Australians at War Film Archive

Elspeth Greene - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:30 **Can you give us a summary of your life from the start to the present day?**

I can start right back from, for instance, I was one-and-a-half pounds, born in one of the first incubators, in North America and if you can image what that was like, but anyway I survived it.

01:00 I was supposed to be delicate all my life, so I was treated delicately and all I wanted to do was to be good at something. I wanted to be good at sport, and I wanted to be a boy, and I tried hard at that for many years. I couldn't win races; also I ran which I found very frustrating. I had very strict Scottish parents,

01:30 after Sunday school for instance we were never allowed out to play in the street or anything like that, we had to be quiet at home, but I think that was par for the course in Canada in those days. I remember Canada wasn't full of Irishmen like this country, there were Scots, French, Scandinavian, Russians, pretty dire hard working people on the whole. Their sense of humour tends to be a little bit

02:00 unintelligible, should we say, to people who don't know it. It was just an ordinary life, we were very, very well off at one stage. I went to a private school, which was quite unusual. We had cooks, maids and chauffeurs and a nanny, that's my old nanny up there. Then suddenly in

02:30 1929-1930 everything crashed. Dad owned four ships, he was shipping wheat from Thunder Bay, it was called Port William and Port Arthur in those days, from Thunder Bay everywhere. We use to go on those, he use to put me and my brother on those ships occasionally to get rid of us. I can remember the highlight of all those trips we had with the captains was one captain

03:00 had a parrot and we thought it was wonderful, the parrot would say 'Morning captain how do you do, I'm none the better from seeing you' we thought that was hilarious because we wouldn't dare speak to an adult like that, we just loved to hear the parrot say that. There were a lot of trips like that that were fun. We used to go down the Gas Bay coast in the summer months, which was lovely.

03:30 We could walk through the woods, picking flowers and Indian pipe and all kinds of odd flowers and things and there was no danger, the parents didn't have to worry, we were quite free to go. They were wonderful summers actually: wild strawberries and blueberries, they were the thing. Then a little later on, I can remember one summer mother and I were picking blueberries and mother was chatting away at me

04:00 she thought, I wasn't answering her, and she went around the bush and there was a bear. She yelled and the bear shot off one way and she shot off the other. I was picking blueberries somewhere out there, and that was kind of fun, not for Mum. I found out that with bears if you don't frighten them and they haven't got cubs they won't touch you, all wild animals, if you leave them alone they leave you alone in other words.

04:30 When the Depression came, things changed completely: it wasn't much fun. I was entering my teenage years, my teen-age was spent wearing hand-me-down [used] clothes from the aunts and things like that which didn't make you feel happy when you went to the school dance and things like that: I was pretty shy, and

05:00 I hated those sorts of things. Then the war came. One night I was skating and I met up with a girl that I knew at school, and she said, "what are you doing?" and I said, "I'm going home," and she said, "No, come to the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], they are giving a dance for the Australian and New Zealand airmen." I said, "Oh that's interesting." That's how I met Roger, but my interest in Australia

05:30 went further back. When I was fourteen, I was on a tram one day, street car, tram, and there were four gorgeous looking young men in those hats with the feathers and the uniform, because in those days, apparently, you traveled around in your uniform if you were a soldier, it was the Bisley Team on their

way to England. I was so impressed, and at fourteen you can imagine.

06:00 Then a little later I was on a tram again and this huge man came in with his wife and I was very impressed by him because he had a part cut out of his shoe, he must have had a bunion or something, I don't know. He sat down beside me and started to talk and said, "Can you tell us when to get off at the Windsor Hotel," and I said, "Of course," and he handed me a card, it was Judge Barkell I think, I cant really remember but I think it was Judge Barkell.

06:30 I had that card for years and years and years but I never had the courage to use it when I came out here. I met Roger at this dance. He's dead and I can't do much about it now I guess, he was dressed in a New Zealand sergeant pilot's uniform, and I guess some New Zealand sergeant pilot was dressed in his AC Plonk [an Aircraftsman] uniform.

07:00 I asked about him, and they said there was something funny about him, I thought, "Oh good, I'll dance with him if there is something funny about him." I started to talk to him and he told me his name and I told him mine and it turned out that he is related to me, I couldn't believe it, his great-uncle married my great-aunt. I didn't know it at the time but the name was there. From then of course

07:30 we moved on and we went a lot and we went to these dances and we met up with all the boys, and I used to take Australian and New Zealanders up north skiing and that was fun. None of them had every skied before and it was pretty disastrous but it was great fun. It cost eighty five cents on the train: you brought up your gear and you went to the little farmhouses, in this case it was

08:00 St Saval, and we went to this house, and they had two bedrooms, so three New Zealanders slept in one bedroom, one single bed, one double bed, and then two Australians slept in the double bed and I slept in the single bed in one room and in those days sex didn't come into it, we never thought about it, I suppose the boys did but

08:30 they were all well brought up in those days. We skied, and for three dollars and eighty five cents we got three meals and our bed for a weekend, you wouldn't believe it would you. At night we'd go to the Maison Blanche and stomp around in our ski boots, no upper ski gear in those days, to the juke box and dance and drink beer of course, so those were fun days.

09:00 I remember the boys missed the train. The boys phoned the depot in Montreal to tell them that they'd missed the train and one of the silly boys made sounds like a train and of course they were caught and they were put into the brig for a week or so. Days were passed like that. I met Roger in January 1941,

09:30 we were married in July 1941 and then he went off overseas at the end of September and I was pregnant. That wasn't much fun because I had to live at home on the one dollar and fourteen cents a day that the Australian Government gave me as a wife. My mother was dying of leukemia at the time,

10:00 I went through having the baby and so-on and it wasn't very much fun. The boy was born and he's a very, very nervous boy and always has been, very hyper, you can't blame him can you? I didn't hear from Roger for ages, I got a letter from Ottawa saying that Roger hadn't

10:30 heard from me in ages, so he was in India at the time and of course I didn't know, and the communications with India apparently weren't very good. The baby came and I was in hospital. I got seven letters all at once, I presume at the other end he must have got a few. As I said my mother died and the two boys were killed fighting. My eldest brother was killed

11:00 when I was on my way to Australia, because he was killed on my son's third birthday before the war was finished here, on [a] terrible little tub called the Glenn Stray. It foundered in the [Great Australian] Bight, I believe, so you can imagine. It was full of Australian airmen and Canadian wives. It was a terrible trip, we ran out of food and we had awful storms and of course we were blacked out at night because of the Japanese,

11:30 but we were young, you put up with that sort of thing. I remember one night there was an almighty crash and a wave broke the stanch of the lifeboat and the lifeboat disappeared and the stanch hit the side of where my cabin was and I thought it was the Japanese so I shot out of the room to see if Butch was ok and in bed I thought. You know how the old ships had transoms, I think they are called,

12:00 I don't know what for, you had to step over … to get out of your door. There he was, up to here in water, the poor little thing, and looking up and saying, "Mummy." Anyway, he survived that. We arrived here on the 30th June 1945, and it was the most perfect, beautiful day, we were woken up at about six o'clock, now in June at six o'clock, you know, what it's like at the moment.

12:30 Great noise, you've got no idea what a racket it was up on deck. They said, "Get dressed, get dressed, we can see Australia," so naturally we all got dressed and went out and what we saw was this little thin line, this grey line in the distance. We all sat there and looked and looked and looked until it got bigger, and as I said it was the most beautiful day when we came though the heads. We stopped off just near the zoo and we could hear all the zoo noises.

13:00 We were very excited. Over at Vaucluse, the Canadians thought anyway, "Oh, red tiles," and no trees in those days: they had gone tree conscious and replanted them. All these red tiles. We have grey tiles in Canada, granite and grey tiles instead of what you've got, we weren't terrible impressed with that. The

husbands hired

13:30 a boat and came up beside and spoke to their wives which we thought was very romantic. Then we arrived at the dock and these poor boys had been told by the navy for days that we were arriving on this day, and we were arriving on this day, and we were arriving on this day, and we finally arrived and there they were with bunches of half-dead flowers and goodness knows what else. I can remember Butch, that's my eldest son,

14:00 "Oh, look at all the Daddies," because he saw all the Australian uniforms. I tried to tell him that the Australian uniform Daddies never saw them of course. Butch was photographed for 'Truth' newspaper which has been defunct for longer than you have been alive I suspect, because he was wearing a little sailor hat with 'Canada' on it of course,

14:30 and a jacket, which was the kind of fashionable thing for little boys in those days. Then we got off the boat. I was taken to a car that had a gas bag on top, I'd never seen one of those of course, that was to save petrol. I was driven up to Lindfield. I didn't know that at the time but then I saw

15:00 a view of a 'toast rack' tram and it nearly sent me hysterical, in Canada in winter those wouldn't do at all, but everything was so exciting, you cant image what it was like, it was unreal. The first house I put my foot into in Sydney was up the street here on Treats Road, would you believe, and I'm ending up on Treats Road. The house belonged to

15:30 Richard Windier QC [Queen's Counsel], KC [King's Counsel], QC, I can't remember, he'd be KC then, yes. Then we went to a boarding house in Mosman, then Roger's aunt, who was in real estate, found us a place, a flat in Bondi

16:00 and while we were there, I got a letter from an Australian that we had known in Canada and I opened up the letter and there were pictures in it, and of course you look at the pictures first, and the picture had a cross on it and it had my brother's name on it, the elder brother, the one in the air force: that was the way that I had learnt that he was killed.

16:30 I was pregnant at the time and I lost that baby, if that was the shock of that I don't know. We moved from there finally to Double Bay and that was great, it was a little portman's cottage that had cost four hundred pounds to build, it had bare lights hanging from the ceiling, the kitchen sink was so old it would have been condemned if the health authorities had seen it.

17:00 It had one tap, a cold water tap, and in the bathroom there was a gas geyser and that was the old hot water over the bath, there was no shower, and the loo [toilet] was outside. So you can image I wasn't frightfully impressed. Then we went out to the laundry and I looked at this thing and said, "Roger, what's that?" and he said, "that's a copper."

17:30 I said, "Yes, I can see it's copper inside but what's it for?" and he said, "You boil your clothes in it," I said, "Boil your clothes, and what do you do with them then?" and he said, "You take that big stick and you put them into [the] wash tub." That was a culture shock, we had washing machines and dryers then, it was really funny, but it wasn't very funny when you had to do the washing, by then I had two little babies, Rowan came later.

18:00 Then it rained all of February, it rained and rained and rained, I don't think, no that was the next year when I had Rowan, I don't think the poor little boy had a dry nappy on for two months, you couldn't dry those terry towelling things. The only heat we had was a little bar heater like that, and of course a fireplace in the bedroom,

18:30 it was really quite funny. Anyway, life went on and we moved from there to West Ryde, where there was a huge complex of houses built, no trees, no gardens, just the house and the fences, a little bit more modern that this cottage in Double Bay. Yes, that cottage was in Double Bay: can you image a cottage like that in Double Bay

19:00 today? They were built especially for ex-service officers, which was rather nice because being all officers, being something in common, and we all had our young babies and we all had no money. I remember two of the people who had a house and one was a man called Bruce Webber, I think

19:30 it was, from the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] and Doug Channel, who did the morning session, he moved to New Guinea afterwards, and also a man called Talbot Duckmanton [sports reporter], who eventually became the head of the ABC show. It's all grown up with gardens and trees and it's really rather nice. I finally

20:00 got my first trip home to Canada and then to England, I kind of did a trip around the world. I worked during the war at one stage, very shortly I worked for Nordine Aviation and flew Harvards and the instructor or the chief test pilot was an Australian so he let me in there, but I had Butch and it was dicey

20:30 so I didn't do that for very long. Then I went and worked for what they called the Return Ferry Group. All the Langley aircraft came to Montreal and we had to check all the manifests and then they were flown off by various pilots to England and then when they had very tired pilots who had done two or three sessions they were sent out to Canada to have a bit of a rest and then they took the bombers

21:00 over to England again. We had Americans, Canadians, Norwegians, Danes, Dutch we had every nationality that you could think over there. I worked for the Norwegian Air Force for a while because I learned to speak Norwegian because language was my thing, because I can

21:30 pick them up like some people pick up the flu, they were no trouble to me at all. That was fun and after the war I went to Norway and had a visit with all these characters and that was interesting to say the least. While I was working at Little Norway I met, well, he was then Prince Olav, the Crown Prince, and he's since been King and died.

22:00 His son then was only five years old and had no teeth in front. He was the King, that was very exciting. Then after the war I went over there and visited the people and I had a lovely incident. I was walking down from the palace and it was a kind of a hill like this and there was a big park, and I stopped a woman to ask her where I could buy a pair of

22:30 ladies' woolen slacks because it was cold and it was winter. I don't know what I said to her, I must have used the wrong word for slacks, whatever it was, I don't remember it now but whatever it was she started to laugh, she was hysterical and she wouldn't tell me what I said, and I still don't know what I said. I don't dare ask anybody either, so I started to laugh too then and then this man came along and tipped his hat and said, "Excuse me, can I help you ladies?"

23:00 and I said, "If you can't speak English, then no." He did and she told him what I said and he started to laugh. In the end we were all laughing and finally he said, "The Grand Hotel is down there let's go have a coffee." So we did and of course I never saw them again. They did finally tell me there was a shop where I could buy ladies' slacks, you wouldn't believe it, it was owned by a mother of a Norwegian that I knew out here, isn't that amazing!

23:30 So that was my first trip home. I was led to believe I was going to come out here to the country, which suited me, my grandmother was a country person but as I told you my grandfather was an artist. The other side of my husband's family are big financiers here, they were 'Sir' this and 'Sir' that, and he got caught with the financial bug

24:00 and he stayed here in Sydney, and if there's anything in this world that I hate, it is money. I loathe the stuff, I need it to live on but I loathe it. I have no use for people who think finance, finance, finance. I'm sorry, I won't even buy stocks and shares because I saw what happened to my father, so I am a bit paranoid about that I guess. So he went on: I was no good to him, his social life, cocktail parties.

24:30 Wouldn't you believe it, when I, first time I came here, the cocktail parties! The men stood around the bar and the women sat around and talked about breast feeding, at a cocktail party, and I just couldn't believe it quite frankly. I just couldn't stand that competition, always trying to have a better dinner party than somebody else, everybody was always trying to get there, after all we all started off with nothing

25:00 after the war, and I found that a bore but Roger found it wonderful so I was no good to him, so finally he pushed off. It was the best thing that he ever did for me because then I had to look after myself, didn't I? My children were nearly grown up, my daughter was sixteen and Butch had already left and gone to Canada, and then of course Rowan was eighteen and able to look after himself, so I went back to Canada then for six years

25:30 because I thought that Sydney's not big enough to hold me, I didn't want any of it. So Annabelle came home and finished schooling in Canada, then she came back here and met a New Zealander and married a New Zealander. I was there for six years and then I came back and I went up to Armidale for about one year and I taught up there and then I came back here and taught back here at Abbotsleigh,

26:00 just six-year-olds. I just took whatever jobs there were, which were rather varied. At one stage during the war I had been a VAD [Voluntary Aid Detachment], nursed airmen and things. I used to visit the Australian Third Secretary and his mother in Ottawa. I'd bring Butch up there and they were wonderful.

26:30 Once I noticed there was some Australian beer in the house, 'Cascade', and I said, "Do you think I can take a couple of bottles to take back to some Australian boys who are in hospital in Montreal?" and they said, "Yes," so they gave me some to bring back. I go into the hospital with my bib on and I put the beer under the bib, and I had beautiful boobs back then, believe me.

27:00 I went in and one of the boys, and his name was Burns I think, he had one of these cages over his foot with a light bulb in it to keep it warm. We put the beer under there, sneaked it out and put it under there, luckily I was gone before they opened the beer because could you imagine, it was warm and what happened, I can imagine there was chaos, but

27:30 that was something that I just remembered. I taught in Armidale for a short time and enjoyed that and then came back to Sydney, I taught at Tara School.

28:00 I didn't teach there, I was a house mistress there for a while, then I came back to Abbotsleigh as a house mistress and then I went back to Canada for another four years, where I worked for the Red Cross mostly, nursing people who came out of hospital, just Red Cross work but that was interesting and

that was fun. Then they started to put me onto

28:30 palliative care persons, people with cancer, and I found that too depressing, so again I came back here and I just took jobs wherever I could. I taught down at Melbourne for a short time in PLC [Presbyterian Ladies' College] there. I had the junior school all to myself, all six of them, can you imagine, first to sixth grade. I was staying

29:00 at a place that had a swimming pool, it was a long time ago and you wouldn't dare do it now. It was terribly hot and the class room was about this size, it was a terribly hot day so I piled them into my Mini and drove, not very far, just two or three blocks, and took them to the swimming pool. I told them to take off their uniforms and just sit in their underpants on the edge of the pool and then I said, "Now we are going to have a spelling lesson and arithmetic tables," and so on

29:30 and so forth. If you answered correctly you were allowed to swim to the other end of the pool. They thought it was great so I did that a few times during my time there and I got away with it but you can't do that today with all the rules and regulations. That only lasted six months and then I came back here. I came back

30:00 for my daughter's wedding in Christchurch, that's when I came to Australia and stayed here for a while. I came back here in 1984 and I've been here ever since. But while I was in Canada I had a wonderful job, I joined the Royal Bank again, I'd been with them in 1938. Do you know, they still had my little thing

30:30 and do you know what my salary was in 1938? Twelve dollars and fifty cents a week, can you believe it? Anyway they took me back and I worked for Visa and it was the most wonderful job that anybody could have. The bank gave us a car and of course we could stay in motels: we weren't expected to stay in the Ritz but in a motel with all expenses paid. The men went to various places and Visa was being started at

31:00 that time in Canada. The men went to all these little banks and set them up with Visa and then went through the villages and set up all the merchants with Visa and then we went in and showed them how to use it, so we were the trouble-shooters, the girls. Well, this was in Vancouver. We traveled everywhere:

31:30 we went from Vancouver to Alberta to Manitoba and north, right up to the Yukon, and south, right to the border, and it was fabulous and we flew everywhere. I had a big Husky dog. The bank flew her with me because it was the time when hippies were hopping into cars and being a little peculiar.

32:00 I was perfectly safe, I never had to lock up anything. She was huge and she only had to look up like this and people left her alone. It was so interesting and you met all kinds of people because you had to go to garages and set up branches and you had to go to jewelers' and set them up. When you went to the garages you wouldn't say, "G'day mate," but more, "How are you, and how are things going?" A place I went to, there was an Irishman and he was a scream, "Wont you have a cup of coffee now?"

32:30 What could you say but, "Yes." I wish you could've seen the cup, it was cracked and black but I survived it and when you went into the jewelers' you were 'Mister' this and 'Mister' that but it was an acting game. If you are going to do sales you have to be a good actor, you had to size up the people you were talking to and act accordingly. You met some funny ones, you really did. I remember one man, he was

33:00 so rude, he said, "I wouldn't've joined this thing if I had've read the small print." He was bullying me and I said, "Look, I learnt to read the small print when I was a kid. It's your fault not mine if you didn't read the small print," and he backed right up because I stuck up for myself. You got a few of those but mostly people were pretty nice,

33:30 it was great fun. One night I had a swim in the pool and the dog was with me and there was another man in the pool and he was Polish and we started to talk and he asked 'Would I have dinner with him?' and I thought, "Oh here we go," and I said, "Yes, under one condition, that I pay for my own dinner." So we had dinner and we had wine and we talked and he said, "What are you doing after dinner?" and I said, "I'm walking the dog."

34:00 He said, "Can I walk you?" and I said, "Yes." So he turns up and it's getting dark and he turned up with a bottle of wine and two glasses, so he took one look at the dog and thought, "Oh." We sat down on the log and drank the wine and got chatting away and the dog was sniffling around and he moved closer and closer and he started putting his arm around me and I sort of went like this.

34:30 I like to set the pace and I just went like that and Sibarka came around and came up and just went like that, 'Grrrrr', right in his face, and he went backwards over the log and that was the end of that, that was the end of that, believe me. She was great, she was always saving me from a fate worse than death.

What happened when you came back to Australia?

35:00 When I came back this last time, I had no money and I had no real training and everything had gone terribly tack and everything here, so I stayed with a friend for a couple of months and I decided it'd got to [be] the country. I read an ad in the paper at Coonabarabran, first to look after a little boy for three weeks, then I saw an ad from Gobbagombalin

35:30 to look after an old man and I thought, “Gobbagombalin. Mr Richard and his grandson had a property up there.” A couple of King’s School boys that Butch was with, their parents were up there, and people I had known, so I thought, “Good, I’ll do this,” so I wrote a letter to her and said, “I’m coming to ??? Coonabarabran and can I stop off the night with you to see if you approve of me? etc, and when I come back from Coonabarabran

36:00 I will just stop,” which was what I did. I looked after this funny old man, I wish you could’ve seen the house. He was so mean he kept turning off the fans, and I kept turning them on, it was so hot: he was a funny old fellow. I’m not saying his name purposely because he turned out to be a great friend of my ex-husband’s uncle.

36:30 **That’s when you ignore it.**

I did that, but that was fun, I can remember. The WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s got terrible maggots and as soon as I see any animal in misery, I get very upset. So what did I do to them?

37:00 I got rid of all the maggots all right but the poor WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. They thought I was mad and they said, “But they are only WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s.” I put them all in warm soapy water and the maggots came out like mad. They didn’t like it, it was revolting but still I saved two or three WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. There wasn’t anything to do up there because the old man wasn’t really old,

37:30 he was just interested in the birds. He got up one morning, walking out the door naked with his shaving gear, he was going to throw out the shaving water. Well he hadn’t had to do that for years, we had indoor sinks and things, the poor old fellow. I gave him up and went into the town and lived in the doctor’s surgery because no doctors would stay up there, and I loved it

38:00 and it was fun: I joined everything. It was three dollars to join the Bridge Club, the Golf Club, you name it, it was three dollars, so I joined everything. I went to the hospital every day and, because I was what you’d call the art and craft director, so all the old people would come in and I’d teach them all these ghastly picture frames with lace around them and those sorts of things but they loved it and enjoyed it.

38:30 I did that and I was up there for about six years and lived in this house, and moved out of it because they wanted it for somebody in the government of course, in the council. I moved up to this little place and it was on a property. To make it comfortable, I can remember, there were holes

39:00 in the floors so a snake could get through and I was inundated with mice, so I went around the whole house with packets of steel wool and shoved them into the holes. When the insurance man said, “What kind of a house is it?” I said, “Fibro board with steel wool trimming,” and he looked at me and said, “Steel wool trimming?” So that was it: I lived there quite comfortably except for the mice.

39:30 The dog wouldn’t even touch the mice. I had a little West Highlander and she was old, but she wouldn’t touch the mice. She would touch the mice in somebody else’s house but not my house, no mice in my house were allowed to be touched. I moved from Galah, and I moved that cupboard over there and there were holes under it. When they moved it, there was a whole pile of dog biscuits that the mice had stashed away. I don’t know how long it was there, ever since I was there,

40:00 because you couldn’t move it easily, or even hoover. It was a funny place.

Tape 2

00:30 **Do you want to continue on about your house?**

The little cottage. People were very kind and offered me a place to go when I was kicked out of the doctor’s surgery and I went into a house and the floor was going up and down but one of the local men kindly fixed that up. It was a wonderful bath tub, it was about six

01:00 feet deep and about six feet long. The only rent I paid them was thirty dollars and I insisted on paying the thirty dollars to cover the expense of the hot water because it was run from their main house, what do you call it, the board. I did it up with carpet and made it into a very comfortable little house and it was great.

01:30 The only thing is, and isn’t it typical, they had a big window on the west side of the cottage and no window on the east side. So one day I was down in the dump and I found a double window and it looked alright so I brought it back and I borrowed a chain-saw and I cut a hole in the wall and sort of fitted it in and then

02:00 bought some slats and put them around to fill the holes in, which you could see where I hadn’t been very accurate, and I had a window. Why it had been out was it was one of those windows when you pull it out, a thing like that, and there was space under it and I just made a little sausage dog to keep the draught out so I had some sunshine in my living room which was great. The verandah came

02:30 around there and the living room was inside there so it was a great little cottage and I loved it. But I got to the stage where I was getting arthritis and I couldn't change taps and put up with dogs that do things anymore. The owners of the place were very anti-Aboriginal

03:00 but I liked them, I was quite fond of them. I lost my wallet one day and it was a little Aboriginal girl that picked it up and brought it to me and they were so anti-Aboriginal, I didn't find them… some of them were hopeless but some of them were very nice indeed. At one stage a black man was brought up to cope with the Aboriginal young and he

03:30 got them organised and working and he was marvellous with them. They were a pretty mixed bunch and unfortunately drink was [a problem with] most of them. He got an old truck, lawn mowers and things together and two or three of them would go out to do a job, so I asked them to come out one day and give me a quote to clean my gutters and mow my lawn and dig over the garden: forty dollars.

04:00 I thought forty dollars each for the kids. No, forty dollars. They came out and two of them sat and talked while one worked and then one hour later one came and sat down and another one went out and worked and that's the way that they did it, and it was forty dollars. They were good and they did a good job too. I was told not to bring them back in case they stole things from the shed. I was so angry,

04:30 I said to the man, "Not even a poor Aboriginal would steal any stuff from that shed because there isn't a damn thing in it that's worth stealing," because everything was rusted, they were completely useless, I could've run the property better myself. I was sorry about that because I liked them. They were funny, they started a café and I was always careful to go there at least once a week

05:00 for a cup of coffee and a biscuit. The biscuit was always soggy because they always spilt the coffees so I had to explain to them that you must, if you are going to serve coffee to the public, you must blah blah blah. Anyway they were very good, but so typical it didn't last, they were onto something else. It's sad really because they have terrific talent. At one stage the government set them up with a

05:30 beautiful craft centre and they made their own paper and printed cards and I said, "You must stick to this and get these to the city centres." The tourists would've bought them up like mad. They printed their own cloth, I just couldn't believe how talented they were, with the help, ok, of people who had to teach them the techniques.

06:00 It just phased out.

What happened next after you moved from the house?

When I moved from there I came down here, I moved in here and that was eleven years ago. Then my son who was living in Sydney moved to Victoria so here I am still alone.

06:30 Since then, I was fairly active when I first came and I was kind of running around doing this and that but I'm not into Probus and clubs and senior citizens' stuff so I said, "I don't want to be with old people all the time," but I've been adopted by three families who all lived in this street and I used to babysit for them when I first came and they have been marvellous to me.

07:00 They gave me an eightieth birthday party which was out of this world, six of them and all their children and I was allowed to invite guests: I had twelve friends. This last birthday they took me to a restaurant and on Mother's Day I was there for dinner. Christmas and New Year's, I'm invited over and they see that I've got somewhere to go always. The boy's wonderful if I need help with the computer,

07:30 he'll come up and fix it up and do what he can for me. I'm very lucky I've got very good people that I can call on if necessary but I don't like to do it unless it is necessary. That was alright but I was getting bored and I got polymyalgia a couple of years ago and I was [on] cortisone which nearly finished me, it really did. I went into a depression

08:00 and one morning I sat in that big chair over there and I was going to do myself in so I went to the doctor that day and he was going to put me onto an upper and I said, "No, I'll cope with it, now that I know what it is I can cope with it." Anyway I'm off the wretched stuff in eight months. They said six months to three years and it took me eight months, and I will never take that stuff again: don't ever take it unless you really, really have to.

08:30 Since then apart from being bitten by a dog up at the dog park because I take Rosy, and Rosy belongs to one of these friends of mine, but they don't like dogs, they got it for the little girl because she wanted it and they neglect her really, they don't ever pat her, they don't ever say anything nice to her, they feed her when it's convenient and I suspect unfortunately because they are all [in] at different times,

09:00 they forget to say 'Has anybody fed Rosy'. So I have her here five days a week and I look after her and she's my friend. I take her up to the dog park and that's another story. We had such fun with the council because it is a cricket ground and I started, and I was the one who started picking up the dog mess. When I was in America you had to, so that's now become a

09:30 thing and everybody does that, well nearly everybody. You get up there, fifty dogs up there at five o'clock at night, all milling around having a great time so you meet all kinds of people and they are all young. These people that I was talking about, these six people, they are all younger, they are not anywhere near me and it's much more fun. So that became a bit of a bore so I went up to this little

hospital one day and said,

10:00 “I want to be a pink lady [hospital volunteer],” and they said, “We have never had one.” I said, “Well here I am.” So they took me on and I pink-ladied, and I hate doing flowers, I like flowers in pots and in the ground but I don’t like doing flowers. One day I saw two rooms with unmade beds and I was a good bed maker during the war so I offered to do the beds,

10:30 so I did that for months but it was too much for me. After I came home from New Zealand, I had a slight heart thing which has gone away again. I’m a great believer in making things go away yourself, if you know what I mean, up to a point you can do it. I’m not doing that, I’m just going in now and I’m just sketching the patients and that is fun. I just bought a box

11:00 of pastels and I’m going to try colour ones: they’re not going anywhere and they think it’s great. That takes about half an hour or three-quarters of an hour to do when you are talking to the patient and they’re talking to you and I go up there everyday. It’s something to do and as you can see, this is a dark little flat and it can be very depressing so what do you do? It’s small and I’m sick of the computer. The Web’s [internet]

11:30 alright and everything but it’s not real if you know what I mean. I like to be in touch with people and although I like to be alone for a while I do like to be in touch. The hospital does me fine because I need people. I like people and I talk to them and then they go out of my life and I feel sad sometimes, because some of them I would like to carry on but they come from Adelaide and they come from up the coast, you can’t see them.

12:00 One dear old man, I made the mistake of asking him what he was reading, “The biography of Einstein,” and I said, “What’s the title?” He said, “E=MC2,” so I knew what it was but I asked him just to get him to talk, two and a half hour later I was filled with it, relativity,

12:30 and I didn’t understand one single word if it.

Sounded like you needed to read the book?

He was happy. Me read a book on Einstein! I can’t even add two and two, maths has always been my bum fair.

It sounds like you have met some really lovely people there?

Really great.

That’s a really great summary and it’s given us …?

13:00 I thought it was the interview.

Now we have to go back and get more detail from you, but that was really great and it was a really in-depth summary so it was more than a summary. If it’s alright with you now, we will go right back to the start, if you can tell us when and where you were actually born?

I was born in Montreal on either,

13:30 and I mean this, either 24th March 1920 or 25th March 1919. Now the hospital records have been expunged because they don’t keep them after fifty years, or didn’t keep written ones because it’s different now, and the government says I was the older. So I’ve stuck to the older and I’ve got the pension a year earlier didn’t I, I’m not stupid,

14:00 so that’s when I was born. I had two sisters and two brothers. I told you earlier that the two brothers were killed at thirty-two and twenty-one and my two sisters, one is remaining in Canada and I never hear from her, she takes after my father’s family, she is as nutty as a fruit cake. My other sister lives on a

14:30 house-boat in San Francisco but she has had a stroke and she’s kind of not very well, and I don’t want to go and see her, I don’t want to see her like that, I want to remember her, but I telephone her every couple of weeks and we have a little chat.

You mentioned you were only a pound-and-a-bit when you were born?

Pound-and-a-half.

You must have been a premature baby?

Yes, very. They had to operate on mother and I think the reason why I survived was because they removed me gently, there was no effort on my part.

15:00 Dad said I was disgusting and looked like a yellow monkey with no eyebrows, no nails, no nothing, but I’ve suffered from mild health problems all my life and I still think that a cake is not cooked properly, always suffers if you know what I mean. But on the whole I’m as tough as nails, obviously to have survived at all.

What was your father like?

Dad.

15:30 in retrospect I loved him because I respected him, and I think love is respect but I don't think I liked him very much. I was too afraid of him, he was very erratic, he'd change moods very, very quickly, which is frightening for me, for a little girl, and I was a very nervous child.

16:00 One sister was blonde and blue eyes and my sister was very pretty and I was ok but I was quite aware that I was just ok. My two brothers, I adored my older brother, he was quite a bright fellow, he went to McGill when he was only sixteen or seventeen.

What's McGill?

16:30 McGill University which was at his time a world-known university for medicine, particularly Rutherford, he split the atom or something at McGill University apparently, because it had one of the best physics labs in the world at that time. Bob graduated from there and joined the

17:00 Canadian Air Force in 1934 and went over to England and joined the RAF [Royal Air Force] and I never saw him again, he didn't come home again. As I said, [he] ran away to sea when he was fifteen. We did see him a couple of times again because during the war his ship came in for supplies to a place called Senelon, Quebec, which wasn't terribly far from Montreal and he'd get leave, that's about it.

17:30 All I can remember is being babied to a certain degree because I wasn't well and the doctors were always saying I had to go to bed at seven o'clock when I was eleven years old and you could imagine how I loved that but I was just skinny and [not] tough I guess.

What was your mother like?

Mum, that's different. She was

18:00 very well loved by her friends. Her father was a Presbyterian minister in Scotland and her mother was a farmer's daughter, and they died when she was twelve and she was sent to Canada with all her brothers to be brought up by a maiden aunt, so she had a lousy childhood. She was a gentle soul

18:30 and she liked doing things for people. I can remember when we were living in Ceneron and we were surrounded by French Canadians, all of whom were Catholics. Catholicism is very medieval, or it was before the war, it was really medieval Catholicism: the priest told you to marry and he told you how many kids to have and he lived in a big house and everybody else lived in a little village.

19:00 She was sent to a convent because it was a nearer school, for Pete's sake, poor Mum. At Ceneron these poor women with these umpteen children were always taken sick. Actually they were riddled with tuberculosis at the time, I'm talking about the 1930s mind you. Mum was always cooking stews or something. One of the things

19:30 I remember, funny enough it's one of the very definite things I remember about her, is one day she was sitting down and saying, "There are too many Marys and not enough Marthas in this world," because all the French Canadians did all the praying and mother was making the stew. That's been such a hang-up for me, now I go to a slap-happy church down here in Lindfield

20:00 and they are Revivalists and everything and I'm not good at this praying business. I said, "You go and be Mary, I'll be Martha." I said, "You are good at praying and I'm a great washer-upper." So that's what I do at the church, I go to the service and then I go out and wash up after. Isn't that funny how something can stick in your mind, and she died when I was only twenty-two, while

20:30 I was living there with Butch.

You mentioned the first part of your childhood was quite a wealthy and privileged upbringing, can you tell us more?

I can remember moving from Montrose Avenue and I think I was about five, and we helped the movers by throwing the kindergarten

21:00 furniture out the window to the movers. I can remember we moved to Upper Lansdowne which is the place we had a wonderful washerwomen called Madam Rayshon, French of course. We had a furnace-man, you had to have a furnace-man to come and shovel the furnace because in those days they were coal,

21:30 and his name was Martello, needless to say he was Italian. We had our wonderful nanny, Marie, and we had a cook called Chetoolt but French Canadian of course. She was marvellous and she came to us when she was seventeen and mother used to send her home every

22:00 week to the farm from where she came from because she didn't want a seventeen-year-old loose in Montreal. They lived in a little farm in a place called Saint Clet, and I was always sent after Christmas until New Year's when Marie had leave and I was sent with Marie to this farm. I loved the poor little rich girl, she slept on a straw palliasse, she drank water from [a] bucket on the floor in the kitchen and everybody drank

22:30 out of the beaker, no AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome] and stuff to worry about in those days. I can remember one day going down to have a drink and there was a dead mouse in the water, and of course I carried on. The two boys were Colat and Albert and they were fourteen at the time and years and years and years later, and I mean this was 1934 until the 1970s, forty years later, I was at home and spending Christmas with Marie

23:00 at her little place and she ended up much better off than I was. Albert and Colat were there and I said, "I remember, Colat, you put that mouse in the water," and he said, "No I didn't, Albert did," and Albert said, "No, you did," and here we were seventy years old saying, "No I didn't, you did," it was hilarious, but they are both dead now, of course. I use to love going there, we'd go for a shimmering off,

23:30 that was later on when I went in the May holidays and we'd go in a two-horse sleigh with a big bear rug over us, and we'd go off into the woods where they'd tap the maple trees and we'd go and empty out all the buckets and there'd be twigs, leaves, dead mice, squirrels and heaven knows what and it was strained off into this huge

24:00 cauldron and they built a fire under that and they started to boil it up. They made maple sugar and maple syrup and every now and again they'd take a ladle of the stuff and throw it out onto the snow and we kids loved it, and these would all be the farm kids and me because it was toffee, maple toffee, terribly sweet of course but we loved it. At lunch time they'd fry the eggs in maple syrup, after all you have pancakes, don't you,

24:30 with maple syrup and they are made with eggs, it's not as bad as it sounds. Then of course we'd all be carted back and they'd cook it and cook it until it became solidified and became maple sugar. They were wonderful days and it was freezing cold, in May it was still very, very cold and a lot of snow, and that was one memory that I have and I love.

Tell us a bit about your schooling?

25:00 I went to a very posh private school called Wustudy which was run by Miss Gascoigne and I was utterly hopeless, good at spelling, good at language but arithmetic, anything to do with arithmetic, forget it, I could read or write.

25:30 I liked it there because I didn't know any better, but I was always sorry for the underdog. There was a girl there whose father had been killed during the war and she was wearing her brother's hand-me-down coats and the other so-and-sos would make remarks and things like that and you know how little girls can be unpleasant. I was always being put on the floor for being a dunce

26:00 because I couldn't do my arithmetic. Finally, when the crash came I went to a public school and Miss McGuire, and I remember her because she was the breakthrough and she was white-haired and retired the following year. She called me up one afternoon after school and said, "Come on," and I thought, "What have I done?" as usual, and apparently she just wanted to see what I was doing in arithmetic. She had these sums to do in front of her,

26:30 I was doing them all perfectly correct backwards and of course that would be picked like that today, but that wasn't picked in those days, so naturally I didn't have any confidence in my arithmetic. I was adding at school and when I was adding the kids' marks I always added each one three times and I got two out of three accepted.

So that was dyslexia you are talking about?

I think that's what it is, it's a form of dyslexia. Even today

27:00 if you give me that, for instance, I can read 'pre-war, when and where were', I can read backwards almost as easily as I can read forwards, and I can write backwards just as quickly and easily as I write forwards.

That's very interesting.

So that wasn't a great advantage. I clobbered on and finally ended up at Montreal High School

27:30 and I didn't finish my Leaving because I couldn't, with maths I was just hopeless. I left speaking German, French and English and Italian because my mother spoke Italian. She eventually, by the way, became the Governess to the Italian Royal family in 1904 or 1905 and so she spoke beautiful Italian too.

28:00 Then the war came and I went into the bank and then I went into various aircraft factories, and aircraft of course because of my eldest brother being in the air force.

Just before we do get to the war, can you, what can you recall about the Depression years in Montreal?

I can remember

28:30 that we just went from bad to worse, when we were finally living in a house downtown in Montreal which was lent to us by friends, and I can remember mother having a huge big pot on the stove like this all the time filled with soup. There would be a knock on the door and here would be this poor young

man, often Englishmen who came out thinking it was going to be better in Canada. He had

29:00 no galoshes and just a thin raincoat on, no gloves, no hat, nothing, and mother used to bring them in and give them a bowl of soup, and cut off a chunk of bread about so big with no butter, because we were hungry in those days too, and send them on their way, because that was all that we could do. I remember going out the back door one day and there was always a pile of fresh snow, you always kick a pile of fresh snow

29:30 and there was something under it, there was a man and he died. I've never forgotten that, it was horrible, he was frozen to death the poor thing. There was a lot of that. They only had soup kitchens, they didn't have the dole. Frankly I think it makes more for character for the ones that did survive and they were able to cope with anything.

30:00 I remember being hungry but never starving, never. We ended up at a cottage at a place called Lac Posie which is north Montreal in Quebec and there was nothing there: there was our house, and there was a little farmhouse next to us where they had a cow, and the wife was pregnant. We went there

30:30 in April and it was still very cold, there was ice on the lake every morning, not thick but it was there. Our only running water was a little stream which was clean from the mountain anyway and we were quite safe drinking it. We had no electricity, no running water, a kerosene stove and Dad used to come up once a week with meat

31:00 which was put into a funny tin thing which was kept under the ground to keep it cool, how we didn't die of food poisoning when you think about it. I must admit I'm digressing when I think of all these things, 'handy wipes' you use on the kitchen and all this stuff nowadays and what we had that summer and survived. Our only bathing, we had to go down to the lake, needless to say I don't think we were very clean

31:30 because we used to jump in and jump right out again. I can remember one morning hearing a heck of a noise in the kitchen and there was a chipmunk at the cornflakes, he'd opened up the cornflakes and was having a lovely time. This was a very interesting summer actually, another time Johnny Frachi, the little boy who lived up the road a couple of miles, came down to stay

32:00 the night with my brother, so I was sent up to tell Mrs Frachi that he was staying the night and I'd stay there the night with her. The sun was going down and as I was walking up the road, a girl of fourteen could walk anywhere safely in those days, it was wonderful, and it really had its points. I crossed the road and of course I stopped dead in my tracks. I was terrified because we thought

32:30 that wolves ate people, so I stopped dead, didn't move, the wolf didn't move, the wolf looked at me and wandered off into the woods, so that's when I learnt that wild animals don't attack you unless you panic or make loud noises or movement.

It must have been such a culture shock to go from such wealth and privilege to this bread line?

33:00 But it makes you appreciate things. I can't stand seeing people who are sick, I can't stand seeing people who are poorer than I am, I give my money away to those people if I can, I just keep enough to just keep going because I can't stand it. I have a friend who has never done without anything, I just think if I had her money just think of all the things that I could do,

33:30 but she is hopeless and she's miserable and always going to the doctor with something wrong. The doctor must think she's wonderful because they don't have to do much, they just take the money and don't have to do anything, she's hopeless and sad isn't it?

Just getting back to when you were fourteen, was it around this time that you saw the Australian?

No it was before that,

34:00 I was about twelve or thirteen, I was fourteen when we went up to this cottage, we'd lived in places in town that had been lent to us and we were separated and I stayed with my aunt and father and my mother was living somewhere else, I don't remember where she was living, we were all separated. I don't want to remember much about it, I think the answer is I don't want to.

34:30 I went to seven different schools or eight different schools which didn't help my education either, no it didn't.

How old were you when war had broken out?

In 1939 I was just turning twenty.

Just before we move on to those years, I believe you had quite a well known grandfather, a Scottish grandfather?

Yes,

35:00 he was a well known painter in Glasgow apparently. I only found that out recently, because of another

filming project that I got involved with inadvertently. He may have been a painter but I don't think he was a very nice man because he never allowed any of the girls to have a boyfriend and one aunt escaped to Canada with my father and his brother.

35:30 Another girl managed to get away and get into the British Foreign Office and lived in Romania for years, [she] was a really well and interesting character. The other poor things just stayed in Scotland, and lived in, not penury but certainly not very well. Luckily Scotland is the only British country with legislation

36:00 where women own their own money, a man can't marry you and take over your money like the other British countries. Grandmother apparently had some money and it kept my aunts going, because I don't think my grandfather made much money with his art or whatever.

How strict were your parents?

Pretty darn strict. I mean manners, and table manners

36:30 and the way in doing things was pretty strict. We weren't always allowed to run around the streets wild like some of the children did but we had our moments. We used to sit around the piano on Sunday afternoon, Mum was quite a good pianist, and play sing-songs and stuff.

37:00 We were taken out on picnics on the weekends, it was a pretty good life in many ways but very restricted compared to other children that we knew, but I don't think that it hurt us quite frankly.

Tell us about the first time you did see those Australian soldiers on the tram that day?

I was

37:30 going into town, probably to dancing school, I took dancing before the crash but after the crash the dancing school just kept me and my sister on, I think out of pity probably. I think I was going down there and I was just on the tram and saw these [men] sitting next to me. When you are fourteen and you see someone with that dashing looking uniform, actually the uniform

38:00 was probably shocking, with that old khaki rough stuff but their hats were fabulous and of course they were tanned and really quite something, quite different. So I said to them, "Where do you come from?" and they said, "Australia." Then they told me they were going to Bisley and I had heard of the Bisley Shoot of course, so that was all because I had to get off the tram, but that was sort of the thing.

38:30 Then later on at school, at high school, the Australian Commissioner came and gave us a talk about Australia and then he gave us a competition for the best poster about Australia, and I won it. I can remember it, I can still see it, I had the sheep, the mountains in the background and in the foreground, with his back to me, was the sheep farmer with a big hat but he had a checked shirt

39:00 on which is what Canadians wear, the Australians didn't in those days. Australians didn't wear check shirts but he had the typical Canadian farmer shirt on and he had a gun under his arm but I didn't know what he was going to do, but I thought it's as wild as that and I won the poster and I got a copy of the Adam Lindsey Gordon poem.

39:30 **Like it was almost destiny that you ended up here in Australia?**

Yes.

Tape 3

00:30 **Could you give us a description of Montreal during these formative years of yours?**

Montreal is built on a hill, it's called Mount Royal but it's built on a hill and it's only about three hundred feet high or something. When Maisonneuve came up the river, way, way back in 14-something, I think it was, I can't remember, he set a cross up there.

01:00 Many, many years there and it's about thirty feet high and there was a light in it every night, it was a navigation thing for the boats coming up St Lawrence River, but it was a landmark. It's always been a park, cars and things weren't allowed up on it. In winter at Beaver Lake, and I think Montreal was a volcano and I think Beaver Lake was the crater of the volcano, and it freezed over and at night they'd have lights up there and we'd go skating,

01:30 we used it for skiing too. The kids today wouldn't call it skiing, they have all that fancy gear, we had old board skis, it was pretty rough. So we skied up there and it was always lit up in winter and in summer they had a pavilion up there and the Montreal Orchestra used to play, eight Sundays of the summer, a concert up there.

02:00 It was one dollar to sit on the lookout, and two dollars to sit on a seat. I suppose it was a dollar at the

lookout because if someone gave you a push you went over, I don't know. It was a lovely park, it was a lovely place for recreation. Downtown Montreal was interesting because they are still cobbled streets, not many but they are some

02:30 and the Basque Market which is now just a complex of shops. Dad use to take us down every Saturday with the cook and we'd look at the rabbits and the guinea pigs and the food and the mittens, handmade French Canadian mittens with hand spun wool, and big sweaters. Oh it was exciting for kids, especially the guinea-pigs and the animals.

03:00 The farmers used to come in from all around and bring in their stuff, you couldn't do it now. There was a house down there called La Maison des Filles du Roi, 'The House of the King's Daughters', I was just reading about it the other day in that book up there. The King of France sent out girls, specially picked

03:30 girls, to marry the Frenchmen in Canada, you can imagine the poor girls, what kind of men they were, they were pretty darn rough, snow-shoers and mostly hunters, the fur people. These girls were sent up and of course they were well escorted and that house is still there and is now

04:00 a very up-market sort of a restaurant and it's very nice. The Château Duran which used to be the Governor's house is now a museum, this is downtown Montreal, it was the old wall of Montreal and can still be seen when you go up the mountain from Peel Street, I think it is, funny I'm trying to remember fifty years back.

04:30 Sherbet Street and St Catherine Street and Dorchester were the main drags right across the city. Going out of the city to West Montreal there was a big area that was totally not built up at one stage and after WW1 [World War One] they planted, the whole of Sherbet Street on either side was planted with maple trees and on each sapling they had a plaque for the name of the soldier killed in WW1,

05:00 and they were there for years and years and I suppose they are gone now, and it's all built up anyway. We had a big public swimming pool, the only one in Rudune, where I nearly drowned with two Australians and they couldn't believe we couldn't swim, country boys came up and said, "Take it easy, we can't swim."

05:30 They had the harbour front, it was an important harbour front in those days too, the furthest you could go before the snow and ice set in Montreal Harbour, and I used to spend a lot of time down there because Dad used to bring me down to the ships. It's all

06:00 changed now, the focus has changed because of this French problem that we had, the English have all left pretty well. In those days the English were the big dogs and they tended to look down on the French Canadians. The French Canadians' education at that time

06:30 was again medieval Catholic, it was run like a Catholic church which was kind of medieval, it's the only way I can describe it. The girls learnt to sew and do all this sort of thing and they learnt arithmetic and they learnt cooking but they didn't learn anything that would get them into university, it was very convent oriented and I think they said their prays every fifteen minutes,

07:00 so they weren't very well educated, it's not their fault. Since the war, it has all changed since the Second World War. It was a nice old city, and I love it and have always loved the French anyway, we were brought up with them, and my mother loved them anyway.

You really brought it to life for us and that was a really good description.

It was a lovely old city, downtown anyway,

07:30 it's all changed.

You made a passing reference to WW1, did people that you knew as you were growing up talk much about WW1?

No, Canadians are funny, they are not like the Australians. That's a past episode, you can't bring back the boys, and I don't think war is something that you really want to remember, I think it should be pushed back and even the kids today here

08:00 now even think, "Oh war, oh look at those uniforms and look we have a parade," it's made a big thing. I think we should be told that it's not a great thing, you don't really want anything to do with it frankly, but then that's my opinion. We have a War Memorial, we have an Armistice Day and we have the Laying of the Wreaths in Ottawa, and I suppose in Montreal too. Dad didn't go because he had a very bad heart from a little boy so

08:30 he couldn't, he lived until he was seventy two, and my brothers were gone. They were in foreign services so it didn't kind of ….

As a Canadian in the 1930s, did you have a strong sense of what it meant to be a part

09:00 **of the British Empire?**

Yes we were all taught that, yes of course. God, King, Queen and Country, definite, just like there.

So what did the British Empire mean to you?

I just thought that it was marvellous, I read [Rudyard] Kipling and all that stuff and Rhodes, the story of Rhodes, a disgusting man he was,

09:30 dear old Kipling he was ok. I was brought up on three books and they were called 'England Story', 'Scotland Story' and 'Ireland Story' and I was brought up on 'Scotland Story' needless to say. Yes, we were definitely, but not particularly pro-English, Scottish.

10:00 I think we changed our constitution slightly, we are not stupid, I gather we still have the Queen as the Queen of Canada but there's no petty council in England, we are our own people and we do that because we don't want the States to step in while the Queen's there. They need Britain as a stepping-stone to Europe, the States leave us alone, but that's my thing,

10:30 I don't know whether it's true but I think it could be.

Moving back to those pre-war years, you've mentioned you were playing in the park and things of that nature, but look at the kind of recreation that you took part in the 1930s, what sort of recreation or entertainment did you take part in?

In summer mostly swimming, and as young children we had

11:00 quite a few parks with swings, see-saws and all that sort of thing. Mostly I went up to the country with friends. It was usually by a lake because we have a lot of lakes, to a cottage by a lake and of course we swam. If you liked fishing you could fish, canoeing and portaging, do you know what portaging is?

It's something to do with rapids isn't it?

No,

11:30 it's carrying a canoe from one lake to another.

Fair enough.

He was called Uncle Jack, but he was half Indian, and our family was Irish, and I thought Mum's greatest friend, and Uncle Jack had this very rough cottage up at Cross Lake. We had to leave the car two miles away

12:00 and walk through the woods with all your gear for the summer. Uncle Jack used to catch lake trout, wrap them in clay and then roll the clay in pine needles and put them in a fire and cook them until the clay dried out and cracked. When you took away the clay all the skin came off the trout ready to eat, I remember that and that was good stuff.

12:30 The Scenery Club wasn't far away, we had to go to the end of Cross Lake and then portage to Lake Tomando and the Scenery Club, in its day was probably 'The Club'. It was a country club and it was gorgeous and you went in and there was a huge entrance hall and in the centre there was an enormous fireplace,

13:00 a four-sided fireplace, and I'm talking years ago and they probably have central-heating now, but Pierre Trudeau [former Prime Minister of Canada] belonged there and it was upper-class but we used to go up there for supplies in the summer and then canoe back with whatever it was we picked up. There was a rock in the middle of the lake and we used to lie on it naked, there wasn't a soul around except the bears or whatever nearby.

When you say

13:30 **we, who were you talking about?**

There was Ruth, and she was the daughter of Uncle Jack and Aunt Anne, yes that was fun.

It sounds idyllic?

See, you are bringing back all kinds of memories that I haven't even thought of for fifty years.

What about dances and things like that?

I told you I didn't have any confidence, I didn't go to dances very much.

14:00 I had a lot of friends at the university, mostly geologists and things and I used to go on geology expeditions, to the various mountains around and about and tap off a bit of rock and stuff, because I'm always willing to learn a little bit of something about anything, and it was rocks in this case. We used to go to the dances at McGill University, they had a German Club which I belonged to and they had dances.

14:30 It's not like today where the young kids have these dances at school. We had very chaperoned and they ended at ten kind of dances, you know. I didn't like them. I knew the boys as friends, the boys were my friends, but not as boys, maybe I was weird.

15:00 The boys were friends and I was always invited to a dance that the kids had because I knew all the boys, but I never had the money for nice clothes and things so I always felt out of it. We didn't have too many dances in the Depression but what we did have were parties where boys and girls would gather together in one house and we'd turn on the gramophone and we'd play music and everybody would bring something to eat and then we'd all have something

15:30 and I might add we were listening to, and you are not going to believe this, classical music not what they call, that rubbish what they listen to today.

What was the attraction of classical music?

We were all brought up to like classical music, most of us, I mean all my friends were and Mum and Dad certainly were. We weren't allowed to even stay home on Sunday if we didn't want to be quiet because that was their afternoon to listen to the concert from Carnegie Hall

16:00 and that's another thing that I remember now.

Would that come through as a live broadcast, the concert from Carnegie Hall?

Yes, no television of course, it was all radio. I can't remember, it wasn't until just after the war that I got interested, it was towards the end of the war

16:30 when those dear old songs 'Don't Fence Me In' and those things that were on and I remember Butch use to sing it and he got his words wrong and he said, "Don't offence me." We listened to those and they are considered so old-hat now I don't suppose any of the young people would recognize them. Yes of course we had little house dances too, because I liked going to Alphia's house

17:00 and playing 'Ain't She Sweet'. Come on, you really don't want to hear about that do you?

Why not, these songs still have topicality, they are still available, CDs [Compact Discs] that are around?

Yes.

There is still a market for that kind of music?

'Aint She Sweet', I suppose tonight in the middle of the night I will remember lots of others. We managed to have

17:30 pleasure but it was terribly inexpensive pleasure, there was no money. But I still have two friends, and they are eighty-four too, that I knew in 1926 at the private school. I phone them three times a year and they write to me, I hate writing so they write and I phone them.

Are they still in Montreal?

No, one's in

18:00 Ontario and the other one's in Sudbury, Ontario, all this French problem a few years ago and that's quieted down now pretty well.

Just moving to the outbreak of the war, what was your earliest awareness that the European war had broken out?

The radio: we were actually listening to the news and that's how we were told. I can remember I was

18:30 only nineteen and I can remember feeling funny and my first reaction was Bobby, my brother, would be in it, that was my first reaction. Then we just had to carry on from there, I can't really tell you how I felt.

Initially, did the news

19:00 **of the outbreak of the war have a big impact on people that you knew and yourself?**

We were all affected by it, but I can't remember really how affected. I know a lot of the boys immediately, like you said earlier, thought, "Let's join up, this is going to be fun," and after that

19:30 boat in the Second World War that was sunk, one of the boys I went to high school with was killed in that.

One of the other -atanias, maybe the Mauritania?

No, maybe it was the Lucitania.

That's definitely WW1, there was a significant ship sinking, I think it had something to do with German U-boats didn't it?

Yes it did,

20:00 German U-boats.

Initially in Australia we had a sense of the 'Phony War' and the Phony War lasted as long as it took Japan to enter the war and apparently there seemed to be…?

No, we were involved immediately, I suppose because we were closer, we were right there.

Did your brother enlist?

20:30 As I said he was already in the air force in 1934, my little brother had just finished his stint with the Australian Navy so he joined a merchant navy. I think if Allan had lived he might've became a Minister, he was a very gentle soul and he wasn't into any kind of violence.

Allan was your younger brother?

Younger brother, and he was the one that was abused on the ship.

21:00 We don't know, he was killed when he was twenty-one, I never got to know him, did I?

Killed under what circumstances?

They were taking food to Arch Angle on the 10th March and they were

21:30 torpedoed and they allowed the men to take to the boats and they lined up the officers and shot them, and that's what I can't forgive.

When you say 'they lined up' …?

The submarine people, the sub man came up and maybe they had some idea

22:00 of saving, I don't know, and decided to shoot, maybe they had no room for prisoners, but the men took to the boats and they lined up the officers and killed them.

That must have been very difficult news to have received?

Poor Dad, Mum had just died.

22:30 **That must have resonated for a while afterwards I imagine?**

He was such a nice young boy too, harmless boy, but then there were a lot of those.

You mentioned that he had been abused, I hadn't …?

Yes, I told you earlier, when he ran away to Australia when he was fifteen, it was a thing called the MANZL, Montreal Australian New Zealand

23:00 Line, and he got it in Montreal and this thing came out to Australia and New Zealand and he was only fifteen and you can see from his face there that he was very young and kind of neat, shall we say, and the sailors, and of course all the sailors all over the world now, they abused him and he jumped ship in New Zealand and he was looked after by a policeman and his family

23:30 and they nursed him back and out of shock and things. The policeman said he had to send him back to Australia and he joined the navy rather than go with that ship again.

So he joined the navy, and having joined the Australian Navy what, just in brief summary form, what happened after that and before up until the time?

He was in the navy for two years and he was up in Hong Kong and I have a picture somewhere of him in a sailor's suit,

24:00 sixteen years old in Hong Kong, and he got as far as Cape Town where he found they weren't popular because of WW1, because the Australians apparently went into Cape Town and tore the place apart so they weren't really popular. He was a bit surprised at that, and then

24:30 at the end of the two years, just at the end of the two years stint as he had signed up for, the war had broken out so he decided he didn't want to be in the navy so he joined the merchant navy, and as I said he didn't want to shoot anybody. He was the gutter on the merchant ship, I forgot, until he got a mention in the dispatches because he shot down a Heinkel on one of his trips.

A Heinkel being a German aircraft?

Yes,

25:00 it was prowling around I suppose and he shot one down and he got a mention in the dispatch and I'd forgotten that.

That's right, when did that happen?

Heavens, I can't remember, some time before 1942, because he was killed in 1942, yes I'd forgotten all about that and my sister has the citation.

He himself seemed to have had quite an extraordinary life up until that time?

25:30 He was twenty-one when he was killed, the poor little fellow. He had his Master's Certificate though, he was a good sailor, then again all my family are good sailors.

The other brother was in the …?

Royal Air Force.

Was this the Royal Canadian Air Force?

No, the Royal Air Force the RAF.

So he had actually gone to England to join the RAF had he?

He was in the Canadian Air Force and then he transferred to the Royal Air Force.

What happened to him during WW2?

26:00 He was one of the original Spitfire test pilots, he came up very high in his graduation class but I forget what. He was a complete rat-bag, he came up to my father's family, a kind of a rat-bag, he was great and full of beans. He had no use, being Australian in him, and he had no use for authority,

26:30 I have a letter somewhere that he wrote when he was in India. He was posted to what they call the Air Ministry in London he was a radar expert at one stage, he was also in the Battle of Britain and I have all his citations and things there. But he hated being in the Air Ministry but he loved flying so he made

27:00 himself a nuisance and they sent him to India where he was finally killed on a reconnaissance trip in Akyab. I believe they have removed his remains from Akyab and they are now in Kuala Lumpur which I think is a waste of money and time because he's gone and in another hundred years do you think the Malaysians are going to worry about a British graveyard?

27:30 I just find that kind of thing a little bit, but you remember. You don't have to have all of that but anyway they have done that, poor old Allan is at the bottom of the North Sea.

Allan was the younger brother?

Yes.

What was the name of the older brother?

His name was Robert Crete.

What year did Robert die?

He died on the 20th June 1945,

28:00 because it was Butch's third birthday, that's when I found out about, with that cross in that letter, that he had gone.

All these things must have had an impact on the family by the end of the war?

Dad must've got a terrible shock, I got a frightful shock, I was here and I had nobody and I had no money, no mother, no brothers to come and give my husband a good smack in the tail to get his act together, he was a nice man but he

28:30 just needed to grow up, it wasn't very easy.

So suddenly the war had changed the whole structure and nature of your family, and the support network had changed. Looking at yourself during these early war years, you mentioned working as a VAD at one point?

Yes, I've worked

29:00 in an aircraft factory for a while, Fairchild Aircraft.

That happened first did it?

Yes, after the bank I went into Fairchild Aircraft.

Before we talk about the VAD thing, can we talk about your working for Fairchild Aircraft and how you became involved?

I just joined it because it was something to join. I was firing bits of metal, I don't know what I was doing at that stage,

29:30 and then I became a sub-contractor in the aircraft building. I remember a shocking day when we were all working at the aircraft and this was early in the war. They played the radio as they do and they came up

30:00 with the names of the boys who had been killed, and the girl next to me heard the name of her husband, and I was so shocked, in fact they stopped that because it was too much of a shock for people. Although it wasn't much more of a shock to see the cross. I didn't last there very long because two English girls, two Poms, came out and started a

30:30 union and I said I was not going to join a union, to ask for more pay and all that rubbish when my two brothers were over there being poorly paid, so that was it, I just wouldn't do it so I just left. Then I became a VAD at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

What did that involve?

You went and made beds and you unmade beds and you changed the pans, all the dirty work virtually.

31:00 We were told never, never to lean over a bed like this, over the patients, and of course when you are in a hurry and there are fourteen beds, you do, and then a soldier would grab you like this and hold you tight and you would be going like this and the nurse would come up and say 'blah, blah, blah'. Dear oh dear, they were fun days.

31:30 Then I told you earlier about bringing the beer to the Australian soldiers and putting it and then it going all over the place I presume.

So you were a VAD in a hospital that was treating soldiers?

Yes, general public and the odd airman. This airman had come on leave and had an accident in the cab, and naturally he was sent to the hospital there and it's a military hospital. So I did that for a while and then

32:00 I worked in the Nuadance and that's when I had my short career as a pilot.

Tell us a bit more about this?

I just met, I had my eight hours and I could fly, I met this Alf Cockell and I think he was from Adelaide I think and he said, "Come on out," and so I did. He said, "Would you like to test her too?" and I said, "Sure," but I only did it for a very

32:30 short time, because I had Butch and my mother was dying and I thought it was risky.

I'm not sure we covered this before. Just to sort of move back slightly, how did you become involved in that company that was doing manufacturing or testing?

They were manufacturing Harvard's and Norsemen, he was a Harvard trainer which was the air force trainer, what you call the Wirraway out here.

Oh, the equivalent to the Wirraway, so how did you become

33:00 **involved in doing all of that?**

I went to Nordine to work and again I was working in the factory where we wore roller skates to go from one department to another, bring orders for this and orders for that, it was quite fun. Then I met Alf Cockell and of course we played that game and that was very short-lived but it was fun.

You mentioned getting hours up in flying, how did you do that?

I was only thirteen when I got it,

33:30 in those days there was no rule.

In what sort of aircraft?

Tiger Moths. There was no sort of rule in those days, anybody could fly anywhere and we flew by the seat of our pants, navigating, we just flew by the railway. There was no air traffic rules, it was even before, no it was just when trans-Atlantic aircraft post,

34:00 trans-Atlantic airmail started, about that time that I was learning, and it was no trouble for me.

How long did you fly at the age of thirteen?

I got my eight hours' in and got my licence. I did a few times after that but it was just like driving a car to a young person, in fact I think it's easier than driving in Sydney, between you and me.

What was the attraction in flying

34:30 **for you?**

My brother, everything he did, and he was seven years older than I, and I just adored him and it was wonderful. Now I realise he was a bit of a rat-bag.

You mentioned this before, why was he a bit of a rat-bag?

It's hard to describe. I've got little bits and pieces from him which I got after the war, they were sent to

me,

35:00 pictures: here he is wing commander in the squadron, and he's sitting in some kind of truck with a cap on the back of his head, with a pair of shorts on and no top. He just didn't like authority, a bit like me, I don't like it much either. That's what I mean by rat-bag, he was just different.

In Australian we would probably call him a likeable larrikin?

For instance he got

35:30 a dancing bear in Delhi, and he put his air force hat on it and he took it into the air commander and opened the door and said, "Sergeant Bear to see you sir." It was Ted Lemon, and he was a man who knew him and he was out here and he's been dead for years now, he went on with his piece of paper and he looked up and here was this stupid bear with an air force cap on.

36:00 That's what I mean when I say' rat-bag', that was the kind of thing he did.

That's fantastic stuff.

Dear oh dear, that was Bob. Allan was serious, he didn't have a chance to be anything else, the poor little lamb.

As well as obviously adoring your brother you enjoyed flying?

I did yes, but I don't enjoy it now very much. I don't

36:30 like the huge planes funnily enough, thundering, and I keep saying, "Come on up," and when they are going down I keep on saying, "Hold it," but when I was in New Zealand last month or about two months ago I had to fly from Nelson to Christchurch and I went down to the airport and I looked at this plane and it looked like a bumble-bee with two propellers and I thought, "I haven't been in a propeller plane for fifty years."

37:00 There was a very nice looking man with stripes on his shoulders and things and he sees us into the plane and helps us and said, "Don't trip over the thingy in the middle," and sure enough in the middle of the aircraft there was a kind of thing like this in the middle of the aisle, so I avoided that and sat down. A little while later this character that was seeing us onto the aircraft goes up to the pilot seat and comes back with a little dish

37:30 and hands it around to everybody, and we were only eighteen passengers, and went and sat down in the co-pilots seat. So it was a do it yourself airline, called Origin or something, it was just a little one. It was the best flight, I didn't even feel the take off or the landing, it was wonderful.

How was the Harvard to fly?

Easy,

38:00 I'm trying to remember. We took off at sixty miles an hour and at one hundred and twenty, I can't remember now.

What was your duty as a test pilot on board a Harvard?

Because it was a training plane you had two seats, you had a trainer in front and a trainer behind,

38:30 trainee seat, and I just had to see that all the instruments were working on the trainee seat, well that was one of the things, and I had to fly it too: we had a double thing but he was there, he was always there.

It was basically to test the aircraft before they went out?

Yes, before they went out for use.

39:00 **You mentioned some of the procedure in terms of training, but how many hours would it take to test this aircraft?**

They take it out, I don't know how long actually, if it was in good order and everything went right they were shoved off pretty quickly because they needed them, and aircraft was short and so on.

Tape 4

00:30 **Elspeth, we were talking about your work with Harvards, so how long were you actually working on doing the test flights for the Harvards?**

It was only a month or two. It was a very, very short period. It wasn't very good when I had a baby and my mother was sick and if she had died, what if something had happened to me, what was going to happen to the baby?

This evidently was after your time at Dorval Airport?

01:00 No I ended up at Dorval Airport, that was my last job.

Where was it that you met Roger?

I met Roger in January 1941, and I think I told you earlier I was coming home from skating and this school friend said, “If your are not doing

01:30 anything, come on down to the YMCA, we’re having a dance for the Australians and New Zealanders,” and my head perked up and there I was in my skating gear but I went. Sure enough there were a lot of New Zealand sergeant pilots, who had come from Calgary, I think, and had a stop-over in Montreal before going to Halifax to go off. Then there was Roger and his

02:00 outfit which were all AC plonks because they were just aircraft number one.

AC plonks, what is that?

They plonk, just AC ones. They were at the radio school in Montreal which wasn’t far from where we lived, so that made it easier to meet him again. While we were dancing,

02:30 in the very first dance, he told me his name and he said, “Roger Sandon Greene,” and I said, “That’s funny, my father’s a Sandon somewhere along the line.” That’s when we found out that we were related sort of.

How were you related?

His great-uncle married my great-aunt in Scotland

Were you blood relatives?

No, my children are blood relatives

03:00 of course.

What was your first impression of Roger?

When I looked at him he was so stiff and I wondered what was wrong with him, and they said that there was something funny about him. What was funny about him was he was in a New Zealand sergeant pilot’s uniform and he wasn’t a New Zealand Sergeant pilot. I don’t know why he did it, it was so unlike Roger to do that because he never put a foot wrong,

03:30 if he got caught he’d be in real trouble.

Why was he dressed in a New Zealand uniform?

I don’t know, I never found out why.

Did you ever ask him to find out why?

What I can remember was it was kind of shunted off, but I think it was because he had always wanted to be a pilot and just to wear those wings for a moment, he was only twenty or twenty-one and I think that was all it was.

You made this funny expression a moment ago and said you

04:00 **thought that he looked a bit funny. Apart from the fact that he was wearing the uniform what made you think that?**

He was looking very stiff, but he always looked like that, he never relaxed, he was a funny boy, but he was a nice gentle boy and we were both of us very wet behind the ears and neither of us had any experience of life at all really. I had had the ups and downs of the Depression and stuff

04:30 but we were pretty protected. He came from Orange where his father had an orchard, that’s where I thought we were going and I thought, “Oh boy that would be great,” but we ended up here instead.

What was it that attracted you to Roger?

I think because he was a nice gentle guy, I’m not into terrible macho people.

05:00 I have a funny feeling it’s the old Martha thing, it’s protection I felt that he was, kind of needed a little bit of a mother or something because he was a mother’s boy, I don’t know, it was just something.

You mentioned a couple of times that he was a mother’s boy, can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Mrs Greene, my mother-in-law, was a very

05:30 dominating character, you get them out here, you come into a room, and Roger’s father died when he was only four and she brought him up, and women cannot leave their sons alone, they are very, very

seldom really normal if you know what I mean, there is always something.

06:00 She was a terrible snob because he was related to all kinds of fancy people and she just turned on you. Even though they were very poor she brought his clothes at DJs [David Jones] so he got that kind of attitude towards life, but I didn't recognize that at first, I was too dumb and sort of ….

How long did it take to recognize it?

06:30 We lived together for about twenty-one or twenty-two years, but he went his own way pretty-well, he never told me anything. He had a weakness for bringing home people and saying, "Oh Mum, this is so-and-so from England and they are going to stay with us for a while," no warning or anything.

07:00 This is Mummy's boy and he did this to me a few times which, but we had ups and downs and ups and downs but everybody does.

Going back to this early period, you met him at a dance, it sounds like you were hoping to meet him again?

I think after the dance, if I remember, we were all going somewhere,

07:30 I suppose you'd call it a night club but I wouldn't call it a club, it was a bit different. They don't have pubs like they do here, something in between and we all went and had a few beers and then he took me home. The other girl that was with me, and there was a New Zealand girl in uniform that was with us, but I can't remember her name but she was nice.

08:00 We all separated and we all met again, and it went on from there, we met as sort of a gang. The New Zealanders went overseas very quickly and very soon and hit the Battle of Britain and most of them were dead within a couple of months, and it was terrible, and they were a nice bunch of boys too.

I'm sure that brought the realities of war home very quickly. Was

08:30 **Roger in Canada as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme?**

Yes. he was in a radio gunners' radio school, that's when he was in India. He was in an officers' mess because he was an officer by then. [There was an officer], he was one of those pompous old British types and asked Roger what he was and he said he was a radio air gunner, "Good god," said the old fellow, "Don't tell me they are commissioning gunners these days!"

09:00 Isn't that terrible? It was so typical, the old India.

I was going to say the last vestiges of the British Raj?

I shudder when I think of what India was like in those days, for the poor Indians I mean.

It must have been pretty dire straits?

Some of the types you see on 'EastEnders' [English soap opera] for instance,

09:30 who were soldiers and went out there and had servants because they were British, could you image how they treated them?

Getting back to the Empire Air Training Scheme, did you get to know much about what the Empire Air Training Scheme actually was?

All I knew was that I wasn't that much interested really, when you are only interested in the moment as teenagers and not much more,

10:00 and we were teenagers and that was the whole thing. At twenty we were about as dim as the average sixteen-year-old today, and hadn't had as much experience in any way but you'd be surprised. I don't think any young person today can conceive how backward we were.

Backward in what kind of ways?

Sexually sort of, in a boy-girl relationship. We didn't go to our first

10:30 dress up ball until we were eighteen, I've still got a card from an eighteenth birthday party from a friend of mine, and things like that. It wasn't necessary to warn people about sex and all that but the kids nowadays, I can't stand the young kids nowadays, they are not kids to me.

But at that time there must have been the occasional girl or boy who went astray?

Yes,

11:00 of course there were a few and they were called fast.

Fast?

Fast, yes they were.

Sounds like something from the flapper era?

I was called a refrigerator because I wouldn't let any of the boys touch me and I didn't want them to and they didn't. If I liked the boy that was different.

11:30 I just remembered that, 'the refrigerator'.

That's a bit of a classic, for how long did you remain known as 'the refrigerator'?

Just when I was mixing with the university blokes and when the war broke out and things but I was very pure.

After you met Roger could you describe how you courted, can you describe your courtship?

12:00 No not really, we just met. There were always dances being given for the boys and we went to those and then as I said he came with perhaps two or three other Australians and a few of my friends and we would all meet in our house and listen to music or just chat and the girls all brought something to eat. I can remember one night and we went down to the kitchen and this was at a

12:30 friend of mine's house and I was living there for a long time and these were big four-storey houses, and the kitchen was in the basement. The boys were sitting and we turned on the radio and some German came on and I said, "That's German." The boys were practicing the Morse code and were writing it down.

13:00 **They were practicing their Morse code?**

Yes, and I looked and said, "Hey, that's German," and we decided it was funny that German was coming out clear: it was the Bismarck sinking.

And they were doing a general transmission?

Yes, "Help," you see, the Bismarck was sinking, but I can't remember the date but I can remember being in the kitchen, and saying, "That's German."

13:30 **That must have been incredible, that was a very significant event.**

It was a big deal.

It was a turning point for the German Navy.

The navy! We were only interested in the air force, and we were only interested in the boys, which was the next stage.

Did Roger tell you very much about his training activities?

No, never told me much about anything at any time.

What were you doing at this time work-wise?

14:00 I did so many things I can't remember which one is which to be perfectly honest.

You said you'd been skating when you first met him?

Yes, that was in the evening after work, I think I must have been

14:30 still working, lets see, 1941, I was twenty-two so I would probably have been working still at Fairchild Aircraft I think. I can't remember how long I worked at these places because I changed from one to the other all the time.

15:00 **Looking generally at what was happening in Canada at that time, was there a very specific notion of women working to help support the war effort?**

Yes, everybody was in there.

How early on did that actually start, that notion?

Pretty early on because with all the boys going away and the girls wanted to get into it too and they did, as voluntary aides and this, that and the other and several

15:30 of the girls became bomber pilots and went across the ocean and things. They really got involved and of course we got the services, we had WACs [Women's Army Corps] and the navy. My sister was in the navy, she was in the navy alright.

What do you mean by that?

It just reminds me of when she was in Ottawa in the navy

16:00 and I went up to do a drawing. I flew up to do a drawing of Sir William Glasgow who was the air marshal who was Sir William Glasgow, Vice-Marshall, Sir William Glasgow who was head of the Australian Air Force at the time. I went into his office and there was this nice biennial character talking

away and sketching away and everything and he said, “I think it’s lunch time,” and he said, “I’ve got to phone the bride,” he said,

16:30 “and let her know that I won’t be home.” Then after I finished the sketch he said, “Your plane’s not going back until such-and-such a time, what would you like to see in Ottawa?” and I said, “My sister’s here in the navy,” He said, “I’ll call her,” and of course he could get through to her like that. He asked for

17:00 Able Seaman Annabel Croft and she comes to the phone, and of course they let her go to the phone and they heard who was speaking and he says, “Hello is that Able Seaman?” and he said, “This is Air Vice-Marshall William Glasgow,” and Annabel says he puts down the phone and he says, “She’s Lord Waval,” and of course she didn’t believe and I said, “Please give me the phone.”

17:30 She was in the brig, she was in jail for doing something, she’d probably gone AWL [Absent Without Leave] or something. She was in the brig and they let her out of the brig because it was Sir William Glasgow. He fixed it and put me in his car with the Australian flag and flew over and I was able to see her for half an hour, that’s definitely, this was the kind of thing that happened and does happen when you

18:00 are high enough up and you know the people up there.

Absolutely. For how long was she in the navy?

I can’t remember when she joined up, she was my younger sister and she was in the navy until the end of the war, she didn’t do anything very much but she went over to Vancouver. Funnily enough her boss in Vancouver, you won’t believe this, was Commander Windier and I can’t remember his first

18:30 name.

There was a Brigadier Windier, he ended up in Borneo?

Sir Victor Windier, Commander Windier, what was his first name? I met them and got to know them quite well and they had a daughter, he was a pain in the neck, Annabel worked

19:00 for him for a while.

I went to school with a Windier as well?

Which one?

Not too sure?

Which one? Peter?

I don’t recall, he was two or three years younger than me.

Peter Windier or Pip Windier?

It would have been a Peter, but I simply remember the surname.

How old are you?

I’m in my early fifties.

Oh no it couldn’t be because Peter

19:30 was eighty when he died so it couldn’t be, it would be Pip’s son probably. They are quite a big clan, it could even be a cousin.

I think you referred to at one point the Air Force Club, what was the Air Force Club?

A lady something, I can’t remember her name, had a mansion on Sherbrooke Street in Montreal

20:00 near the university and she turned it over to the Air Training Scheme for the duration and it consisted of a club where the boys could go and meet at night and have a beer, and they could get sandwiches and stuff. It was opened, I wouldn’t know if it was opened during the day but it probably was but I was there at night after I’d finished work and I’d go down there and sketch

20:30 as many boys as I could sketch in one night. The man behind the bar was the President of the Royal Bank of Canada and he served beer behind the bar for all the soldiers.

Sounds like a stage door canteen?

Yes, and he was a nice old guy. They all

21:00 came in and there were South Africans, New Zealanders, Australians, Canadians, English of course, British, Polacks, Czechoslovakians and Norwegians, the whole lot.

You have mentioned a couple of times sketching, can you just fill me in on how you began

sketching these various people and including the high ranking air force officer?

21:30 I think it must have been because I did Air Vice-Marshal, I can't think of his name, and he was my boss and I sketched him one day, it was fixed it was all very non-military kind of operation.

You were sketching portraits I presume?

Yes, that's all I'm interested in.

When did this interest begin?

22:00 I've drawn all my life, you can see that one I did of my brother there. I've got one downstairs in the car, a copy of one I did of an Australian who came from Adelaide, Sneaky Ethan Smith. I can remember his name because I called him sneaky, with a name like Ethan Smith what did you get, because I just used to do them because I just love sketching faces. As I said I'm taking it up

22:30 at the hospital now, and taking it up again but I wish I had a dollar for every sketch I've done now.

Just returning to a point that we were discussing just a few moments ago, I'm interested in the whole notion of how much of a revolutionary thing the women's war effort was, here in Australia but also in Canada. Did it seem like a massive breakthrough that suddenly so many women were in the workforce?

23:00 I don't know I really thought of it at my age. We certainly had women working but we didn't have as many young women working as you had here, I was shocked to hear that you can go to work when you are sixteen. Our high schools were geared slightly

23:30 differently, we had three streams. The ordinary stream, the humanity stream and the science stream and obviously I went into the humanity one because that was all language and I had to take basic maths and basic science. The ordinary stream were where the girls took geography and sewing and typing and shorthand and stuff and the science stream you took two or three sciences and

24:00 one language. When you graduated, and if you graduated from the ordinary stream, you had a good basic education, and you were made to read good books and English of course in one or all of them. They didn't read the tripe that they read now, I mean when I say that we were reading Thackeray when we were six or eight at the private school I went to

24:30 and I even bought a copy the other day, the original illustrations, and I couldn't believe it and I remembered them.

It must have been a very advanced education, comparatively?

It's different, we go in for a lot of history, I don't know if they do now of course, what am I saying, but in my day and I don't know what it was like here of course, we went in for a lot of the classics

25:00 and so were what I call well-educated, well-rounded. I find here now they are too good at one thing without having any [versatility]. I like Melbourne because when I was down at Melbourne, if you went to a dinner party they discussed all kinds of things, not just football and

25:30 bowling scores, do you know what I mean?

Just looking at the context of WW2, so you are talking about the fact that there probably was a greater degree or almost certainly a greater degree of education for young women at that time and I'm trying to relate this?

There were more jobs too of course because the most we were taught was to get married and have children, that was the basic thing, except if you went to university but of course in those days there was no free university like there is now. You had to

26:00 pay for your own thing or you borrowed it and paid it back.

Before the war began, what path could you see your life taking?

I couldn't see any path, it was so dreary, it

26:30 really was, it was so dreary. In retrospect, meeting Roger and everything was a gate for me, I could break away from all the old 'chipolatas' that my mother and father brought me up with. Even now when I set up a table and everybody has a mug and things I say, "Yes mother, I know better." I send up a little prayer and say, "Yes mother, I know better."

27:00 **You're saying you were brought up with all the niceties?**

Definitely. When I came out here the women were so Victorian, we were advanced compared to them. I have friends now my age who are still pulling out the fancy cups and stuff and thinking that these things are so important in life. They are just things that you have and when you die you don't have them any more:

27:30 things don't mean anything to me any more. They were pretty funny out here and very parochial, but understandable, if you stop to think, even you can't remember, at your great age, that nobody in Vaucluse in those days would know somebody on the North shore and the only way to get there, and very few people had cars, was by train, bus or ferry, so

28:00 you didn't know anybody in Vaucluse, you know what I mean.

Surely there was a notion of café or restaurant society where people would gather together?

I suppose a few, and if somebody from the North shore happened to go to 'Ascham' or 'Frensham' [elite private schools in Sydney] they would know people, but they wouldn't keep that much in touch with them because it was too difficult.

28:30 **But there must have been sporting associations, like golf clubs for instance, where they would play each other?**

Yes, but nothing like now, it was pretty grim in those days. Sport didn't take on here until after the war and now it's too much as far as I'm concerned, if you can call it sport at all, I call it a formal war. As I said, they talked breast-feeding when the boys were telling

29:00 dirty jokes and drinking kind of thing and the men didn't mix with the women at all, I found that very peculiar.

Just going back to the early war years and after your meeting with Roger, how long before you decided to get married, or do you remember the day he proposed to you?

No, I can remember I was in bed with a bad cold and then he came to see me and asked me, and I said, "Yes."

29:30 **He proposed to you as you lay ill in bed?**

Yes, I was lying in bed with a bad cold and he was down in the kitchen trying to fry me an egg or something, if I remember rightly, it was something funny and he was hopeless but anyway, that was it, very romantic.

Sounds like it.

Very romantic.

How long had you been going out at that time?

30:00 We were going out nearly six months, and that was quite a long time in those days. Then we got married soon after because of Mum dying and we didn't have much money and it was very quiet at the wedding.

Can you describe the wedding in any case?

It was a little church in Centeron. Mr Bersey he was the minister and he was very careful to write out to Australia to make sure that Roger was single, and he said he was,

30:30 that's how protective they were in those days. We got old Dr Clarke from our church in the better days who had christened me to come and marry me. I had two or three boys from Roger's things came to the wedding and my two sisters were bridesmaids

31:00 and that was it, it was a very quiet wedding because of mother.

When you say these boys were from Roger's things what do you mean?

They were all from the radio gunnery school.

Do you remember what you wore?

I wore a white crepe dress with a big white hat and I threw it away of course after Roger left, and white shoes.

31:30 My sisters had a pale blue silk dress with a big hat, and it was quite a nice little wedding. The boys stood up on either side of Roger, and a lot of the boys came from Roger's school and they lined up on either side, they didn't have the swords but they lined up on either side and it was real nice. Roger had to borrow the money for the wedding ring, he had to get everybody in the school sort of forked over

32:00 a few cents to get the engagement ring because we didn't have any money you know. One dollar and fourteen cents a day they got, mind you they got their food, but in those days that wasn't bad but certainly it wasn't good. Yes, I remember that.

What did the reception consist of?

We had

32:30 it just back at my place with Mum, so that Mum could be there, it was just very, very simple. Dad was only just getting another job which he did quite well on the wharfs during the war. I suspect they went

as far as they could to make it a pleasant little wedding, I don't suppose there was more than twenty people there at the wedding.

33:00 **Had your mother been well enough to attend the wedding?**

No.

That must have been quite difficult?

Yes.

She was there for the reception I presume?

Yes, she sat in the chair and we all could talk to her, a tiny little house I don't know how we all fitted in come to think of it. She grew quite sick quite quickly

33:30 because I remember my twenty-second birthday, I thought it was my twenty-first as I told you earlier, there was a bit [of doubt]. I had two of my oldest friends and two Australians and Roger and me for dinner. Mother served us lamb chops, a lamb chop each. When I look back,

34:00 [what] the Australian boys must've thought when they ate half a dozen, it was all that Mother could afford, it was expensive: they came from Australia or New Zealand. When I think back, poor Mother, twenty- second birthday.

How long after you were married did your mother actually pass away?

34:30 Mother died on Pearl Harbour [bombing of the United States Naval Base] day, she died or was buried on Pearl Harbour day. I know one or the other because we were interested in Pearl Harbour at the time, it became sort of a thing to us afterwards.

That must have been quite difficult at that time?

It was terrible, I had to give her injections.

35:00 **What date had you actually been married?**

We were married on the 22nd July 1941.

And Pearl Harbour day is November or December?

It was December the 3rd, I think, 1942, because Butch was born the following June.

1941 was Pearl Harbour day.

Was it?

Late 1941

35:30 **because the first Japanese advance towards Australia was early 1942.**

It must have been the anniversary of Pearl Harbour day then, Butch was born the following June and mother had the joy of holding him in her arms like this, she couldn't hold, she had the joy of holding him, until she died her first grandchild. It wasn't actually because my [brother] had a son in England and she never saw him again.

36:00 **She actually lived on into 1942?**

Yes, she was just getting worse and worse of course.

You said that Pearl Harbour had very little impact to begin with as far as people you knew were concerned?

No, that was our family because mother was ill and I had problems so that kind of thing. It was the Americans' thing anyway, not ours.

36:30 **Was Roger aware that it might be the Australians' thing, because with the Japanese entering the war there was fear that the Japanese would invade Australia?**

I don't think the young boys really thought of it, they were gung-ho about going overseas with flying, all they could think of was getting over to Europe, I don't think they really, I don't remember

37:00 him talking about it.

He didn't talk about the fall of Singapore as a particularly significant event?

No.

Because that made quite an impact in Australia.

Well it would've in Australia but in Canada it wouldn't, the letters between Australia and Canada during the war were pretty few and far between, so I can't remember discussing Pearl Harbour. We were

shocked when we heard about it,

37:30 we had our own problems.

Presumably after you married Roger you continued working for a while didn't you, and at some point in the scheme of things comes a daughter?

I worked off and on depending on how mother was, yes, until Butch was born and of course I lived at home, then I was looking after mother full-time.

38:00 **At what point did you begin work at Dorval Airport?**

I must've started working there

38:30 about 1943, towards the end of 1943, and 1944 and 1945.

When we get to the next tape we might talk a bit more about Dorval because I've just realised that leaping ahead a little bit, the time after you married Roger you were looking after your mother and you were doing bits of work here and there?

Yes.

39:00 **When did Roger actually leave Canada?**

He left – I think it was late September 1941.

Where did he go after that?

He went to England and then he went off to India and he spent most of the war in India.

Tape 5

00:30 **I think we got up to the point where Roger had left Montreal to go to England. Can you describe what that was like, saying goodbye to Roger?**

It's hard to describe because at the time you go sort of numb I think, I found it kind of unbelievable.

01:00 I went down to Halifax to see him off, and I saw him get on the ship with the other boys and I felt dead, I think, I just felt dead. I left Halifax and went home and just had to carry on. I can't remember what I did after that.

You didn't actually know that

01:30 **you were pregnant before he left?**

No, I didn't find out until I was up in Ottawa at about three months' and I was riding and I fell off the horse and I got terribly sick and I went to the doctor and he said it was the first time he had heard of anyone getting pregnant by falling off a horse, and that's how I found out.

What was your reaction to that news of being pregnant?

02:00 Horror at first and I wasn't talking to my father so I wasn't living with my father I was working in Ottawa. Then I went home and I can remember vaguely going home to Montreal and meeting mother at a restaurant and telling her and she told Dad and he said that 'She has to come home'. In that era if a woman was pregnant she was looked after.

Why weren't you

02:30 **talking to your father at that time?**

We were always having fights about something or another, I was a rebel and he liked to have you right there you see, and be right there.

What had your parents thought of Roger?

Dad thought he was great because he was a sailor. Mother thought he was an Aboriginal because he had such dark skin but actually he's got some Spanish in him. He's Irish you see really

03:00 and a lot of the Irish have Spanish in them, so that's what it was, but they were quite happy. I don't think they ever thought I was going to get married, they thought my two sisters were going to get married before I did, and it came as a shock to Mum.

We have talked about this off camera a little bit in the initial part of the

03:30 **interview but I believe there was a lot of difficulty in communicating with Roger during this time, can you talk us through what those difficulties were?**

I just didn't get any news from him at all, nothing, and he apparently wasn't getting any news from me because a few months afterwards, I got a uppity letter from the Australian Air Force office in Ottawa saying that Roger hadn't heard from me and 'blah blah blah',

04:00 they thought I'd gone off with somebody else. I phoned them and said, "Hey, I haven't heard from him either, and I don't even know where he is," but at least they were able to tell me that he was in India. When Butch was born like I said, when I was in bed in hospital I received seven letters that all came at once, heaven knows how many were lost.

There was a period of nine months that you didn't hear from Roger at all?

04:30 No.

That must have been quite a traumatic time for you?

Not the whole nine months. I had heard from him in England, then he went to India and he wasn't allowed to say he was in India and I suppose he wrote from India but I suspect the Indians took a stance and did a few funny things, I don't know. All I know is that I got the seven letters after he was born and sat there and just cried.

05:00 **Like I was saying before that must have been a terribly traumatic time for you, I mean you were pregnant, newly married and not getting any news and Roger must have been quite awful?**

Yes, it was probably pretty traumatic I suppose but life had been so hard up until then, and anyway during the Depression and everything, and it was just another burin to bare I think, I just didn't know.

05:30 **What did you think had happened to Roger?**

I just didn't want to think that he'd probably found himself an English girl, which he finally did which was an ambition and he did finally marry an Englishwoman.

But not during this time of course?

No.

You'd actually thought that he'd left you?

It is the first thing that you think, what else

06:00 is there, probably found himself a little English bit. So I just had to carry on, that's all, I was very busy and I didn't have an awful lot of time to sit and weep about it because I was very busy looking after Mum and Dad and my two sisters who were working: it wasn't a very happy time to remember.

You mentioned

06:30 **before we started filming that there was an incident when you were writing a letter to Roger and you got stuck into some of your father's whisky. Could you retell that story for us?**

It was that I was just writing to Roger and I was feeling very sorry for myself because I hadn't heard from him and what I thought I needed was a drink, so I took some of father's little bit of whisky and I was knocking it back and I was just drinking it.

07:00 I was so sloshed and poor Dad came in and he was a little bit perplexed, he didn't know what to say, and he did this and he turned out and got ready for bed, he just left me there and never said a word. Of course I was frightfully ill, needless to say, and he came out and helped me: a funny old fellow he was.

I mean around this time also you were

07:30 **pregnant and your husband was away at war, and your mother was also very ill. You mentioned that she had leukemia how was leukemia treated back in those days?**

The point is she came to menopause and she was treated with a thing called the radium pack, and it was a little tiny thing of radium, wrapped up to be safe and was

08:00 put inside and it burnt her. It was pretty cruel the radium treatment, not like today. I think that must have been what happened. Today, if they looked at her body they probably would say, 'Yes it was radiation burn,' and there was no real treatment and all they could do was feed her

08:30 liver, she had to eat liver to get back her blood. This was fifty-five years ago and there was no treatment really, and I can remember going in to feed her one day and she said, "I can't bear another mouthful of liver," and I said, "What would you like Mum?" and you are not going to believe it, she said, "I want like a cream puff," so I went down to the local pastry shop and I bought her half a dozen cream puffs.

09:00 At the time a friend of hers was kind of nursing her and being a carer and she had the day off when I did this you see. She was horrified and I said, "Katie, for Pete's sake, the liver at the most is only going to keep her alive in the long run for three more wretched and unhappy weeks, let her have the cream puffs and go off happy if you know what I mean."

09:30 But she was horrified but I've always had that idea, why make people suffer and eat things they hate and go though things they hate in order to exist for an extra few weeks, that's what I find about modern medicine, it's too much. I don't want to be brought back if I have a big stroke, I just want to be let go, I don't want to be brought back and be in a bath-chair.

You mentioned

10:00 **talking about cravings during your pregnancy and you also had your cravings and I believe your father was able to help you out?**

Strawberries and junket would you believe, he use to get me strawberries out of season and I don't know where he got them, they must've come in from the southern states I suppose, yes, poor old Dad.

It sounds like your dad during this time was being quietly supportive?

He was being very supportive to [me] pregnant and to have a baby and 'Oh when the baby came' and, oh

10:30 boy, he would have been happier if it had been a girl, but it was a boy and he loved him. Then after the war in 1950 he came here and he was here for two years, just living here, and I had Annabel and he was as happy as a clown, and he saw Annabel and she was born in August and he died in the November

11:00 but he had Annabel for a short time.

That was lovely.

Which was nice, because he just loved baby girls, it was lovely, a baby girl.

Just getting back to giving birth to Butch, what was that like, going through the pain of birth without the support of a husband?

Well there

11:30 again I don't suppose I thought much about it, he was a breech birth, which didn't make it very easy, but the matron at the hospital had been a trainee nurse at my birth and she looked after me when she heard that Mum was sick, she looked after me like a baby. She put me into a kind of a private room, actually it wasn't a private room it was a surplus room, and she put me in there by myself so I wouldn't hear other women bawling and carrying on.

12:00 It was something I had to go though, there was nothing I could do about it, I knew it was going to be painful and everybody told you it was in those days. By the time I had the third I had learnt a few things like taking a deep breath and letting all the air out of you as the pain rises and as the pain fades away and that kind of thing. At that time it was pretty rough.

12:30 **Was it while you were in hospital or just after you had Butch that you received those letters from Roger?**

Yes, it was just after he was born, a couple of days after he was born.

What was it like receiving those letters?

I couldn't believe it, there were seven or eight of them or something all with Indian stamps on them, I didn't know where to start I was bawling so hard.

That must have been such a relief to know that

13:00 **he hadn't left you?**

Yes. It was a big, big load off my mind. I also had the support while I was in hospital of two school friends who were his godparents. They were both medical students at the time, so they came to see me. They brought Butch to see me after a couple of days, I didn't see him for a couple of days and he was a bit of a mess. They brought in this huge

13:30 baby with kind of a purple skin, a great big thing and I thought, "No wonder I had a hard time," and they said, "Aren't they beautiful kids?" Anyway, I went to touch him and they said, "You can't touch him." It was a Negro baby, but ten or twelve pounds of him. Butch was only five-something so you could imagine looking at a ten-pound baby. When they are born

14:00 they are born a dark purple, dark colour, and they look like a baby who had been bowling. They were good and very supportive and they held my hands though the thing and they were rather nice.

When did Roger find out that he was a father?

I don't know, I suppose he received one of my letters sometime or maybe the Australian Office told him, I don't know, it's all too vague now, I can't remember.

14:30 They weren't very pleasant times so I tend to push unpleasant things out of my way and not dwell on them too much if I can help it.

I was just thinking that must have been from your perspective all these things going on then from Roger's perspective all of a sudden finding out he was a father, it must have been quite shocking news?

I think so but I thought he was very pleased with himself, very pleased with himself,

15:00 and I'm glad we had it because he was chosen to go on the Wingate Expedition, where everybody was killed if you remember, but luckily my brother stepped in and Bob was a big wing commander by then and he said, "My brother-in-law is married to my sister and he's just had a young baby," and so he got him out of it, they got the Air Ministry to do that because he had been there for a while.

So your brother and Roger

15:30 **they were in contact?**

Yes.

This was in England?

In England first, and I think they met up again in India.

That must have been nice to know that they could look out for each other?

It was nice for poor old Roger the pilot having a wing commander as a brother-in-law, believe me, especially in those days when they were so snobby about the hierarchy.

16:00 **You had Butch, and life went on, how long did you stay in Canada before you left for Australia?**

I left Canada May 17th, Norwegian Independence Day, May 17th 1945, and arrived here on the 30th June.

It was between Butch's birth and leaving for Australia that you worked at the Dorval?

16:30 I had to foster Butch out for a while which was horrible and I didn't like that at all, but I had to do it because mother couldn't look after him, I wasn't going to leave him with my sisters because they didn't know one end of a baby from the other. I had to foster the poor little fellow out, but for the most part I had him somewhere near me so I could see him.

17:00 I stayed with friends, an old friend from way, way back and her parents and they said, "You better come and stay with us." I stayed with them and I was very lucky because they were very kind to me.

Why did you have to foster Butch out?

Because I had a row with my father and I wasn't going to stay around, there was no way I was going to stay around. He was

17:30 a bit of a bully and he was bullying my kid sister and threw her back and forth and that was that, Dad and I never really twigged and yet he came all the way out here after the war to live here with me.

Sounds like it was a real roller-coaster of a relationship?

Yes,

18:00 and as I said I think I liked him and his guts and so on and respected him but I don't think I really loved him, too afraid of him, too unsure of him, poor old Dad.

Was he ever sort of physically violent?

He use to whack us, but then we all got whacked in those days, mothers and fathers in those days always believed in a good whack,

18:30 quite frankly, in the right time and right place. I don't mean standing up with a belt and going like this, but a good whack with a wooden spoon in the right place is pretty good.

We had a few broken wooden spoons in my family.

I don't think they did any harm really, it's a shame there aren't a few more of them now.

How long was Butch fostered out for?

I can't remember, I shifted around

19:00 so much that I really can't remember, I just can't remember when. When I was living with Cherry and when I was living with the Irish family I just can't remember, it was in-between anyway.

Was it around this time you were working at Dorval?

Dorval.

The Dorval, sorry

19:30 **French was never one of my strong points.**

Well the English put their emphasis on their first syllable whereas the French always do like ‘Evon’ is Yvonne, it’s not ‘Doreen’, it’s Doreen, and that’s what it is, you are trying to say ‘Dorval’ instead of Dorval.

Well thank you for that.

Don’t mention it.

That actually

20:00 **made a lot of sense, I probably would have done a lot better at school if I’d known that.**

The way they taught French when I came out here and the way they taught German was really weird.

At Dorval this was where you were flying the Harvard’s and …?

No, that was just before that, when I went to Dorval I was working for British Overseas Airways Corporation, or the Return

20:30 Ferry Service, that was what it was called. While I was there I was an operations officer, and also I was photographing on one of the original copy machines of all the changes. For a while there they had radio beams and they changed and they flew in on radio beams, coming into Dorval you came in on a certain beam, then they changed them all the time so that the Germans couldn’t

21:00 check up on them, so I was working on that for a while.

What were your other duties as an operations officer?

Just being in the office and just mucking around, changing when an aircraft got to Iceland and you’d move the thing over and when it got to England you’d move it over, the usual nothing, just office work really.

You mentioned an original photocopying machine?

Yes.

Can you describe what that looked like and how it worked?

21:30 It looked very much like what we have now, you have a soft cover that you put over and a big thing like this and you put it down and you pressed the button. It was pretty crude but it did the job, you pulled the thing over of course and then photographed it, it just looked like a machine to me, nothing very fancy. The Comptometers which were supposed to be an advance on typewriters were pretty crude now.

22:00 **What was it called?**

A Comptometer.

Can you describe one of those for me?

No, because it’s too mathematical for me.

Or just kind of give a brief?

We used it like a typewriter, did it print off things or did it send messages? It’s terrible, I can’t remember. I know the one we had at Dorval you could get in touch with

22:30 Bermuda to find out if there was anything going on. We had a sort of funny code thing we used, not that any angry men got as far as Bermuda, but maybe a few soldiers did. A Comptometer, yes, it printed off things, I really can’t remember whether it was a sort of typewriter

23:00 radio messenger thing, I really can’t remember.

You mentioned there was the use of radar, or radio beam, and that you would change the plots?

Yes, they’d plot it for me then I’d have to draw it out on the thing and then photograph it and send it on.

23:30 **Who would you send it too?**

They would be sent to the pilots of course, given to the pilots, this was all for the pilots and navigators to help out the pilots, and quite often when the instructions were changed I’d be printing them off and navigate it to the pilots’ books, so that was quite fun.

Was this a private airline?

No, this was the Return Ferry Service,

24:00 as it was called, the British Overseas Airways Corporation, the BOAC, not just British Airways.

Very interesting. When did you get news that you would be coming to Australia?

It was before mother died, early in the war and

24:30 I can remember I was pregnant but I didn't have Butch. I got on the train and I went to Detroit and I got as far as ?Nebraska and my dear old mother-in-law sent a cable saying that it was too dangerous to go out,

25:00 and, boy, it was in 1941 the Japanese things were [beginning], so to delay it so I turned around and went back and here I was, young and pregnant, and we were allowed twenty five dollars, that was all we were allowed to take out of the country. I was in Utah in the middle of the night and they were so nice, I had a young man who was in charge of the passengers and things and he looked after

25:30 me and he took me home to his wife and they gave me a bed and the next day he arranged for a train to go back to Chicago and that was something, and I'm glad I didn't come out before Roger did because I think I would've killed my mother-in-law or throttled her anyway.

Did you have much communication with Roger's mother at this point?

Very little. I mean there was no

26:00 communication of mail between Australia and Canada, it would be non-existent because what would you want to write for when half the time the boats went down anyway and there was no air mail in those days, so we didn't.

When did you hear that you would be leaving the second time?

That was, I suppose, in March 1945 and we left as I said in May and were

26:30 allowed to bring one trunk and one bag and you can image the amount of stuff you can bring in one trunk and one bag.

So what did you pack?

My best clothes and a set of sheets I think and my various wedding presents and stuff, just very little, we didn't have much.

What sort of wedding presents had you received?

There was a bit of silver

27:00 and a few fancy plates that I managed to put between my clothes and of course Butch's stuff, his wasn't much he was so tiny, he was only three. As I said we arrived on that day, that lovely day with those poor soldiers standing there with half-dead flowers looking half-dead themselves which they gave when we came ashore.

27:30 **So Butch at the age of three must've started to have some questions about who his father was. What did you tell him?**

I only told him that his Daddy was in the air force, and he recognized the air force uniform and that's all, that his Daddy was in the air force and that he was overseas, and there's not much you can say to a kid of three, 'Overseas' doesn't mean anything and you couldn't say he was next door, how do you explain? So I just said

28:00 that Daddy was overseas with all these other airmen and he recognized that and as far as he was concerned the Australian Air Force uniform was Daddy. So the day he arrived and saw all these uniforms and said, "Look at all the Daddies," and they were too, or a lot of them were. You couldn't really explain very much, just that Daddy was away, he was obviously away and the kid accepts it.

28:30 They are not like today's kids at all, they didn't question they accepted it.

What was the name of the ship that you were on?

The Glenn Stray, Alfred Holt Line, motor vessel Glenn Stray, and it was a terrible old ship too, oh boy, but however, we survived it.

What were the conditions like on board the ship?

They were alright, I mean I'd never been on a ship,

29:00 not since I'd been to Bermuda as a little child, it was just shipboard to me and we thought it was exciting and lots of fun and shared a four-berth cabin with another Canadian woman and her baby and we put two babies together obviously. The food was alright and we kind of entertained ourselves and made out fancy dress parties and things like that.

29:30 The crew entertained us too sometimes. Butch had a lovely time because the crew just loved him and he

was a very friendly little fellow and even the Captain used to let him go up to the cabin, and the crew used to take him over and give him chocolate all the time which we didn't have. Yes, we stopped in Panama and that was interesting.

30:00 **Can you describe what you saw there at Panama?**

Yes, we went off with some of the Australian boys of course and we ended up in the red-light district, with all these funny open houses with opened walls and there were the women laying there waiting for anybody to, you could imagine us poor innocent Canadian girls,

30:30 we didn't know that those things even existed, and that was funny. That was the second time I did some snuggling up, I smuggled a bottle of gin on board.

The second time?

The second time, yes. The first time was in the hospital when I brought the beer in to the airmen and this was the second time, I managed to bring a bottle of gin in. It was a long, long trip, six weeks,

31:00 17th May to 30th June, six weeks trip, and it was pretty rough, it was pretty rough.

What was the mood like on board the ship?

Everybody was looking forward. The boys were looking forward to going home, the girls were excited about seeing their husbands and going to a new country, it was general excitement.

Was there a bit of apprehension mixed up with the excitement, I mean, you hadn't seen Roger for over three years?

31:30 I was a little bit mixed-up but when you are young you just accept these things, you don't let them bog you down like you do when you are older, you have some experience and you know what can happen, but we didn't even think of what could happen, we were going over there. Some of the girls went back and claimed their husbands, my husband wouldn't've gone

32:00 back to Canada, England yes, you couldn't drag me there by my feet.

You mentioned that you had a room-mate on board the ship, did you make any other friendships on board the ship?

Her sister-in-law became my closest friend, she went back to Canada too, later when her husband died, and she was living in Vancouver and I was working in Vancouver

32:30 and we were very good friends in Australia, and we met forward going on board almost and her sister-in-law shared the cabin with me, she was not my type at all shall we say. The two brothers married two totally different types of girls.

33:00 I went to the Canadian Club for a while and we had a Canadian Association but we all drifted away from that, some went to the country and some went up to Queensland and then we all had families and we all got involved with our families. I suppose we were just taken into Australian life and that was it, though Cookie was the only Canadian that I really stayed in touch with.

33:30 **Tell us more about the fact that it was a very rough trip coming over from Canada to Australia?**

I don't think it was a very stable ship, I'm not fully au fait with ships but it was a pretty rough trip. Did I tell you that one night when Butch was in the bunk asleep

34:00 and we were all in the dining room or fun room and playing games or whatever and there was an almighty crash and it was pretty rough sea and a life-boat had been broken off the stanchion and the stanchion had been bent towards where my cabin was and water poured down into my cabin

34:30 and I think I told you, and thinking immediately it was the Japanese and we were torpedoed. I went down the gangway to get Butch and there he was standing up to there with his knees in water, poor little fellow, saying, "Mummy I'm wet." So we had to sleep in the lounge for a couple of nights until they sorted all that out.

The war was still on at this point, so the threat of the Japanese was still ...?

Without a doubt,

35:00 you didn't think of it too much, I don't remember going to bed every night thinking, "Are the Japanese going to get me tonight?" That was the first thing, when we heard the crash, but what else would you think? Everybody sort of went into a gasp and dashed off in all directions but that's all it was. By then the Japanese were getting pretty tired and were more up north with the Americans and not bothering with down here, I don't know if there was a threat

35:30 down this way. It was a long trip and we ran a bit short of food because it was longer than what it should have been. We were brought down south, so we cut across, away from the submarines, and we were going to go into New Zealand to get more supplies but I think the captain thought, "We can make

it to Sydney," and with a little bit of hard

36:00 work on the part of the chefs we did and we didn't starve, but I must admit the last few meals were a bit odd.

What sort of food would you be eating on board the ship?

You were ending up more with beans and not as many vegetables, not as many nice things, that we were having but the food on board ships is always funny, it's always old and don't forget in those days we had no

36:30 frozen foods, that came well after the war so it was mostly tins and packaged milk and the milk would always be dried milk. We were young and we were hungry so we ate it. Anyways, there was nothing else, believe me you will eat anything when you are hungry.

You mentioned this briefly in the summary, can you talk us through step-by-step your first impressions

37:00 **of coming through the heads in Sydney?**

Not really again.

You mentioned you saw Australia in the distance, we got that bit and we got the bit of you being moored out in front of the zoo, I was just wondering was there anything, was there any particular memory of coming through the heads for the first time?

37:30 We came through the heads and all we could see was green on this side and red tiles on that side which was Vaucluse and Watson's Bay, it was a beautiful bay and we were kind of 'Oh boy, this is great'. It was very exciting and we were all kind-of over-excited and of course within five minutes we were going to see our husbands and of course it was hours before we finally did.

38:00 But it couldn't've been a more beautiful welcome as it was, there were no clouds in the sky I remember, it was just blue, blue, and funny red tiles and the sounds from the zoo on the other side and it was terribly romantic and terrific.

Sounds like Sydney turned on its best for you that day!

It was and it was a lot nicer

38:30 than what it is now because there was no noise and no pollution and everything was clear, clear, clear and it was beautiful.

You disembarked from the ship, what was it like seeing Roger again?

Funny, I hadn't seen him for four years and you felt kind of 'Oh', and of course

39:00 I felt kind of 'Geez, is he really glad to see me?', I think, and then of course everything was ok once he'd seen Butch and hugged him and given me a hug and piled me into that weird car that had the gas-bag on top, which you have never seen of course and then we were in that boarding house.

What was Butch's

39:30 **first reaction to seeing his father?**

Well he just thought that all the Australians were his father, he didn't know what 'father' meant really, he really never had one and then when this man kind of picked him up and hugged him and took him off he just took it because he was just so used to being handed around from here to there, and he was so used to uniforms that it didn't phase him. I know when he met his grandmother,

40:00 she was a country woman and I will never forget, and he never said anything in front of people, he was always quiet, being that way. After when we got into bed that night he said, "Mummy, why does granny have a face like an old prune?" you know when you see some of them and they are so dried up, and I said, "Butch you don't say that."

Tape 6

00:30 **Can you talk about the hospitality of the Canadians to the Australians during WW2?**

I know a great many Canadians opened their homes to the Australians and the New Zealanders and I mean really welcomed them in. It was a new experience for them and the Australians and the New Zealanders I suspect. But

01:00 after the war, several times I met up with Australians who said how good the Canadians had been and, like the English, I suspect the Australians and New Zealanders thought we reached beyond the dreams

of avarice because, I mean, while you still had coppers we did have washing machines and while only a few families had a telephone we had telephones and we also had itemized telephone bills long before the war,

01:30 but you didn't get them here until about 1965. I remember one incident where a young Australian kept phoning his girlfriend in Calgary and putting it on the bill, and of course they caught him because it came out on the bill, these people didn't know anybody in Calgary.

He was basically exploiting the hospitality by using the house phone?

Young men, you always get sorts

02:00 going to do that, the English were pretty bad when they came over too. Some of the English were pretty bad, very few of the Australians were, the Germans and the New Zealanders were great.

Once you had arrived in Sydney, how did Butch and Roger get on?

Butch was quite happy to accept him as

02:30 a father, but like nearly all the fathers who were away when their sons were born didn't gel with them, very few, and Roger wasn't made to be a father anyway he just ….

Did he ever put time into Butch?

No, I never knew him to take the boys to the beach, or take the boys on a picnic or take the boys to football or cricket or to anything they liked, because he didn't like

03:00 it so he just didn't. That was him and he wasn't adult enough to, I would say that I grew up before he did, put it that way.

If we were looking at mental ages here how many years older than him would you have said you were?

I remember when he left me I was 44 or 45 and I was having a

03:30 weep one day and my son said, "Don't worry about it, Dad's just never grown up." I don't think he grew up until he was about sixty, he really came down to earth when he had a second two sons, he was much better to them than he was to mine, much more family-minded, he was trying to make it I think when he was young.

What were the Australians like towards you when you arrived?

04:00 It's hard to describe, they were all very pleasant and friendly but they were very parochial really. We were considered, I think, kind of weird and foreign, you had 'white Australia' policy and English, it was all English, and Irish, mostly English and Irish

04:30 with a few Scots and Welsh thrown in I suppose, but they were very English-minded and we weren't. The Canadians weren't a bit English, we were different.

Did you find that people were confusing you all the time with the Americans? Did people assume you were American because of your accent, and would that have caused complications?

I can't remember particularly, no, I don't think so.

05:00 When we were in Double Bay and we used to walk down the street and the lace curtains used to move and the old ladies were eyeing me going up and down the street as though I was something from Mars, but no they were very kind, very, very kind.

When you say parochial, did you feel you weren't part of the 'British club' in a way?

05:30 Yes.

To what extent did this make you feel a bit isolated from the mainstream?

I just felt that there was no way they could understand as being 'Australia, Australia', there was no way they could understand why we would not feel the same about Australia, you know, Canada, naturally I was homesick for Canada, I couldn't've given a damn about Australia after a while quite frankly,

06:00 especially when things didn't quite work out so well. They just simply couldn't come to the fact that we didn't think, they were always saying to me, "Oh but you're Australian," but I say, "No I'm not, I'm still a Canadian and I want to be a Canadian and I still am."

How long was it before you started to get homesick?

06:30 Pretty soon, pretty soon.

What do you think brought this on?

Well Roger just went his own way. He was, I don't really kind-of want to talk about this because it puts him in a bad way but I understand a lot of things that I couldn't explain anyway, but there were ways that things that he did

07:00 could be terribly, terribly hurtful and I just don't think I should talk about them.

I presume this was from quite early on?

Yes.

Did you have any kind of support network out here?

No, only my friend Cookie, because he didn't allow me to have any friends, I had to have his friends. He was ambitious

07:30 and he wanted a certain type of friend, and I like everybody you know, candlestick maker, and I'm quite happy to talk to all of them.

To what extent was Roger class-conscious?

He's a snob, do I have to say any more? His mother made him that way apart from anything else, but considering it's supposed to be a country where there is no class, I found an awful lot of class

08:00 consciousness. When I was young, in my school I can remember Ester, she was Jewish, and Caroline was an Italian and we had two German girls and we had all of Europe in my classroom, in my class let alone the whole school. Whereas here it would have been unheard of to have a Greek or an Italian up on the North Shore in the school, you wouldn't,

08:30 I don't know where they would have been, Eastern Suburbs, if not the Eastern Suburbs the Western Suburbs.

This snobbery, would this have been more on lines of old-style concepts of breeding or would have money come into it to a certain extent?

It would've originally been I'd say, yes, breeding,

09:00 the way you were brought up and the kind of manners and all that sort of things but I think it's deteriorated into money but I think that's almost anywhere. If you haven't got money, there's no fun being here if you haven't got any money, except I have fun because I don't care.

Fair enough. I believe there is a story involved in one or two dinner parties and bad wine?

That was just one and that

09:30 was when I first came and these darling people in Rose Bay gave a dinner, kind-of in my honour, and they were giving me Australian wine. They poured this glass of red wine and it was so astringent it practically dried my mouth out, but I had to pretend of course it was lovely. I didn't have to drink too much of it, thank goodness. That was funny but now the wines are good

10:00 and I have a couple of bottles down there that I'm dying to get into. But I can't afford them so I have to wait for an occasion, but that was funny. Then not long after I came here I was taken to the Australian Club by a friend of Roger's and a dear old fellow. He had rounded collars and he wore a stats and, Eduardo, he was a darling and I had to sit on his right-hand side because I was the guest of honour. He ordered me

10:30 a typical Australian dinner, guess what? Roast lamb and veg, but before that, Australian oysters. Well I looked at the oysters and thought, "I'm not going to get those down my throat, they look hideous." So, being brought up properly, I had to give it a go and luckily they had triangles of bread and butter, so a piece of bread and butter went in and an oyster and it

11:00 went around and around and the bread and butter went down but the oyster didn't and it was agony for the first few minutes, and I had to do this because he was waiting to hear. Finally I got a couple of oysters down, and there was salt on them and for years and years when I went out for dinner [I made sure] that I didn't have oysters, but they were Australian oysters, are the best I've ever had, they are small and delicate. The American

11:30 and Canadian oysters are too iodiney for me, they are too strong and too big and even more disgusting-looking.

Sounds like the first impression of Australian oysters was that of a large and unpalatable jellyfish?

Well I don't know, I just looked at them and thought 'yeuk', boy, I don't mind them now and I don't get them very often with the price of them now. That was a funny dinner.

12:00 **Was Roger's father still alive at this stage?**

No, he died when he was only four and that was, I think, Roger's big trouble and he was a Mummy's

boy, I don't think women bring up boys on their own very successfully.

When did you first meet Roger's mother?

The day we arrived,

12:30 we moved up to Mr Windier's first. He had a party lined up for me weeks before we arrived because we were supposed to have arrived weeks before and then we went back to the boarding house and granny was there to meet us.

What were your first impressions of Roger's mother?

13:00 She came from Orange, and she'd been a cherry orchardist's wife and she'd lived in Orange in a day when they weren't so aware of their skin and keeping it and all that junk so she did look like an old prune and she was dumpy. I thought she was alright, I thought she was going to be good but she didn't like me.

13:30 She wanted me to go home and leave her with her baby boy and my son, she took over Butch completely. She just came and took him whenever she wanted, she never kind-of asked, she just took him, and he adored her of course and she adored him. The poor old soul she had a damn hard life, and if she got a little bit of pleasure in taking Butch out and taking him away like that, in retrospect, I don't mind,

14:00 but at the time I was a little bit miffed.

How often would she do it?

Almost every day, she was lonely, she lived in a little room. She was a doctor's daughter from Orange but I wouldn't think she was very well educated, in Orange in those days, this would have been back in the 1880s or 1900s. She had nothing

14:30 to keep out…The property was with an outfit here and I won't name it because I don't want to be sued or something but they played with the money and she lost it all and she had to go to work. The only thing the poor old thing could do was housekeeping, so Roger was moved from boarding house to boarding house. He didn't have much of a life, he never had any Christmas or birthdays

15:00 or anything exciting like that. So he was kind of left really to start with so you couldn't be expected to be used to family things. She did her best the poor old duck.

You mentioned that Roger was a bit of a snob, to what extent was your mother-in-law also a snob?

She must have been but like I said I don't want to mention

15:30 the names of the families, they were very, very well-known, particularly in Melbourne. She was the sister- in-law and she was just a little country girl. I rather gather Roger's father was like my son Rowan, he's the one that was different, he went farming and the others all went into

16:00 high finance. Funnily enough one of Roger's cousins, he's one of three, and one of them went into the big finance and his sister married a very wealthy man and became a farmer. It's funny isn't it, it's a pattern that follows.

It's a genetic pattern?

A genetic pattern, so it's there.

You must have felt

16:30 **fairly lonely, particularly with Roger's mother taking Butch so often, on a day-to-day basis that must have been?**

We had so little money that it was all we could do to juggle things and keep things going and keep the little house going and do the washing in the copper and then move the stuff into the thing

17:00 and wring it all out by hand and move it into the other tub and rinse it again, it took you all day practically. Then going down to the shops and getting the food and coming back, I was very busy from day to day. Roger had a social life which I had to go along with, it didn't really terribly interest me, but it was fun up until a point. But I

17:30 wasn't used to all the drinking, and Australians, and especially after the war, seemed to be going for it a lot, lets say.

Why?

I think in England and Canada and everywhere during the war everybody was so up and they took to drink to make them relax and to forget things and I think that quite a reasonable and understandable reaction, but

18:00 it just wasn't my scene.

So what you are saying is the momentum of this drinking culture continued after the war?

Yes. One thing Roger did do was he cultivated a lot of interesting people, they were doctors and lawyers, forget the merchants and the chiefs, the doctors and lawyers were fun and I met lots of them and had quite good

18:30 evenings and conversations. I don't know anything about law and medicine, you just throw a little ball in the court and sit back and let them talk, and you learn a lot, you might learn a few more little balls to throw into the next court when you go out again, this was the way that I worked it. I wasn't really allowed to have friends of my own, I had a few but they weren't his type of fish.

19:00 **You mentioned one particular friend?**

Cookie.

Cookie. Can you please establish for me who Cookie was?

Cookie was a Canadian girl that I came out on the ship with. She was from Alberta, and I don't know why but we took to each other and became friends and she went back to Canada and I was in Vancouver and she was in Victoria so I saw quite a lot of her until she died in 1975.

During these early days in Sydney,

19:30 **how much were you able to see of Cookie?**

Not that much because they lived in town, because her husband was a medical student and he committed suicide which was sad, and they weren't Roger's type of people.

When was Roger discharged from the air force?

20:00 In 1946 because I know he was in hospital up at Bellevue Hill for a while.

What had happened to him?

He had dengue fever, and I think it came back or something,

20:30 when we were in Double Bay he had dengue fever and I used to try and get up to the Bellevue Hill, the bus route in those days went via Bondi I think.

How much had Roger told you about his war service, the places he'd been and the things he'd done?

Nothing very much because he really didn't do very much, he was there, but he never talked about it.

21:00 **Do you think he'd had a easy war?**

I don't think living in India was easy anyway, he got the dengue fever there and he was a very fastidious man. I can imagine, he wouldn't have wanted to have seen where the food was cooked in India. He didn't like India but he was stuck there, but he didn't have an awful lot to say,

21:30 anyway he was never at home to say anything he was always at the club with the boys, so that was that.

Did you have a change to go to the cinema or theatre or doing any kind of cultural things?

No, he wasn't interested in anything cultural, he did take me to a couple of concerts

22:00 and we did go to the odd picture. I can remember in Double Bay we went to see a film and it was so full we had to sit in the front row and another time we came with Butch and he was a shocker. He came with us to see Mr Windier up here and we were going back to Double Bay by ferry and we went to Mosman

22:30 and we were going home by ferry, and we were sixpence short for the ferry money and Windier had given Butch sixpence, so Roger said, "Butch do you think you can lend me your sixpence?" and Butch says in a loud voice for everybody to hear, "Oh no you don't, Mr Windier gave me that sixpence that's my sixpence." Roger could have killed him then and there.

He probably turned crimson?

23:00 If he could embarrass you, old Butch did.

After the war what kind of work did Roger do?

When he left the air force he joined Qantas, where he was a traffic officer for a while and then he didn't like that so he went back and joined the little insurance company he was with before the war, Paxton.

23:30 A tiny little office in Martin Place and then he went to another insurance company.

24:00 He finally joined a company that had headquarters in London, so it suited him, and he finally became an underwriter in his own right. But he became a underwriter and he was just getting there when that awful shebang that they had a few years ago, all these people played games and they lost billions and Roger of course lost

24:30 millions and he had to pay up, but he made it.

When were your other children born?

Rowan was born in 1948 and Annabel was born in 1952.

So that's a fair stretch between the first and second?

Between the first and second but don't forget that I lost one. Yes, there was roughly five years between each which is rather peculiar. Which left Rowan who was on the outer because the young one, who was five years younger, was the baby and therefore getting all the attention, and the older one, being five years older, was into the real world and playing football, so he was left out,

25:30 the middle children are always.

Through this time of bringing up first Butch then your subsequent children, how much easier was it becoming to cope with what must have been a fairly lonely and alienating time?

26:00 Rowan was born when we were in Double Bay, that kept me very busy. Roger wasn't interested in children at all, he was just interested in getting on, he wouldn't come home until seven o'clock at night and the children were in bed. It wasn't terribly happy,

26:30 but I can't say I was ecstatically happy at the time, in fact it was fairly miserable. It was him and it was in the blood to be ambitious, and to want to be financial. It just wasn't my scene so I was just pretty lonely. Luckily an American ex-naval commander and his wife came out and that

27:00 was great and I met up with them through my sister who came out and visited for a short time. They lived out at Watson's Bay and they were a great help to me, and I felt I had a little back-up.

How were they to be a little help to you?

Just so that I could go and moan to them, nothing else, and they understood.

Through these people

27:30 **or through other people, were you able to build up any kind of social network for yourself?**

When I got to Ryde particularly where, as I said, we were all young wives and were all wives of ex-officers of various sorts and we all became friends because we all had young children. Then I sort of made friends

28:00 but Roger wouldn't be friends with them, it wasn't what Roger wanted, he wanted something a little bit more. But I did have friends then so things were a help. Then finally a German girl came to live there when they gave up making it particularly an ex-serviceman's place. This German girl was rather fun and she was from Frankfurt

28:30 and she always had interesting visitors and her husband was with the CSIRO [Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation] so I made friends with her and she was more the kind of thing that I liked, she was interesting. I finally went to Germany and visited her parents and had a lovely time, only four or five days in Heidelberg and it was great, she's dead now too. I met a lot of interesting people through them because they were always having

29:00 interesting people out from Germany and Europe.

She sounds like quite an extrovert actually?

She wasn't really an extrovert, she was very bright, she had a science degree herself, she was very German but she was nice and a good friend. She had all kinds of interesting people, would come out visiting out from Germany. I remember one night a Professor Mavis

29:30 who came to the party and he had been invited by Canberra to come out and do something about mistletoe, because the mistletoe was killing the trees in Canberra, and he had to come out because he was a micro-biologist or a biologist or something. He was out and he came to this party and being

30:00 a typical European he moved from one women to the other and was talking to them and then he got to me and I thought, "What the heck am I going to say to him?" and luckily I had read an article in 'Time' magazine a week or a few days before

30:30 about a man, Ukla, who had synthesized chlorophyll but couldn't spark life from it. Oh well this is alright, "Why? Dr Mavis, couldn't Professor Wavier do this?" He started in and I don't know how long later we'd gone through the double helix and goodness knows what else and I didn't understand any of it so I was just throwing in a little here and there. The next day she was on the phone, killing herself

laughing, saying that Dr Mavis had met a very intelligent women last night and I said, “Not me?”

31:00 and she said, “Yes.” But I’ve always covered myself up that way, throw something in the ball court and let it bounce.

It seems like, that gradually you were meeting people.

And making my own, I was gradually making my own friends. I used to say to Roger, “Don’t you come,” and I’d say to her, “Just invite me and don’t invite Roger and I’ll come,” and I did,

31:30 because he couldn’t cope with those people. He left school when he was thirteen to go to work, and that’s something I will never forgive his mother, because he was bright and that’s one of the things that he was going to prove in spite of that.

Up until this point and given that you are a gregarious energetic person, how did you cope with all this social isolation in the years before

32:00 **this bit of a breakthrough?**

I think it’s because during the Depression I felt it, after Dad lost all this money and so many of my school friends still had money and I couldn’t mix with them anymore, so I’ve always felt a little bit on the outer, and I suppose I just changed.

That seems to have made you more adaptable, very self-reliant?

I had to be self-reliant

32:30 and yes, I am. I’m also very, I can meet anything and anybody and kind of talk to them. Up at the hospital we get French, German, Chinese and I go in and say, “Nihao,” and they just babble on in their language, and I say, “Hold it, that’s it,” but I learned [‘Xièxiè’] the other day and that means ‘goodbye and thank you’,

33:00 so that’s my Chinese conversation. When you are lying sick in bed and somebody comes in and beams at you and says, “Nihao,” it’s a bit more cheering up I think. We had a little French girl who was blind, she didn’t speak English, so I had to ask her would she like a drink for instance, I had to help her have a drink, I was a fair help to her I think. We had a couple of Arabs,

33:30 I can say a few rude things in Arabic but I can also say ‘salaam-alaikum’ that’s enough to start off with and ‘shokran’ which is ‘thank you’ again.

Looking back at Sydney in the late 1940s and early 1950s I think you have described the suburbs around Sydney as being almost like a series of isolated individual villages, would that be true?

34:00 Yes, and it was getting better because more people were getting cars, but it wasn’t really until Whitlam came in that the working man got the chance to buy cars and have things. Before that they were kept pretty down there and you went to the beach and it took hours and hours and hours on a tram then a train and then the bus.

34:30 Cars were coming in and people were moving around a little bit more so it was becoming a little bit better.

Once again pre-Whitlam we are looking at fairly sharp [obvious] class differences?

Well I felt so.

Social economic differences?

Yes.

In terms of what you’d been used to in Canada, were there any other major cultural differences that you noticed when you first came to Australia?

35:00 I think the major thing was that here, was you had the ‘white Australia’ policy, and the only foreigners you had were the poor Greeks and Italians who were considered, I don’t know what Greek and Italian [was], almost like something from outer space. Whereas in Canada, I can remember having much, starting with the French in the first place, help. Out west for instance,

35:30 in the old days Canada didn’t take in anybody if they wanted to come to Canada and you had to prove you were a farmer. If you are a farmer you go out west you don’t stay in Montreal like they do here, you just clutter up the place on the dole, but there was no dole anyway. We had a lot of Swedes and Russians, Polish and

36:00 people who went out and were farmers out west. Of course McGill was quite a place at the time, the university had all kinds of interesting people, doctors and scientists came in. We had a lot of Chinese people come in and work, they came in to work on the railways and were allowed so many years and then had to go back, but we were used to them

36:30 and a lot of them became laundry men, so we had Chinese laundries. We were used to a very, very mixed ….

You came to Australia during the time of immense immigration which in itself changed Australia.

That was before I came, just before that time, the immense immigration didn't start until what?, really it didn't start till

37:00 after [Gough] Whitlam [former Prime Minister of Australia].

No, there were quite a lot of displaced persons coming into Australia, so-called 'displaced refugees'. I can remember being on ….

They were mostly English weren't they, so many of them were English I think.

Quite a few Baltics and Czechs.

There were a few, but we'd been used to them for years and years and years, it wasn't a surprise to us, as here they still have trouble coping with it properly, but I must admit they are not

37:30 fussy enough.

Just looking at that immediate post-war period, what notion did you have of Australians' relations with the outside world, and how connected was Australia to the international scene?

I thought you were pretty isolated, I thought England just seemed to be just England and the British Empire, trade with the empire nearly all oriented

38:00 towards England rather than to the States. As I said, I thought it was quite isolated, and the airmen of course brought back knowledge of Canada and had been there but the Australians seemed

38:30 to be no more knowledgeable than say the average Canadian if it came to that. The Canadian and the mid- west aren't all that aware. Nowadays, yes, because they have to be, with the television and all that, but they were no more aware than the inside Australians if you know what I mean because they weren't in a big city. Because we are all down on the forty-ninth parallel, you were just all around

39:00 the edge, we've only got the States and the three oceans, so the forty-ninth parallel is obviously the place to live.

Tape 7

00:30 **As time went on did you ever feel that you shared the sense of being a Canadian and became more of an Australian?**

No, I think I remained Canadian mostly. I wasn't very happy here so what was there to make me feel about Australia, especially Sydney, I loathe Sydney.

And yet you have chosen to return to Sydney?

Because I thought my son was going to be here but he went to Victoria didn't he,

01:00 that's the trouble.

There must be some things that you still like about Sydney, though.

Not much, not really. I think the harbour is beautiful, actually I think the harbour is the only thing that Sydney has got over Los Angeles and New York, they are all just glass buildings now, they are not pretty anymore, it's just pollution and cars, cars, cars: no, the harbour is beautiful,

01:30 they can't do much about that can they? You can't ruin the harbour very easily, otherwise I'm sure they would've, they would've found something to build in it like a casino in the middle of it or something.

What are the main ways in which Sydney has changed since you came out here in the mid 1940s?

Obviously it has become much more populated and I like that, it has become much more multicultural and we have a lot of Chinese around now and I like them.

02:00 There are too many cars which I hate and the drivers, they ask you on television to write and say what annoys you about Sydney drivers, of all the things that send me mad. Yesterday I was lost in this thing and I was getting very tired, and coming up the highway every street said 'No right turn', but I

02:30 was in the right because eventually I wanted to right turn but they had 'No right turn' signs and I couldn't see where I could turn right. Finally I pulled out and this truck went 'beep' and he pulled up at

the next light and he abused me, and told me a four-letter-word and I said, “four-letter-word yourself, I’m lost and I need help and not what you’re telling me.”

They say that Australians

03:00 **are among the most aggressive drivers in the world?**

They are, but what can you expect when on television ‘Be top’, ‘Be a winner’, ‘Go to the top’, ‘Win the gold medal’, it’s aggression, aggression. Think about the poor little guy who’s run against you and lost, how does he feel, don’t think of how he feels just, “I won.” I hate that and I won’t watch

03:30 any sport now.

Do you think Australia has become less parochial in the last half-century?

Yes, they’ve had too, I don’t know anybody up here on the North Shore who entertains the Chinese, anybody Chinese or black or Lebanese or anything, no that’s true I haven’t, even the youngish people. They are all

04:00 clannish, they go to Riverview [prestigious private school] or they go to Knox [prestigious private school] and all their friends are Knox, whenever they have a party it’s nearly always all the school.

Yes you are right about the clans or even the tribes. Do you still get homesick for Canada?

Less now that I’ve made up my mind that I can’t go back. Ten years ago, just after I put what money I had

04:30 into here, I got a letter from Canada in Vancouver saying they had a flat for me there, a much better flat than this. I think I was crying for about ten days, and then I thought, “Oh well, it wasn’t meant to be.” There’s something here for me but I don’t know what it is, there must be something, so here I am. I’m not unhappy or discontented

05:00 now, I’ve accepted it. If something exciting happens and I go to live in New Zealand well great, but if it doesn’t, I’m happy.

You seem to be living a contented fulfilled life?

I’m really quite contented in my old age, I think it’s the slappy-happy church that’s helped me.

There’s great spirit in those places, genuine spirit?

They are terribly kind and they really don’t care that I can’t quite come to terms with

05:30 some of their beliefs and they just accept it and they accept me as I am, I find them very pleasant.

Moving back to the end of the war, where were you when you heard that the war had ended?

In George Street, and I can remember walking down George Street and there were dozens of people and everybody was cheering,

06:00 and I came face to face with two Norwegian sailors and I said to them (UNCLEAR), they talked back Norwegian to me and we were talking – this just shows you how parochial they are – and an Australian came by and said, “Why cant you speak English?” I mean honestly, I could’ve slapped him, look at him, he’s a Norwegian and they were helping to free you down here and this was the attitude.

What did the Norwegians tell you?

06:30 We didn’t say much of anything, we were just saying, “Isn’t this great, now I can go home.” It was just in passing because there were crowds just going back and forth.

Did you actually hear via radio broadcast or, did someone tell you that the war had ended?

We were downtown and we could hear the people talking, and we said, “What’s happened?” and they said, “The war has ended,” then the crowds started to fill up and we realised

07:00 that something really exciting happened and that was it, it was funny.

What feelings did you have when you learnt that the war had ended?

Thank God it’s over and everybody can come home. The poor Chinese prisoners and things and the poor German prisoners could go home, or the poor British

07:30 prisoners with the Germans I should say, and the poor German prisoners could go home too, not that I like them very much but I wished them to go home.

I think the war had certainly brought great changes to your family?

Yes, more or less decimated us, there aren’t too many of us left. My son has had one son and he’s had one son but I don’t think they will get married and he’s half Maori

08:00 and my nephew lives in New Zealand, and he married a Maori girl.

In what ways do you think the war had changed you as a person?

I certainly stopped feeling that war

08:30 stories were romantic and exciting. War is a dirty word to me now, you can keep it. It's hard to say, it made me grow up of course and I realised the total and complete futility of it all, absolutely silly. What makes

09:00 me mad too is the damn British, they used us, they used the New Zealanders and they used the Australians in two wars, sent out men in there to be killed, quite happily, while their bloody officers sat up, they have used us like mad, and taken the best out of our country

09:30 that they could possibly get, so I'm not very pro-British anymore, I used to be very gung-ho but not now.

It certainly sounds as though you feel they have a got a lot of answer for?

They have. Actually, funnily enough, the only good conquerors, if you want to call them that, funnily enough are the French. When they go into a country they leave the natives to their own affairs, they don't

10:00 try and change their language, don't try to change their lives, they leave them be and just go in there and teach them French and then they work with them and I think they are the best, the best of the colonialists should we say. Well the British are half German anyway.

Since you'd married a serviceman, what impact do you think the war had had on him?

10:30 I really don't know because he never discussed anything with me, he'd come home late and we'd have dinner and that was just about it, we very seldom sat and talked.

Was he a different person at the end of the war to the man you met?

I only met him

11:00 for such a short time, as I said we were both wet as baby blankets and yes he had changed but we hadn't been through anything, he admitted it himself that the worst thing that happened was when an engine cover flew out over his gun turret and frightened the living daylights out of him.

11:30 He didn't know what had happened, but he never had to shoot at anybody or anything. He was in the 10 Bomber Squadron in Bangalore or something and he never saw an angry man, it didn't change him very often, because he lost a best friend.

He lost his best friend, when was that?

His best friend was in the army,

12:00 it was a boy he knew before the war and he was his best friend, he lost him some time during the war, I think he was in the Middle-East.

That must've had an impact on him?

Yes it did, and he was very upset but it didn't change him for the better or for the worse. He was upset

12:30 about that boy, so I called my son after him.

Which son was named after him?

Brian, the eldest one, poor old Brian Robert, called after Brian and my two brothers and they were all killed, poor old Butch.

Just coming back to when you moved back into Double Bay, I believe the household living conditions were a little on the primitive side,

13:00 **different from when you first moved in. There is one detail that you haven't told us and this concerns an umbrella?**

I remember one morning and it was raining like stink, and as I said the water was running along the wire that went into the middle of the kitchen and it was dripping off the light bulb, so I couldn't turn on the light, I didn't dare, but it was wet and I was trying to cook the breakfast under this thing

13:30 and I put the umbrella up, and I was crying my eyes out and saying, "Why did I ever come to this place?" a few other choice air force epithets, so I was trying to fry the eggs and bacon, I couldn't believe it, it is funny when you think of it now. That was a dreadful little cottage, it really was.

How long was it before you moved to the next place which was West Ryde?

14:00 Yes, we were there for two or three years and then we moved to West Ryde, and that's where Annabel was born.

14:30 **Could you tell me a little bit more about the ex-service people's houses at West Ryde, that you mentioned in passing before, can you give us a description to what that place was and why it was such an important change for you?**

It was an important change for me because it was civilized, because we had fridges and we had nice gas stoves and no leaky, no bare wires hanging all over the place. The only odd thing about it was that it didn't

15:00 have plumbing, it wasn't attached to it, the sanitary main up the back, for the first year, I think, and then all that was fixed, the people next door got one of those funny septic tanks, we couldn't afford a septic tank so we had to use the other thing. I had to use one of those before, so you know.

15:30 They were nice little houses, and they were such an improvement, anything was an improvement on our house in Double Bay, and some were bigger and nicer than others. We were diddled with the good old bureaucracy and we were told we had another house that had three bedrooms, and

16:00 we were even told where it was. So we went out to see it one day and brought a picnic with us and we sat there and thought that this was very nice and when it came to the actual thing, we were given another house with two bedrooms, two bedrooms with three children which wasn't so good, however we managed. Most of the houses were nice and everybody started gardens and making the place

16:30 look reasonable. We had a dairy farm across the road where we got our milk, and that's now all built over of course, then it became a park and that was nice. Shaftsbury Road hadn't been, the hill up Shaftsbury hadn't been paved and was all just rough

17:00 going up to Eastwood. It was shorter to go to Eastwood than going down to Ryde, so you pushed everything up this awful road, try to push this pram up this awful road to shop.

Because that road was a big dip, even now and without paving it must have been pretty horrendous?

It was terrible, it was about that slope. I never had the car because Roger used the car to go to his friends'.

17:30 Every weekend he went sailing with his friends in Potts Point so I didn't have the car so I had to go shopping and push up the hill. I didn't say anything because that only created problems, and I had nobody to back me up and say, "Alright you so-and-so." I'd pack up the kids and go home but I didn't have anywhere to go, you know, no money to go with so I had to stick it out.

If you don't mind me asking, did you ever have any

18:00 **confrontations with him over this?**

We had a few, poor old Roger he wasn't very thoughtful. He'd arrive at the door with his two friends from Potts Point and say that they were coming for dinner. He hadn't told me and I was living from hand to mouth, our meals, and I had to do something about dinner, I passed that out a few times

18:30 as a joke. There was another friend that was invited, you couldn't buy chicken, the chicken man came to the door and you ordered a griller or a boiler or whatever and the griller was to come and we were going to have chicken for dinner and I had everything ready and, lo and behold, the chicken didn't come, and Harry did. So the only thing to do was to give Harry another drink and another drink and another drink and when we finally got the chicken

19:00 and I cooked it, but it wasn't really good. Year and years, in fact almost forty years later, and I said, "Do you ever remember that dinner?" and he looked at me and said, "I've had better meals at your place." He's dead now the poor old fellow. We had no furniture at one stage so we had a dinner party and I just spread the sheet on the floor and we just ate on the floor, and in those days nobody seemed to mind

19:30 terribly, it was quite hairy sometimes.

Sounds like a pretty Bohemian relaxed thing to do actually?

Why not, I used to do parties like that when we were living up here at Killara. In those days fancy dress parties were quite the thing, so I'd have a party

20:00 or a Greek party and the girls had to come in nightgowns and the men came in tunics and things. I can remember Butch and his friend was there for the weekend, they happened to be on leave from Kings for the weekend, and they had guitars and they came out and I think I put a hole in two pillow slips and put them over their shoulders and put a piece of string around their waist and they were slaves and they came in and played guitars while we all sat around and ate off huge

20:30 plates in the middle of the thing. We just picked them up with our fingers and of course the women had to go around and wipe the men's lips for them and dropped grapes down their throat. Everybody got a little bit more drunk, that was fun, we really did have fun. Now all they think you have to do is drink and punch someone, we never had anything unpleasant like that ever, we had lots of fun.

21:00 **I think other parts of the city probably did, I think there were some pretty rough parts in the inner city?**

Yes, but I'm talking about where we were. Up here you have to have a security officer if the kids have a party, I think that's pathetic.

Looking a little further at this West Ryde housing settlement, can you describe what the housing settlement was, was it …?

It was a government thing.

It was a government thing, what did it actually consist of?

It consisted of,

21:30 I suppose, eighteen or twenty-four houses all built in the same area, all brand new, various sizes, some two- storey some not, and they were allotted to various service officers who needed them and I think the mortgage rate was 4%, especially for them, so most of us could

22:00 just get in there. As I said there were some interesting people: Doug Manton, who's retired from the ABC now, he was there and Doug Channel and Bruce Webber, they were well known ABC commentators in their day.

These were also in the houses at West Ryde?

Yes, they had been in the army, air force or navy and that's where they were living, I mean we were young and we had no money, none of us.

22:30 **It seems to me what you have been saying is it was a very good sense of community there?**

It was really rather fun, not everybody but most of us got together pretty well, it was quite fun.

Was there a sense among the ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen that you knew of the need to commemorate WW2 through associations or Anzac Day ceremonies?

23:00 No, I don't remember that but I do remember Anzac Day came up and we all used to go to the pub at Ryde to celebrate with the boys and it was always a good old booze-up and everybody reminisced and so on, especially the men but that was alright because that was what they did. The special thing about it was that everybody did it.

23:30 **And reminisced what, presumably they would reminisce about their war years?**

Yes, they were such a different lot. Some were in the navy, the memories would be quite different from the ones who were at Tobruk or the ones in India, the ones who were in Germany and so on, there were no ex- POWs [Prisoners of War] that I remember.

There was a club called the Canada Club I believe, you

24:00 **mentioned it in passing before, the Canada Club, what was the Canada Club?**

It was the Canadian Club, it was just for the new wives and it was down in Macquarie Street, when you could afford a place in Macquarie Street on next to nothing, ha ha ha. We used to meet I think once a month and we were just homesick and we just talked about home, and it faded out as we all assimilated more-or-less into our new lives.

When was the club established?

24:30 It would be 1945, almost as soon as the war had ended, and it went on perhaps until 1950s, it may have gone on longer but I stopped going.

When it was first formed, approximately how many members did the club have?

I couldn't remember.

Would there have been dozens?

There would have been perhaps twenty, yes perhaps twenty. There were quite a few Canadian brides that came to Sydney, but quite a few of them

25:00 went back.

Why did quite a few of them go back?

The wives wanted to go back.

Did they take their families with them?

Yes, they went back. Roger wouldn't go back, he would never have succeeded in Canada anyway.

Did you want to go back and take Roger with you?

It would have been very nice if he had, I certainly would have gone back but it wasn't meant to be.

25:30 **Did you discuss that with him?**

No, there was no point in it, he was just not the type.

From your discussions with the other women at the Canadian Club where any of them finding the same kind of difficulties that you'd found?

Yes, we all talked about our various difficulties, and joked about some of our difficulties. We would be homesick and have a chin-wag about home

26:00 and we would moan about the coppers, so primitive things that we had to put up with, but apart from that it was just sort-of a social club too, to get us together, just so we could get it off our chest I suppose and meet people from home again.

Sounds like an excellent idea actually.

Yes it was quite a good idea. The Norwegians had the same

26:30 they had a Norwegian Sailors' Club, and I met a lot of Norwegians there after the war.

So you would attend the Norwegians' club?

Yes, I used to go in and see them because I worked for them when I was with the BOAC, I was with the Norwegians for a short time. Actually next August I'm going up to Queensland to visit a girl that I met all those years ago.

27:00 **The BOAC work was in Canada wasn't it?**

Yes, that was the Return Ferry Group at Dorval.

Could you tell me what the Ferry Group actually was?

It was British Overseas Aircraft Corporation, they sent over a British

27:30 air vice-marshal kind-of to be the big boss and a British air commodore. Now the main thing was, it was, the lend-lease aircraft that came from the States were flown into Montreal and into Dorval, the Mitchell bombers and Liberators and such, and they were checked over, the manifests were checked over to see that every detail was right, which was one thing that we had to do because things went missing of course. We had

28:00 all kinds of airmen there because the planes were flown over to Britain, and then the pilots, if they'd had their leave, went back too on service but there were always pilots who had done so many hours and were tired and so they would get them to bring a Mosquito over to Canada and then they'd flown, or even sometimes it was just a BOAC plane

28:30 back, they flew back and then picked up other aircraft and took them to England and that's the way that it worked.

It was literally the ferrying of the aircraft rather than personnel?

It was the ferrying of the lend-lease aircraft.

Thanks for explaining that because I was going to ask earlier when you first mentioned it.

It was an interesting place, we sent back Polish, Norwegians, Swedes, Yugoslavs, Czechs,

29:00 South Africans, Australians, New Zealanders and the Russians even landed there once, they didn't bring any aircraft they just came to see us.

These different nationalities would be ferrying the various aircraft would they?

Yes.

How long would they stay on average?

It would depend, they were given leave to rest over and then it would wait until the next lot of aircraft were checked out and sent off,

29:30 it would be fairly regularly because they were going and coming.

Did you have much of a chance to socialize with these people?

Yes, we had lots of fun, I went to a Czech wedding that lasted for three days. Don't ask me what it was like because all I can remember was we were dancing. The guy I was dancing with let go of me and I went bang against the wall with great force to my great surprise.

30:00 We had lots of fun and that horrible old Taffy Polar, the British air commodore. The British air commodore, and my boss, was a squadron leader who had left his wife and children in England and

came to this nice comfortable thing he had a girlfriend Dee. Dee and I went to school with each other and

30:30 I can remember working amongst the aircraft at the time and the bell rang and I was asked to go into the office of the squadron leader and Craig, and I don't mind mentioning his name, he was a …, and here's Dee sitting on Craig's desk with her legs crossed, you know, and he said, "Would you go and get Miss Bush and me some sandwiches from the canteen," and I looked at him and said, "No, Squadron Leader Dee can go and get them."

31:00 He couldn't say anything because I wasn't in the services, gee he was furious.

That is a great story, it's a wonderful story.

I couldn't resist it.

Did you ever come close to joining the services yourself?

The nearest I was, was the short time that I worked at the end of the war, 1944 to 1945, and I worked for the Norwegians and they didn't have an

31:30 air force per se but I wore a uniform and spoke Norwegian most of the time. They had their men coming back and forth and that was all, that was the nearest, that was it, that was my service.

What sort of job were you doing for the Norwegians?

Secretary for Captain Bung, who was the head, that was all really. I think I flew down

32:00 to Elizabeth City, Carolina, once, I must have been one of the first air hostesses because all I did was serve coffee to the men on the aircraft and they were pretty crude in those days.

It must have been fairly difficult after all this work and all this adventure that you had in Canada and then to come to a very quite parochial Sydney and

32:30 **not to be out there in the workforce: did you miss what you had?**

I would have liked to have gone into the workforce, and I could've got anything then, but I didn't want old granny Greene taking over Butch completely, and I think that was one reason, and Roger didn't like the idea of me working, and he had the old fashioned idea that he should keep me, and he had to keep me.

33:00 I remember my first working thing was Christmas at DJs and they had a new department for wrapping parcels, because in Australia all during the war they had no paper and Christmas presents were done in paper bags, and they had this paper and ribbon and because I was used to that, I was in that department. This lady came in and she was going to put whatever she had bought on her account and I said, "Yes, and your name?" and she said, "Mrs Allsworth," and I said,

33:30 "Mrs Islesworth, I S L E S W O R T H?" and she said, "No, Allsworth," and I said, "Yes, Islesworth," and it was 'Mrs Allsworth' of course, so I had a few little things like that at first. When I was teaching at Abbots and one of the inspectors came in one day and he said you'd never teach them to spell you know Mrs Greene, not with your pronunciation.

34:00 I remember trying to teach them the word father, and I said, "Father of the church and you have a father," I keep getting 'farther'. So one day I was in assembly and I was listening to them as they started off with the 'Lord's Prayer' and the Australians were saying, "Our father who art in heaven,

34:30 hallowed be they name," and I thought, "Got it!" and the next time I didn't say 'farther', I said 'father', and they spelt it correctly.

Congratulations, you'd adapted!

It was funny, it really was.

I suppose we are almost at the end of the interview now: it has been quite a pleasure to talk to you.

It's been great for me, I've had a great time meeting

35:00 you people, well this is kind-of a one-off.

Just before we finish recording, I was just wondering if there is any aspect that we haven't covered that you'd like to mention as part of the interview?

Just that if my son ever

35:30 gets to read this that I cooled it enough, do you think I cooled it enough?

Very much.

Needless to say, after Roger left and I was pretty miserable for a while and sour as anything, and

anything Australian as far as I was concerned I could have stamped under my foot and not looked at it twice, it was the best thing that he ever did for me, because I wouldn't've had all these adventures otherwise.

36:00 I'd just gone from one place to another and just had a ball.

You have had a very adventurous life actually.

You would be surprised some of the adventures I got in and out of and saved by that great big dog of mine.

He clearly made the most of it as well.

It's that I'm lucky.

On behalf of Rebecca [interviewer] and myself and the 'Australians at War Film Archive' I just wanted to thank you very much and as I said

36:30 **before, it was a real pleasure talking to you and hearing your story.**

Well I thank you very much and it's been a very exciting and fun day for me, certainly a change from my usual daily routine should we say, thank you.

Thank you very much.