

# Australians at War Film Archive

## John Morgan - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/589>

### Tape 1

00:31 **Thanks for talking to us, it's great to meet you. As I say John, perhaps we could just start with a summary of your life, and if you could start by perhaps telling us where you were born and ....**

Born in Sydney 1928. My father was a young army officer, my mother was the daughter of

01:00 Irish migrants.

**Whereabouts was that in Sydney?**

In Sydney. Yes, according to my mother I was conceived in Botany Bay, that makes me a Botany Bay man of a different kind, my father never denied it and look at me now.

**Which suburb did you grow up in?**

Sydney, Rockdale. Didn't grow up, I was only there for four years. Army transfers officers every

01:30 four years in those days so at the age of four I was moved up to Queensland.

**Brothers and sisters?**

Brother, one brother, younger, he was four years younger. He was born at the time we moved to Queensland. In Queensland the army moved my father still, roughly every four years, we lived in different towns, different suburbs.

**Was your father in the First World War?**

No, no. My father graduated from Duntroon College in 1919.

02:00 Then they sent him to England and France for more training after World War II, World War I, there has been so many wars I get them mixed up. Then he came back to Australia and married my mother and was an army officer the rest of his life until the Battle of Milne Bay in New Guinea.

**And was your family lots of aunties and uncles?**

The family, well on the Irish side plenty of them. I think my mother's mother had ten children,

02:30 my father's mother had six. So yes, it was a typical large family of the 1920s, 30s.

**And schooling?**

Schooling, every time we moved it was a different school. Mainly Catholic convents when I was young and later on the Marist Brothers. And while I think of it, in all the years and all the schools in all my life up until

03:00 1960, so that's about thirty years, I never saw an Aboriginal man or woman or child anywhere. In those schools or in the streets, surprising.

**Were you aware that there were Aboriginal people around?**

Not around, I knew they existed because in Brisbane I went to often, three or four times a year, I loved museums, saw plenty of Aboriginal artefacts. When I was about eighteen or nineteen I knew in Queensland they were in reserves

03:30 where they weren't allowed out and whites weren't allowed in. They were well protected, and it was only until 1960, where I employed an Aboriginal woman and her daughter, where I really saw two Aboriginals. Surprising.

**Well we might come back later to that. Where were you and your family when the war broke out?**

1939, my father was then a major, chief instructor and commanding officer of the

04:00 non commissioned officer training school at Enoggera in Brisbane. We lived in Alderley Heights, and I still remember the night that Holland fell, as it came over the radio my brother and I were fighting at the dinner table over who would have the biggest half of an apple, the biggest half, and my mother started crying when she heard Holland had fallen. We were just kids and we didn't worry too much about a war far away. That

04:30 was the night Holland fell, but we knew war had started in Europe.

**You were aware that your father's occupation was to do with fighting?**

All my life, from the age of five or six, I remember him using his army revolver on our back veranda about 1930, about 1934, to shoot rats when we lived in Maryborough Queensland, since then I realised

05:00 he shot the wrong rats. The rats must have been bad in Maryborough, Pone House had typhoid in it. And the department just had to burn that house down to prevent other houses getting typhoid. Maryborough, Queensland, that was the 1930s.

**Was that a training school there your dad was at?**

Oh Maryborough, no that was just a normal transfer where he was working from the normal army depot just as a young lieutenant.

05:30 It was only years later when he had gone through the rank of lieutenant, captain, up to major, he was a major when the war started, World War II, and we were living at Alderley Heights, and he was at Enoggera. From there he went on to Milne Bay and got malaria. Moved back to home, Australia, nearly dead from malaria.

06:00 Looks like to me he was one of the early cases of malaria and he did not have Atebrin, which was the latest chemical out to save people from malaria. His skin never went yellow, other soldiers who had Atebrin, their skin went a very yellow colour. Atebrin for years, and with his malaria it took about twenty years to go away, it put him out of the army, he just couldn't work as an officer. You couldn't give him a job as a truck driver, driving a truck in heavy traffic and all of a sudden malaria hits you,

06:30 you go delirious. No matter what you were doing you would go delirious, which is a form of insanity. It took twenty years for that malaria to clear up. It has killed people.

**Did you spend most of your time in Enoggera after the war started?**

No, he went to Milne Bay, we then flew to Sydney. People had heard about the alleged Brisbane line,

07:00 where the theory was from a line drawn from Brisbane all of the north was going to be given to the Japanese just to move in. I wouldn't be surprised if that was true, my father had told me years later that on one of his inspection tours up north, Japanese soldiers dead who'd come ashore on beaches in north Queensland, they had lists of the towns and the villages in their pockets where they were to be billeted. So there was to be an invasion by the Japanese. So we fled to Tambourine Mountain

07:30 near the Gold Coast, that's where my mother and my brother and I were when he was suddenly brought back with others to Greenbank Military Hospital, nearly dead with malaria. That was where he was out of the army a few months later. And he and my mother bought this shop outside of Amberley aerodrome. Well that's, amazing years, living outside of an air force base with the war on, and most of our customers in a small retail shop being Yanks. There was still plenty

08:00 of other customers but the Yanks were the big spenders. Amazing.

**Was your father at home at that time?**

He was out of the army and out of the hospital, and we all lived in the living quarters behind that small shop. And I seen him get malaria still in those small living quarters, in his bed, very hot and sweating one minute and then very freezing cold and shivering the next. Terrible thing to see happen to a man. And he just worked when available.

08:30 We all helped out in this shop where the Yanks were customers.

**So your father was he TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension] out of the army?**

No, no never TPI, not a pension or anything. I actually think he just walked away, he just couldn't do anything, anything else as an army officer. He had been a battalion commander in New Guinea, that's quite a high rank, next rank would have been general and I think he was just too sick and he knew it. He either got a discharge or just walked away, one or the other. But he still was discharged anyway through the paperwork. But he lived until he was eighty-five, then he just dropped dead.

09:00 But in the meantime malaria did kill quite a few people.

**So can you tell us a bit in summary of what did happen during the time when you were near Amberley air force base in the shop?**

Well we had that many Yanks and our own RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] people and civilians coming into the shop. The Yanks wanted plenty of ice-cream, plenty of meat pies, plenty of sandwiches. They had plenty of money,

09:30 not plenty because they were given plenty, it was just their rates of pay were higher and then the exchange rate made them wealthier than our blokes. Our own air force men couldn't spend money like the Yanks. We had that much money coming in that we had to hire a carrier to take the coin to the bank, put it in wooden boxes. You just couldn't count it all. The bank didn't want to count it, they just weighed it. They knew how many pennies went into a shilling, how many shillings went into a pound.

10:00 They weighed it and said 'so much', okay, so much into the bank it went. But the Yanks were rather odd, they came in all shapes and sizes. And I remember one of them, his name was James Stewart, Jimmy Stewart, he wasn't a Hollywood actor but he looked like one, quite tall. And the RAAF women, the WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force], some went crazy, two of them starting fighting, arguing over him in

10:30 our shop. Wrestling on the floor. I served him with his ice cream or whatever he wanted and he just walked out, left them fighting on the floor in WAAAF uniform. There was no military police around or they'd have to arrest both of them on the floor, amazing to see two grown women fighting over one good looking Yank.

### **James Stewart was in the American Army.**

He was but it wasn't this one. Another odd thing happened there, I had never met my cousin, Matty O'Mara,

11:00 that's the Irish side of the family. He came to the shop one day and my mother introduced me to him. He was a fighter pilot in our air force. Up on the islands he saw one of our planes crashed on the beach, he ran to the beach to see if the pilot was okay, and the pilot wasn't okay, he was badly smashed up. He got him into his own fighter plane, sat on his lap, took off and got him back to safety. If he hadn't done that John Gorton would have never become Prime Minister, it was John Gorton he saved.

11:30 So, oh the things on the family side in the war, unbelievable. There was a shortage of some foods, you had ration coupons for tea and sugar. Ration coupons for petrol, petrol was stolen, sold on the black market. What else? I can't think of what else was rationed. But we all had these coupon books, and separate sheets of petrol coupons, you had to hand them over with money

12:00 for petrol. Petrol was so short it was stolen. I found a drum, forty-four gallon drum, a big drum of petrol hidden in the bush, I sold that to a farmer for five pounds, five pounds was a week's wages in those days. Ten years later I ran into one of the ex-air force men in Sydney. Talking to him, talking to him about old times, I told him I found a drum of petrol and I sold it. "That was my drum of petrol, I stole that and you sold it?" Dear oh dear, I stole off him, he stole off the air force.

### **12:30 Were you at school at this time?**

I did go to Ipswich Tech College for part of the war, up until 1944, worked in the shop in the morning, I'd go to tech college, then after I came back home I'd work again in the shop, do my homework, go to bed. Get up in the morning, do a paper run or something, go off to tech college, this went on and on until I left tech college at the end of 1944 it was, yeah.

### **What were you studying at tech college?**

Well those days you studied about eight, nine or ten

13:00 subjects, the teaching was very thorough. I left tech, finished school, in those days 'Queensland Junior'. I'm often asked what year was that and I say second year, people think today it was second year and it wasn't, it was equal to about fifth year of university today. I do have a certificate from Queensland University for passing the Queensland Junior. That was only their second year in those days, the teaching was very thorough.

13:30 The dux of the class became a pharmacist, had his own business. But years later both he and his wife finished up working for me, I might have been the dunce of the class, just how things go. An odd thing did happen. I had been reading the Yankee comics because we had that much stuff we could pick up from Amberley aerodrome, Yankee stuff. Could be Yankee comics, Yankee newspapers. And one comic I read was a particular illustration of a certain type of aeroplane

14:00 which to me was fiction, but the news media reported there was a great row on the Yankee Conwest, it was top secret, what's it doing in a comic? It turned out to be the Norfolk P-61 Black Widow night fighter. One day I got the bus at Amberley to go over to tech, looked over the tarmac, and there was one of these top secret painted black night fighters sitting on the tarmac for all of the spies of the world to see, the public on the highway could see it, everybody

14:30 could see it, unbelievable, unknown, top secret night fighter, painted all black, and went to school. For years I wondered why it was top secret, there were no machine guns in the nose of it which was most unusual, machine guns in the nose helped the pilot shoot down another plane that was straight in front of it, it had machine guns in the side, machine guns on the top, none in the nose. I worked out it must have been the

15:00 latest type of radar, the top secret radar used in those days, used to follow enemy aircraft at night to shoot them down. And sure enough in one of my books here, that was why it was top secret. Today nearly ever airliner has that type of radar in the nose, it's a common thing, it was no longer top secret.

**How did you develop this interest in aircraft?**

There was so many of them, they came and went. Mosquitoes, Liberator bombers,

15:30 Lincolns, Mitchell bombers, Airacobras, you name it, they had it. I have never found out yet why the Yanks had so many different types of aircraft when one bomber would do, one fighter would do, but not them. Five different bombers, five different fighters, each one with a different particular job. We were stuck with our old planes, but we finally had Yankee Liberators at Amberley, English Mosquitoes. Mustangs, quite a few Mustangs

16:00 came through. I saw many crashes, a Dutch Air Force Mustang flew low across Amberley, I saw the right wing break off and it just rolled over, landed on the tarmac, blew up. British Air Force Spitfire, I saw him climbing up the strip, the engine stopped, lucky for him he just turned and just glided back down again, he was safe. Another bad crash was one of our

16:30 Lincoln bombers, very big four engine plane. I was delivering newspapers to the married quarters. When you live near aeroplanes you get to know them by sight and by the engine noises. We all heard this Lincoln, be one of ours, come in fairly low, fairly fast, couldn't see it because the buildings were in the way. But all of a sudden the engine made an awful loud roaring noise, I have never heard anything since like it. We all just stood still expecting the worst and sure enough the thing crashed.

17:00 Thirteen were killed in it. I heard what happened, somehow the nose of the plane went way up straight and it slid backwards down its tail, crashed on the edge of the aerodrome. Terrible tragedy. There were other cases, two of our RAAF men with the wife of one of them came to our shop quite often. The husband was killed a few weeks later. She then married the other man a few weeks later after that, he being their best friend,

17:30 he was killed a few weeks later. She was a widow twice in about five weeks. Very unusual things.

**Where were you, were you still there when the war ended?**

We stayed there, we moved there in December '42, roughly a year after Pearl Harbour, and we stayed there until the war ended, I forget what month in '45, but

18:00 we were there a few years after until '48 and we left there in December '48. So we had six years at Amberley, during the worst part of the war and the years of peace. Then we sold the shop and moved away to other parts of Queensland.

**Where did you move to?**

Well Maryborough, Gladstone, back to Maryborough. Back to Brisbane, Sydney

18:30 and then I finished up in Canberra.

**When did you leave home?**

About 1956 when I got married the first time, then I left home.

**Where was that?**

We were living in Maryborough at the time. We had been there in the 1930s, my father was a younger officer. And then in his older age and I was older we moved back there again.

**What was your family doing at that time?**

My father was in the greyhound racing game.

19:00 He was the smartest, biggest confidence trickster in greyhound racing. Made lots of money. They were all robbing themselves, the public never went to greyhound racing so it was really a lot of con artists, taking money off themselves and making the money circulating. He was a book making, well, greyhound racing, owned one track, had an interest in a track in Rockhampton with Rex Bulbin, the Lord Mayor. Then we lived at Maryborough. I'd get the morning plane from Maryborough

19:30 up to Rockhampton, pencil for him with a mate of his bookkeeping. I'd fly on the midday plane back to Maryborough, pencil for him there when he bookmaked on that track, whilst a mate managed his own track he owned in Gladstone. There was three dog races in one Saturday, he was clearing a thousand pounds, which today equals approximately twenty thousand dollars. Lot of money.

20:00 **Did you have dogs yourself?**

No, I've never been a gambler. Nothing at all like that, I'm more of an administrator. And the Queensland State Government brought in a new state law forbidding the ownership of dog tracks by a private person, so we had to get rid of the Gladstone dog track, otherwise today I could be owning a chain of dog tracks. That's how I would be interested in dog

20:30 racing if I owned the tracks.

**And your first wife, she was a Maryborough girl?**

Yes.

**And when did your first children arrive?**

Oh my son was born about six years later and my daughter about four years after. My brother was with us at Amberley, he finished up joining the air force, then he became a pilot, then he got killed in that,

21:00 Sabre Jet crash up near Newcastle.

**Did he see action in Korea?**

No, no he was too young for that. I was with the army in Victoria when Korea started, I volunteered to go, I was CMF [Citizens' Military Force], they didn't take me. A local sergeant went, I don't know how many CMF men served in Korea, possibly quite a lot did.

**When did you join the CMF?**

1950s, 1955 I think it was and Korea started in 1956.

21:30 Korea was one of those odd things where war was not declared. War was not declared in Vietnam and war has not been declared in Gulf War I, Gulf War II. World War II was declared by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in England, I remember seeing that on the Movie Time news. There is a big legal difference when war

22:00 is declared and war is not declared. Today we have this Australian fellow, Hicks, where is it, in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba?

**Guantanamo Bay.**

They class him and the others as illegal combatants. Which means they are not prisoners of war, there was no war declared. The legal situation is very different.

**The world's changed a lot since then.**

Meaning of words.

**What was**

22:30 **your work at the time?**

In Queensland I did a heck of a lot, I had no trade so all I could do was pick up what work I could do, labouring for some months then that would quit. Then I would be doing office work for somebody, selling life insurance. Queensland country areas were very bad for work in the 1950s. They, the further you lived away from the big cities in Australia work problems get worse and worse, country areas are in a bad way.

23:00 This is why so many people leave the country, come to the city to get work. I did many things.

**You said you employed a couple of people though?**

Oh yes that was when I was in advertising in Brisbane, ten years in advertising.

**When was that?**

1958 until 1968.

**Were you still in the CMF at that time?**

Oh no, I was in the CMF

23:30 when I started the business but I had to leave the CMF when the business just became too big, too strong. I couldn't have any part time for the army.

**That was the advertising business?**

Yes.

**How did you get into advertising?**

Well there was just a need for it. In those days it was called letter-box advertising, today it's called junk mail. I was just a big contractor, I had government jobs, private company jobs, retailers, free sampling,

24:00 many things.

**Were you still with your first wife at that time?**

Yes.

**When did that finished, or what happened with that relationship?**

Well she stayed in Sydney, I came to Canberra and that was it. Finished with it, par for the course.

**So after Brisbane where did you go?**

Now which year was this?

**Brisbane, this was '68 I guess we're up to.**

'68, well yes we were

24:30 going to go to New Zealand, got to Sydney, the shipping company mucked us up a bit, I got sick of that, I came onto Canberra with the kids, she stayed in Sydney.

**And you've been in Canberra ever since?**

Yes, thirty years in Canberra.

**What brought you to Canberra?**

My son had developed bronchial trouble in Sydney. We lived under the flight path, aircraft flying into Mascot. The air pollution fallout was so bad in Petersham

25:00 he was getting very sick, we had been to Canberra on a camping trip, the air here was clean and fresh so I brought him here. He's now a bit of a giant of a man, the bronchial trouble went away, Canberra saved his life.

**He's still in Canberra?**

Yes, yes.

**And what about your mum and dad? What did they ...?**

Well they parted after Amberley, he went his way, my mother went her way. He got married a second time many years later,

25:30 she never remarried. He dropped dead Hervey Bay outside Maryborough, we always seem to rotate around Maryborough I don't know why, and she died in Brisbane.

**And did you stay with your mum when your mum and dad broke up?**

I was with my mother for a few years and then I got married and went on my own way.

**When**

26:00 **did your mum and dad split up?**

Oh let me see, just before we left Amberley, possibly in 1947 I think.

**Gosh that's a very full and very ....**

Very mixed up, a zigzag life. Some people have one job, one house, one spouse all their life.

26:30 Not us, we just zigzagged everywhere, crisscrossed.

**We might go back to the beginning then and we can sort of start to discuss some of the details and go into it more thoroughly, thanks very much for that. That's given us a very good overview of what you've been up to. Can you tell us a little bit about your early memories of your family life when you were growing up in Sydney?**

27:00 My early life in Sydney would be 1928 until 1932. We left there when I was four because of the army transfer so I don't remember much of those four years. But once we got to Maryborough and I started to develop as a young boy I remember my father giving me a lift on a bicycle to and from school sometimes. I'm sure that was a first

27:30 only and last bicycle our army ever had. I don't remember much else, the bicycle impressed me greatly, I knew he was an army officer. After we had been transferred to Brisbane I was old enough to start polishing his army boots, shining his brass buttons, I played with his Wembley '45 army revolver he kept in the bedroom cupboard.

28:00 I never loaded it, I knew how dangerous it was if I had and it fired, I never took it out of the bedroom but I played with it. He also kept his army sword there in a scabbard, I played with it. Didn't take it out, I knew it was dangerous, it was sharp. I saw him carry the sword at times when he was on horse, in uniform and leader of the Anzac Day parade.

**In Brisbane?**

In Brisbane yes.

28:30 Now with the army and him being at Enoggera, Enoggera was at running distance from the, I would run down there every so often just to muck about playing in the camp and so forth. He would be busy teaching the non-coms [Non Commissioned Officers] how to be better soldiers. I didn't bother going down to the other part of the Enoggera camp which was infantry. My father was

29:00 instructing at the school which was very separate from the other. I still have photographs of him and other officers and other troops of that time. What else?

**What sort of father was he?**

I didn't see much of him at times. With him being with the army and my mother being sick at times, my brother and I went into boarding schools, we could be there for months. See either one when they came to visit us but if my mother was too sick that's where we went, into a boarding school.

29:30 **What was wrong with your mother?**

Lesions. She had surgery on her abdomen at one stage and looks like there were all bits of meat inside her body stuck together the wrong way and caused all sorts of internal pains. She had that trouble about thirty, forty years. I remember my father coming home bruised one day, badly bruised. He

30:00 had been out at Chermside army camp travelling around in an army tank, I have been in a tank using Matilda tanks, they're very cramped, more cramped than a submarine. Well he was in this tank and apparently he was one too many. As the tank bounced over rocks and holes and bumps and things he was thrown about, that's where he got all of his bruises. Another time he had to fly north in the back seat of a Wirraway fighter

30:30 plane and he told me the canopy blew off so he had this wind whistling past him as they flew north. He never flew in an aeroplane again all the time I knew him. The Wirraway really frightened him.

**Did he talk to you about his army life when you were a young lad?**

No, not really talk about it. I had plenty of access to his training manuals which he had at home. I learnt to read maps and draw army maps,

31:00 I learnt about army hygiene. Saw illustration of building, toilets, you name it, everything the army could do is what he was teaching to the troops under him, so I was teaching myself in my spare time.

**Would you say that your mum had most to do with you when you were growing up because your dad was away so much?**

Oh yes. Lot of influence, yes. When the war had started, and

31:30 we were living at Alderley, everyone was encourage to do something for the war effort, she got involved with making camouflage nets. So she, with several hundred others in the big army hall at Kelvin Grove, were making camouflage nets out of cord, actually fishing nets. Cord, very pliable. But when the Yanks came along they had very different ideas, they used wire netting, machine made, and you didn't need a hundred persons fiddling with sticks and

32:00 thread to make nets. The wire netting did the same job. They were using wire netting, we went on using string netting.

**Had your dad come from a military family?**

Not direct, with my mother's side of the family, they're the Irish side, they're priests and poets.

32:30 My father's side are Sweeneys, that's English as in lawyers. The Morgan side, his father, they're Welsh, they're the soldiers and the pirates. I prefer the pirates myself, I've always had this craze for square sailed boats. Even as a little kid I was making boats with square sails, I did make a copy of Endeavour, about that long, Captain Cook's Endeavour, with oblong

33:00 sails, a sailing model, used to sail, beautiful boat. I still have my own pirate flag today. So I think I have inherited some of the pirate ancestry. The Morgan side also produced politicians, I still prefer the pirates.

**Your dad joined as a career army officer, do you know why that was?**

33:30 He went to Duntroon, he had to be selected for that, it just wasn't open to everybody. 1919 he graduated, I still have his commission which is an official document signed by Baron Forsyth, appointing him as a lieutenant in His Majesty's Armed Forces of Australia.

**What about your grandfather, was he in the First World War? .**

34:00 My father's father? I doubt it, he was working in the coal mines and also a coal miners' union rep. And he finished up in gaol over some matter and his fellow trade unionists wouldn't bail him out. So when he got out of gaol he quit being a coal miner, quit being in a union and went to work for employers. He had to

34:30 change sides or he wouldn't have a job. And he went up higher in rank and got a better job working for

the opposition. One of those queer things. My mother's father, an Irishman, migrant from Ireland. They had ten children I think it was, he finally went off to South America, I have a card that my mother gave to me that he

35:00 sent back to the family, he was selling some sort of combined hair oil and snake oil that you also drank to cure your ills. I think he was a typical Irish confidence man somewhere in South America. I did write to the police in Argentina trying to trace him, what happened to him, but they didn't have a record. I'm thinking every chance, he, being Irish, got involved in every damn revolution and possibly got shot by a firing squad, which that would be the Irish side of him.

35:30 My side, the Morgans, we'd either win the war or we'd start running and they couldn't catch us. With the English side, they want to argue about the legal side of it all. And the rest of the ancestry, I didn't know anything of them, they had all come and gone before I was born.

**How aware were you of the ANZAC [Australia and New Zealand Army Corps] tradition?**

36:00 Oh very much aware of it, I was a bookworm then, I still am today, bookworm when I was a kid. I did have a book dealing with Gallipoli, pictures, photographs, so forth. I must have read that several times when I was in primary school. So I knew a lot about Gallipoli, the ANZACs, very much. My father also wore the Australian slouch hat as well as his peaked cap so I knew the history of the slouch hat.

36:30 **What interested you most about the Gallipoli story?**

Oh the whole thing was interesting, it was one big tragedy. But I learnt just by observing, when the enemy are up high in good positions and you're down low, don't try to run up the hill to kill them because they can easily kill you down the hill. Bullets go down hill faster than you can run up the hill, that's how it works out.

37:00 **What other book influenced you when you were a young man?**

Oh, after the war in Europe started there was a small magazine that, maybe that big, would be available in the bookshop newsagent's, it was called The First Six Months of the War and it might have cost a shilling, one shilling. Plenty of photographs of what was happening in Europe, plenty of text to read. About nine months later a second one came out,

37:30 The Second Six Months of the War, similar. About another nine months later a third one came out, The Third Six Months of the War, then it stopped, the war went on for six years, that was twelve six months, and that poor book lasted only three runs. The paper shortage in England wiped it out, they couldn't print any more copies. But it was a very educational book showing me as a kid what was happening in Europe.

**You were reading comics too?**

38:00 The comics I was reading, some were English, some were Yank. I'm sure from memory it was the (UNLCEAR) and the Aeropilots comic that ran a section on how to fly an aeroplane. How to work the joy stick, how to work the pedals etcetera. That's how I learnt to fly, out of a comic, and I'm sure it was still the same comic many years later, they used different aircraft as the years progressed

38:30 and it had this picture of a black aeroplane, claimed to be the secret, top secret P-61 Norfolk Black Widow night fighter that should never have appeared in a comic. Time up?

**We might just change tapes there.**

38:53 **End of tape**

## Tape 2

00:30 **Let's talk a bit if you can about moving around as a child, did you find that difficult?**

As a child, no. You just do what you're told as a child, no, no. Changing schools didn't worry me, it would worry some kids, it didn't worry me.

**How about friends?**

Changed friends, one adjusts, adapts to changes like that.

**Do you remember any particular friends you made and left in the early days?**

01:00 Well I remember about 1934, I think it was, the convent school Maryborough, we were all little kids of course those days. There was one red headed kid, I forget his name, and three or four of the other little kids had grabbed him down near the fence at school and they were bullying him, knocking him around. Well I guess it must have been the Welsh side of me came out and the English side, I walked

01:30 down there and told them to quit or I'd bash the lot of them, four or five other little kids, and they stopped bullying this other kid. So at my age of about six or seven I stopped one kid being bashed by other little kids. Sounds stupid, little kids fighting like that. I had to step in and be the school policeman.

**How did you get the status or bulk to become the school policeman? Were you a tough kid?**

No, I'm basically a coward, I'll turn and run like

02:00 buggery. Well sometimes I'll turn and run, other times I'll stand and fight.

**Did you fight much growing up?**

No, not much, no.

**What sort of a kid were you?**

I don't really know, I could never see me as other people could see me. I was quiet at times, noisy other times, a bookworm other times, sticky-beaking other times. I liked the movies of course, we didn't have television when I was a kid,

02:30 you had to go out to the movies, the Saturday matinee. When we lived at Alderley I could walk down to Newmarket shopping centre with one shilling, pay a penny for the tram, Newmarket to Brisbane city, get into the movie matinee movie in the afternoon for fourpence, no sixpence it was. Come out and buy a big hamburger for fourpence and a penny tram back home. All on one shilling. Today the same kid might

03:00 pay five, six dollars, or parents might take him in a twenty thousand dollar motor car. All I had was one shilling.

**What sort of pictures did you like?**

Well we had Tarzan of the Apes, things like that. Buster Crabbe, what did he play? Oh gosh, I think that was the same Buster Crabbe, I think, who lost his head in the Thames river when illegally diving under a visiting Russian battleship. And somehow he lost his head, they found his

03:30 body but never his head. I'm sure he was the main actor, Buck Rogers, that's what it was. Buck Rogers and his girlfriend Wilma, Doctor Zarkov and the dog, I forget the dog's name. I think, quite a muscular man, like a poor man's Tarzan. I think he became a commando type of person in World War II

04:00 in England. Movies like that, comedies and so forth.

**Was it in Brisbane?**

Brisbane, yes, yes. And Technicolour hadn't been invented. Movies were all black, white and grey.

**Can you tell us a bit about the picture palace at Newmarket, what sort of cinema was it?**

Newmarket, great big tin shed. I think the seats were the canvas ones

04:30 like deck chairs from memory. Quite a few theatres were that type of seating over the years. It was only the big main theatres in the city that had upholstered leather seats. Plastic hadn't been invented so they weren't covered in plastic they were genuine leather seats. And genuine rubber. But as you went out in the suburbs and even out in the country, out in the country you'd be possibly sitting on a wooden bench, and possibly no roof on the theatre.

05:00 Four walls so the public couldn't look in and cheat, no roof, when the dew came down everybody got wet. That didn't matter as long as you saw the movie. I think the first movie I saw was in Maryborough as a kid, I think it was a silent movie, that's how far back I go in movies.

**Did you go every week, or every couple of weeks, how often?**

Well in those days I think I possibly went every few weeks. During World War II at Amberley

05:30 the Yanks had their own open air movie theatre. I went nearly every night. No charge, they just walked in and sat down in the open air and everybody joined them.

**Can you tell us a bit about Brisbane in the time before the war? What sort of city was it?**

Well before the war, I being just a kid, we lived in New Farm, just on Brunswick Street

06:00 with the trams running up and down. To me in those days it would have been a quiet place. There was a small shop in that shopping centre and an odd looking man smiled at me one day and gave me a postage stamp, my mother told me it was a Japanese postage stamp. He was the first Japanese person I ever saw. Some time later when we moved to Alderley

06:30 near Newmarket there were Chinese working the market gardens, selling their fruit and vegetables over the back of the hill on Newmarket creek. So there was a Japanese laundry man in New Farm, Chinese market gardeners at Newmarket. But in the USA it's the opposite, you have a Chinese laundry and Japanese market gardens. There were so many Japanese market gardeners in California, thousands

were locked up, interned,

07:00 in World War II. But they also raised a whole battalion of Japanese Americans and they fought in Italy against the Italians and against the Germans.

**New Farm and Newmarket are both just suburbs of Brisbane today, were they less citified?**

Oh gosh, yes. In those days they just stopped short of being hillbillies. When we lived at Alderley, the local civilians they were hillbillies. When I left,

07:30 I just said Alderley, no Amberley, the locals there were hillbillies. Like if a woman came into our shop and asked were our blocks of ice fresh, have you ever seen a stale block of ice? I haven't seen yet, they were a pool of water. We sold ice at the shop at Amberley because they didn't have refrigerators, they had ice boxes. They had to buy ice from us. How hillbilly can you get?

08:00 **What did the people around Brisbane do mainly?**

1930s, a lot of them didn't do anything. Depression years, no work. Before we left Sydney my father had been stationed at Milsons Point on the southern end of the harbour bridge. He told me, it must have been in the '60s, that he and the other officers there, they were laid off for two weeks. Permanent army officers, defending Australia if they had to, laid off for two weeks

08:30 without any pay, they were public servants, army officers, because the government didn't have any money to pay them. He told me, "We had nothing to do, we went back to work and we worked for two weeks without any pay." That was the 1930s Depression, in about 1931.

**Do you have images of that Depression that stuck with you as a child?**

Yes, especially when we lived at Maryborough.

09:00 I remember men coming to our house, not a lot at one time, just one at a time, asking my mother could they chop firewood for a meal. And she being what she was, "Yes." We had a pyramid of chopped wood at the back of the house and she was feeding these men every so often. They were coming around looking for food because they had to tramp around, they were unemployed. The dole might have been five shillings a week in those days. My mother

09:30 found a mark on our front gate, that was a secret sign, come in here and you'll get a meal if you chop some wood.

**What did these men look like?**

Ordinary men, just men. But apparently from what I've read, I don't remember it happening, I didn't see it happen, if somebody in those days got their dole money in Canberra this week, they'd get next week's in Goulburn, they'd have a week to get to Goulburn.,

10:00 after that the next would be in Yass, they'd have a week to get to Yass, the unemployed kept moving. The idea was, according to some historians, that politicians didn't want too many unemployed in one place, they might riot.

**What signs of hardship were there in your own home?**

None really because we were rather wealthy, my father would have been on, possibly at one stage,

10:30 one pound ten shillings a week as a lieutenant, possibly two pounds a week as a captain. I think a captain today would be on about one thousand two hundred dollars a week. Compared to the present average wage of about four hundred, five hundred. So we were reasonably wealthy. And besides, a packet of ten cigarettes cost sixpence, today a packet of twenty cigarettes can cost ten dollars. Things were much cheaper for us

11:00 who had money to spend.

**So obviously if you say you were wealthy you had more than others around you?**

Oh yes.

**What sort of signs of wealth did you have in the family then, how did you know you were doing all right?**

Well I did have shoes and socks, I did go to a private school. A lot of people couldn't afford to have shoes and socks for their kids, or go to a private school. The private school was the local convent. They might have charged a fee of a shilling a week for kids to go to the convent school. And my mother

11:30 also donated money to the church every so often. So we were quite well off as a young officer's family.

**How much influence did the church have in your life growing up?**

Oh it influenced my mother an awful lot, being an Irish Catholic, yes. My father it didn't influence very much. It influenced me until I was eighteen and I quit and got out, I haven't been back in organised religion since.

12:00 **What sort of things would you do? Obviously you went to church every Sunday?**

Oh yes, had to or we'd burn in hell. Going to burn in hell anyway I think, church or no church. I think being in hell would be more fun than being in heaven, all goodies in heaven, baddies have more fun.

**The accommodation's not as good though.**

The accommodation, yes, yes.

**What memories do you have of church, growing up?**

Of church?

12:30 The church schools were strict. The convent with the nuns, the Marist Brothers, they were strict. As I got older and left the convent and went to the Marist Brothers we had to have good manners. We doffed our hat to a lady or took it off completely, we said, "No thanks," "Yes please," good manners were whacked into us. It's still in me after all these years. I still doff

13:00 my bicycle helmet to a lady sometimes out of habit and good training.

**Did it come naturally to you, this sort of politeness?**

No, it was whacked into me.

**Can you remember an occasion where you actually got punished at school?**

Whacked? Good heavens yes, it's the best thing that can ever happen to a kid, I recommend it thoroughly. With the Marist Brothers at Ashgrove our toughest brother and well loved Brother Harold,

13:30 he had a strap made from a horse's cropper. That's the strap from the saddle over the horses bum, a loop and the tail was pulled through it. That stops the saddle moving forward. And he had one of those cut short, and he'd put his hand through the loop, and he'd line ten or twenty of us up, bend over, 'bang, bang, bang, bang, bang'. It worked well. I haven't forgotten my manners or the subjects ever since.

**What sort of things would be bad enough to get you a whack?**

14:00 Not doing your homework. Giving cheek to somebody you shouldn't have given to. Bad language, as in saying the word 'bloody' could get you a whack. They weren't that fierce. Some people have an image of the religious schools being fierce with punishment, but when we got whacked we remembered it. Was the whacking at the time, that might have been fierce, but the rest was okay.

14:30 **What was the worst trouble that you ever got into as a kid?**

The worst trouble. I think building a volcano out of mud under our high block house in New Farm. I got the volcano going very well, smoke coming out of it, built up under the house. The neighbours called the fire brigade, there was only me and my little volcano under the house.

15:00 **How do you build a volcano?**

Out of mud? You just get a heap of mud, build it up, you push a hole down there, a hole down there. Shove paper in and set fire to it, nothing to it. The worst trouble my brother got into was at Alderley when the dunny, a pan and a box of sawdust was attached to the house, he started smoking when he was about seven, and of course he was in the toilet, he was just sitting there and he threw the butt in the sawdust, that set the sawdust on fire,

15:30 that set the dunny on fire, that set the house on fire. I and my volcano was harmless compared to his efforts.

**Was it just the one brother?**

Yes, one was enough.

**And he was a little bit older than you?**

No, four years younger but thought he was older.

**So how did you two get on?**

Terrible, fight, fight, fight, I don't know why.

**Were you a mean older brother?**

Oh to him I would have been, to me

16:00 he was just a nuisance. It might have been jealousy in me, I don't know, but we were never compatible. He was a red headed, I was a black headed. He was short and wide, he never got bigger, he got older and taller and wider. I just got taller and blacker head. But what caused the friction between us I have no idea. But one thing I enjoyed in New Farm, we had a tram line running down past our house and down to New Farm park, one tram going down,

16:30 another tram coming up. My mate who lived somewhere nearby, he'd be on the other side on the other footpath with a tennis racquet, I'd be on this side with a tennis racquet. And one tennis ball, we'd wait until the tram would come along and then hit the tennis ball, hoping it would go right through the tram to the other kid on the other side. It did happen quite often, sometimes it didn't, and there's a passenger sitting in the tram with a tennis ball bouncing around inside the tram wondering where it came from. Well it came from me or

17:00 my mate.

**Can you describe those open trams to someone who has never seen one?**

Well they weren't really, they were open in the middle, they had roofs on top. They weren't open on the top. Trams then were fantastic, they got rid of them some years ago which I think was a shame. They were built like battering rooms at both ends, there was a cabin on each end with the middle open with the seats and aisle with the conductor going up and down.

17:30 Sydney at one stage had their toast rack trams where the seats ran all the way through. People crammed in, people hung on the outside, the conductor hung on the outside, how conductors weren't killed in Sydney I don't know. I mean Brisbane, they had the luxury of walking up and down the aisle, and one of the things that made them tram men stand out was that they wore caps like the French Foreign Legion. A white round cap with a peak thing.

18:00 Yes, you could swear that they were absent without leave from the French Foreign Legion working as trammies [tramways staff] in Brisbane. The trams for me were very good. They were built like battering rams, I know because two of them ran into the back of my panel vans on two different occasions. They certainly hit cars and trucks very hard. Now they've been replaced by trolley buses, but trams for me were much more enjoyable.

18:30 **Is that how you got around most of the time?**

A lot of the time yes. Long distances yes, but being a kid I just liked to run, run somewhere, run down to the river bank, get stuck in the mud. Run back home covered in mud.

**Did your family have a car?**

No, my father was never crazy about motor cars. I think motor cars those days, in the '30s and early '40s,

19:00 they would be, still be expensive for the average person to buy. Could have been cheap to run, petrol would have been cheap, registration, third party would have been cheap compared with today. My father was not mechanically minded. He was a terrible mechanic when he did anything. He once put a new letter box on our front fence, problem was he put it on back to front and the postman couldn't get mail into it.

19:30 That's my father's ability in erecting mail boxes, he was far better as an administrator.

**Did you do much with your father as a child?**

Not much, not much. Went to the movies, that's about all I can remember, he and I, my brother and my mother did as an outing.

**You mentioned you had tennis racquets, did you play sports? What sports did you play?**

Oh with the

20:00 brothers we had cricket rammed into us, tennis, football, I stopped playing rounders, being an Australia version of baseball, stopped playing Australian Rules, which is I think today is what NFL [National Football League], stopped playing them about 1936. I still preferred the rugby in those days, union or league.

**Was that**

20:30 **the popular choice when you lived in Queensland or Sydney, it was always league over Australian Rules?**

Oh Australian Rules was actually a foreign game in Queensland. Victoria has always been foreign to Queensland, which was the home of Australian Rules, as it was called it my day. In the 1960s when I lived in Brisbane, Jack Handers, one of the local big Holden dealers, he was crazy about Australian Rules

21:00 football, he was trying to push it as much as he could, promote it in Brisbane. But it's very hard to get interest in such a thing, they're so imbued with rugby league or union.

**Can you describe your house in Newmarket, the one with trams out the front?**

High blocked, toilet underneath with a pull chain instead of the sawdust box.

21:30 Wind up telephone. I thought I was smart by dialling a certain number, I forget what it was, someone on

the other end always said, "Water police." I did that two or three times a day for a while, about a week I think. Then my mother found me and told me to stop it because we had to pay for those phone calls. There was no such thing as electronic telephone systems in those days so the water police

22:00 never knew who was making calls to them and never talking. I just dialled the number sort of thing and someone said, "Water police," and I hung up.

**How did you make a call on a wind up telephone? Did you have to go through an operator or what would you do?**

Let me think. When I worked a telephone exchange in Gladstone, Queensland, there is five Gladstones in Australia, I worked in the one

22:30 in Queensland. The night shift on the local telephone exchange, I'm sure they were wind up telephones where you would talk to an operator. I think that the telephone at Newmarket was still wind up and a dial combined. The wind up was the generator inside that put the electricity through somehow, I don't quite know how it worked but it did work.

**So can you just**

23:00 **describe what it looked like and how you used it?**

Well you'd take the receiver, we called the receiver the ear bit. I'm sure we had a wind up phone, it wasn't a pedal phone, you didn't pedal it, I know that. I forget the rest, but nevertheless it got through to the water police I know that. I'm sure I didn't ask somebody for the number, if I had the police could have checked back and found that those calls were coming from

23:30 the same subscriber phone at a certain address, Brunswick Street, New Farm, all the time. And they possibly would have sent someone around to see what the heck was going on. No one came, so it must have went through a telephone system that couldn't be traced back. I was only about ten or twelve, thought it was great, and then my mother said, "We have to pay so stop it."

**What else was in that house?**

Three bedrooms,

24:00 wood stove. I'm not, oh I think maybe the refrigerator in the kitchen was electric. We did not have a decent form of refrigerator, no, we got a gas refrigerator in Alderley, so in New Farm we must have had an ice box. The old fashioned ice box and the meat safe, which was a large tin box

24:30 with a door, someone had hammered lots of holes in the shaft, hammered nails in it or something. You hung it up, put your meat inside it, kept the flies off it, keep it cool. After a week it would be rotten and you couldn't use it. So we got our first refrigerator, gas operated, in Alderley, all before that it had to be ice boxes. Ice on the top, food on the bottom.

**What sort of food did your mother cook?**

25:00 Vegetables for a start, meat, fish. I don't remember much tinned stuff being used. I don't remember much of a variety of tinned or packet, nothing like today, you go to the supermarket, they might have ten different brands of baked beans, all different brands, all the same size, varying prices, ten different packets of something else. In those days there wasn't such a variety.

25:30 **What sort of food shops or deliveries would you get?**

Milk delivery at Alderley, milk was still delivered to us by the milkman, horse drawn cart. He milked his own cows, the milk came in big drums, vats I think they call it. He took milk out of that in a pint pot walked up to the front door tip his pint pot into our pint pot, go back to

26:00 his cart, my mother having left the money on the front step for him to take. That was the milk delivery. Bread, one brand of bread, it was called 'bread'. Today you go to the supermarket, ten, fifteen different brands, thick, sandwich, thin, or stale, fruit loaf. There was nothing like that, it was just bread and you had to have a bread knife yourself and cut it up, slice it.

26:30 Every so often my mother would send me to the shop to get half a loaf of bread which you could get. I would eat half of the half loaf of bread before I got home. So all she got was an empty shell, "Where's the rest of it?" "In here." So I had to go back and get another half a loaf of bread. Milkshakes I think from memory were about threepence.

27:00 You could get a penny ice cream and a half penny ice block. All those kinds have gone, once World War II got into full swing here in Australia, half penny ice blocks disappeared, the threepenny ice creams had a half penny tax put on them they become threepenny halfpence. The halfpence added was the war tax. I think it's still on ice creams today.

27:30 **The war tax?**

Well why take it off, people get used to these things. Don't take them off.

**Get some money back off those Americans.**

Yes.

**And what was an ice block like in those days?**

Well I bought my first ice block when my father was at the Water Street Depot, no it wasn't, yes it was. The Water Street Depot in where was it?

28:00 Water Street was in Brisbane. I asked for an ice block at the corner shop near the army depot. Went back to where my father was, I took one lick and didn't like it. I took it back and told a fib, my father doesn't want me to have this ice block can I have an ice cream, sure enough he took the ice block back and gave me a small halfpenny ice cream. That was my first confidence trick

28:30 ever and it was the best one I ever worked. That was about 1936 I think it was. I don't know what he did with that licked sarsaparilla ice block.

**They were home-made practically?**

In those days practically everything was home-made, practically everything yes. Very primitive, very primitive.

**Were some of those things better than they are today?**

Well there were no synthetics available

29:00 so you couldn't make plastic ice cream. I know so much about sausage meat from the Amberley shop. I walk into a supermarket today and I'll say can I have a quarter to a kilogram of the plastic Devon please. I say it loud and all the customers start laughing, so do the shop assistants. And I say they don't make Devon like they used to and they don't make shop assistants like they used to either,

29:30 by that time everybody is falling over with laughter. The Devon does not taste like Devon, it does taste like plastic.

**It's not very nice to find out what they put in that stuff.**

Usually all the wastage. Bits and pieces of animals maybe people, I don't know. We have that many disappearing people why shouldn't they put them into sausages, why not.

**You mentioned that there was one Japanese market gardener?**

30:00 Yep, Chinese market gardener, I never met them.

**Japanese laundry man.**

Yes.

**Were there many different European cultural groups?**

In those days no. When I was with the Marist Brothers, no it wasn't, it was the convent at Windstains near Eagle Farm.

30:30 One boy there was a Russian refugee. Russian. White skin, no Aborigines as I might have mentioned, he was learning English, I don't remember much about him, but he was the first non-Australian kid I ever met.

**Were you identified yourself as an Australia kid?**

Those days yes,

31:00 Ginger Meggs was my hero. I even had a waistcoat at one stage and I walked around the Newmarket garden area trying to copy, be a clone of Ginger Meggs, bare feet, shorts, oh yes very Australian. Very much.

**What did being Australian mean in those days?**

In those days, oh little kids wouldn't know. We were just kids, we just copied our heroes whoever our hero was

31:30 but we wouldn't really know too much about being an Australian. It's only when you started to be involved with reading history and so forth. We learnt a lot of history in those days.

**What kind of history did you learn at school in those days?**

Well we knew all about Francis Drake and the Spanish Armada. Mazeppa's last ride. Ever hear about Mazeppa.

**Don't believe I have.**

Think he's Hungarian from memory, one of their heroes. And the baddies grabbed him and tied him

32:00 onto the horse backwards and then flogged the horse who ran away fast. I don't know where he got to, I forget the rest of the story but that was Mazeppa's last ride. Well we had that. Then the Queensland State Government printed and supplied the reading books for all schools, both government or privately owned. We had the same standard book each year, different book got better and better. We had such a wide knowledge of Captain Cook, history, you name it.

32:30 It was really fantastic for those times.

**You said that Ginger Meggs was a hero of yours, what other heroes did you have?**

Buck Rogers in the movies. I think they were the only two I had. We didn't have the pop band groups like we have today and all that hysteria, nothing like that. In the movie theatres we had the cartoons, oh Mickey Mouse when you were a little kid.

33:00 But you grow out of Mickey Mouse, and Buck Rogers and Ginger Meggs replace Mickey Mouse. Can't remember any others.

**What about sporting heroes?**

Oh Don Bradman was everybody's sporting hero. I had that much cricket rammed into me at school I don't like playing cricket any more, I'll watch the highlights on television but I haven't played it for a hundred years I think, that's what it feels like. I finished up disliking it because it was rammed into me.

33:30 But Don Bradman yes, we were all crazy over Don Bradman.

**Did you watch the cricket test matches at all?**

On television?

**No at Brisbane on the ground?**

Oh no I never went to the ground no, I don't think I ever went to a sporting event of any kind when I was a kid. The school sporting event, the local school sports, yes, because I was involved in it, had to be. But others, no. In Brisbane the favourite

34:00 yearly thing would have to be the Brisbane Exhibition at the Exhibition ground. I think they called it exhibition because everybody made an exhibition of themselves. I still remember one particular exhibition they had there was the globe of death, a big metal globe and a poor lion was allowed loose in it. And two or three men on screaming motorbikes

34:30 came through a hatch and rode around in this big globe. That poor lion. I think it was eventually closed off by the RSPCA Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals]. It was either cruelty to the lion or cruelty to a motorbike rider, I'm not sure which. Queensland never got things quite right.

**What else happened at this exhibition?**

Well there was a bearded lady, I don't know if it was a lady, I think it was a man possibly

35:00 dressed up as a lady and we suckers paid a shilling or something to get in and look at this lady. Then there was Ubandi, the African midget native, a pigmy so we were told. About that high, dressed in skins, shield, spear, all that sort of thing. We kids would stand there looking at this little person and all of a sudden this little person would go, 'Roar,'

35:30 and of course we'd go, "Ahh," backwards. What else was there?

**Was it like an agricultural show?**

Oh yes, it was an agricultural show but we kids weren't interested in the parade of the cattle, we were interested in the entertainment side of it. There was the boxing, Sharman's troupe and all that sort of thing. All entertainment. Rifle shooting, pay so much and fire a .22 rifle down a long tube,

36:00 there wasn't a range where somebody could get hurt. And if you hit your target they'd retrieve your target for you and you could walk away with this target in your hand showing how good or how bad a shot you were with that rifle. But there was no limitation, little kids or old men could use that rifle, there were no laws like there are today. A lot of those things have disappeared.

**Was that the only time growing up that you used a gun?**

As a child yes, yes. I played with my fathers pistol, the revolver, big heavy

36:30 thing. I think it was that big, but it wasn't, it was a heavy pistol, quite a large one. But the .22 at the exhibition was the only gun I used as a child.

**Did you have any ambition to become a soldier like your father?**

No. I just automatically did things, I just joined the CMF because it was there.

**What sort of things did you want to be when you were younger?**

- 37:00 It's possible, if Japan had not come into the war, I would have went on to be a Marist Brother or a Marist Priest. The Japanese in the war made me change my mind completely because it was on to Amberley, then in '48 I quit the Catholic Church and as I say, today I still prefer the pirates to the priests and the politicians.
- 37:30 **Was there any inkling that there was going to be a war in your family with your father in the army?**
- Not before 1939 and certainly not before the Japanese came into it, no, no inkling. But he never spoke of it.
- How much did Queensland at the time look outwards to the outside world?**
- Oh no, no. Don't be silly, it always looked inward, always.
- What were the sort of things that Queenslanders were interested in?**
- 38:00 I think survival would be the big thing in those days, 1930s. To me, I'm sure we still had the Depression on until Japan came into the war. December 1941 was Pearl Harbour, 1930 to '41 is eleven years. To me it was eleven years' Depression up until Japan came into the war, I reckon the Japanese really pulled us out of the Depression.
- 38:30 **And it was mainly agricultural industry around where you were?**
- Oh it (UNCLEAR0 country the agricultural, in the cities you were just relying on the local shops, the local factories, whatever they might be. Many things did employ a lot of labour back in those days. The tram system for instance in Brisbane, every tram had a driver and a conductor. Today where buses are used
- 39:00 it's the driver only. So half of all those jobs are gone, disappeared.
- When you say Queensland was inward looking, were you a Queensland first?**
- Oh very much a Queensland first, the rest of the world didn't exist. And even in the 1960s I originated the 'Buy Queensland made' campaign. That's how chauvinistic a Queensland I was.
- And now you've been living in the ACT for ...?**
- 39:30 Well I know of three refugees from Queensland: John Sinclair, the environmentalist, Bjelke-Petersen chased him out of Queensland; the former police commissioner, Ray Whitterod, who died just a couple of months ago, he left Queensland, I read his biography, he got to the stage where he had a pistol beside his bed at night and he was a police commissioner; and the third one I know of is me, I became a refugee in 1968.
- We have to stop there and change the tape.**
- 40:00 **End of tape**

## Tape 3

- 00:30 **John, how aware were you of America as you were growing up?**
- Not very much at all. I doubt if I even realised that a lot of the movies that I saw came from America. I knew of Christopher Columbus from our school book, the great Queensland Government reading book. Christopher Columbus well mentioned there.
- 01:00 When we did history we did the colonies of North America rebelling against England, the French Montcalm being beaten by the English general on the Plains of Abraham. We had a lot of American history pushed into us but as for American influence on our everyday life I think it was non-existent. Never knew a thing about anything like that. Today it's different,
- 01:30 we have so much radio and so much television, easily see American influence coming through.
- Did you listen to the radio?**
- Yes, we had the old fashioned large cabinet. Little tiny dial thing number, you turned your dials to what your numbers, and you could pick up your radio program. We used to listen to the seven o'clock news. Before that
- 02:00 there was a program called 'How the Other Half Lives'. That was like a three or four minutes program, a drama or comedy of some kind. I can't remember anything of them, then the news would come on, then we'd have comedy programs. I think a lot of people relied on radio because it was there and they didn't have much other alternative. Now the alternative is home video, technicolour

02:30 went down the movies, technicolour on television. The things that are available today just about wiped out radio of the old days.

**Do you remember your father discussing the war with your mum at the dinner table?**

No no. If they did any talking about any bad news they would have done it behind my back and maybe kept it quiet from me. After my father had left the army and

03:00 we'd been at Amberley sometime I asked him some day about the Battle of Milne Bay, all he said was, "The Japanese were tough soldiers, they came ashore, they got stuck in the mud, we shot them." He never condemned the Japanese as a people, or the Germans or Italians, nor did my mother. I never heard him say anything anti-racist, anti-ethnic in their lives.

**03:30 Can you tell us or recount for us your impressions of the build-up towards war at that time?**

The war in Europe? I don't think we had any build-up in Australia. I think there was certainly build-up in Europe with the Nazis getting into power.

**Just watch your microphone there.**

04:00 Europe of course was in turmoil during the '20s and '30s, especially Germany.

**What can you remember hearing of Germany at that time?**

Hardly anything. I do remember the Spanish Civil War. From memory that was about 1933 to 1936 or '37, but I don't remember much about the Nazi build-up

04:30 or Nazi preparation or even English preparation for war. The German attack on Poland, from what I remember and what I've read, was sudden, they weren't arguing for months about it, the Germans just suddenly attacked.

**Did that change the home life for you when war broke out?**

War in Europe? No, no. it was only when Japan

05:00 came into the war, that's when our life changed.

**What was your father doing at the time Australia went to war with Germany?**

1939, from memory he was attached to the Water Street Depot as a captain. We lived in New Farm, might have been Alderley. Just a slight difference in timing and where we

05:30 were living at the time.

**Do you recall hearing the speech from Menzies on the radio, the declaration of war?**

I remember his deep voice saying something about declaring war. I do remember seeing Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of England and Britain, on the news in the movie theatre,

06:00 when he came back from Munich he stepped off the plane and he waves a piece of paper, peace, that went all wrong for him of course. Remember hearing him declare war. Thatcher was on television declaring war on Argentina, but no one declared war in Korea, Vietnam or the Gulf. It's peace all the time, people shooting is peace.

**06:30 At that time did you feel that you wanted to run off and join the army when you were old enough?**

It was only when we were at Amberley and we sort of ran away to join the army. I was under eighteen, my mother wouldn't sign the papers so I wasn't allowed by my mother to join the army.

**Can you tell us about that time? Did you run away?**

07:00 Well I didn't run away, I just wanted to join the army, maybe to get away from Amberley and the business, I don't remember, but I was under eighteen and she wouldn't sign the papers.

**Did you have sort of a burning desire to go and ...?**

No, not a burning desire. I think I just wanted a change. If somebody had said, "Join the navy," "Join the air force," "Join the army," "Join the foreign legion," I would have done any of them just for a change.

**Was there any specific thing you wanted to be when you grew up at that stage?**

07:30 Not really, I had no ambition, I just worked, did things and enjoyed myself, but no actual ambition. No real target. A lot of people do have targets and they work all of their lives, some people get there some don't. A lot of people just go on and on but no target, that's how I was.

**You said that you went to church, had you developed a sense of spiritual faith?**

08:00 I don't know about that. Spiritual faith, do you mean deep inner faith?

**Yes.**

No I never had that, even when I was interested in being a Marist Brother or a priest when I was younger, to me it wasn't deep. I think I would have become rather argumentative as a brother or a priest if I found corruption anywhere and it wasn't fixed in the church, if I had stumbled across paedophilia and it wasn't fixed.

08:30 Had a bit of a rebel here lately in Father Collins I think it is, he now lives down (UNCLEAR) way. I think he's been a bit of a rebel, no longer acting as a priest from memory, he is still a priest but he doesn't run a service on Sunday. So I wouldn't have minded being a priest like him, a rebel.

**You said you may have become a priest if Japan had not entered the war, was there a particular role model you looked up towards?**

No not really.

09:00 The Marist Brothers influenced me a lot with their teaching standards and their morals, their controls, yes. Very influenced. As I say, I was interested in being a Marist Brother or a priest only because I had so much experience with them. If I had been with Christian Brothers or something else I might have been interested in being a priest for them.

**Why is it you didn't want to follow in your father's footsteps and become a military officer?**

09:30 I don't think it interested me that much. I don't think I had any real targets until I started the advertising business in Brisbane in the 60s. My target then was to make money. I just ambled along. I think thousands did it then and thousands do it today.

**Around the time that war broke out, do you recall what your mother's**

10:00 **reaction was?**

When World War II started in Europe I don't recall the reaction, I think she would have had some. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbour I don't remember her having any reaction there, although I'm sure she did have some thinking of losing her husband in the war. She might have had it, might have talked about it to him and others, friends, family. I never heard her talking about it.

10:30 **Was the relationship between your mum and dad a happy relationship when you were growing up?**

On and off. My mother was very jealous and I still remember a particular incident when my father's brother, Charles, he was a member for parliament here, Charles Morgan, Charles in Sydney had written to my father up in Queensland a letter

11:00 and my mother opened it before she gave it to my father. And in the letter Charles had written, "How is Dale?" Well my mother went raving mad over this Dale woman, "Who is Dale?" She gave my father hell for a week, he told her nothing. He got lots of cold shoulder and hot tongue. At the end of the week he told her, "That is Dale Carnegie, he wrote a book 'How to Win Friends and Influence People.'"

11:30 My mother had been raving mad for a week over Dale Carnegie and didn't know it.

**Why didn't your dad tell her?**

Well that was my Dad's sense of humour. I've done similar, I'm terrible. The sense of humour came out in my father and in myself. Since my mother was so berserk he just let her mislead herself, he wasn't misleading her. I think she even

12:00 phoned Charlie from Queensland, Charlie was in Brisbane, oh in Canberra, "What's this Dale thing?" Charlie just wouldn't tell her. "Ask Harold, your husband, he'll tell you." Harold came in, terrible thing to do to a woman but she did it to herself really. Yeah.

**Had you developed an interest in aeroplanes at this time?**

12:30 Well being a kid I always liked ships and aeroplanes. I suppose a thousand years ago kids would have liked horses, cows, things like that. Carts, wagons, even today, kids have changed, they like computers, electronic things. In my day we didn't have that. We had Meccano sets, you could buy a model aeroplane and build it out of wood, balsa wood

13:00 and paper. I did get one, I think I paid sixpence for it. No it wasn't in Alderley, it was in New Farm, sixpence for a model aeroplane, bits of balsa wood and paper, and the instructions said, 'Cement the balsa wood together.' I still remember going around a building centre near the shops looking for cement to cement the

13:30 balsa wood together. If they had said glue I would have got some glue. But if I had used cement that model aeroplane would never have flown. I think I did get it built somehow, but it was a mess, being a little kid. So that was the start of it. But over the years I got a bigger and bigger interest, when I got to Amberley of course there were that many different types of aircraft, English and Yank. It was horrendous.

- 14:00 Since then of course I have learnt to fly and I have made lots of model aeroplanes, model boats, taught my son to use his hands, use his brains to make model aeroplanes and boats. He is now a fitter and turner by trade and doing scientific work. So the manual ability in me came out in him and now he's doing very good for himself.
- You were around twelve years old when war broke out, do you recall or can you describe for us how**
- 14:30 **things changed in your house?**
- 1939 the Europe war started, no big changes. Europe is on the other side of the world, it might just as well have been on the moon for what the average Australian worried about it. It was only when Japan came into the war and started coming south, that was when we as a nation started to get worried.
- 15:00 **Well you mentioned rationing.**
- We had the rationing, I think that was only when Japan came into the war. From my memory there was no rationing before then. Only after, clothes, some food and petrol. Can't think of anything else that was rationed. We had identity cards, about the size of a postcard. No photographs,
- 15:30 no fingerprints, just my scratchy signature on mine and lots of wording, what use was it? But if you didn't have it on you when they raided like the queues outside the movie theatres, well you were in trouble. You had to be a spy if you didn't have these silly identity cards that could have been forged, faked, counterfeited at any time. Sickly greeny grey colour they were, about the size of a postcard.
- 16:00 **Even for children?**
- Teenagers, I had one, I don't know what little kids had, I don't think they had anything.
- Do you recall other propaganda material that was given out at the time?**
- Somewhere I got a wall chart showing different kinds of aeroplanes, Japanese and ours, silhouettes so that I couldn't shoot the wrong aeroplanes down: I didn't have a gun. I had them on the wall at home, and at the shop at Amberley.
- 16:30 Propaganda, I think it was after Japan came into the war, in Brisbane, Doctor Goddard with his campaign 'One hundred planes for the defence of Australia'. I don't know what planes he meant, what type, he was pushing for more aircraft. I never saw any Australian aircraft, that is
- 17:00 air force aircraft, until Amberley. But when we were at Alderley in those days there was one row of houses behind ours and then from there there was a sloping long paddock right down to Enoggera camp. And it was somewhere around that paddock I heard some planes flying and I looked toward Enoggera camp, three Yankee Flying Fortresses in formation flying south above Enoggera camp.
- 17:30 I'm sure that was General Douglas MacArthur arriving by Flying Fortress. There is plenty of photographs in the history, magazines, newspapers, showing him being greeted on a railway platform in Brisbane city. That's his arrival in Brisbane. I don't believe that, I believe he came by Flying Fortress. MacArthur was a Yank, he knew USA, he knew the Philippines, I'm sure if they had put him on a Queensland train
- 18:00 in Townsville or Cairns to come to Brisbane, he'd look around, "You're fighting a war with a damn toy train set?" Because Queensland train ran on a narrow gauge, his Yankee trains at home were on a wide gauge. Queensland trains could fit inside their carriages, to him it would be a toy train, I think he would be insulted to have to travel from way north Queensland to Brisbane on a toy railway line. He'd just yell out, "Get me a Flying Fortress!" I'm sure they did,
- 18:30 and that's when he was landing in Brisbane, possibly at Archerfield, and it had to be kept quiet, there were three Flying Fortresses in Brisbane, they were great targets for the Japanese to raid if they had any aeroplanes near us. So I'm tipping his landing at Brisbane railway station was a fake.
- Did the work for you dad change? And did you see less of him**
- 19:00 **when the war broke out?**
- Oh yes, I believe at Enoggera I did see less of him, I was still going to school. He possibly put in long hours at the school where he was the head instructor. He had to get men through the training scheme and then into the army again to go off to war, where they had to fight. So we were seeing less and less of him.
- 19:30 **Do you recall the time that he told you that he had to leave Australia, that he had to go overseas?**
- No, no, no. I never saw him and my mother part, I did not know he had really gone off, he did not say farewell to me or my brother, he just wasn't there. I guess he and my mother did have some parting somewhere.
- 20:00 **Why do you think he didn't say goodbye to you?**

I can't think why. It's possible he had too much on his plate, he might have been given one hour's notice, "Pack up, you're leaving," just like that.

**Where, or what was your awareness of where he was going?**

I did not know where he was going, I knew he had gone, I did not know where to. Later on he told me he had been at Townsville

20:30 and then he was at New Guinea in Milne Bay.

**Were you also aware of the Brisbane line at that time?**

No, no no. The Brisbane line crept into our news media sometime later but I do believe top army, navy, air force officers knew things were so bad, they did get out of any danger areas. And anything Brisbane and north would have been a danger area.

21:00 **And did your father advise your mother to move?**

I don't know whose idea it was, he possibly did. Now when I was at the Marist Brother College at Ashgrove, one day we were all told suddenly, "Go home now." It might have been eleven o'clock in the morning we were all sent home. And I remember as I went home, I think I was riding my bicycle, there was lots of small planes flying north over the suburbs.

21:30 We heard later on that hospital ship Centaur had been sunk just off the nearby Queensland coast, sunk by Japanese submarine. Some Japanese submarines also carried aeroplanes on their decks in a special waterproof hangar. English had the same, I think the Yanks had the same also. For all we know, one of those planes could have been used to bomb the three Yankee Fortresses parked at Archerfield. That could have

22:00 happened. But I think it was far worse than what the public was ever told, so there could be some truth in the Brisbane line. But as with any old armies from a hundred years ago or a modern army, the longer their lines of supply are, the bigger the trouble they have, because those lines of supply can be cut for an attack. That's what defeated the Germans in Russia. So maybe it was planned, "Let the Japanese come in," but the Japanese tend to live

22:30 off the land.

**What were you told of the sinking of the Centaur?**

I don't remember much about it, it would have hit the headlines before but I don't remember much. I do remember all the small planes, civilian planes, flying north. They must have been asked to go and search for this submarine.

**Did you miss your father when he went away?**

No I don't think I did. I had years in boarding school because of my mother's sickness

23:00 and I think that just toughened me up. Time not seeing either parent.

**Can you tell us about the time you said you were moved fairly promptly, evacuated out of Brisbane?**

Well I don't know if it was actually promptly. My mother just took my brother and I off to Tambourine Mountain. We just went there, and I just went to, the Marist Brothers school also evacuated, fled

23:30 to the Tambourine Mountain. That's why my mother went there so I could go on schooling with them. So it's possible a lot of people that I don't even know about just left Brisbane. Anyone who was left behind was just left behind.

**Did you feel that you were leaving things behind?**

No, no. The army moved my father so often I just moved when he moved, and moved school to school.

**How long were you up at Tambourine Mountain for?**

24:00 Oh maybe six months.

**And after that time you moved to Amberley and set up the shop, is that right?**

Well my father came out of the army when we went to Amberley, yes.

**Do you recall hearing news of the battles up in the islands at that time?**

Well it would have been front page news in the newspapers we were selling but I can't think of any individual ones. Since then of course I have seen that many Hollywood movies, that many documentaries about the war,

24:30 a lot of them things are still in my mind but mainly from the movie theatre, from reading magazines, newspapers.

**Do you recall your mum writing to your dad or you writing to your dad when he was overseas?**

I wrote to him once from memory, only once. She might have written more often, I think she did. I wrote to him once,

25:00 I don't remember him writing back. It doesn't mean, he actually got my letter, I don't know. It's quite possible that the mail was in ships that were sunk and is still there, I don't know. Or they were in aeroplanes that were shot down. Could be burnt and destroyed inside an aeroplane crash, you just would not know what happened to mail at times. Just because nobody replied doesn't mean that they got your letter. They might have written many times to families

25:30 and for some reason nobody got that mail because it also could have been lost somewhere or destroyed in the system.

**Did you get support from your extended family?**

Support from my extended family?

**Yes, your uncles and aunts?**

Oh, had no support from them, we're up north in Queensland in the

26:00 jungles of Queensland. Even if it was Brisbane, they were all down south, Sydney.

**Did they move the whole school?**

Marist Brothers, didn't move buildings. Only the brothers and students, and they just took over one or two houses at Eagle Heights, Tambourine Mountain, must have moved lots of desks and tables and chairs up there.

**Can you tell us about that move?**

I don't know how they moved,

26:30 I didn't see them moving, when we got there they were already set up. We just went to school in new buildings.

**You must have been a little bit mystified as to why you were doing this, were you?**

No, no. To me it was just another change, I saw so many changes. The only solid things I have had in my life really were ten years in Brisbane and thirty years here in this house. Everything else has been changed, zigzagged. Me or family members.

27:00 **At the time, did you get any training as a kid for air raid drills or something like that might prepare you for a ...?**

I don't remember any of us school kids getting training in case of air raids, no. I think there would have been hit and miss with us school kids, or hit and hit and that was it. But at Alderley my father

27:30 dug a slip trench in the backyard for the four of us to get in and hide if there was an air raid. The architect next door, he didn't use army training manuals, he built an underground hotel room for him and his family. He was an architect.

**This was before your dad went to Milne Bay?**

Before he went to Milne Bay, yes. And I remember being down near Newmarket school walking along barefoot and all that, bunch of people there digging

28:00 trenches there for Newmarket school kids to jump in and hide if there was an air raid. So I joined them and I'm busy helping them dig the trench. I felt something bite my foot and I looked down and it was a green snake wriggled away on the grass and I didn't worry about it, green snakes are harmless.

**Did you know that?**

Yes.

**How did you come to know your snakes?**

Oh it was just kid talk.

28:30 Black snake is deadly, brown snake is deadly, green snake is okay.

**And so you had no training at all, once you had dug these trenches did you know what they were for these trenches?**

Oh you jump into them, yes. If there was an air raid you jump in. I don't remember Brisbane having any air raid sirens for practice with air raid sirens. Or the evacuation of buildings, I don't remember any of that ever happening,

29:00 in shopping centres, schools or in the city. I think we were just as good as all being dead if the Japanese

had raided. When I look back now, with my knowledge of military history and so forth, it was precarious, wide open slaughter waiting to happen.

**Were there any other precautions that Brisbane took at the time? Blackout?**

29:30 Well at Ipswich Tech we had blackout paper on the windows there at the school, at the Tech College. We had none on our shop windows at Amberley. I don't remember any anywhere else. To me, when I look back the whole thing was very lackadaisical. I would say the Russian people, the Japanese people, were far better trained for warfare than what we were.

30:00 I still call ourselves hillbillies up there in those days. Hillbilly attitude.

**Did you feel that at the time?**

No, hillbillies don't usually know they are hillbillies, they just know they're people.

**Can you describe your particular sort of slip trench that you had in your house?**

30:30 From memory it would have been about that long, about that wide, that deep. They were not deep enough for a trench for me to hide in from an air raid of any kind. I'd like one about that big, knee-deep. But that was the sort of thing that was dug in many places, like Newmarket school ground. Get down low in this slip trench. The

31:00 architect, he had to have a fully - what would you call it? - serviced hotel room. Kitchen area, toilet, the lot. Bunks.

**Can you describe it?**

No, I never, I saw it from the outside but never on the inside. Later on saw him in the Amberley shop, many years after he had joined the air force, he was probably building air raid shelters for the air force, I don't know.

**Did you play as kids in these things?**

Oh,

31:30 it would rain, there'd be too much mud and so forth in the bottom of them. I never ever played in them, I think I got into it once, that was all. There were air raid shelters built along the Brisbane River, near the main city area, of concrete, reinforced concrete. Just a large reinforced concrete grove that might take fifty,

32:00 might have taken fifty or sixty people standing up. Fixed concrete groves. They were there for many years, even after the war they were there. There might have been two or three of those. That's all I remember seeing. That might have been all of the protection all of the main city of Brisbane had. As to how ten, twenty thousand persons could have got into those air raid shelters

32:30 beats me. But I think too many of our political leaders were too short-sighted and would actually sacrifice thousands of us or accidentally sacrifice thousands and not know any better.

**Can you remember meeting Americans for the first time?**

Meeting. First ones I saw were on a Yankee

33:00 five ton truck whizzing along Newmarket Road, three or four of them on the back yelling out, I don't know what they were yelling about. I could see they were Americans, that was the first time I saw them. The first time I met them was actually at Amberley. But my father had met quite a few, I think it was April '41, Pearl Harbour attack was December '41.

33:30 About April '41 a Yank, a United States Navy Division came to Brisbane and he was involved in making the welcoming ceremonies for them. That's when he met the Yanks, he might have met others before and after, I don't know. I never saw those navy men. I still have a letter from the government mentioning him and thanking him for what he did. Amberley was the

34:00 only place I really saw American troops. Before that any I saw were Australian mainly at Enoggera training camp.

**How did the troops treat you?**

Well at Enoggera army camp they soon knew that I was the son of the commanding officer and in that case you usually get a lot of respect that you don't deserve and you usually get the run of the camp.

34:30 And they all seem to become a father figure to you and intend to be a father figure and see that you don't get hurt in their commanding officers' camp which is a good idea. But with the manners training I had at school I still would call them 'Mister so and so' if I knew their name. There was always good manners from me to them, that's how I've been brought up.

35:00 **What did you do with the run of the camp?**

I just wandered around, walked around, up and down the rifle range. The map room was my favourite because there was a big sandbox there where they would make a model map with troops and mapping, all that sort of thing. My brother was a bit more ambitious than I. He and his mate crawled across the rifle range one day while it was being used by the machine gunners. There was bullets whizzing down towards the targets

35:30 and he was crawling along the grass with the bullets flying over their heads. I never tried that. Be he decided to run away from home one day and he was found in the map room hiding with his mate. That was one example of him running away. The next was when he ran away to next door, the architect with the air raid shelter, because they had a big toy train set under the house, and we didn't have a train set.

36:00 He ran away twice.

**Can you recall the or describe to us your father coming back from Milne Bay?**

Yes. My mother wasn't at Tambourine Mountain at the time and the head brother, Brother Ignatius, just came to me and my

36:30 brother, "Grab your things, pack up, you're going to Brisbane, your father's in hospital." We went to Greenslopes Military Hospital, he was there laying in the cot, in the hospital. And he was quite normal, okay at the time. We were glad to see him for sure. Didn't see him much after that until he came out of the hospital and we moved to Amberley. And at Amberley

37:00 for some years he would get an attack of malaria. It just immobilises a person, they can hardly move, they could be on the floor or in a bed or cot or something. The circumstances of malaria are terrible.

**Do you remember meeting him?**

In the cot at Greenslopes Military Hospital? Yes I still remember seeing him. He was glad to see me, I was glad to see him. We were all glad to see him.

37:30 **And what did he say to you?**

I don't remember what he said to me, but he wasn't having effects of malaria at that time, he was quite sane and quite normal.

**Why was he in hospital?**

With malaria.

**Might just stop there.**

37:48 **End of tape**

## Tape 4

00:30 **I want to talk a bit more about rationing, when was the first time you noticed rationing in Queensland?**

Before we went to Amberley, went there December '42 so I noticed it before, mainly because of the clothing coupons. We were given each a small book, each page of coupons were entitled to so much clothing over time, you couldn't get

01:00 the whole lot at one time from memory. Then there was tea rationing, you could have so much tea. As to why tea is really necessary for a war I don't know. I don't know why Coca Cola is necessary for war, a whole lot of things are not necessary for war. The poor Russians didn't have half of the stuff we had, they never had them. They weren't needed for everyday life or for a war. But we had them so we rationed them out,

01:30 butter was rationed, meat was rationed.

**Did it change your everyday life as a child?**

Not for me as a child, it would have changed my mother's shopping habits. Everyone's shopping habits were changed. In peace time or war time, if something is in short supply, people are encouraged to want it, need it, buy it, then encouraged to pay more for it.

**Did your**

02:00 **mother have special access to certain goods through perhaps the army?**

No, no. As far as I can recall there was never anything special for us as an army officer's family. No special treatment. I don't remember my father or mother cheating on the rationing, I think we got enough of what we wanted. In the shop it was different, we needed lots of butter for the sandwiches for the Yanks. Could hardly get any better, but we could get

02:30 a good look-alike margarine. We used boxes of margarine. Big boxes, a lot of people did not know the difference.

**Was that the first time you saw margarine?**

Yes, the first time I ever saw margarine. We still had to slice our own bread to make the sandwiches. We'd get a phone order seven a.m. or maybe eight a.m., from some of the Yanks we knew, it was, "Twenty mixed sandwiches,

03:00 twenty meat pies, fifteen bottles of milk, is Joe Blow's dry cleaning in yet? We'll pick it all up in a half an hour." We'd busily make up the order. A lot of Yanks preferred our meat pies to their own army food for breakfast. We didn't mind. I think our pies sold for about one shilling each from memory, for the Yanks it was quite cheap.

**We'll get back to the shop in a minute. The rationing of food in your own household, did that**

03:30 **cause new things to appear on your dinner table?**

I don't remember and I doubt it. See vegetables weren't rationed, you could still buy all of the vegetables you wanted. Vegetarians would have been quite happy, they didn't worry about meat, if they were smart they would have sold their meat coupons to somebody who would pay a price for them. I don't know how the big restaurants and cafes got on.

**What about petrol?**

04:00 Petroleum was the thing. Truck drivers still needed petrol, government vehicles needed petrol, aeroplanes needed petrol, varying grades of petrol, super petrol for aircraft, lesser quality petrol for civilian vehicles. The army needed petrol and for civilians, yes it was rationed. And coupons looked like postage stamps. My father not having a car until we went to Amberley, petrol rationing didn't worry

04:30 us. At Amberley we did eventually get a truck, a utility truck, and we needed petrol for it so we applied for petrol rationing coupons and we got them. Every few months the ration would be cut down and we'd reapply and get the rationing back up again. We actually had too many petrol coupons and we, like many others, banked them with our favourite service station. I think it would be Zupp service station in

05:00 Ipswich, now fifty years later, still owe us about three hundred gallons of petrol. I'm not going to remind them, they might want us to pay for it, three hundred gallons is about six hundred litres, I don't want six hundred litres of petrol.

**So when you say 'bank them' what exactly do you mean by that?**

Well we'd deposit them. Just give them to the manager of the service station, he'd write in the book 'Morgan: a hundred gallons; Smith: fifteen gallons'. Whatever it was. So he owed us that in petrol coupons. Guaranteed we were buying petrol

05:30 from him anyway. There were forged petrol coupons, fakes. Bloody terrible. People still used them.

**Were any of these rationing coupons currency? Was it valid for anyone's use?**

They weren't valid legally to swap around and use for different things, you weren't supposed to even give them to somebody else as a present. But anything that could be traded for something else was on the go at the time. The biggest thing that could be traded was Yankee cigarettes,

06:00 they cost five shilling in the Yankee canteen, you can get three pound for them on the black market. That gave you a profit of three hundred per cent. Quite a good profit.

**Who'd be buying three pound packets of cigarettes?**

People who smoked. It was a carton of Yankee cigarettes, twenty packets, twenty cigarettes per pack, that's four hundred cigarettes which the Yanks bought for five shillings then could be sold on the black market for three pound. Four hundred cigarettes.

06:30 In the meantime, well my father, when he smoked a hundred a day he was paying sixpence for ten.

**What did you as a child know about this black market for things? Was that something you learnt about at the Amberley shop?**

As a child before Amberley I didn't know anything about it no. No it only came in when the war with Japan got tougher and tougher. When the war with Japan started rationing did not come in straight away, it just came in bit by bit. When someone at the top realised things at the bottom were

07:00 going to be hard to get. Because all industry was changing to war production. So things had to be rationed.

**Your father left in the middle-late stages of '42 is that right, just before Milne Bay?**

No after Milne Bay, he was in Greenslopes hospital until September.

**No, when did he leave to go to New Guinea?**

Oh it was before Milne Bay. Oh yes, would have been

07:30 early '42, yes.

**Was it at that time the bombing of Darwin happened and the Japanese were on the run?**

About that time.

**What do you remember about the Japanese advance and the bombings that hit northern Australia?**

I don't remember too much, there would have been publicity but I did not know that much about it, don't remember it. There was also a raid on Townsville when my father was there, he went into a trench of some kind, and it wasn't the kind he thought it was. Been used as a toilet.

08:00 There was a major cum colonel up to his neck in the proverbial.

**Was that a story you heard many years later or ...?**

Oh some years later he told me about that, yes. He was in a hurry, there were bombs coming down and he jumped in that trench. He picked the wrong one. As far as I know the Japanese never bombed any further south than Townsville. I did read or hear about a Japanese sea plane flying over Sydney Harbour Bridge

08:30 at night some time later, that could have been quite possible. After all, Japanese submarines did get into Sydney Harbour.

**Did you, you may not have been following the news obviously as a young, early teenager, but it must have changed the atmosphere in Queensland when that happened, can you talk a bit about how that atmosphere changed?**

Oh God, yes. Well the rationing changed everyone's life. You never knew when there was going to be an air raid on Ipswich or Amberley.

09:00 At Amberley they had anti-aircraft guns. I've never know of any anti-aircraft guns in Brisbane, if they were there they kept them quiet, I never heard them fire. They were firing at Amberley, practice shots. But there were also man power controls, if you had a certain job necessary to the

09:30 war effort there wasn't much chance of you leaving that job to get another job or even to join the army. Railway men had to run the trains for the war effort. For one of them to leave and to join the army, very difficult, who would replace him on the trains? He was more important as a train driver then as a soldier.

**How much did all of these hillbilly Queenslanders wake up at that stage?**

I doubt if they woke up much at all.

10:00 See many years later they couldn't handle road courtesy week. How could they handle a war? They couldn't handle one of their premiers, Joh Bjelke, how could they handle other things? I did become a real hillbilly at Amberley myself, I still have a bit of it in me, I have tried to shake it off.

**When your father was in New Guinea, it was the closest the Japanese came**

10:30 **to Australia.**

Not really, when he mentioned to me about dead Japanese troops being washed ashore on Queensland beaches, the ship that they were on, most likely sunk of course, must have been very close.

**What were you hearing from your father, do you remember receiving letters at all in your household?**

He only got one for me as far as I can remember. I don't know what he wrote to my mother but we still had censorship.

11:00 Any soldier writing home from overseas, their letter had to be inspected eventually somewhere in the system and have certain parts crossed out. At Amberley one of the women we had working for us, her son was a captain in the army. And I remember her saying that he wrote home and he must have said all sorts of things because half of the letter was blacked out.

11:30 He possibly said those things on purpose just to fill up the pages so he was writing home. But the censor blacked it all out. But the letter was good to her, his mother, in her hand when she got it. "Oh he's been writing, it's a great big letter but half of it's missing. Doesn't matter, I'll read the rest of it," that kept her happy, he was a captain.

**Was there blacked out parts in sections of the letter you received?**

I don't remember seeing any. My mother never showed me any letters that he wrote to her

12:00 and in the one letter I received I don't think there was anything blacked out there. Nothing. I think his position, well in New Guinea he was promoted to colonel, I think he would have had more brains and more responsibility to write anything that would be crossed out. If he wrote too much that had to be crossed out it would be very odd for a high ranking army officer to do that.

12:30 **You were living within a sort of army community at that stage, there must have been a lot of people around your age that had fathers off at war?**

Yes, yes.

**Were there any of those that you remember hearing about?**

I don't think I socialised with them. There would have been kids there, teenagers and younger ones. But I don't remember ever socialising with kids of another army officer's family. We could have lived suburbs away,

13:00 in the next town for all I knew. I never socialised with them, I don't remember any. Oh yes Ipswich Tech, one of our school teachers there brought up the business of two children, boys in his class, being sons of army officers, but the other one was Salvation

13:30 Army officer, and I was the real army officer's son. It was his idea of a joke. Two army officers' sons, Salvation and real army.

**Who were your teachers at Ipswich Tech?**

Who were they? Mr James was one, very prim and proper, damn good teacher. Mo Biggs, very big fellow, I think he played football for Queensland, another great teacher.

14:00 Skiing, I think it was Skiing, Mr, some name like that. They were all great teachers, the effect they had on us those days, at times we were meant to knock off school at three o'clock, three thirty something like that. Somehow we kept them teaching, talking to us for an extra hour past knock off time which today I think would be revolutionary for any school kids to try that

14:30 and do it. Well they'd be teaching us more and more and so we realised, 'they are late in knocking off and going home,' we kept them there and busy just because school was so interesting.

**Were these older men?**

I think the youngest might have been thirty-five, Mo Biggs I think was the oldest, maybe forty-five. Those persons, teachers, they were great.

**What about the situation with young**

15:00 **men at the time, were there many around when the war really got going?**

Well we had two armies in Australia, two Australian armies. One was a group of men who would go overseas and fight anywhere in the world. The other group would fight only inside Australia. And I think, was the Curtin Labour Government realised the Japanese were coming into New Guinea and New Guinea was not Australia.

15:30 So they changed the regulations, making New Guinea part of Australia, so the second army had to go there and fight. My father was in charge of the training of them, and I think they were conscripted actually, I'm not sure. There has been that many rows over conscription in my lifetime, I don't remember.

**Was there an attitude in the army community you were in towards that militia,**

16:00 **one way or the other?**

Oh they were criticised by those who thought they should be prepared to go anywhere in the world. See we lost a lot of men in Singapore, they were captured, went into Changi camp. Well see they were overseas then, Singapore was then part of the British Empire, so was Malaysia, they were independent countries and they're still part of the British Empire as far as I know. To us

16:30 Australians they were just distant places.

**What was your mother doing after your father had left to go to New Guinea?**

Well she was helping with the war effort and making these camouflage nets out of string. There were other fundraising efforts she was in, raising money for the war. I can't recollect other things she was doing, I might

17:00 have been too busy doing my own thing.

**What were the camouflage nets like, can you describe them to us?**

Just like large fishing nets. They'd be thrown over stores out in the open or over aeroplanes things like that and maybe tree branches would be put onto them. Later into the war they had bits of rag tied into them, the idea was to break up the shape of the thing that was underneath so from air observation

17:30 it wouldn't look like an aeroplane or an army tank in the open or a bunch of stores in the open. Change the appearance, change the shape, change the size.

**Did you watch her make them at any stage?**

At one stage I was helping, the kids were helping.

**How do you make them?**

Well you have the string wrapped around a shuttle gadget, just a piece of wood with a hole in it, and by using a certain fashion you were actually knitting a large net, easily done once you know how.

18:00 Fishermen today still use the same thing today to repair and make their own nets, I think.

**Where did you get the materials for this from?**

Oh the string would have been guaranteed supply from the government somehow, otherwise it might have become a black market item or nobody wanted it, but anything for the war was easily obtained.

**And how was the string delivered?**

Oh I don't know how it was delivered.

**In a large roll or in a ...?**

18:30 I think it might have been large rolls made by machine you see, machine would put them onto large spools, very large reels, that's the only packaging way. Not to roll them up into a ball, no machine would handle making a ball of string, it wasn't a little ball of string, it had to be a big ball of string, so it had to be a big ball of string so it would have to be on a reel. I don't remember seeing a reel of string but it would have been there somewhere.

**How did your life and position within the family change once your father had left the scene?**

19:00 It didn't really, I was still just the eldest son, my brother was still a nuisance to me.

**Did you have more responsibility do you think?**

No. No. It'd be very different say in England, in London where the elder children would, say, have to look after the younger ones, say, in case of air raid, all that sort of thing, we had nothing like that. I think if Brisbane had have been attacked, or Sydney attacked by air raid, Australians would have had to change their attitudes

19:30 and ideas immediately. Even today those who have been through the Darwin bombing or the Townsville bombing would have any idea of what war is a little bit like. Brisbane and Sydney wouldn't know.

**How great a lengths do you think your parents went to shield you from the realities of what was happening in the world?**

I don't think they did. I still saw the war news in the movie theatres, I still had the books, newspapers,

20:00 I still remember the Japanese war against China where the news showed us some little kid, showed some little kid sitting all by himself on a railway station, everything around him had been bombed to bits. That was before the Japanese came into World War II. I'd say the whole of the population was shielded by censorship from very nasty things happening. I'm sure we were shielded a lot from the brutality of a lot of

20:30 the Japanese who if the ordinary Japanese soldier didn't chop that person to bits with his bayonet he'd be shot by the officer behind him. They were very cruel to their own troops.

**There was also propaganda talking about the threat of the Japanese?**

Oh plenty of propaganda. Yes.

**How frightened were you of possible invasion?**

No, no. I don't remember being frightened at all through the war,

21:00 no, a lot of people might have been frightened by posters, radio broadcasts. I wasn't. Maybe I had seen enough of it in the magazines I was reading. I still remember reading a particular book, I was Hitler's Prisoner, by a Czech writer called Stefan Lorant. He died a few years ago. In that he described his experiences in Czechoslovakia, being arrested

21:30 by Nazis and put in gaol. I still remember in the whole book, I was only a kid at the time, little kid, he was saying there was a British navy officer in this gaol with him, a British naval officer, and he said to Stefan, "Get me out of here, I am a Jew," now that was, I read that 1938 I think, maybe '39. So I knew something bad was happening to anyone who was a Jew.

22:00 **Did you know any Jews?**

Don't recall any before Amberley, Amberley I knew one Yank who was a Jew. Frankel was his name, nice fellow, short, plump, overweight. Think he was a radio technician from memory. The only Jew I knew.

**How did his being a Jew make itself obvious to you?**

My mother mentioned

22:30 he was a Jew, that was all. But he himself, to me he was just another ordinary person. I don't remember him ever saying to us, "Don't put any ham on my sandwiches," don't remember anything like that. I think he ate and drank like everybody else, not every Jew is a religious person and won't eat ham or shellfish. Some will eat everything just like I will.

23:00 **When you were in and around the army base when your father was away did you see many wounded soldiers at all?**

No, no.

**So when you went down to see your father in hospital was this the first time you had seen ...?**

Seen him in hospital for sure. I don't remember seeing many other patients, or men patients or women patients in that hospital.

23:30 Army hospital, army women and army men, from memory he was the only one I took any notice of, there could have been hundreds for all I know. But he was the only one I noticed.

**It must have been an emotional time having your father arrive back in hospital?**

Yes, and being a kid I think I was still a bit too dulled by everything in my life all of the zigzagging bit. I think seeing him in hospital was just another part of the zigzagging.

24:00 **Was it the same for your brother?**

I think so. At Amberley I had access to the hospitals there, both the women's hospital and the men's hospital, because I was delivering newspapers. Now they had plenty of patients, but they weren't victims of war. Could have been somebody fell over and damaged their knee or they had a cold or something like that. Normal everyday stuff, nobody for war injuries.

24:30 **When your father left hospital and came home, was he still active in his life?**

He didn't have a home to go to, we had left the house we lived in, we had left Tambourine Mountain, we stayed in a hotel for a few weeks and then they bought the shop at Amberley.

**What prompted your parents to buy a shop?**

25:00 Well he didn't have a job any more, and no income. My mother wasn't working, she had never worked a job in her life as far as I know. Wouldn't know how to, she was just a mother and housekeeper, so I think they just bought the shop because there it was. The price was right, he had the money from the army and they bought it and that was it.

**What were the circumstances of your father actually leaving the army?**

Malaria.

**He got pensioned off?**

No I don't think he was pensioned off.

25:30 Today they would have a pension for, I don't know what system they had in those days but I would be inclined to believe that one day when he could, had malaria and could walk, he just walked away, just like that, didn't go back. That's what I think happened. Delirium, we had cases in the streets of the town, someone is at home with a mental condition they're at home, they walk out the front door, they're

26:00 in a daze all of the time, they're walking around in the streets, sometimes they hit parked cars, sometimes they're not. That's how he was. But I seen him later on in the bed in the back of the shop with malaria hitting him, oh cruel.

**Can you describe some of those symptoms of malaria that you saw in him?**

One is where the body feels freezing and the body is shaking with cold. The eyes are bleary, dazed,

26:30 can't talk much. Then it changes over to heat, the body feels hot. If a doctor put a thermometer in his mouth, my father's mouth, it might be the same temperature for being hot or being cold. It's the sensation, heat, sweating, sweat pouring out. The head rolling, the eyes all glazed. If you've got many troops like that in the front line with malaria, what the hell are they going to do if they are attacked? You can't, they're crippled, they're immobilised.

27:00 They can't be given a position of authority which he had. If he was in charge of a thousand men like he was in New Guinea, and he was hit with malaria, how can you give orders, how can you make decisions? You can't.

**And what did you do when your father was ...?**

I could do nothing. I don't know what medication he was taking.

**Just be careful of that, it makes a sound if you touch it too much.**

I heard, someone told me

27:30 Atebrin made people's skin goes yellow. It looks to me that he might have been one of the earliest malaria cases. Quinine might have been the only medication available or might not have been available, might have been used. Stores like that might have been days or weeks in coming to Milne Bay. He possibly had nothing to stop malaria or to relieve it. I have seen quite a few

28:00 of our troops wearing their green uniform and the slouch hat in the streets, while we were at Amberley, their skin was quite yellow, which contrasted with the green shirt. And when I was, nearly twenty years later I was working with a young fellow, not young then. He had been with my father at Milne Bay, under him, as an ordinary private soldier. He had malaria bad, he was thin like a

28:30 skeleton and his skin was still yellow twenty years later. Twenty years later my father's skin hadn't changed colour and the malaria started to fade away.

**In those early days in the back room of the shop, it must have been very frightening for you to see your father like this?**

I think I was disturbed, worried about him because he just couldn't move, couldn't do normal things that he would do. When you're knocked down on a floor or in bed or a bunk with malaria

29:00 you are immobilised. You're a physical cripple, you can't get up off the bed to get a drink of water or food. The body stays there and waits until it wears off, and it had killed people.

**What did you know at the time about malaria?**

Nothing, only what I saw at the time and how it affected my father.

**Was that the first time you had ever heard of this disease?**

Yes. I heard about it while he was in Greenbank army camp, I knew about it there.

29:30 I don't know how many of our troops died from it. But I think in some war, I'm not sure where it was, there was one third of the British army was knocked down with malaria. One third.

**Was very common amongst all of the soldiers in the Asia region.**

30:00 With the jungles and the climate, it produced malaria. Carried by only one type of mosquito. I've had lots of mosquitoes bite me in Queensland but there were none that carried malaria.

**After you spent some weeks in the hotel your parents bought this shop, again your life is zigzagging all over the place. Did your life change immediately?**

In the shop?

30:30 **When they first bought it and you moved in.**

Oh it changed straight away. I became the head paperboy straight away.

**What was the initial period like?**

Just a change and I had to adapt. I think I learnt to adapt very easily, I think I do it even now in my everyday life. Once in a while I fall off my bicycle, I just adapt, get up and ride off again.

31:00 But the shop, the previous owners, I'm sure they were hillbillies, they did not know its potential. Well my father realised what could be done. In no time he and my mother had two women making meat pies in the kitchen, another two women making sandwiches, this is all for the Yanks mind you, plus any of our own air force people who came along. Two behind the big refrigerator selling ice cream and milk and milkshakes. Mainly to the Yanks.

31:30 A woman running the post office attached to the business, another two persons handling the ordering, grocery and dry cleaning and laundry side of it. And fourteen paperboys.

**This is a lot of people.**

A lot of papers. Gee.

**This huge business can't have been set up immediately though, what happened?**

No, it would take him time, about a week for his administration ability,

32:00 but to get him to fix a fence or do anything mechanical, no. Administration, yes.

**Can you describe the set up? Where were you and what was the shop like?**

Well the main part of the shop was very small. Behind it you had the living quarters out the back. Then we had the store rooms, then we had the post office, but my parents then added a front veranda with a roof over it.

32:30 So it sort of became a indoor, outdoor, restaurant, café, snack bar, milk bar sort of thing.

**And where was this shop in relation to the air force base?**

Those days it would have been about two hundred yards from the main gate of Amberley. In today's values what's that? Roughly two hundred metres, roughly. So just walking distance for anybody to come over from Amberley front gate, main gate, to come over to the shop.

33:00 Some did walk, some came in trucks some came in jeeps.

**Can you describe Amberley air force base for us?**

To me it was wide open, considering there was a war on. I know about today's security and terrorists, Amberley was wide open. They had a barbed wire fence around it, it must have been originally a farmers paddock, covered in grass and so forth, I guess the government bought

33:30 it or seized it from some farmer. I'm tipping the first aircraft were landing on dirt and grass. I don't know when the tarred strip was put it. It had the English type aircraft hangar, the big oblong building with big sliding doors. When the Yanks arrived they built gigantic igloos, self supported, no doors needed, wide open, living quarters for married

34:00 staff, head office. The ordinary men had their long building with the bunks, maybe twenty, thirty to a building, they were called huts. They weren't really huts, they were just long dormitories. The women in our WAAAF, they had their separate living area, otherwise there'd be all sorts of sexual problems. The commanding officer, Group Captain

34:30 Douglas, he lived with his wife and son in a house at the Amberley State School, it was only a small school building with one teacher, he wasn't there, he had gone, the school was closed. Group Captain Douglas lived in the school house just over the road from the shop. The main road, Ipswich to Rosewood, came right past the old air force base and past our shop. Once the Yanks came

35:00 they wanted their own, they needed, not just wanted, they needed it. They couldn't build the big hangars on the old side of the drome, so the airstrip was extended over the main road into another area and that's where the Yanks were based. Which meant aircraft taking off or landing were passing over the main road. I've known me to be in our truck and in the middle of that tarmac, look up there and there is a big aeroplane coming in to land.

35:30 If the engine had broken down or I had got a flat tyre, somebody had to make some adjustments. Either I have got to scoot off in a big hurry with a flat tyre, or couldn't because the engine had stopped or the pilot of the aeroplane would have to make arrangements to either hit us or miss us. He could miss us by flying over and landing further down the strip. Well to prevent things like that happening they had two large gates, long gates, with one of our air force men on each gate and they would open and close the gates to suit traffic

36:00 or aeroplanes coming or going. And the sort of ridiculous things happening. I've heard since that that main road has been closed and now the new main road goes around behind the back of the other side aerodrome . Now along that edge of the aerodrome there were dummy aeroplanes parked. So if the Japanese or the Germans or some Italian came in and attacked in an air raid they would hopefully attack those dummy aeroplanes. From the ground you could see they were dummies, from up high it

36:30 looked like the real thing. But I reckon our air force, they were our dummies not the Yanks, made a mistake. They didn't move the dummies around. If the enemy flew over and took photographs and did it in a week's time, and then in another week's time, they'd see those aeroplanes with the same number in the same place looking in the same direction, they hadn't moved therefore they must be dummies. If they had moved them around a bit every few days, anyone would, flying over would think, "Oh they've moved, they're real," but we hadn't got to that stage.

37:00 **Would you be able to get up close to these dummy aeroplanes?**

Well you drove past them on the main road, you just threw a stone you hit them.

**Well what were they made from?**

Oh just a timber frame with fabric over them, they look like the real thing, from the ground yes you could see that they were not real. There was nobody standing around them, no dummies, no real persons moving. None fixing flat tyres, no one raising a bonnet and adjusting an engine, nothing like that, so it could

37:30 be estimated easily that they were dummies. But even then the main hangar area would be a better target than any few small aeroplanes out in the field. The Yanks were different, they had their big hangars, they must have had their own workshops there. It wasn't the regular United States Army Air Force which it was when the war started with Japan. They cut the word 'army' out and called it the

- United States Air Force. We didn't have them at Amberley, they had the air transport command
- 38:00 which was the transport section using aeroplanes, and the variety of aeroplanes coming through Amberley. They had their own workshop and that's why they had various bombers and various fighters. They had bombers parked in the bush with camouflage netting over them. We as kids would wander through the bush and just have a good look at the thing. Today I think we'd be arrested if we did some of the things we did then.
- 38:30 **What was the force strength, how many people do you reckon were on this base?**
- Oh gosh. I'm only guessing, possibly with our RAAF there could have been a thousand, with the Yanks there could have been two thousand. With our women's air force, the WAAAFs, possibly a hundred, a hundred and fifty.
- 39:00 **So essentially there were two separate bases, the American and the Australian? Were the Americans there when you first set up the shop?**
- Yes. Yes. Oh they move quick, we would, those days we'd take probably a month to do 'x', they think of 'x' this morning, it would be done tomorrow. The Yanks had the big, they had the advantage of a giant population in USA and we had a small population. And a small population, you don't have that many thinkers compared with a great number of thinkers
- 39:30 in a big population. So they could get things done quicker because more of them thought faster than we did. Just like small thinkers and big thinkers. The hangars they built for that time, they were gigantic. Big dome, not an actual dome a big curved hangar.
- I'll just, I'll get more descriptions of that, we just have to change the tape.**
- 39:53 **End of tape**

## Tape 5

- 00:30 **Can you describe those hangars in a bit more detail for us?**
- A wooden frame, a zigzag frame, curved, then covered over with roofing iron. They had a smaller version many years later they used in the North Pole which they called 'igloos', which really is the little Eskimo building, like a little dome made of ice blocks, that's a real igloo, but they made
- 01:00 other ones that they called Nissen huts or igloos. Like that, a big curved frame and then covered over with metal. So the big aircraft could go in easily.
- How big were the biggest hangars?**
- Oh gosh. Oh gosh, if you put two double-decker buses one on top of the other the two could drive in without touching the roof. That's how high they were in the middle.
- 01:30 **And wide?**
- Very wide. A Liberator bomber could go inside, a Liberator wingspan is very long. They had complete cover once they got the aeroplane in there from the weather, and inside they must have had, I never went into one, they must have had their workshops, their mechanics, all that sort of thing.
- So the United States section had two huge hangars?**
- Had two hangars. I think they're still there. They might now be used by our
- 02:00 Swing Wing bombers, I'm not sure.
- And then on the RAAF ...?**
- On the RAAF side was the old English type of hangar which is oblong, you see it in the old English movies at times, with big sliding doors, where the Yankee hangers didn't have doors they were open both ends. I remember one time there was a lot of noise down inside one hangar, smoke coming out and sparks everywhere, and they quickly towed a Liberator bomber out that had caught on fire. Well they pulled it out of the hanger so it wouldn't do any more damage to the hanger itself.
- 02:30 If any fire had destroyed the wooden frame up on the roof the whole lot would have come down. So they pulled that Liberator bomber out quickly.
- And what was your first impressions of this air force base?**
- People, people wanting ice creams, people wanting soft drinks, sandwiches, meat pies and newspapers. That was the impression they gave me, I think to me it was just another part of my zigzag.
- 03:00 **Had your zigzag incorporated working to this point? Did you have, had you had (UNCLEAR) ?**

No no, I was just a school boy. And even at Amberley, there up until '44, I still went to tech college of a day time. But before that I worked in the shop, I delivered newspapers. I came home from tech, worked in the shop, served customers, did homework, went to bed, each day.

03:30 **So how did you adapt to working a job for the first time?**

Well the job really was working that shop and to me it was just existence. I existed, there it was to be done, I did it, adaptation all the time.

**Your paper round was the main job you had in the morning?**

Yes, with the other paperboys, fourteen of us over the aerodrome. All with pouch to put the money in, Australian money,

04:00 Yankee money, Dutch money, 'give us money for newspapers'. Yep, deliver newspapers in bulk to the officers' mess, got through the hospital seeing who wants a paper. The Yanks were newspaper crazy, they had to read. They still had their own midget newspaper from back home, what a way to run a war, they cross the world and they still have their own little newspaper to read from back home, fantastic, and the comics.

**What newspapers were you selling?**

04:30 The Brisbane Courier Mail, that was the main one. Brisbane Telegraph. Ipswich Times, we had some of them but they weren't as popular as the bigger papers, and I think it was the Brisbane Courier Mail and Telegraph that cost twopence each, two pence, two pennys, which by Yanks' standards was very cheap, they were avid readers of the newspapers.

**How did you get these newspapers of a morning, how were they delivered?**

05:00 Delivered by truck, the Brisbane newspapers were delivered by truck every morning. All the way along the line they were stocked from Brisbane up to us, I think we were that last of the line. Every newsagent on the trip of thirty-four miles would get this bundle of newspapers dropped at their door. And then the afternoon we'd have the truck bring us the Brisbane Telegraph. And to come from Brisbane to our shop by truck

05:30 in the afternoon, it was a high speed race. One of the drivers of the truck was a racing car driver in his spare time, on the weekends in the race track and I think he was the one that was killed on the Four Mile Bridge when a Yankee five ton truck and his newspaper truck collided. The Yankee truck won the battle, the newspaper truck and the driver were squashed on the bridge.

06:00 **So you would collect these newspapers in huge bundles from these trucks, and then ...?**

They just dropped them off, we didn't go out and pick them off the truck, he just, he got out and he'd just dump them on the dirt in front of the shop or on the steps, wherever he was, because he was in a hurry. All newspaper men are in a hurry, he'd drop them and run and we'd then take them inside.

**What would you do then, can you take us through your paper round?**

Well you had to check the papers and make sure that they were all as required. We didn't want

06:30 twenty when we needed two thousand. You'd have to cut the rope around, the cord. And then start counting them out to each paper kid, he's taking fifty, he's taking a hundred. Whatever it might be, make a note of it. Give them some change to go in their leather bag on a strap around their neck. When they came back we'd have to work up the paper work, so many not sold from the ones we gave them. Then they are supposed to have money in their bags to suit the papers sold, and the money we had issued them with

07:00 as small change. A lot of book work on the newspaper run alone.

**Being the son of the owners of the shop, were you sort of in charge of this section or ...?**

Sort of in charge, yes. I was still learning, a hillbilly learner in charge of fourteen newspaper boys. They were cheeky and so forth and I gave them cheek,

07:30 I wasn't a stand over merchant because I still had to go out and deliver newspapers myself whilst they were doing it.

**And you were only fourteen at this time?**

Yeah.

**How old were most of the newspaper boys?**

Most were my age, some might have been aged twelve, nothing much under that. Some were local kids from around Amberley, others came from Ipswich, all the way from Ipswich . Four miles come out by bus or ride their bicycle out, just to be a paper boy and get paid.

08:00 **Could you just describe from the start to the finish one of these paper runs, you got the papers onto your bike, how did that work?**

No not always on a bike. I didn't have a bike at that stage, we walked over with the papers under our arms. Money bag here and a bunch of papers here. Rip it out, papers, papers and of course the Yanks would just rush us, straight away, you'd get the money shoved in our hand and they'd grab a paper and off they'd go reading. They were hoping for

- 08:30 good news like, 'the war is finished and we are going home,' they had to wait years for that. And wander around the camp yelling out paper. The only group of Yanks I kept away from were those wearing dungaree jackets, dungaree pants and a dungaree type of cap, brilliant green colour, the large letter 'P' in white on the back of the jacket. 'P' for prisoner, they were Yankee prisoners of their own army
- 09:00 who had possibly been drunk on duty, or caught fighting down town or absent without leave. When the Yanks prosecuted them they were guilty, you would do a week on KP, which would be 'kitchen police', that would be kitchen work, or they got the job of keeping the streets of Amberley aerodrome clean. The guards were in their correct Yankee uniform with their rifles. I don't know if the rifles were loaded,
- 09:30 but if they were and any prisoner ran away, well the 'P' on his back would make a good target to shoot at. I didn't know how rough any of them fellows were, they couldn't have been too dangerous because they would have been locked up in a Yankee gaol. But I didn't know any different so I kept away from them. But the Yanks wanted newspapers, newspapers, newspapers.

**Did you just learn about all this as you went along or did somebody ...?**

- 10:00 It was a learn as you go along thing all the way through, yep.

**Did you ever get stopped or asked questions by any American?**

Well quite a few of them were surprised to learn that I and everybody else over here spoke English. They thought it was their only language, their language not ours, they wouldn't even know where English came from because they were

- 10:30 basically, a lot of them were hillbillies themselves, ignoramuses. Our money tricked them. Well they were used to metric money for a hundred years, a hundred and fifty years, which some Frenchman invented in seventeen hundred and something, England should have followed and we would have followed. To have us and our ten - how many was it? - there were twelve pennies to a shilling, twenty shillings to a pound, that made it
- 11:00 two hundred and forty pence in the pound. Then we had ten shillings, crown, half crowns and two shilling pieces, very large pennies that the Yanks called cartwheels and a little tiny coin called a threepence, which was equal to three giant things. 'How could that be equal to three of those?' The Yanks couldn't work it out. Quite a few Yanks when they were buying a paper from me just pulled out a handful of coins, "Help yourself." I'd take tuppence for a twopenny newspaper,
- 11:30 I didn't take the whole lot, maybe I should have but I didn't. So they were tricked by the money, they were tricked by our customs. We drove on the wrong side of the road of course, they always drove on the correct side.

**Did the Yanks have any other customs to do with money? Did they tip you at all?**

Oh tipping wasn't that much, there was usually no tipping no, don't think so, can't recall.

- 12:00 Well the occasional Yank might have given me too much money for the paper and said, "Keep the change," but it wasn't that noticeable, you couldn't make a fortune out of it, that's for sure.

**You mentioned you had to deal with American money, Australian money and Dutch money, how did that work?**

Well we knew the exchange rate, it was fixed by the government of course. So if a Yank wanted to give us a Dutch guilder I would take it if it was the right value and covered the cost of the ice cream or whatever it might have been.

- 12:30 Japanese money was never used, occupation money or real money, that had no value with us. Had such a variety of money. The biggest problem was the fake two shilling coins that were, of ours, our money, two shilling ones. I must have had thirty or forty of those at one stage, made out of lead or some similar metal, you couldn't really use them for anything because everybody could tell they were
- 13:00 too heavy to be a two shilling coin. Some people just forged them, faked them. I don't recall any of our forged paper money being used. Fake petrol coupons, yes, I think they might have been worth more than the money.

**So you would just walk into the air force base and people would come and buy papers from you or ...?**

Oh yes my word.

- 13:30 **Did you have a route that you followed every day?**

No, we knew where the officers' mess was, the Australian officers' mess, we knew where the women's quarters were, the Yanks' mess, their officers' mess. They would have standing orders of twenty newspapers for this mess, fifteen for that. But the ordinary Yank, ordinary Australian, could be in his bunk and you'd wander through the bunks, "Paper? Paper?" "Yeah give us one."

14:00 We'd sell them there, and then they'd have to get out of their bunk to buy a newspaper. Or they could be out on the street walking around, we sold them on demand wherever anybody wanted one.

**Can you tell us a bit about those dormitories?**

Just a long hut. Lot of bunks, cots each side, nothing double-decker although they could have fitted in twice as many persons, each had their own locker. That's about all I remember of them. Windows pulled out on each side and a door on each end.

14:30 **Were they the same in the Australian and the American sections?**

They were the same yeah. I think the Yanks must have been using our buildings that were there already before the war. Now where the shop was, over the dirt road, on one side there was a camp of men called CCC, Civilian Construction Corps. Their job was to build anything for the war effort,

15:00 they were called Curtin's Country Cousins, 'CCC', because John Curtin was the Prime Minister and you had to do something for the war effort and that's what they were doing. Another group was further out in the bush somewhere, I can't remember where, they were the Allied Works Council, AWC. They were also in construction, they were all refugees and migrants from foreign countries, they were together. The CCC were Australian, all living under tents,

15:30 cooked in the open, that sort of thing. Camping out all of the time. Barbecue lunch every day whether they wanted it or not, they were very important.

**Did they use the shop just like everyone else?**

Yeah but they didn't have the money to spend, where the Yanks could spend so much because the exchange rate was in their favour, well they would be paying five shillings, five of our shillings, for four hundred cigarettes.

16:00 My father was paying, what, sixpence on them and he would get (UNCLEAR). So the Yanks' money availability to them was double ours, therefore they had that money spare and they could spend it.

**Apart from the amount of money they had, was there any other noticeable differences between how the Australian airmen and the American airmen did behave?**

To me the Yanks were more open and free than

16:30 the average Australian military or civilian. This gets back to a big population.

**And what do you mean by 'open and free'?**

Talk more, friendly more, less suspicious. The Yanks in the USA evolved very differently to us. They evolved from their colonialism into their free state ideas, less government control. More self sufficient, more

17:00 self reliant. No social security system. If you were short of money you went and took it. If you lived out west you were a cowboy, you were short of money you went and took it. You were then called an outlaw. We had it here but not as much as they did. Our famous western cowboy was, the fellow with the mask, the helmet, the slot?

**Ned Kelly.**

17:30 Ned Kelly, he had no social security, he needed money, he took it. Same as the Americans. But because they evolved so differently they were more free, they also objected to government rule, government control. Even today they still do, they had no income tax until after World War I, I don't know for how many years we had had income tax. But they thought differently, and they came over here and we were very much like their hillbillies back in Alabama,

18:00 Kentucky. That to me was the difference, we were the hillbillies they were the smarter alecs. They were civilised, we were only half civilised.

**Well being a more guarded suspicious Australian hillbilly, what was your reaction to these free and open people?**

I just took their money off them, that's all.

18:30 They're nice fellows, I became friends with quite a few, our lounge room at the shop, say from six p.m. until sometimes two in the morning, was sometimes like a social club. Between Yanks eating and drinking, milk shakes, ice creams, sandwiches, hot meat pies, mixing with our fellows, doing the same in our lounge room, it was like a social club. Sometimes the shop didn't close until two in the morning, that's how busy it was. Yanks were quite free and easy.

**Did you sell alcohol?**

19:00 No, except medicinal wine. We couldn't get a licence to sell alcohol and we couldn't get a licence to sell petrol from the petrol pumps out the front, we weren't allowed to have petrol pumps. Just because there wasn't enough petrol around for new petrol pumps. We had one customer for alcohol, one of our air force men, he liked his medicinal wine which I think might have been one per cent, two per cent alcohol. So he would buy the occasional bottle

19:30 off us, maybe once or twice a week, I think the bottles cost three shillings. We did not need a licence to sell alcohol for medicinal purposes and that's what he got. He was the only customer we had for it in the whole of Amberley.

**Where did the air force go to drink?**

They would have gone to Ipswich. Get on the bus, or get in one of the cars they had, or get on their bicycle, or on their motorbike, head into Ipswich four miles away.

20:00 I don't know, I never heard of alcohol being allowed in their private quarters, on their base or in their mess. I don't remember the Yankee canteen serving alcohol in any way. I presumed the Australian officers' mess and the Yankee officers' mess would have alcohol for officers and guests only.

20:30 The Yankee officers' mess did have some poker machines and we kids did have access to the Yankee officers' mess, we finally worked out I think its might have been our shilling worked their poker machines. So we got some money out of the poker machine, then the officers woke up to what we were doing and banned us from the mess.

21:00 That's how far we got into Amberley just as kids, of course there wouldn't be any spies amongst us Australian teenage kids, I doubt that we could handle it.

**What were the messes like?**

The Yanks? Well even the Yankee regular soldier uniform was better quality material than ours. The officers wore a lot of gabardine which I had never heard of before. Walking out in say greyish trousers,

21:30 and darker coloured green jackets, fantastic clothing material. We were inferior as far as uniforms go. I knew my own father's uniforms, what his material was like, his material for him when he was a major was more like a hessian bag, sugar bag stuff. Good quality by our standards, but very bad compared with the Yankee.

**What about the differences in atmosphere of the messes, the Australian compared with the American?**

22:00 Oh I don't know about that, being a kid I did not mix that well with them.

**Well what about the physical conditions?**

Oh for Yanks much better, they wouldn't go to war without the comforts of home. We had to not have comforts of home when we went to war.

**So what was some, apart from poker machines, what were some of the comforts of home they brought with them?**

Well the meals they had, their food would be better than ours for sure. Even though it was supplied by our suppliers, they

22:30 would have better qualified chefs working for them. It was just back to them having evolved two hundred years into their society, where we'd only been say a hundred and fifty years ahead of our convict society. They evolved faster.

**This notion of evolution and them having some civilisation that you didn't have, was this something you thought at the time?**

No, no. I just saw people and their habits and their ideas and their things. That's all.

**23:00 They were never joked about or seen as a nuisance or talked about?**

Oh there were some Australians very much against the Yanks. We had a lot of trouble in Australia in early World War II when the war started in Europe, a lot of Australians were against Germany being fought by anybody, a lot of Australians don't know the meaning of the word Nazi.

23:30 It's short for German National Socialist Workers' Party. It was a form of communist party, Germany had two communist parties, the Nazis loyal to Germany, the other bunch loyal to Moscow. Yugoslavia had the same thing, we have the same thing. One bunch loyal to Moscow, the other bunch loyal to Australia. The sympathisers with the Nazis in Australia didn't want England to fight

24:00 Germany. There were demonstrations in the street against it, they were loyal to any ideas of socialism, especially to Moscow. When Germany attacked Russia it was different, they swung against Germany then. Germany did have a communist government in the Weimar Republic before the Nazis took over under Hitler. Germany had civil war in the streets,

24:30 the red Nazis liked Moscow, fighting the black Nazis that we know as Nazis. Socialist fighting socialist. It looks to me like both turned out to be extreme capitalist once they got into power.

**Did you have any notion of politics when you were growing up?**

Those days, none.

**Did you notice the Australian communist party protesting against the war at all?**

25:00 I knew they were protests, I did not know much about it. See we were split, even with the army. Those that would go overseas and fight anywhere and those that would stay in Australia. Might be a national form of schizophrenia, I don't know.

**What was Ipswich like at this time?**

Ipswich was mainly a railway town when we got to Amberley. It had railway workshops, big spinning mills making clothing material.

25:30 They were the two main industries. There was still a lot of shops retailing, a lot of country areas, farmers and so forth. It would have been something like a back-dated, old fashioned English industrial town.

**How did this old fashioned town react to the influx of Americans?**

The Americans spent money in Ipswich so anybody who wanted their money

26:00 loved them. Anybody who was against them didn't want them in any form and didn't want their money. And getting back to this red, left wing sort of thing, some of those people didn't like the Yanks because the United States was capitalist, imperialist etcetera, they didn't like the Yanks, were against them.

**It wasn't just a political thing though was it? They were taking a lot of Australian women?**

26:30 They would help the dislike for a lot of people, yes. Any Australian man who was looking for an Australian woman couldn't get one because the Yanks picked up his favourite one that he had his eye on, yes. There was some fights in the streets sometimes, nearly civil war in some streets in Brisbane city, fighting the Yanks over women or just over being drunk and wanting to fight or because, 'they're reds and they're Yanks and we'll fight them.'

**27:00 Did the Australians and the Americans drink in different places?**

They drank together many places, in the civilian hotel. I would say many Australians did drink civilly with the Yanks and vice versa no problem, but if somebody is out to stir and cause trouble for any reason they will do it, and if the Yanks were going to be their victims the Yanks became their victims.

27:30 The more I think of it in all of those years at Amberley I never saw military police, never.

**Is that because it was a particularly well behaved base do you think or ...?**

Possibly, we had lots of guards. Australian Air Force guards on the gates to stop the traffic going over the strip, guards on the main gate. I never saw any air force police or military police

28:00 patrolling the streets of the aerodrome or the civilian areas, never.

**I just want to stop there for a moment, we'll ....**

28:12 **End of tape**

## Tape 6

00:31 **You were describing how the paperboy run operated and how there were some divisions in the paperboy ranks?**

Well just mainly a matter of them giving change, money, papers. Just a matter of when they came back doing the book keeping of it, the more papers they sold, the more money they should have in their money bags. There was a lot of money, fourteen

01:00 paperboys, fourteen money sets to count and so forth. I caught one paperboy stealing pennies one day, Chicky Sour was his name. I told my mother about it and all she said was he was a communist, I knew nothing about communism, and apparently he was one of the leading communist parties in Ipswich. And I had also learnt about

01:30 weather observation down at the villa, below the mess office they called it at Amberley air force base. Because they had invited me to go down there and see what they were doing. So I learnt about weather maps and radio sounds and balloons and so forth. And I was introduced to a man who wanted to be

known as Steel, it wasn't his family name but he wanted to be known as Steel.

**Just stop there for a sec. Okay, tell us about Steel.**

02:00 Found out late, in Russian the word Steel is Stalin. He was a communist in our air force, a lot of them wouldn't join our armed forces until Russia was attacked by Nazi Germany and then they became very patriotic and on our side, it was just the way part of the population were. What else? What else can you ask me?

**Well I was wondering did you ever read the newspapers?**

02:30 Usually the front page, I didn't have much time for the rest of the newspaper. Front page of the Courier Mail, Brisbane Telegraph, Sunday Mail. Sunday Truth, Brisbane Sunday Truth it gave the Yanks hell, practically every divorce that involved a Yank they would write it up because that would make the Yanks more unpopular with those who wanted them to be unpopular. Ah, quite a few magazines came and went during the war because

03:00 no paper to print them on. Many were not being imported any more, imports would be for importing things, not magazines and newspapers.

**Can you tell us a bit more perhaps about the Americans' relationships with Australian women, with any examples if you might have any?**

I did not observe their relationships at close quarters, I left that

03:30 to them. But I think the average Yank was more polite, more good mannered than the average Australian, and they also had the money and they were also a change. A change in someone's life can be quite a boost, I had plenty, I was zigzagging in life and every zig was a change and every zag was a change. So for Yankee men to come on the scene in great numbers, I would say some were faithless to their wives back home,

04:00 and some were faithful. Some married Australian women. One of the young women that worked for us, her sister married a Yank, that shortly later was killed in the Philippines in one of the battles over there. So there were Australian widows of Yankee servicemen. Amberley had many warning signs around the perimeter fence, barbed wire, an ordinary barbed wire fence like a farmers fence. Nothing big, ornate, like a concentration camp thing.

04:30 Lots of signs, well maybe six or seven scattered, warning, 'Photography is prohibited, offenders would be prosecuted'. I wish I had ignored that sign, I would have got a movie camera and taken so many movies and possibly be locked up for it, but today it would be history on film.

**The Americans, did you get to know any of them very well?**

Oh as customers, they were very talkative,

05:00 some in the class a friends, quite a few.

**Were there any particular you remember?**

No I can't remember, it was fifty years ago. They came and went, didn't stay very long. You might have known any of them only for weeks, months and then they just disappeared.

**What was your father's attitude towards the Americans?**

He was quite sociable, he was sensible enough not to be against them in any way. At one stage he put about twenty horses in the back yard because many Yanks liked to

05:30 ride horses. There was one Yankee he got very friendly with, that Yankee even had his own western saddle at Amberley, I don't know how he got it to Amberley or where it came from but he would go horse riding. My father didn't go horse riding, he was too busy making the money. A lot of the Yanks went horse riding and quite a few were killed by galloping under low branches of trees, have a head collision, kill themselves

06:00 riding horses. There weren't any Aboriginals in sight at Amberley, none in the CCC, never saw any in our air force. Never saw any Aboriginal woman in our air force. I saw one Yankee Negro, those days. My mate and I were thumbing a ride on the main road near the shop, up the long hill we wanted to go, this Yankee truck came along, we hopped on the running board, it was a Negro driving a truck. He gave us a lift to the top of the hill we

06:30 thanked him, off he went, off we went. About twenty years later I heard there was two camps of Negroes further on past Amberley out in the bush. Not allowed to come into Ipswich, never saw them in Brisbane. This would have been part, I believe, of the 'white Australia policy'. Keep them away from the whites. And many American Negroes did great things in the war, they even had a squadron

07:00 of fighter pilots, and a Pappy Boington fighting in the Pacific. They weren't all just guitar players and singers and fools, they were quite smart men. Well to keep them out twenty miles in the bush, if they had have been allowed leave to come into town there could have been more riots in the street between our people and them and the Yanks and them, the white Yanks and them. To me today it's just sick

ridiculous business.

07:30 **At the time what were you aware of?**

How aware?

**Were you aware that they were segregated?**

No, no. Only knew this one, he was driving a truck of course, only for a few minutes. But never realised, never knew they were camped twenty miles out in the bush. If I had knew it then, I would have got a truck load of newspapers and ice cream and went out and sold it to them if I was allowed into their camp. I know from my readings they did have a lot of white officers in charge of them.

08:00 There weren't that many black officers.

**What was your impression of the black?**

Well hardly didn't even know that driver but I was good mannered to him and so was my mate and he to us. He might have been surprised to, a Negro from USA, to have white boys thumb a ride of him. They'd be more surprised to learn we accepted his ride, standing on the running board of that big army truck and then we had the good manners to thank him at the top of the hill. Could have been a big surprise to him.

08:30 I hope it was, show we were a little bit civilised but otherwise the Yankee Negro and the Australian Aboriginal, just out of sight.

**How aware were you, were you aware that there were no Aboriginals around?**

No, didn't even think of it. I had no association with them when I was young. Out of sight out of mind. I knew Australian Aboriginals were kept on a big reserve somewhere in Queensland. And they weren't allowed out without a permit and

09:00 whites weren't allowed in without a permit. Apart from that I knew nothing of them apart from what I saw in Brisbane museum.

**Can we just come back to the shop and talk in a little bit more detail about that. Can you tell us specifically some of the things you had in the shop that catered for the Americans?**

Ice cream, milk, milk shakes, sweets, meat pies, sandwiches.

09:30 Our coffee they didn't like. When I was first asked for a coffee by a Yank I gave the order in the kitchen, they opened a bottle of coffee - what do you call it? - essence of coffee that we always had. Well to them it was terrible, they wanted coffee as they knew it, they just wouldn't drink our coffee, they drank our tea but not our coffee.

10:00 We gave them a laundry service and dry cleaning service which was catered for by people in Ipswich. So we had vehicles coming and going with newspapers, vehicles coming and going with laundry, dry cleaning. Truckloads coming with soft drinks, milk coming, bread coming, lot of coming going on.

**What sort of soft drinks did the Americans like to drink?**

Any of ours, our sarsaparilla was very much like their Coca Cola or vice versa.

10:30 I actually got an empty Coca Cola bottle one day, washed it, got the cap, put McMahan's Sarsaparilla in it, put it in our fridge. A Yank come by one day I was in the kitchen, "Can I get a drink?" "Yeah help yourself." He opened our fridge door, took that bottle of sarsaparilla out, opened the lid, drank the lot, thought it was Coke, never said a word. He didn't know the difference. That was McMahan's Sarsaparilla. Today Coca Cola is just fizzy water,

11:00 it's not the real Coca Cola, I won't accept it as Coca Cola. My grandkids know I will not allow today's Coca Cola in this house. They can drink it outside in the backyard if they like but not in this house.

**Why is that?**

It's false advertising. It's not Coca Cola, they have cut their costs by making it a fizzy drink and as it was, from what I have read, the Washington Government made an agreement with Coke that Coca Cola all over the world in

11:30 Yankee canteens, that's army, navy and air force, would not cost more than five cents a bottle. So the US government had to subsidise Coca Cola as part of their war effort. I'm sure the Germans, the Russians and the Italians never had Coca Cola to keep the war going but the Yanks had to have it.

**Did you sell Coca Cola in your shop?**

No, we couldn't get it, no. We had the ordinary Australian soft drink. McMahan's, then Fiscal,

12:00 we had two drink companies supplying us.

**Can you describe the taste of the Coca Cola that you got from the Americans?**

It's like our sarsaparilla. Our sarsaparilla today made in Bundaberg, sold here in Canberra a thousand miles away is very close to the old sarsaparilla of World War II and the old Coca Cola.

**Can you describe the Coca Cola bottle?**

Well in those days it was the stream lined bottle, the curve, that's their standard bottle. Even the big ones today that are plastic, still the same shape.

12:30 **Can you remember tasting it for the first time?**

Oh yes, to me it was just like sarsaparilla, the sarsaparilla then and the Coca Cola were good, I did drink a bit at the PX, that's the canteen, they call it the Yanks' personal exchange. Canteen in other words.

**What other things were you able to sample in an American PX?**

Oh their chocolate that we couldn't have, couldn't get.

**Can you describe their PX for us?**

13:00 Like a small supermarket, but big enough for their camp at Amberley base. They had that many things for sale that the Amberley Yank felt he should have in aid of the war to keep things going. They had the comforts of home.

**Why did they need your shop then, to shop there?**

We had meat pies, that was a big attraction. They were good meat pies, so they would come over to us. A lot of them, not all,

13:30 but a lot of them would come over to us for meat pies for breakfast.

**Must have been difficult to get a lot of ingredients for the meat pies given the rationing, can you tell us how ?**

I can't tell you how it came in, my parents got it in somehow from somewhere. I doubt if it was kangaroo, I doubt that, I think it was just beef meat. There was no shortage of flour, no shortage of bread. Flour wasn't rationed, maybe flour should have been rationed and cigarettes not rationed,

14:00 why ration cigarettes and tobacco? Rather a contradiction in the cigarettes and tobacco for war, and you don't need butter if you can get margarine.

**Did you take up smoking at this point?**

No, not interested, my father had given up years before, I didn't start smoking until about twenty years after.

**Did you advertise the shop?**

No. What would we advertise in? The Brisbane Courier Mail in Brisbane?

14:30 Thirty miles away. Nowhere to advertise, we didn't have to advertise anyway, the shop building was there, the Yanks were there, and the two got together.

**Were there customers other than Americans in your shop?**

Yes the Australian air force, both men and women, and the local civilian population, weren't many of them. And the civilian construction works corps men, and the allied

15:00 works council men.

**What was the shop called?**

Amberley store. That's all, no big trade name, no flashing lights, no neon lights, nothing like that. Today it would be just classed as a hillbilly operation. Sort of thing you expect to find in downtown Tallahassee, Alabama, Oklahoma, something like that.

**And your pies, can you describe how they were sold, were they sold hot or cold or ...?**

15:30 Sold hot, but there was a trade secret why they were so good and I have told many persons making pies in the past fifty years as to what the secret was, and they have never used it.

**And you can share it with us today?**

I'll tell you but don't you tell anybody else.

**Okay.**

Our two women cooks put lemon juice in the pastry. Real lemon juice, boy that made a difference. It went right through the

16:00 pastry we cooked and right to the meat. The Yanks and our fellows came back for more, fantastic. So

don't you tell anybody else, it's just between you and me.

**What other things were in the pies?**

Nothing else, it was just the meat. We didn't put threepence in, or shillings for them to find on their birthdays, nothing like that. Plain good meat pies.

**Did you only make enough for the store or did you distribute them elsewhere?**

No only for the

16:30 shop, that was enough yep. The Yanks had that much laundry and dry cleaning coming in, I never saw any laundry facilities on the aerodrome for the Yanks or for our fellows. There must have been some somewhere and I never ever saw them. But the Yanks had their large duffle bags, they'd bring their clothes in for laundry in those, with their name and number on the bag. We'd just process it and off it

17:00 would go and it would come back a day later.

**Were the pies the only attraction of the shop?**

Women. Any young woman working for us was an attraction. Most of them had their own boyfriends already at that time. We did not have any women of the night or women of the day hanging around the place at all, they were already available in Ipswich. Bordellos were highly illegal but with the war

17:30 they were allowed to operate. Ipswich had at least one, and in the 1960s Brisbane had four illegal ones.

**Can you tell us about the relationships between the American servicemen and the women working in your shop?**

Well the women working for us just treated them as customers, that's all. And if the Yanks ever made any advances towards them they just politely ignored them or told them, "No," as the case may be.

18:00 I'm pretty sure they did have their own boyfriends, men friends, elsewhere, they were quite happy and didn't want to be involved. But with one Yank named Jimmy Stewart, to have two WAAAFs wrestling, punching and then on the floor of this shop wrestling over this Yank, I wish I had a movie camera, it was unbelievable. To see two women in air force uniform on the floor in a public shop in a public place, customers looking on. My father wasn't there at the time, I think if he was

18:30 he would have started book making on who would win the fight. It was so ridiculous and funny and stupid all at the one time.

**Did your father also work in the shop?**

Oh yes yes. He had to do the books, he was quite a good bookkeeper. He studied bookkeeping as part of his army training, so he did the books and the taxation records, etcetera.

19:00 We didn't have taxes like we do today. Canberra brought in a half penny tax on a threepenny ice cream, it did become a threepenny half penny ice cream. I don't know what other taxes were used then. But I'm sure we are paying more taxes now than during the war.

**Were there any things that you were unable to get?**

Oh lots of things we were unable to get.

19:30 And sometimes we'd get things from the wholesalers that we didn't order. Some of them were very tough. If they had something we needed, they would demand that we would take something else as well. One day we had to take a small wooden box about that long, dried apples, which we didn't want and didn't need. If we didn't accept them and pay for them our supply would be cut off. So once in a while we would be lumbered

20:00 with something we didn't want. That's how business would be done sometimes.

**Can you describe any black market activities?**

Petrol itself, tobacco, cigarettes at times, selling for more than the legal price. There was no such thing as a recommended retail price, if there wasn't a government fixed price you could sell it for anything you wanted to.

20:30 But the Yankee cigarettes were very popular on the black market. Lucky Strikes were the most popular, and Chesterfields were the next brand. I can't remember any more. Plexi glass, which was plastic glass used in aeroplane windows and so forth, that was something new to us. I remember some Australians at Amberley, they must have got some wrecked plastic glass off

21:00 a crashed aeroplane, they were hand making rings out of it. And I was offered one of these rings, was about twenty-five pounds. In today's money that's about two thousand dollars. I didn't want to put a two thousand dollar ring on anybody's finger. Somebody might have paid him twenty-five pounds for it. But they were making them in their spare time and of course if they could sell them they got extra money. But plastic glass, today it's

21:30 plexi glass, it was something new and different. So they were trying to create a demand for something like that and it did work.

**Did the Americans bring in things that you hadn't seen before?**

Commercial things?

**Oh, food items?**

No, I don't think so. I don't remember any unusual

22:00 food items in those canteens. Never sold vegetables, never sold block of ice, they didn't need them, they had refrigerators. I think Coca Cola was the only soft drink they had, I can't recall anything specially imported that was very different to us. There was a shortage of women's stockings in nylon or silk, well they could be used to bribe women for all sorts of

22:30 things. Some Australian women used a brown coloured paint to cover their legs then put a black mark down the back to show a seam. Paint it on, all fake, it did the job, it looked good. But for real nylon stockings, God knows what they would do, or maybe the devil would know what they would do.

**What about chewing gum, did the Americans have chewing gum?**

Yes they had their own chewing gum yes. We

23:00 did not have any chewing gum, I think our factory maybe stopped making it. I remember Wrigley's Chewing Gum later on but I don't remember any of our Australian made chewing gum at Amberley during the war. The Yanks had their own chewing gum but I wasn't interested in it, it never appealed to me.

**Can you**

23:30 **describe how big the shop was for us?**

Not that big, it wouldn't be bigger than I suppose the average three bedroom house, with a shop in one corner of it. The veranda that my parents put on the front of it, that did help make it bigger. But for the business and the customer traffic that went through it during those years it was horrendous.

24:00 **How many customers would you estimate a day?**

Oh I couldn't tell you. The shop front door opened at six, the locals would come in early and get their own newspapers and bread, it would close around two a.m. the next morning, God knows how much money and how many persons came through that door. I just couldn't tell you, sometimes people were queued up. I couldn't tell you.

24:30 **Did you have much spare time, what did you do in your spare time?**

Not too much, in those days I didn't know the words 'spare time', to me it was just doing things. I didn't even think of time, I would go to tech and do this, and if I wasn't at tech I would do other things. I might take a day off and run around the bush with my mates. Spare time, just didn't occur to me that there was such a thing as spare time, I just filled in time.

25:00 There was no forty hour week in those days, and certainly wars don't run on a forty hour week.

**How aware were you of what was happening in the war at this time?**

Oh yeah I was very aware of it, especially when different aeroplanes came and went, and Yanks came and went and our fellows came and went.

25:30 Every so often you would hear of someone killed and so forth. Very aware of it. Would have been more aware if the Japanese had air raided Amberley but it never happened.

**Was that a concern?**

That it never happened?

**That there was a possibility?**

No I never thought of it, never thought of it.

**What provisions did you make at the shop for air raids?**

There was none, possibly run outside and get underneath the shop.

26:00 There was only about two feet off the ground, it was a low block. Maybe hide under the shop. Even Group Captain Douglas at the school house, they had no protection, he was a low block house also, maybe they had to climb under the house, crawl under and hope nothing hit the house. I don't know what Amberley had as protection either for the men and women that were there, there were no

- 26:30 underground shelters, I never saw any shelters above ground. I think the hierarchy must have estimated very little chance of the Japanese attacking Amberley. It was thirty-four miles, about thirty-four miles, forty miles inland in southern Queensland. For The Japanese to raid Amberley, they'd need an aircraft carrier, so why bother? All they need to do is raid Sydney city, bomb it to bits, that would scare the rest of the population.
- 27:00 **How did your dad spend all of the money he was making in the shop?**
- Well the war did end and we were still there for three years after that. Business going down, down, down., so the money went down, down, down, keeping the business running. We still had a lot when we left but not as much as when the war ended.
- At the time of the war when the most Americans were there, how was that effecting the local economy?**
- Well I think the Yanks in Australia,
- 27:30 well all over ,wherever they went they did boost the economy. Awful lot. Wasn't just number, also the money they had because the exchange rate gave them, say two of their pounds to one of our pounds. Two of their dollars for one of our dollars, more money in every man's pocket to spend.
- How did you feel about the Americans, did they inspire you, or did you think that you might like to be like them?**
- 28:00 No I never thought anything at all like that.
- But you cast yourself in the light of hillbilly compared to them?**
- Yes. I think we are still the amateur class, we might have come up a few rungs from hillbilly, we might be hillbilly class three or class two.
- At the time do you remember feeling inferior to the Americans?**
- No, no. It's only my adult years I have thought back just how backward we were then.
- 28:30 And when my father was at the Enoggera training school our army still had wagons and horses. As to what they would do in the real war, I don't know, but they were at Enoggera. I think the Yanks would have shot their horses years before and dumped the wagons and used tanks instead.
- 29:00 **Can you tell us a bit more about the average day in the shop, what time you started, doors opened?**
- Six o'clock, because of the newspapers. In the afternoon we had the Brisbane Telegraph' arrive. Bit with the war running all hours of the day we had people coming and going. If we stayed open until two o'clock okay, the next night we might close at ten. Depending who was available, who was coming, who was going. A lot of the service men and women had to work
- 29:30 night shift, some worked day shift, some worked night shift. Because war kept going, on and on, every day of the week, all day. The switchboards had to be operated, anybody working on any form of radar, I doubt if Amberley had any radar, I think it was still too new of an invention. We had guards on duty even then, I don't know what number on night shift,
- 30:00 but if you knocked off at one in the morning and we were open and you wanted something to eat well, we were there.
- And what sort of lighting did you have in the shop?**
- Ordinary household two forty volt light. No neons, no spotlight, just ordinary lighting, every household type of lighting. Nothing flash, no neon signs.
- How much stock did you keep on the shelves?**
- The groceries went down an awful lot because there was so little demand.
- 30:30 Ice cream went up, the bread went up, meat pies. Then we took over, there was no laundry or dry cleaning facility available, we got so much laundry coming in, so much dry cleaning. It was all, usually all in the large duffle bag each.
- Did you ever offer to go for a ride in an aeroplane at the time?**
- 31:00 Nobody asked me and I did not ask. I would not, should not have been allowed to. Quite possible somebody might have smuggled me in, either our fellows or somebody else. But it could have been a bit nerve racking going for a ride in a military aircraft with some wild pilot. I remember some Yankee officers coming in one day and I told them quite
- 31:30 casually, "Captain Platt's dry-cleaning is still here, he hasn't picked it up in a few weeks." And one of them said, "Do you know what happened to him?" And I said, "No I don't." And I didn't ask any more and he didn't tell me any more but he paid for his dry-cleaning and took it. Well Captain Platt, I know, had flown a Mitchell Bomber across Amberley aerodrome, bank over to about a hundred and twenty

degree, bank on its left side, it was

32:00 frightening to me looking at that aeroplane. From what I know of aviation he could have had side slip, no lift on the wings and gone down and crashed sideways. To me the only reason why he stayed flying was he had made a big curve and was using centrifugal force to keep the plane in the air. And he was so low, possibly two hundred metres above the ground.

32:30 If the plane had side slipped I don't know how he could have got out of it. But I don't know what happened to him. But some of the Yanks, they were very rebellious, very risk taking, even when they were driving at times. When you look around today at the way we drive, well some of us are amateurs to them. Too fast for the conditions, much too fast. If you are driving a big army truck and you are driving in traffic

33:00 you will squash quite a few vehicles in front of you, and I think a similar thing happened with aeroplanes.

**Can you describe any particular incidences of bad driving or crashes that the Americans had?**

There was a Yank called Izzo, I Z Z O, that was his nickname. As to what his real name was I don't know, it might be Isopade or something, and he came flying past our shop one day in a beep. I don't think Australians had ever heard of a beep, it's a big version of a jeep.

33:30 And he went flying past our shop, down the dirt road, took the next corner flew along that dirt road heading toward Walloon, there was a radio station down there where they used to work and we heard this awful crash. Izzo's truck. We flew down to help Izzo, the beep was upside down on the side of the bush, Izzo underneath it. What saved him was that the gutter there was actually a creek thing, a trench.

34:00 He had got into that trench creek as the truck went over upside down. That long hole in the ground saved Izzo from being killed, I don't know what it would have cost him to pay for the damages, if it cost him anything. But that dirt road was very corrugated and I think his speed was far too great for the corrugations, and the truck went into a vertical bounce, bounced off the road and turned over.

34:30 He was lucky to get out of it alive. So the driving was a bit reckless at times. One day a Yank turned up at the shop with a Japanese army motorbike and a side car, I don't know how it got from up there in the Pacific Islands and then down to Amberley. I'm guessing some Japanese were shot because they were on it. Ten Yanks grabbed it, put it into a BC-3 aeroplane because the doors were open, it was flying to Amberley and the motorbike was unloaded at Amberley.

35:00 Well this Yank wanted me to buy it for five pounds. I had never ridden a motorbike, it was a copy of a Harley Davidson with (UNCLEAR) as handle bars. I didn't have a hope riding the thing, I had never ridden a motorbike before, using a side car, the front wheel was out of balance, the whole thing was wobbly, he managed to get it back to the shop. "No thanks I don't want to by it." "Why? How could you not want a Japanese army motorbike?"

35:30 I think it might have been a Japanese marine's, it was a greyish colour, grey for marines. So it came from up in the islands to Amberley. I don't know where it finished up. Today I wish I had it, it might have been a collectors' item.

**How do you think they got it back there?**

Well it had to come by aeroplane. They wouldn't ride it all the way, it just wouldn't last that long because the front wheel

36:00 must have had a bad buckle in it, made the whole thing wobble and shake. But in a war like that, the Yanks could move anything they wanted to, officially or unofficially. Surprising the things they did.

**Did you secretly feel that they were sort of over resourced?**

No, I knew nothing about being over resourced, I just knew that they had things, they had things we didn't have. The variety

36:30 of bombs that they had, the variety of fighter planes. Even rifles, they had three different types of rifles I knew about. There was the Bar automatic machine gun, the thirty calibre carbine and the Garand. And early in the war, in the Philippines especially, they still had the bolt action, that's four types of rifles. We had one. Then they had the Thompson gun, forty-five calibre, went on the tanks. They had thirty calibre and fifty calibre machine guns.

37:00 They had such a variety of different types of machinery and equipment, surprising that their war ever produced so much. We had Wirraways and Lockheed Hudsons and a few Avro Ansons. I have been inside the air force Avro Anson somewhere in the aerodrome, it was amazing some of the places I got into as a kid, today I'd be shot on sight. The Avro Anson

37:30 is the only aeroplane I know that has balls. Two balls on wires, when the wheels go down to land these two balls come up out of tubes so the pilot can see the wheels are down because the balls are up. When the wheels come up the balls go down. Amazing thing, that's an Avro Anson.

**We might stop there and change the tape.**

## **Tape 7**

00:03 **Okay, we were talking about aeroplanes. As I mentioned before I think, off camera I think, this must have been a fantastic place to be as a young lad?**

Yes it was, yes.

**Can you tell us about all of your impressions of the American aeroplanes?**

The variety and the size and the shape, say from a Bell Airacobra fighter plane to even today, it's rather odd because the engine was in the middle of

01:00 the body and the pilot sitting in front of that. The propeller was driven by a long shaft at the front, and they used that shaft hollow to have a machine gun in the front. And it was ideal as a tank buster and the Russians used lots of them. And I saw lots at Amberley and there was a cannon in the nose, like they had it, yes, you just aim it straight at a tank, allow for a bit of distance,

01:30 and they were used by Russians especially to blow up tanks. They would have a twin tail Lockheed Lightning, plenty of them. See there was such a variety from little aeroplanes, the Bell Airacobra with an engine in the middle, then two engines over here with a long tail at the back. The contrast was very great. The popular Kittyhawk B-40 with P-38 Lightning. Fighter planes,

02:00 did I mention the Norfolk turning up earlier?

**You mentioned you saw one.**

Yes that was top secret from the publicity and I worked out it was the radar in the nose that made it secret. And I have never yet seen it in the documentaries, movies of war and so forth. It can't be a secret any more. From what I have read, it did have a good record as a fighter plane shooting down enemy aircraft.

02:30 **What was the most impressive machine that you saw at Amberley?**

B17s were impressive, that's the Flying Fortress. The latest models then were very impressive because they had so many alterations that made them better. The British Royal Air Force was supplied with the early model Flying Fortresses early in the war. But the Yanks made the mistake of not having a tail gunner, so when the German

03:00 aircraft attacked from behind they weren't very safe. The British complained no tail gunners so the Yanks then put tail gunners in.

**Can you describe what they looked like, to someone who has never seen a Flying Fortress before?**

There were four engines, long wings, very wide wings. Very long body, quite a few windows here and there, lots of machine guns sticking out. Lot of noise when the engines are roaring for take-off. I

03:30 think aeroplanes en masse, in a big group, would be more impressive than any one single plane by itself. A lot of Mosquitoes came to Amberley for a while, I think they were ours. They might take off five, ten, fifteen at a time, all screaming across the drome going off up high. One hit a truck one day that was working on the aerodrome repairing the tarmac. I don't know what the truck was doing there

04:00 whilst Mosquitoes were taking off but war is war, things happen.

**Can you describe what happened there?**

Well it damaged the truck and damaged the plane and the truck driver was in the shop days later, he had a bump on his spine, that was the only injury he had. I heard the pilot was quite okay in the Mosquito.

**Mosquitoes were gleaming silver coloured?**

Well they could be gleaming silver but many planes were camouflaged, British, Americans, German, Russian. But I read somewhere, to speed up the war

04:30 production the Yanks stopped painting them, saved time. To wait for the paint, there wouldn't be that much paint involved but there would be a little bit. And they just stopped camouflaging them, they just become plain aluminium. In the early days a lot of aircraft, like the early DC-3s, the aluminium skin was riveted on

05:00 and every rivet had a little dome, a little bubble, rows and rows of all these bumps. It got to the stage where they didn't have these bumps any more, they were all smooth head rivets and that made a

difference in the air flow. Reduced the weight slightly but increased the air flow, that increased lift. So all of these little changes were great improvements.

**Did they follow a certain routine at the aircraft base, would the planes usually take off or land at a certain time?**

Oh I've never known that to happen, no.

05:30 Could be any time coming down, any time.

**You mentioned I think briefly before how you got to know the sounds of these aircraft?**

Yes.

**Can you talk a little bit about how the sounds varied amongst these different aircraft?**

Four engine ones would make an awful roaring noise compared to the single engine, and if they were flying low over buildings, and you heard the differences. The old DC-3 say was very tame compared with a Flying Fortress or

06:00 a Liberator or Lincolns. The different engine noises between the big four engines and the two engines were great. There was one unusual plane I saw there, there was only two in the world made like it. A stagger-wing Beechcraft. The cabin biplane where the top wing is moved back compared with the bottom wing.

06:30 Most planes have the top wing forward. The only other aircraft with its wing back was the DeHavilland 9, I think it was of World War I. Only saw one of these big beach plane, it was at Amberley, it was used more like a VIP [Very Important Person] transport plane, single engine. Quite fast. Why make them at all

07:00 with the top wing pushed back, when everybody else has got them pushed forward? That's how the Yanks thought, my plane has got to be different to your plane. We have to make the rudders a different shape so people know our rudder from your rudder.

**How did you learn about these planes as a child?**

Observation. I did find a training manual, a Yankee training manual. I had it for years and I think someone took it without asking me.

07:30 A PIF book, P I F, Pilot's Information File. A loose leaf book, good quality paper, full of information and illustrations on what pilots should do for certain things, certain times, certain intervals. The emergency work, how to put your parachute on, how to jump out. All sorts of general information that a pilot should know to become more competent and more efficient. I had that book for years but it's gone, I don't know where.

08:00 **Did you become a bit of a buff, a bit of a plane spotter?**

Oh well, didn't become one, there they were, you didn't have to turn your eyes, they came, they went. But when you hear the engines roaring and suddenly stop you would know there would be something wrong, and sure enough there would be an explosion, a DC3, you hear the engines warming up one morning and all of a sudden they stopped. When I went past on the bus to tech [technical] college, there it was sitting on its belly on the tarmac.

08:30 The wheels had collapsed and once the propellers hit the ground the engine stopped. So that was a bad case of someone pulling the wrong lever I think.

**What other accidents did you come in contact with?**

Well I wasn't really in contact with them I saw some happen.

**Sorry, well that's probably better.**

I heard some happen. Some were out of sight and I heard them happen, some I saw happen. It was very tragic to see an aeroplane, like this Mustang where, Dutch air force,

09:00 the wing breaks off and you can see the wing falling down, you know something bad is going to happen. The other wing is still lifting so it turns the plane over. Then the plane is losing lift, it disappears behind the buildings and you know what to expect, a big cloud of flames and the smoke goes up and the pilot is dead in just a few seconds.

**Can you go back to the beginning of this and just take us through what you saw and what you heard and how things unfolded in this incident?**

Well I was out the front of the shop and I heard the Mustang coming.

09:30 Recognised it to be a Mustang engine, had to be a Mustang. It flew over the main road area, I am watching just going along. Then as it went over the buildings in the distance I saw the wing fall off. The plane itself wasn't over the buildings it was down past them all, towards the tarmac. The wing just broke off completely at the root, surprised that it happened but it happened. And the plane just turned

over slowly and disappeared

10:00 behind the buildings. Then the explosion, nobody can live through that.

**Was there a fire ball? What kind of explosion?**

Oh yeah, fire ball yep. I presume it had a full tank of fuel. The worst one that I know of was a Lincoln, our Lincoln, one of ours. Crashed, I don't know what happened, how could a giant, four engines, suddenly go straight up in the sky like that. It's sort of impossible.

10:30 I had heard of them being flow upside down. Can be done, but to go nose up, and slide backwards. That's what happened, thirteen were killed.

**Did you see this crash happen?**

Yes. I seen the Lincoln coming in, it wasn't coming in to land, we could hear the engine quite regular, I was delivering newspapers to the married quarters with other people around me, wives, kids and so forth.

11:00 Then we heard this awful roaring noise which is unusual for that type of plane, then we all just shut up talking and just stood still and sure enough one big explosion. A lot of us then went out on the main road and saw what had happened. There was one big ball of fire and ash on the ground near the main road. I heard the nose had just gone straight up and that's why the engines were roaring. The pilot was somehow trying to pull it out of this vertical position.

11:30 It couldn't be done, it just slid backwards, tail first, and the engine exploded.

**What happened then?**

Well nothing happened, the fire brigade just couldn't put the fire out and you couldn't save anybody. A day after, when they cleared the wreckage away you got one black patch. A plane like that burning then becomes just a crematorium. Anything alive it survives as ashes, ah well that's all it would be, just ashes.

12:00 **What's the smell like of a burning plane wreck?**

Aluminium burns at six hundred and sixty degrees Fahrenheit. It's a very low temperature for metal to burn, aluminium is very lightweight and very strong if used in certain ways, can be very soft aluminium or very hard aluminium, one or the other. It will burn very easily and if you've got aviation fuel mixed with it,

12:30 plus rubber or anything else that will burn, the fuel itself burning will set everything else on fire. I had to burn one of my father's dead horses one day, I know the smell of burning horse and human beings can smell similar. Horses are meat, human beings are meat.

**That plane crash though is mainly just a smell of burning rubber?**

Well there was no smell by the time I got anywhere near it, it would have just blown away in the breeze.

13:00 But any smell is a gas from the aircraft burning, most of the smell would go up with it, if you are near the site of it I doubt you would smell anything until all the burning had stopped and a lot of heat had gone and then the breeze would blow any smell of anything burning, blown around and then people would smell it.

**Tell us about the fire brigade set up they had at the air force base?**

They had a fire brigade but nothing like what we would imagine a fire brigade could be

13:30 today. I think they had one fire truck, I don't remember the Yanks having any fire trucks. There were fire extinguishing bottles around the place in places, unusually large ones as a big as a man, on two large wheels with a handle so they could be moved from one place to another. But for any major fire I don't remember Amberley having anything. And there never was a major

14:00 fire there other than the occasional aeroplane crash, and most of those, well you just couldn't put them out. Let them burn, that's all you could do.

**I've never heard of these fire extinguishing bottles can you tell me about them?**

Well you've got a large bottle, a cylinder, big as a man, on two large wheels, those old fashioned cart wheels. Had a handle so you can grab it, those big wheels make it easy to move along, if you are on a smooth tarmac it's easy to move along.

14:30 And hope to put the fire out with the big fire extinguisher.

**It was connected to a hose?**

Oh no. It was self propelled, but self operated, very much like the small red extinguishers you see in buildings. Along that line, similar idea.

**There must have been an armaments depot at this air force base?**

Oh I don't know I have never heard of

15:00 any bomb depots, no bomb storage for aircraft, I have never known bombs to be loaded on the aircraft. The Yankee air transport command, well they'd be involved in moving anything. And I think with the workshop they had inside these big hangars, that's why the occasional bomber or fighter turned up, and they'd do the work on, they had pretty simple maintenance.

15:30 Otherwise I'm sure they were just involved in transporting anything. The DC-3s and the Curtiss Commando, which is like a DC-3, very similar, well they were used a lot for transport. But for armaments I doubt if there was, no big depots for bombs, no big depots for ammunition, for rifles, machine guns, nothing like that. They would have had some for their own

16:00 individual personal use, but nothing for war use, no big big battle, nothing like that.

**You were a young lad, were you interested in bombs and weapons at the time?**

I didn't know much about them, I didn't worry about them at all.

**Did you take interest when you saw a loaded bomber or ...?**

Well we wouldn't know if they were loaded..

**You never saw them being loaded?**

No I never saw any bombs being loaded. Never saw bombs out in the aerodrome,

16:30 anywhere in those two areas, Yank or Australian. If the modern bomber was loaded with bombs we wouldn't know it because they would be tucked inside the hull. I don't know any plane having bombs on board and the bombs exploding when the plane crashed. Which would add, of course, to the explosion, never knew of it.

**Are there any other crash incidents that stand out to you? There was the Mustang and the Lincoln.**

17:00 Mustang, Lincoln, there was the Spitfire, the DC-3 legs folding up One of our Liberators crashed but not at Amberley, it had taken off of Amberley, something went wrong a few miles out and it went down into the bush out there, gum trees, all that sort of thing. It blew up, I didn't see it, but a mate of mine, Cecil Miner, he had got there because they had a farm in that direction,

17:30 he said there were bits of bodies up in the gum trees.

**You mentioned Cecil, who was he?**

Son of a farmer. It was his father I sold the drum of petrol to for five pounds, he being a farmer he needed petrol for his tractor and truck and so forth, and car. So he gladly took the stolen drum of petrol off me and I gladly took his five pounds.

18:00 Cecil was just another hard working kid in the local area, working on his father's farm.

**Were these kids you went to tech with? How did you ...?**

No I was the only one at Amberley that went to Ipswich Tech, the others at times had gone to state schools, God knows what other schools they went to, I presume some had left school, didn't go at all. But we had the run of, nearly eighty per cent of Amberley aerodrome we could have the run of. There was Group Captain

18:30 Douglas and his son Ian, bit younger than I at the time. He would want to go and see his father in the office, the head office at Amberley at the time, and we would just walk thorough the aerodrome, through the administration building up into his father's office. Nobody stopped us, none challenged us. They knew he was the son of the CO [Commanding Officer], they knew me as the paper boy, we didn't look like spies, we weren't big enough to be spies, we weren't intelligent enough to be spies. And his father wasn't in the office so we just turned around and walked

19:00 all the way back out again, no trouble. Today we'd be grilled and locked up in five minutes.

**From your vantage point of having the run of eighty per cent of the place, would you notice the morale of the place, was it a happy base?**

Everyone I knew seemed to be happy. Seemed to be happy. They were very happy the day Italy surrendered.

19:30 We in the shop did not even know Italy had surrendered, it must have come over the radio, we must not have had the radio on or on the wrong station or something. And the Brisbane Telegraph suddenly sent us about a thousand Telegraphs. We got them about eleven o'clock instead of the usual four or five p.m. in the afternoon. Italy had surrendered, we've got to get rid of a thousand newspapers. I threw them into the truck, got over to the drome as quick as I could, "Paper! Paper! Italy surrendered!" There was

no one at home, everyone had knocked off.

20:00 "The war is nearly finished, what are we doing here?" They must have all gone down to Ipswich to the pubs. Or home, wherever home was. We were stuck with a thousand newspapers we could not sell and the Brisbane Telegraph would not take them back, we had to pay for them or we wouldn't have got any more Brisbane Telegraphs.

**'Italy surrender ruins Amberley store'.**

Something like that, and if I had those thousand newspapers now they would be worth fifty dollars each.

20:30 Dear oh dear.

**Was there a sense during that year that the war was being won, that it was all going to end?**

Oh we had a lot of good news at times and there was good news but I would say a lot of bad news was kept from us at times, bad news. We had the fall of Hong Kong, that was bad news, the fall of the Philippines, bad news, the fall of Singapore, more bad news, the fall of Dutch East Indies. There was so much bad news

21:00 as the Japanese came south. It was ridiculous for the Japanese to attack Pearl Harbour, they had been our side in World War I, not against, on our side. The Germans were on our side, or the English side rather, at the Battle of Waterloo, years later they were against us. All this, a lot of zigzagging, so was I in my own way but countries, nations, governments, they were zigzagging their way, they were making big ones and I wasn't.

21:30 **Japan was on our side in the First World War.**

Yes.

**Were there any other headlines that stand out to you from your paperboy delivering days during the war?**

Well the bomb on Hiroshima would have been big. I don't remember the newspapers. But every good bit of news, good news, would make headlines to bolster people's morale. But I'm sure a lot of bad news that we still don't even

22:00 know about was kept from us. Bad news demoralises people. Bad news sells newspapers, good news doesn't. So it is quite a conundrum balancing the bad news and the good news. "What should they be told?" or, "Should this be kept quiet?" "Will this sell newspapers or won't this sell newspapers?"

**And yet morale was fairly good on the base as you said?**

I think morale might have gone down an awful lot once the Japanese

22:30 got to New Guinea. Once Darwin was bombed and Townsville, I think that brought morale down an awful lot. It was only when we started to win a bit that the morale come back up again.

**What would happen around the base, say, when one of the aircraft crashed and say someone had died?**

A lot of people were very sad, could be your mate living in the same hut with you in the next bunk, now he's

23:00 gone. And you might know his wife and kids. A lot of sad people whenever there was a crash and people were killed.

**Did they have any rituals to mark?**

Oh they might have had on the drome but I never saw any in public places. No big monuments put up. No celebration - celebration? - commemoration parties to remember so and so. I never knew of anything like that but they might have had them. I

23:30 think when some, in the case of the Lincoln, thirteen were killed in one crash, a lot of people could have been directly involved as friends, workmates, boss. Anything like that. Who wants to commemorate them, you're just sad. That's it.

**Were there flags all over this air force base?**

No, no. I saw the Australian flag on the main flag pole near the main office, head office, the administration office.

24:00 I don't remember the Yanks having a flag pole, they should have. Maybe they had their flag erected in the officers' mess, that would be a good place to have a flag. But I don't remember stars and stripes on any flagpole at Amberley, nowhere.

**Was that the Australian flag or the Union Jack?**

No that was the Australian flag.

**Before we get onto talking about the end of the war and those things, there is a couple of things you mentioned that I want to go back over, you mentioned a black market.**

24:30 **Did your shop have any under the table products in it?**

Under the table? Under the counter.

**Under the counter.**

We had unknown persons coming in, people we had never seen before coming in asking for cigarettes that they'd want to buy, tobacco, but we usually kept that reserved for our regular customers.

25:00 Strangers just couldn't get it, they should have just went and got it elsewhere. I and the other kids were often asked around the place, "Where is the dump?" because the Yanks had established a dump where they would dump unwanted things. Up the hill and turn the first left and there it was, about a hundred yards into the bush. The Yanks were throwing out that much stuff that was valuable to the Australians. We knew

25:30 where the dump was but we had to keep it quiet. There would be a thousand people there on the weekend there, salvaging Yankee stuff and we wanted the stuff as kids, just to muck about and play with. They'd throw out belts of ammunition, live ammunition. I have fiddled with fifty calibre belts of machine gun ammunition. If any of it had exploded I wouldn't be here now, I would be full of holes. Other things they threw out, just I remember, surprising.

26:00 **What sort of things would you pick up? Would you pick up the belt of ammunition?**

Oh yes we used to light candles under the cartridges hoping they would explode. They usually did because the cap would sizzle if it got too hot, it would explode, set off the cartridge and it wasn't in a barrel, it was in a belt clip you see, the bullet would just pop out somewhere, couldn't do any damage. Couldn't.

**What else would you salvage from the American dump?**

Oh I don't remember.

26:30 It could be magazines, books, tinned food. Excess tinned food they had dumped and didn't want. But that many people had heard about, 'there is a dump somewhere at Amberley,' and they wanted to know where it was. We kept it quiet as much as possible, but by the time the war finished so many people knew about it. Every Saturday, Sunday, there would be so many scavengers. Our greatest delight was finding these belts of ammunition and throw them into a fire.

27:00 Burning rubbish, throw a whole belt of ammunition in and go and hide behind a tree, sure enough there'd be tracers flying around the place, explosions everywhere. That was the best thing we found at the dump, today I know better. Dear oh dear.

**What other favourite places did you have around the air force base?**

No that would have been the favourite place except the local swimming hole. It was actually a bit of a dam on a left over

27:30 farm or a left over dam, I'm not sure which. Maybe thirty feet across, the water brown with mud. One Sunday afternoon I am looking after the shop and there is kids running past the shop up the dirt road carrying buckets and tins. "What's going on?" So and so had found a barrel of beer down at the pond, the dam, whatever it was.

28:00 I went galloping down, sure enough they had a big barrel of beer, I never saw a barrel that big, with a tap on it, and young Crewie, a mate of mine, Crew, a halfwit, laying on his back, only a kid only about twelve, mouth open and the tap turned on and he is gulping all the beer down that he could. Everybody else is there with tins waiting their turn, tins and buckets to get this beer.

28:30 They never found out who owned the barrel. When it was empty we just shut the tap pushed it out in the water and that became our pontoon whenever we went swimming in this dirty bloody dam of water. Brown water because of the soft mud that stirred up. There were no ducks in it, no birds hanging around, it was too dirty for that but it wasn't too dirty for us. And that barrel sure made a good pontoon, it did float.

29:00 It must have been stolen from somewhere, and somebody else found it and of course word got around, everybody who wanted beer helped themselves.

**When did you first drink beer?**

Oh, first drink beer? Oh gosh. My parents weren't drinkers, they might have a bottle of beer with Sunday dinner between themselves on a hot

29:30 Sunday afternoon. Had to be hot in Queensland. I might have had a sip of beer, I didn't like it. My brother was drunk at seventeen, I wasn't. I was a barman many years later in my uncle's hotel in Maclean in northern New South Wales. That turned me off beer drinking. I have never been a beer drinker. Hall Hound beer, hopped beer, I would drink usually at the Hall Hound Bar at Central

30:00 Railway Station in Sydney in the '40s, it's gone now. Many things have gone now, I don't know why. But they were non-alcoholic, you could drink them. I've never been much of a beer drinker. Being a barman for a year in a country pub, that turned me off beer drinking. Oh not for me. If my parents had been drunkards there was every chance that my brother and I would become drunkards, to me it would have been family environment that influenced us.

30:30 Now in my older age I might have a couple of glasses of wine at Christmas and Easter with my son's family, that's all I drink.

**What other things did you get up to with your mates apart from swimming and setting off ammunition belts?**

Horse riding. My brother had his own horse named 'Socks' because it had white hair on its feet. It also had a backbone

31:00 a bit like the Himalayan Mountains. I borrowed it one day without a saddle, tried to ride it down the side road, went a hundred yards, my bum was so sore I went back. No, no more horse riding for me. I preferred motor bikes although we didn't have motorbikes until many years later.

**Apart from this offer to buy one did you ever have a motorcycle?**

Years later, oh yes. I did have a small motorbike at Amberley.

31:30 Acme was the brand of it. We had a mail run from Amberley up to Rosewood. Seven mile long mail run, delivering mail to the families, plus other motor bikes many years later.

**You had various jobs within the shop at Amberley, could you just take us through a day of work from morning until night, from six until two am or ...?**

Well in the morning it would be me and others getting rid of the papers, somebody had to look after the shop while I was out or they were out getting rid of the papers.

32:00 So I was out of the shop. The orders would start coming in for food, customers would start coming in, the post office had to be opened at nine o'clock. The biggest nuisance all day, and sometimes in the middle of the night, was the phone attached to

32:30 the shop. Public phones where you had to put two pennies into it from memory, a twopenny phone call. And if customers didn't have two pennies they had to get them from us in the shop. My mother was woken up one night in her bedroom by someone knocking on the window, being a low block building. "Are you getting any?" Because my Mum had a pure mind in those days, "Getting any what?" she says.

33:00 "Tobacco." "No I'm not." "Can I have two pennies for the phone?" Who wants to get out of bed at two in the morning to give two pennies to a hillbilly outside your bedroom window just to make a phone call? Oh it was a headache.

**What else happened during the day? The shop stayed open into the evening?**

Yes.

**Would the custom change?**

Well we had that much variety of the customers coming through.

33:30 None of them would come in at a set regular time. Joe Blow might turn up nine o'clock one morning, back again at one that afternoon. Next morning we hear he got killed overnight somewhere, plane crash or something. Or the same group could come in often ,over days, weeks, we had regulars for years. They weren't at a fixed time. Jimmy Monk he was one of the Australian airmen. He would

34:00 come in for his breakfast, a meat pie and a bottle of milk or something, and go off. He might come back in the afternoon for afternoon tea or something and then we wouldn't see him for days. He'd come back again. Years later when I am watching, oh we had television that's right, he was accidentally on television, I recognised Jimmy Monk. He liked Harley Davidson motorbikes and there he was driving his motorbike through George Street,

34:30 Brisbane, and the motorbike slipped on the tram track and his motor bike went one way and he went the other way. That was Jimmy Monk, nice fellow, he was a regular.

**Did your family become friends with any of these regulars?**

Well we got to know them fairly well, let them come into your lounge room at night until two in the morning, yes they would be classed as friends. And I would be doing my homework for tech college in the lounge room at times and all of these

35:00 people standing around talking and drinking. There was no rough stuff, no fights or anything like that. They're all just sociable.

**How did that lounge room social club evolve?**

Just because we knew so many people and we got on with them so well. Or maybe my mother or my father might have invited them back to have a drink or something. There was no television involved, no home videos, no home movies, just talk, eat and drink. Lots of talking went on.

**And would this be open to the public or ...?**

- 35:30 Not open to the public, no, it would be customers that we knew well enough. Got to the stage that people just walked in and out from the shop, out the back in the kitchen and the lounge room and so forth. I remember one Yank turning up one day, I think he had a stuffed crocodile. Only a small one. About three feet long, stuffed. With its mouth slightly wide open and its rows of teeth.
- 36:00 I knew one of my cats was sitting on the linoleum floor in that lounge room which was empty of the day time, so I borrowed the crocodile off the guy, put it quietly on the linoleum behind the cat and gave it a push. Well the cat heard something scratching and it turned around and all it could see was long rows of teeth coming at it. That cat was running at a hundred miles an hour and going nowhere, its feet could not make any friction on the linoleum. It finally caught onto the linoleum and off it went out
- 36:30 the door. I don't think it came back. That stuffed crocodile sure worked on that cat. Oh dear oh dear, I don't know where the Yank got it from, what he was doing with it. He went off, might have bought it in a souvenir shop.

**Were these stray cats?**

Oh not really, some might have been stray. My brother and I were into cats, my father was into greyhounds and horses.

- 37:00 My mother was into a canary and a mountain lorie. The canary committed suicide in its cage. Then we got a duck for Sunday dinner, my brother and I would not kill it. So we called it Katie and it lived happily ever after, and when we sold the shop and gave it to a local farmer and it then went on to the local farmer's duck pond. I guess it spent the rest of its life on the duck pond between animals and people.

**37:30 Did your father have greyhounds when you were living at Amberley?**

At Amberley, yes he started to get stuck into greyhounds, as the saying is, in those days. Not so much during the war but after the war. He liked greyhound racing, he liked book making. He liked to cheat on the greyhounds, he cheated a lot. Con man, he evolved into the biggest and best confidence trickster in

- 38:00 greyhound racing in central Queensland and made lots of money out of it. It was an interesting life. I was never interested in gambling, greyhounds or anything else. He did have one or two race horses. Never went into race horsing much. Anything he could not control to his satisfaction he wasn't interested in.

- 38:30 Once he controlled it he bent it, made it work his way. Very good idea, works well.

**He was obviously a successful man in many ways?**

Successful man, yes, yes.

**Did you look up to him?**

I don't think I did, to me he was just my father. I think we had spent that much time apart because of me being at boarding school sometimes,

- 39:00 because of my mother's illness and he being in the army, we did not have a relationship like I and my son had. My son and I were very close when he was growing up, did many things together. So my father was chief instructor at the army training school, I became chief instructor for my son, with him in it, one student, my son. So I was teaching him many things.

**39:30 Do you think your father's war experience continued to affect him mentally, if not physically?**

I think he was annoyed with something, I'm not sure what it was. I'm sure he was disgusted with malaria knocking him down. I'm sure he tried to do everything involving the army to a very high standard. He might have got great satisfaction with being a good army officer, nothing wrong with that.

- 40:00 But I think he realised with his high position, for others he could have been pushing for better equipment, better training for the troops, and not getting it. And with them going off to fight savage enemies, it was a bit like going off to fight lions in the colosseum. What are you going to fight these lions with? Haven't got the equipment.

- 40:30 In our history books there was a case of Potts' Rebellion in New Guinea, Brigadier Potts, one rank below a general, he rebelled over something, I forget what it was, I did read something about it. But something went wrong and Potts was objecting, it was called Potts' Rebellion. So something might have happened at Milne Bay that my father knew about and others knew about. Interesting it was kept quiet.

- 41:00 In the official records you might never ever know what happened.

**Well we might never know but the camera is about to stop.**

41:09 **End of tape**

## Tape 8

00:30 ... over the rank of major came into our shop, the colonels were possibly too busy in the back room of the base somewhere. But pop me a Colonel Nelson one and I'll tell you a bit about him.

**Okay, I was wondering if you could tell us, John, a bit about this Colonel Nelson?**

Yes, Colonel Nelson of the, as far as I know he was air transport command. I never saw him, never met him, he never came into the shop, only heard about him. Apparently he picked up an Australian woman to have her living on the Amberley base in the American

01:00 section with him. That was okay. When he got a Yankee women's army uniform and has her wear that, that was a bit risqué, and when she started telling the Yanks what to do, ordering them around as if she was an officer, they must have written to the congressman. All of a sudden Colonel Nelson was disappearing in one direction and she was going in the other. So Washington must have moved fast somewhere in the system to get rid of him.

01:30 And this fake woman officer. As it happened a silly stupid thing to do but some people on higher ranks are stupid.

**What was your mum's role in the shop?**

Oh general handy person, handy woman, management, telling people what to do, ordering things. Busy, it was a busy place.

02:00 You could say it was a small industry, I would say the speed at which we worked and the things we did, you wouldn't get it done today, people just aren't that interested in working that fast or hard.

**What social relations or function did your mum have?**

At Amberley?

**Yes.**

Shopkeeper, that's all she was, shopkeeper. Later on she took over the post office,

02:30 and became the postmistress, I became an assistant postmistress without have a change of sex because I was helping my Mum in the post office as well as everything else.

**But she would have been matron of all women?**

Oh those that worked for us, but outside there was no social life. The local people, we knew their names and they were customers, but no such thing as meetings, community meetings,

03:00 social gathering, no dance hall or anything like that.

**Did your mum introduced servicemen to the ...?**

Oh look she introduced some servicemen, Australians or others, to other Australian civilians and so forth. There was one young hillbilly girl coming into the shop, I forget her name. My mother introduced her to this young plump Yank. Ah, a month later

03:30 he had a special badge on his collar which meant that ...

**Watch your microphone.**

He had this special badge on his shoulder with the US flag on it which meant that he was something like an assistant to the colonel. Well this girl, real bushy, wasn't even really that attractive, they finished up being married. Halfway home we heard, after the war, he became the secretary to the American Ambassador to Greece.

04:00 And she was his wife. So she got world trips, after being a hillbilly girl of Amberley. Amazing things happen.

**And met in your shop?**

Yep. Oh we had one Australian soldier turn, I think he came from the anti-aircraft unit, I heard he was a commander, well maybe he'd been a commander but I think he had mental troubles, he was doing hand stands around the shop.

04:30 Imagine walking into a supermarket today and a man dressed in a pale brown khaki shirt and shorts and army boots standing on his hands walking around the supermarket, you'd think there was something wrong. He was the only one that ever came in from the anti-aircraft people, we never saw

them otherwise. So we thought there was something wrong with him but as long as he could fire the anti-aircraft gun we didn't mind.

05:00 **Did you have one price for the Americans and another price for the Australians?**

No we didn't think of that, I didn't think of that, I wasn't that corrupted. One flat price for everybody, whatever it was. Except when I sold one Yankee carton of cigarettes for three pounds, that was not nice, but the three pounds was nice.

**Who did you sell that to?**

I forget who it was, I forget. But some people

05:30 were prepared to pay a high price for nearly anything they couldn't get. That was a side of the black market, a seller wanting a high price and somebody else wanting to pay a high price just to get it, whatever it was.

**Did you ever practice any withholding trade practices? Like withholding goods to make them scarce?**

We wouldn't sell tobacco and cigarettes to just anybody because quite a few of ex-servicemen as they came back, they were issued with a

06:00 ration of cigarettes that they could buy from certain shops. And some, not many, were listed with us and every week of two they would come in for their allocated tobacco or cigarettes, we had to make sure they were available for them anyway. We couldn't sell their ration to anybody else. But restricted trade, to me it would come to us from the wholesalers.

06:30 The box of dried apples that we didn't want, we had dried apples, for weeks I remember eating dried apples. That was a restrictive trade practice, you take this box of dried apples or you won't get any more. I remember one wholesaler charging us ten shillings for brown paper wrapping around some of the things we got. Ten shillings to pay for paper wrapping those days would be like charging a hundred dollars today.

07:00 You just go screaming mad up the street having to pay ten shillings for wrapping paper.

**Were there any particular new words the Americans taught you?**

'Bejesus', 'dollar'. Dollars were unknown to us until the Yanks came, we had pounds, shillings and pence. We have dollars now and it has gone the reverse way, a lot of younger people today in Australia would not know what a pound,

07:30 shillings and pence were. A lot of oldies in the middle know both, new and old. 'Bejesus', 'beep jeep', 'help yourself'. What else? I can't think of anything else.

**They used the word 'okay', had you heard that before?**

Oh 'okay', that was already in before the Yanks came.

**What about**

08:00 **wartime slang for the aeroplanes?**

Well the Yanks were a bit different from the British and us, we called our fighter planes 'fighter planes'. They didn't, they called them 'pursuit planes', meaning 'chase'. The French called their fighter planes chasseurs, which means 'chase'. The Yanks and the French were similar, using similar words

08:30 meaning 'aircraft that chase'. As to what happens when the aircraft that are chasing are chased by another aircraft, I don't know. But to us we just had fighter aircraft. The Yanks used to call their aircraft their official number like 'P-38' and all that sort of thing. I don't know quite where we would have got our numbers from, the English system.

**Did you know the ranks in the American Air Force?**

Oh yeah.

**And did you ask them what were they were doing, the Americans, when they came into your shop?**

09:00 No, no.

**You knew they were a pilot or ...?**

I knew the ranks from PFC, which is one stripe, that was Private First Class, we would call that lance corporal. Their corporal had two stripes, the ordinary sergeant had three stripes but after that they could have one other stripe below, or two stripes below or three stripes below, the three stripes below it was very close to our warrant officer.

09:30 And if they had the letter 't' with a stripe of any kind through it, they were a technical, they could be a

motor car mechanic or a radio mechanic something like that. Then they had a lieutenant with one bar, captain, two bars, the majors had two, I'm sure they were oak leaves. One was gold colour, gold colour for major and the silver colour was for lieutenant colonel.

10:00 But the colonel had the eagle on his shoulder. Thereafter, one star's for one general, two stars, three stars, four stars. Patton was five stars and MacArthur was five stars. After that you're either the president or you own all of the USA.

**Can you recall the accent? It must have been quite strange to you when you first heard the American accent?**

It varied. From memory they all spoke very accurate English.

10:30 I think the air transport command would have been a lot of higher educated men and more trained in the work, radio technicians, air flag technicians, therefore you wouldn't find the ordinary hillbillies amongst them. I have never known any of the Yanks in all those years to talk hillbilly

11:00 style. High-pitched voice with silly English, like you have on the Beverly Hillbillies on television, nothing like that.

**But they still must have had thick American accents?**

They had a variety of accents, not too many talked through their nose like a lot do. We knew they were Yanks for sure, just by their accents we could tell that. But Canadians also have the same accent,

11:30 very similar accent.

**There were Canadians at Amberley?**

No I don't remember any, but they're next door to USA. You'll possibly find there was some Mexican accents like the Yanks.

**You also mentioned there was Dutch planes there?**

Yeah, well the Dutch aeroplane I saw with the wing falling off, that was Dutch Air Force, that had Dutch markings on its side.

**Did any Dutch come into your shop?**

No I never saw them. I don't know where the plane was coming from

12:00 and I don't know where it was going to, it was destroyed and the pilot killed in just a few minutes. But I think there was a couple of Filipinos at one time in uniform that could have been part of a then ATC [Air Training Corps]. I don't remember any Yankee army coming in. There was certainly no Yankee marines, no Yankee navy. I would say most

12:30 of the Yanks at Amberley were in air transport command. And in the movie on TV a few nights ago about the Berlin Airlift, clearly on the Yankee planes, air transport command doing the Berlin Airlift. That was '46, I think it was '47. So we were air transport, they weren't fighting groups, but I'm sure they worked on bombers and fighters because they had the workshop facilities and the trained men to do it.

13:00 **What percentage of your business was from the Americans?**

As a guess, ninety per cent.

**So can you tell us a little bit about the time the Americans left and how rough that was?**

They just disappeared. They didn't come over, a hundred come over and say, "We're leaving, we're going home or going up north," which they possibly didn't want to, getting closer to the battles

13:30 in the Pacific Islands, and also the battle was moving further north and north, to me the air transport group would be very safe moving north, it would never go into a battle zone and be stationed there, they would fly in. Delivering things, picking up things and flying out but never have their bases out of there, they just couldn't. If they were ever wiped out, well there was just no transport left for the army, navy, air force.

**Can you tell us the story of you finding out the Americans had left?**

14:00 Well one minute they just weren't there. I would say possibly within four weeks they had just gone, they had just disappeared. To me they had just moved north, I don't know where to. It was still the official secret as to where they moved to, I would say, I would say believe that. But as the war in the Pacific moved north more and more towards Japan, everything Yank in New Zealand and here would

14:30 move north bit by bit. The ones at Amberley might have gone as far as Port Moresby and worked from there.

**How did that make you feel when the Americans left?**

Well we knew business was going down, which it did of course. Bit by bit. But a different bunch of Yanks

had arrived, and these were civilians, they were the embalmers come to Australia, involved in exhuming the dead Yanks because the Yanks take all of their dead armed forces home.

15:00 We don't, we leave ours there, very rarely do we bring anybody home. But their job was to exhume any dead Yanks in the cemeteries around Ipswich, around Amberley, embalm them, they showed me photographs of before and after, surprising what they could do, and then the bodies were shipped back to the USA or maybe Hawaii, depending on where they came from. But I wondered why embalm somebody

15:30 just to send them back and be cremated. Why embalm somebody if the family never saw the person? And if mothers and brothers and father realised that they were just looking at just an embalmed version of their son, surely they go into some kind of mental shock. I've never worked out why

16:00 they had embalmers, other than to keep the embalming industry going.

**Perhaps they didn't have the refrigeration to preserve the bodies?**

Yes, possible too. But some of the bodies would have been smashed up so badly, about the only thing they could patch up really and make look presentable would be the face and the head. The rest of the body could be straw.

**How many Americans**

16:30 **were killed while serving at Amberley around Amberley?**

Oh possibly twenty I would say at Amberley. But of course up in the islands there could have been thousands.

**But specifically at Amberley.**

I would say about twenty that I knew of in the Amberley area. There was a cemetery at West Ipswich I think and there were some buried there.

**What happened to those people that were buried there?**

17:00 They were exhumed, repaired, returned home. But of course with a bad enough aeroplane crash everybody is burnt to cinders. There is no embalming there at all. They could possibly put some bags of sand in a coffin back home and that coffin is never opened and there is a family mourning and they bury a coffin with bags of sand in it and they put a monument on it and that's it.

**How long before the end of the war did the Americans leave?**

17:30 Well the Yanks, oh I'm not too sure. The ATC were gone before Japan surrendered, so they must have moved north quite quickly as the war went north. And the Yanks took Iwo Jima and Saipan islands, both of those islands became air bases.

18:00 Ah, its possible the ATC would have moved to there as part of the Yanks being there, they still had the regular fighters and bombers coming and going but there would still be transport command for everybody else. So I'm tipping they could have been stationed there, Saipan or Iwo Jima. They just went, we never saw them again. One Yank did stay behind, he married

18:30 Betty whatever her name was. She had been a busker on the Sydney ferry at one stage, I don't know when they got married. My mother told them to buy themselves a house, it was made out of three large aeroplane crates, pinewood crates been put together by somebody and turned into a comfy little house because of the housing shortage, they bought that. Twenty years later I went to Amberley, Bill and Betty were still living in that comfy little cubby house.

19:00 He had become a Queensland rail man in Ipswich. She couldn't live in the United States, wasn't allowed to live there because she had asthma, no way that any social security system there would care for her even though she was the wife of one of their servicemen, so he stayed behind. Quite a few Yanks did stay behind but he's the only one I know of.

19:30 I don't even know if he was stationed at Amberley, I don't know where he was stationed. Bill someone.

**How did your life change when the Americans left?**

Well we lost most of our staff. We still had the business to run, the post office to run. Less newspapers to sell, less bread less sandwiches, less pies, less ice cream, less money, less everything, down and down, bit by bit. We stayed another three years.

20:00 In December '48, then we sold the business and moved out. It had been a neat six years. December '41, no '41 was Pearl Harbour, '42 we moved in. December '42 to December '48, a neat six years, hadn't zigzagged within those years at all.

**Can you tell us a little bit about how you heard that the atom bomb had been dropped?**

I don't recall how we heard it, the newspapers, would have covered the front page.

20:30 It would have been on the radio, no television news of course. We'd see and hear it later on, days, maybe weeks later in the theatres, in the newsreels.

**How was the relationship between your mum and dad at this stage?**

When the war ended they were still together, they parted after the war.

**Why did they part?**

Oh there were just personal differences.

21:00 She was still a jealous wife, he didn't like it. I have had one also, I didn't like it, no good, berserk jealous over any bloody thing that jumps to your imagination. But they parted, went their own ways, and she and I were running the business together, didn't employ anybody else. Until December '68.

**Do you think his war service might have affected the ...?**

21:30 Oh no, I would say she would have worn him down. I couldn't have married a woman like that, she would have worn me down. That's my mother, a loving woman, I loved her, still do. But certain things in the personality, to them it would have been more of a personality clash. He did tell me years later he just couldn't stand her jealousy. I would say he couldn't say, "G'day," to a woman without my mother being jealous.

22:00 Terrible thing, my first wife was worse than her, worse than my mother, very bad with jealousy, terrible thing. Yeah.

**Do you recall the celebrations at all, what can you tell us about the end of the war?**

Amberley I never noticed any. I think a lot of the servicemen there, Australian, were left there, maybe on D Day [6 June 1944 - Normandy invasion] they just went home went to the pub, took the family out.

22:30 Quite a few lived in Amberley itself in the civilian housing. Quite a few, might have been six families, so if they went home for the day all they did was walk past our shop and they were home. On D Day. VE Day in Europe, Victory in Europe, I don't remember any celebrations, no fireworks

23:00 anything like that. No rockets going off in the sky. No drunks running up and down the street. In the big cities there would have been, well there were celebrations in the streets in the big cities. But Amberley was not a big city, a very small civilian population and the RAAF population, they'd like to be off home. If they lived on the base they'd just walk a few yards to their accommodation with their family perhaps and then they were home, maybe go down town.

**23:30 What was the most memorable thing, the biggest thing in your life at that time at the end of the war?**

The end of the war? I think just the war ending and business going down. One came after the other. It was a change from working hard as a kid because I had left tech end of '44, the war finished '45, I had about a year working my guts out as a teenager in the shop,

24:00 year of war, seven days a week. I think I went three months once without a day off. For a teenager that's not bad. They could be sixteen or twenty hours a day. But for me the war finished, business started going down, that was all there was to it.

**24:30 How did life for your family, how did the circumstances change? Were there more things available for instance?**

Oh bit by bit. 'things', you mean goods? Yeah bit by bit. Petrol was still rationed, from memory I think it was up until '48, three years after the war we still had petrol rationing. I think it was the Ampol oil company that decided, 'We will not accept petrol rationing coupons any more.'

25:00 That made petrol rationing stop, looked like there was no real need for it. But it looked like some people in Canberra wanted to control us more and more. It had got to the stage where people could not move interstate without permission, travel restrictions. These silly ID cards, today people would look at these identification cards,

25:30 mine especially, what the heck is it? There is no identification other than my scratchy signature as a teenage kid. Stupid.

**Did you try and move interstate?**

We were one of those who did and we did but you had to have permission.

**This was you and your mum?**

Yep, I think some people in Canberra just wanted to control us more and more. Without mincing words, I would say

26:00 Moscow idea of controlling people.

**Can, around that time you were a young man, did you develop an interest in girls or ...?**

I did not know what they were for until I was aged about twenty-five. I was still an amateur and a hillbilly. I made a mess of, the mess I made of relationships at that age.

26:30 I was so busy I hadn't learned to dance, I haven't yet. I hadn't been to dances, I was very restricted, I should have become a monk in a monastery really, no drinking, no smoking, no women. What else in life besides having your own cat? Go to a monastery. Ridiculous by today's standards.

27:00 **Become a priest.**

And the paedophilia side? No thanks. Oh dear oh dear, the world has changed since I was your age, changed a lot, often for the worse. But a lot of the bad news that we have today, I never knew of it in the '60s, the '50s the '40s. The funniest worst news would have been Sunday Truth reporting on

27:30 the famous golfer, Von Nida, whose wife with a private detective chasing him across a golf course somewhere, he in the company of a woman, he was his underpants in one hand and a woman in the other. Being chased at night time across a golf course, a famous golfer. That made big news in the Sunday Truth.

28:00 You don't find news like that in any of our newspapers now because the old divorce act came in, under Labour I think, prohibited publication of details of divorce. So we don't see any of the spectacular divorce news like the Sunday Truth used to print. The went into it in great detail, only perverts would buy Sunday Truth. Sunday Truth was village gossip.

28:30 The Yanks, of course, they were a target for Sunday Truth.

**Now the war had ended and you were not so busy in the shop, did you feel that there might be some other things you might like to do at that time?**

Yes, have time off. Got to the stage where we closed the shop on Sunday afternoons. Later on we'd close also on Saturday afternoons.

29:00 So I would have two afternoons off a week. That was good going for me in those days after working the long hours I did. And with my little motorbike I could go tripping up and down the country, put my dog on the petrol tank, take my rifles and go out hunting. The dog loved it and so did I, so did the motorbike. In those days there was hardly any gun control laws.

29:30 You could go out, well you couldn't shoot rabbit because there just weren't any, but you could shoot hares, ducks. No problem. Attitudes, ideas, have changed over the years.

**Do you remember your father leaving home at that time?**

Oh well he and my mother used to have loud rows, today I would say she was the major cause of it.

30:00 I could tell you about the time I hit him over the head with a bottle of creaming soda. I will tell you. He and Mum were verballing each other at the back of the shop, there were two doorways, they were in one open doorway, she had her back to a door, he had his back to me, and they were pushing and shoving each other yelling and shouting,

30:30 there was nobody else around, nobody else in the shop. Well after all of these rows over the years I got weary of it, I just opened the fridge door behind me, grabbed a bottle and then 'bang' against his head. It turned out to be a bottle of McMahon's Creaming Soda, a bright red colour like blood. My father told me later all he saw was a great big lightning flash and red blood flying everywhere,

31:00 my mother said she saw something flying. There was glass stuck in the door around her, he had a bit of a cut on his head, that stopped the argument, they never had an argument in front of me again in their lives. I was always treated with respect. That bottle of creaming soda worked miracles and it cost fourpence retail, plus maybe

31:30 a penny deposit on the bottle if you took it out of the shop. So keep a bottle of creaming soda in your back pocket if people are arguing, it might calm them down. I don't know about a bottle of sarsaparilla, it might make them more savage.

**That was quite an extraordinary thing to do.**

Yes, I was sick of it. 'Bam', like that. I loved my father ever since and he loved me more. Maybe I should have hit him years before, he might have loved me more.

32:00 I don't know.

**Was it a particularly defining moment for you?**

No, they, it was just a practical moment, they're fighting, arguing and I'm sick of it, 'bang' and they stopped. Works wonders. Think of corporal punishment, for lots of people it does them the world of good.

**But at the time were you in the habit of doing such things?**

No, first time I ever ruined a bottle of McMahon's Creamy Soda over somebody's head, I have never done it since, its too good a

32:30 soft drink, don't waste it, but it worked wonders that day.

**It must have meant something, your dad's a man of military training and quite used to looking after himself I would think?**

Well never turn your back on your son when he gets older. If he had been facing me I still might have hit him but, gee, he might have lost an eye. Two eyes and that would be a terrible thing.

33:00 **Did you ever talk about that incident with him afterwards?**

No, but with his second wife he wrote to me and said they were thinking of parting, this is about twenty-five years after, oh yes. What happened there? He had retired from greyhound racing, played bridge, was a great bridge player, writing a newspaper column on bridge taught his new wife to play bridge and they had a bit of a

33:30 dispute about something and he wrote in his bridge column about how some husband and wife had argued over bridge and she had shot him, in this column he wrote, all fiction. Well his then wife somehow got the idea he was having a crack at her in the column. That's how they had their argument and they were thinking of parting. So he wrote to me and told me all of this and I wrote back, 'Blah, blah, blah. If you are not careful I will come up and

34:00 settle it my way." He told her what I had done to him and they lived happily ever after. Feeling just the threat of violence in the letter in the mail from me straightened them out.

**You said your life was a zigzag, you eventually zigzagged out of the retail business?**

Yes.

**And you went on to join the CMF, can you tell us a bit about that?**

34:30 One of my work mates had joined and others decided to join so I joined. I was then working in the Ashfield telephone exchange as a technician in the '50s. And in those days when you joined the CMF and you were a commonwealth public servant and went into army camp for a few weeks you got your civilian pay and your army pay. That was an incentive for anyone who was greedy for money. I just wanted to go and play soldiers.

35:00 When I joined, it was the Parramatta Lancers, of course the rumour got around that we were going to be supplied with horses and fancy uniform, tall bear skin cap or something and a lance. And you see soldiers like that on parade, some parades, but it is very rare nowadays. Well we didn't have that at all, instead we got Matilda tanks and drove around in Victoria, Puckapunyal. I spent so many weeks down there the regulars thought I was a regular.

35:30 Just a few months driving tanks at Puckapunyal and did telephone exchange work when I wasn't working. Then Korea started and I was at Puckapunyal, '56 I think that was. I volunteered but was never sent. I am glad I was never sent, it snows in Korea, I don't like that deep a snow, ten, twenty, thirty feet of snow.

**Korea was '50, '53.**

36:00 It might have started then, I'm not sure, around that time.

**You were in the CMF around that time?**

Yeah. Well I then decided to move from Sydney up to my parents', they got back together for a short while, in Gladstone, Queensland because there is five Gladstones in Australia, this was Gladstone, Queensland. Flew up, transferred from the tanks over to infantry

36:30 and joined the CMF in Gladstone then, in the infantry there. So now I am an infantry man, even in the army I was zigzagging a bit and did a fair bit of training as an infantry soldier. Then we moved down to Maryborough, my

37:00 mother and father were still together. I transferred in the CMF to the railways squad and the engineers. So now I am a railway man in the army, another zigzag. Then, well I moved to Brisbane and started my business and I didn't have time for the CMF so I quit.

**Did you ever consider joining the regular army?**

I wasn't physically fit to be regular. Fit for CMF,

37:30 CMF duties, overseas front line and CMF and I was a good shot myself but not fit for regular.

**What was wrong with you?**

Feet trouble and I have still got feet trouble. I inherited my mother's fallen arches, my son has a bit of it

and his son has a bit of it. So the Irish side has fallen arches. That's why we tend to walk the zigzag.

**Why does that prevent you? Does that make ...?**

38:00 Oh yes, soldiers should be one hundred per cent fit. If you have to retreat fast you have got to have feet that will move fast. They aren't all those travelling tanks and cars and aeroplanes, you've got to be physically fit.

**So you did apply to join the regular army?**

Oh only when peace was on and we were at Amberley, I tried to join at Ipswich. My mother wouldn't sign the papers because I was under the age

38:30 of, was it eighteen or twenty-one? I think eighteen was the minimum age where you could join without your parents permission, I'm not sure, something like that.

**But later when you joined the CMF did you actually try to join the regular army?**

No I volunteered for Korea and could have gone as a member of the CMF and be shot at and shoot somebody.

**Why were you keen to go to Korea?**

Just army experience,

39:00 military experience. I'm not a born killer, I am a born pacifist I think but I'll fight if I have to. I would have gone if they sent me.

**Was there any thought that you might have followed in your father's footsteps when you made that decision to volunteer?**

No I never thought of that. I know that it was him going to Duntroon, that made him professional, well trained

39:30 of the day and the time, might be 1919 just after World War I, but he and the army hierarchy would still be thinking of World War I type of war. Dig trenches, banners, charge, get shot, all of that sort of thing. That's how they were thinking then, it's all changed since, thank goodness. With my brother, he joined the air force but then he went into pilot training, became a jet pilot and got killed.

40:00 **Where was he killed?**

Up at Dungog outside of Newcastle. He had complained to me some weeks before it happened that the altimeter could be misread. You could be a thousand feet higher or a thousand feet lower than what the altimeter showed you in a Sabre jet. Well he was coming in to land apparently and his plane hit the top of the hill and trees.

40:30 Outside Dungog, Well an air marshal, McNamara, here in Canberra I knew, I think he was in action, at the time he was about to retire. He told me he had trouble flying over Perth in a Sabre jet, he was lucky he was up high and what the altimeter showed was a thousand feet too high. If he was coming in to land he would have been too low somewhere and he would have been killed in a crash.

**We might just stop there and change the tape.**

41:00 **End of tape**

## Tape 9

00:32 **We just want to wrap up with CMF, because that's relevant to what we are talking about, and talk a little bit about what happened after the war. I just want to ask a few general questions.**

I'm sure some of our CMF men did serve in Korea. A local sergeant did, I know that for sure, I'm not sure about how many others. These were civilian soldiers fighting in a bloody war that hadn't be declared. The contradiction, what I am trying to say, is ridiculous.

01:00 **How do you think your experience in the Second World War changed your life path?**

It did, the whole thing relied then on the Japanese coming into the war against us. If they had came into the war on our side it would have been very different. There is a chance I would have went on to be a Marist Brother or priest. I would have by now been defrocked

01:30 or deknackered or de-something. I think I would have rebelled over many things. What made me quit the Catholic Church in '48 was that the Bishop of Armidale had died and left a fortune. There was I trying to be a good Christian, helping people more than I could sort of thing, not worrying about it, just doing it. I believed I was being made a sucker of. The brothers, Marist Brothers taught us you should believe one hundred per cent,

02:00 less than that you should quit, get out, and I believed less, I got out. So screw their teaching, I really quit the Catholic Church. I have never been involved in any organised religion since.

**Are you a nationalistic person?**

I used to be.

**What prompted that?**

What do you mean now by nationalistic?

**Sorry, I don't mean extreme, I just mean are you ...?**

02:30 Keen.

**Keen to support Australia in the wars?**

Oh during the war I was, I am not now. All I can say, it was my experience, having been in eight trade unions, trade union rep in four, been in four political parties, one of which I founded, ran for election to parliament twice,

03:00 now in my old age all I can say is, "God help Australia, nobody else can."

**You obviously thought that you could help Australia, being that involved?**

With the help of others, yes. Not by myself. I doubt if Jesus Christ would even bother trying, not by himself.

**So do you think Australia has changed or do you think you have changed?**

It has changed a lot for the worse. There was a book reviewed by the Brisbane Courier Mail in the 1960s, I have not been able to buy a copy of it anywhere,

03:30 cannot find it in the National Library anywhere. It's called How we Fool Them with Their Own False Logic. I have forgotten the author, I have forgotten the publisher. It is about Australians. It's a book for manipulators, How We Fool them with their Own False Logic. Do you fellows remember when we had a referendum on the national anthem? Do you?

04:00 We've never yet had a referendum on the national anthem. Fraser put on a referendum on the national tune, 'tune' is not 'anthem'. Tricked me for five seconds. Where is God Save the Queen? We had a referendum on the national tune. Cost one point seven million, why didn't we have a school kid pull a name out of a hat? Words are tricking the average Australian. Years later

04:30 (UNCLEAR) Commonwealth Attorney General's, where did we get our national anthem from? They told me, this is not me saying it, they said it, "Hawke Labor caucus decided that was our national anthem." Just on the word tune the whole population was tricked. We are still tricked, war was not declared in Korea, war was not declared in Vietnam. It was peace all of the time

05:00 and the Yankee embalmers had a wow of a time in both. Gulf War was not declared, Gulf War I. Gulf War II is not declared, we now have Gulf War II and the people don't know it. Our politicians don't know it. We're not starting it, it's the Iraqis that are starting Gulf War III, they are doing it their way. Words again. Trick people.

**Just to get back to your own words, on your path may have led to you becoming a priest were it not for the Japanese entering the war**

05:30 **and attempting to invade Australia. What was it about that that stopped you from wanting to pursue your earlier ambitions?**

Well I just evolved into the shop at Amberley, six years. And during those years I just lost interest so by '48 I just quit.

**I guess that comes back to my original question then. In that six years what did you learn, or what**

06:00 **was it about your view of war or view of your country or view of your role in life, or what changed?**

I became disillusioned with many thing, especially with religion. When the news came that the Bishop of Armidale had died and left a fortune in money, priests in the Catholic Church can be wealthy, not by working hard in the shops or factories but because they inherited it. A lot of graziers' sons had become priests and they

06:30 inherited the grazing property. Well my idea of a priest or a brother, the brothers have nothing, nothing at all. Christian or Marist Brothers and the others, they are completely penniless, well that's my idea of a brother or a priest. Not inheriting property. If you do inherit, well give it away to the rest of the family or someone who needs it. But how many people would give away grazing property? Disillusioned me.

07:00 **Disillusioned with religion but you still had great faith in your country obviously if you joined the CMF?**

Yes.

**Where did that desire to perhaps fight in Korea come from do you think?**

We were there, our fellows were there, I could be there. The same thing happened with Gallipoli. Men volunteered to join the Australian Army, World War I, they went to France, they went to Gallipoli, "Our mates were there, let's join up and help them." Of course

07:30 both became tragedies, if we had won at Gallipoli, well it would be a different situation completely, France was a terrible mess, terrible thing. Singapore was terrible, Malaya was terrible.

**How did Australia in general change during that period?**

Too much. Our population when I was a kid, maybe 1938, might have been a bit over five million, today we are on twenty million. As you increase the population all the problems also increase. The Yanks and the Russians and the English,

08:00 all of their populations have increased enormously. Therefore problems will increase. Name any crime that you want, a thousand years ago it probably didn't happen, today that many new crimes are happening.

**You were an inward looking Queenslander perhaps as a child ...**

Yes.

08:30 **... when the war broke out, what were you when the war ended?**

A hillbilly inward looking Queenslander. When we left Amberley I was still a hillbilly, that's for sure.

**You've described what a hillbilly is, quote, a number of times through the interview, but does that include a little bit of gypsies in that, did you keep moving around? Is that part of the reason you describe yourself like that?**

09:00 No, I have been here now thirty years, I don't want to move but I might have to one day. This house is worth a lot of money on the market at the moment. So what if I were to sell it and shed a great big profit, where am I going to move to and how much am I going to pay? I could be in a very bad situation. I might just stay here the rest of my life, I don't know.

**You mentioned there was a time in your life you became very political, joined trade unions and ran for parliament,**

09:30 **can you tell us a bit about that time?**

Well when I was in Maryborough and joined the Queensland railways, that was very much a political organization. Hillbilly Labor Government, could not exist in Canberra. I became a trade union rep because I joined the Queensland Railways Trade Union.

10:00 Took an interest in it. But before I had joined the railway, my fiancée's brother, he as a bit of a red, I wasn't working, he got me a job working on the wharves as a wharfie. That's where I learnt about the wharf labourers, I didn't join the union, I wasn't there long enough, five days' was all the work they had. From that there was other trade unions I had been in before or after.

10:30 Talking a fair bit, people took some notice of me. Queensland, I contested the House of Reps election. Canberra, I contested a Senate election.

**In what role as a member of a party?**

In Canberra it was the newly formed Democrats, even they today are not the Democrats I was in.

11:00 In Brisbane for the Senate we formed our own new party, the Public Party to those that were interested. Oddly enough a neighbour of mine worked a Mirage printing place, came home one day and said to me, "John, the communists where I work are saying you are one of them." I said, "Oh yeah, I've never met a communist," and it was one way that they helped me lose votes. I was being sabotaged,

11:30 smeared. See that's how dirt politics is. I cannot see me ever running for parliament again, I would not lower myself. That to me is how bad things overall are. As a person who has been in business, been unemployed, been an employer, ran for parliament, I do have some knowledge, but I know it is nothing compared to

12:00 what one needs to know to be in politics or even to vote. The average Australian does not know enough to be able to vote and to know what is going on.

**Do you believe in democracy?**

What do you mean by democracy? The Yanks think they're a democracy. I drew up a scale some years

ago, just a straight line, I still have my copy of the Russian Constitution in the English language of Stalin Russia.

12:30 I have had my own copy of the Yankee Constitution. They are both equal, they call themselves democratic, they get a zero on the scale of democracy. I have the Swiss Constitution, where people have a right to a referendum they can compel politicians whenever they want to, that's up the top. We are halfway, we are fifty-one per cent. Because we can't have our constitution changed unless we have a referendum.

13:00 The Yanks are dictator. To me, the USA now is the West's version of Stalin Russia. Only the names have been changed, the principles are the same. Only a month ago some Yankee congressmen on our radio were saying, "Now when you are in Washington and you criticise the government you are labelled straight away as being a communist even if you are a Catholic priest." You criticise Washington now, you are a communist.

13:30 It's bad, morally bad, politically bad.

**The Americans had a big role to play in a pretty formative part of your life back in the war, how has that affected your relationship with America in the rest of your life? Obviously now your views have changed.**

Well today I just wish the USA would fade away. They have abused the English language, we are now abusing it. I lost a court case once over the meaning of one word.

14:00 I thought it meant something else, now I know better, that's why I relate to you the story on national tune, national anthem. Two different words. The present President Bush used the word 'crusades' months ago to describe the problems in Iraq. Next thing on television Bin Laden, 'crusades', there you go, they are keeping the crusades going from six hundred, eight hundred years ago.

14:30 One word caused that much trouble in Iraq.

**What about in the intervening period between then and now?**

Between when and when?

**Between back in the, when you were a teenager in the war, until now, obviously as the US Government is not good in your eyes. Has there been times in the past when you have had a different view towards America?**

I was very pro-

15:00 Yank until only ten or fifteen years ago. When things started going sick over there, President Nixon to be threatened to be impeached, it would be like on of our prime ministers being arrested for shop lifting or something. That's how bad it was in their hierarchy under Nixon. It's ridiculous.

**What was your stance on the Vietnam War?**

I was busy working hard

15:30 for years, I didn't take that much notice of it. I knew it was bad, I didn't like it. It's no good any big nation standing up saying, 'We are democracy,' then they go and blow the daylights out of some other country.

**Just before we finish, I just want to ask a couple of questions about what happened in the end of the story. What happened to your mother?**

16:00 **She remarried?**

No, never, ever. Some men were interested with her. I think she was twisted with her Roman Catholic idea, she had guilt because she had divorced my father, that is not Catholic. She wouldn't be involved with another man in case it meant sexual life with him. She possibly had her own mind with guilt, plus sex would make it adultery and that's against the Catholic Church.

16:30 So I'm satisfied for years my mother was mentally bent because of distorted religious views. There is a lot of it around.

**Did she live a long life?**

Oh she died a few years ago, how old? It was age seventy I think it was. My father dropped dead age eighty five. His mother lived until ninety five.

**And what happened in the latter period of your father's life?**

17:00 Well when he retired and was living with his second wife, just played bridge, wrote his column, had a quiet life, went fishing. That's all.

**Can you tell us about the time you heard about your brother's death?**

Oh my, no it wasn't my mother, it was a friend of the family came and told me he had been killed. So I

went straight to my mother, of course she was upset, my father was upset.

17:30 I think he might have been more upset than he showed because it was just a waste of a life, young fellow being killed.

**What happened?**

Was the Sabre jet plane, well I'm tipping it was the faulty altimeter. Looked like he was coming in to land at the air base near Newcastle, the altimeter showed a certain height, it looked like the jet started to clip the trees on the top of this hill,

18:00 he grabbed the ejector cord, whatever it was, the handle, he got ejected, his body was found separate from the plane, jettisoned away. So he knew was crashing, he got out, but he was too close to the ground and of course as he hit the ground he just died straight away. As it was, our cousin was a doctor in Newcastle, he got the job of going out to check this body on the ground, knew my brother because they had been together at times so he recognised his cousin straight away.

18:30 Then I think another nasty thing that happened was the air force officers calling on my mother and father told them to, 'Come down to Newcastle for his funeral and we'll pay the expenses,' and never did. The air force never paid anything, the commonwealth paid nothing. Should not say words like that.

**How much were your family told about the circumstances of his death?**

19:00 Only that it was a plane crash, I got information from other people talking to me.

**Was there ever any official air force inquest into it?**

Oh there would have been for sure. It was quite possible that anything serious like the altimeters being incorrect might have been hushed up, kept quiet. It was the first thing I ever heard about it, from somebody else, then Air Marshal McNamara confirmed it from his experience.

19:30 Lot of things are kept quiet.

**What year was that?**

It might have been 1955.

**It was after the Korean War or during it or ...?**

Oh no, after.

**I think we're coming pretty much to an end, the archives idea, or the idea of it is for it not so much to be used tomorrow but it's going to be put away for fifty years, a hundred years. This is the chance we're giving anybody that we're talking to, the chance at the end of the interview just to sort of make a statement about things. It's a difficult thing to do off the cuff,**

20:00 **but if you give it a moment's thought, is there anything that you'd like to say about your life experience, particularly your unique experience of being a teenager during the war, that someone watching or listening in a hundred years' time might be interested in hearing, a final statement for the archive?**

Well I think it's already coming, it's already here,

20:30 the Financial Review touched on it some months, the 6th of June they touched on it, I do think I should have been corrupted from my teenage years, that's the vocation I missed to be corrupted and make a lot of money and to go on making money, and to hell with the rest of the world. That is called 'greed', that's also called 'the American business model', written up on the 6th of June,

21:00 one principle of it in the Financial Review, the government to do less and less. No goods and no services, which means no dole and no pensions, which means riots. Crime in the streets, charities to help the poor more, taxation to be reduced, it's the American business model. About the only thing left that our government will have will be the

21:30 army, navy, the air force and customs, everything else will be privatised, even the police force. The City of Philadelphia Police has been a privately owned company since the city of Philadelphia was founded about a hundred and fifty years ago. That is how we are going according to the Financial Review. So make money while the sun is shining.

22:00 Its nasty, I don't like it, it still contradicts my idea of being a goodie and trying to help people.

**Can you see any hope for the future of Australia?**

Only as a Yankee state. When the Yanks had forty-eight states we were forty-nine. Then they got Alaska, that became forty-nine we became fifty. Then they got Hawaii, we became fifty-one. Costa Rica, of all places, some months ago was to join the United States as a commonwealth.

22:30 We're being pushed back all the time in the number of the state that we are in relation to USA. It's a very sick thing.

**Start this century as part of the British Empire ...**

Finish ...

**... end the next one ...**

... less than a colony of the USA. I have read and studied a lot on Yankee crime, I see it in practically everything they do in big business.

23:00 It's terrible.

**Thank you very much for taking part in this, it has been enlightening talking to you, it is the first time I have talked to someone with your point of view.**

Somebody with my point of view?

**We haven't talked to anybody, we've talked to a lot of people who were flying the planes, we haven't talked to anybody who was living near the base. It was great. Thank you.**

**INTERVIEW ENDS**