

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Colin Bowden - Transcript of interview

**Date of interview: 29th September 2003**

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/603>

### Tape 1

00:36 **Rightio we're ready to go so if you want to start from the start.**

Well we start from the scratch we go back to way back in 1924 the horrible thing happened. I was born at Taringa. Yeah they used

01:00 to have the little hospitals all round the suburbs I think in those years and I was born at Taringa in the Venter hospital. And away we went from there because that was just before the Depression years and. Not that you can remember anything much about that really except that if you went to school with shoes on you were pretty lucky hey. Not that I minded because most of the, well

01:30 the living in those days was bare feet and that sort of thing and you had space to move around in. Like you had open paddocks and things that were just across the road from your home and that sort of thing. But I mean today they're all built over and you'd never know they were there and. Made it a lot easier for kids really. But where I lived in particular was. I didn't have many friends like living close. Only school

02:00 mates and things. There was only one down the road that was a particular friend. But Mum didn't like him. I don't know why, because we were always up to mischief and things. But those years it was a lot different though as you grew up as a kid. You you had the respect for the law and you you had the respect for your old man. And you used to do as you were asked sort of thing you know. And the Grandfather and the Grandmother lived

02:30 next because they they used to spoil me a bit the Grandma. Grandma especially, you know ,but anyway. Cause I was at that time I was an only child, my brother was born a few years after me then my sister came along 11 years after me which means that I sort of had no family and the brother, the brother died when he was 3 years of age so. It was one those things

03:00 and there's only the mate down the road cause the other school friends used to live miles away. And anyway you always had to come home from school and you had to be home at a certain time see. It didn't give you much time to go round your mate's place. If you went round your mate's place on the way home you were always late coming home and then you might get the strap around your backside when the old man come home you know for not turnin' up. But oh well that's how we sort of grew up. We knew, how should I say? Yeah.

03:30 One day I was going up to school I went to Indooroopilly State School. To start off I went to Taringa State School first which was about half a mile towards the city from our place and that friend that lived down the road from me he went to Taringa School all the time. Then during the Depression years when work was hard to get and things the father he was a plumber

04:00 and he was out a work sort of thing. But in those years Mum tells us that they seemed to be better off during the Depression. Because bein' a plumber everybody had a leaky tap or a leaky tank or somebody wanted it. In that time you used to use rainwater tanks in Brisbane because the water supply wasn't the best. It used to be full of alum or somethin' from. Things have improved now over the years with the purification of water you know. And

04:30 nobody used to like drinkin' that water and then you had the tanks. And of course there was always somebody had rusted out or something they'd have to have a new tank and then I had to offside him when that happened. But then he turned up at the a fellow that he knew had a business and they got a he got the contract where he rebuilt the Scarborough Hotel way back in I think it must a been

05:00 1935 it would a been. And we moved down to a rented house at Scarborough for, jeez we must a been down there for 8 months I think, and I went to Scarborough School and I mean Redcliffe and Scarborough in those days was mostly all bush. I mean there was nothin' much down there then. And I spose I must a walked about a mile to school from down there cause and a just an open

05:30 road. That's all built over now. You'd never recognise it today. And then of course the only way to

Scarborough in those years was by bus that used to come round through Petrie and down that way through Kippa-Ring down to Redcliffe and along to Scarborough. And we were down there a few you were sort of along way from home sort of thing you know. And I finished up I

- 06:00 got the measles and the mumps didn't I? At the tail end of that down there and they took me up to Grandma's in town. And I spent the last bit of that spell at Scarborough up there. But the Scarborough School I mean it had it was just a one room school with two teachers and, boy oh boy, no doubt the biggest biggest open paddock for a school yard. And run. There was only one fella I couldn't catch in that school.
- 06:30 I couldn't catch him. Cause we're pretty active you know when your young days. You're always runnin' round or walkin' through the bush and things. The Uncle used to visit us down there and he was a keen fisherman and he used to walk through the bush over to Deception Bay there and cause in those. He he was workin' in Brisbane all right and you hire a boat and go out and catch the old winter whiting there and he'd have buckets fulls of em you know. Put 'em through the mincer. He'd always bring these little
- 07:00 little diver whiting and put 'em in the mincer and make fish cakes out of 'em. You know you'd be flat out catchin' a few today wouldn't ya? They were in droves down there. But anyway that was that little spell down there. And then I went when I came back to there Mum decided she didn't like me goin' up to that Taringa School so they sent me to Indooroopilly School which was the other direction West of our place. And and I spent
- 07:30 the rest of the time there up to Seventh Grade at Indooroopilly School. And played cricket and well kicked the football around and that sort of thing, you know. I mean you used to play inter-school sports but I mean in those years. I can always remember I was in the cricket team and we went to play Taringa school and they had this cricket pitch down behind Taringa. I think the recreation ground is still there today as they called
- 08:00 it. But I remember goin' down and the grass'd be nearly 2 foot high see and the fella'd hit the ball and you couldn't find the ball. That and they'd be runnin' up and down between the wicket. Oh crikey Rafferty rules but that was it, you know. Oh yeah. What else did we do? Crikey. Oh yeah one day I was walkin' to school. That's how I got the cricket bat. I was walkin' to school and a few other fellas that
- 08:30 lived down the road from our place they were walkin' up the up the hill where the Shopping Town is now but past there and in those years it wasn't bitumen right across. It had a strip of bitumen road and dirt on the edge and we were walking up the dirt side. And me mates are walkin' two of em in front a me and oh 10 shilling note. Now that 10 shillings right. That's half a dollar in it? That was a lot a money in those days.
- 09:00 So boy. No it was a dollar wasn't it 10 shillings? Of course it was. That was a dollar I picked up and boy that was big money. Hey 1938 I spose that would a been. Anyway they all wanted a share a this money that I found see and they walked over it. I said, "No you walked over that." Anyway they made me take it up the Head Master. So anyway Mum said, "You know you've got to go up to the office and get that 10 shillings see. You found it."
- 09:30 So the Christmas time came round to the holidays so I fronted up to the old Head Master and demanded me 10 shillings if nobody had claimed the 10 shillings. I got my 10 shillings. So what did I do? Put 2 and 6 with it and I got a a Don Thanel who was a well known Shield cricketer in those years a Don Thanel cricket bat and there I was. I had a cricket bat. Well then few blokes used to come round home then and we'd bat the ball. Cause I had the bat see.
- 10:00 Anyway so the father my father was a, he had been the skipper of a Western Suburbs team and they used to before like Brisbane used to be in Shire's up to about 1930 and he was in the Western suburbs team and he was the Captain of that and. He he just missed out on the big thing for the year that he had an accident at work with one a
- 10:30 those petrol lines. He went to fill it up with petrol in a hurry and he hadn't put the thing right out. It still had a flame and he burnt his hand and so he only ended up with a little gold shield for the season. But they cleaned em all up that year and he was in line to go in the Shield team but no he wouldn't front up for it so. But anyway that's goin' back many many years I'll tell ya. I could only just remember that cause I was only a little kid. Yeah the old cricket.
- 11:00 **Did you like school?**
- Oh I was goin' all right goin' all right till we came up to the Seventh Grade and and there was a fella there he's Bill Hagan was his name. And he was only a little chap but he used to have the great fun in beltin' you with the cane in those years. You'd get the belt if you didn't do things right see. And I didn't I'd had enough a that. I thought, "Blow you I'm not goin'." So I didn't go to school.
- 11:30 I did what they called played the wag see. And of course you get found out anyway don't ya? So got the belt over that but anyway. That was thing and. Of course that was when I was gonna get the belt when the old man came home too see. So I took off too and I. I finished up and I came out and I thought, "I'm not goin' any more." So I I thought that I'd walk down to the Grandmothers place at Woody Point and the only way that I knew to Woody Point was to go out
- 12:00 through Lutwidge way and down through Petrie and round that that long way see. And I had an old little

dog called Spot so I grabbed Spot and off I went see. And I can always remember I I was walkin' down through Toowong and it was Dad and Dave come on the radio in a house and it must a I knew that was about quarter to seven. So and I'm I walked right through there and when I got to Chermerside

- 12:30 that was the end of the street lights in those years. Well actually it was Lutwidge Cemetery and I mean there was nothin' out Chermerside. It was all just bush see. Crikey that was the wind up me then. I was walkin' in the dark. On me own with me dog. So anyway I was all right and we got going. Anyway a car came along. He wanted to he said he's going to Petrie he'd give me a lift. I said, "Good-oh." So he give me a lift down to Petrie in this thing. And I got out there
- 13:00 and it was getting cool see. I thought I'll go down the railway station in Petrie see. I walked down the railway station and the station, in those years there was always station master's there and the trains were comin' through the old steam trains and that was a water stop and one stage and they'd fill up with water and that. And he had a nice fire in the little little stove in there. So I sat inside the office there and I I must a dozed off and had a sleep and I thought and he dozed off about five o'clock. I thought, "It's just before daybreak
- 13:30 I'm goin'." So I up and off. Finished up walkin' all the way and get down to Grandmother's place see. Anyway you still had to face the music when the old man come down. But but that was a different term then I dunno what happened. But anyway they came down and the anyway went back home again and I finished up then I went went to into the first year of Junior and I went to the technical college. Cause
- 14:00 I used to work across at home before all this happened as things were starting to, somebody put a service station directly across the road on the corner of Coonan Street Moggie Road where we lived they put this little service station in see. And I must a had little bit of a mechanical bent because when I went over that garage no trouble at all. I was pumpin' petrol with the best of em you know. But then Mum used to complain about comin' home
- 14:30 with dirty, greasy clothes. You know with oil and. Anyway it finished up it turned out with this thing after goin' to the high school and everything this was just at the start of the war like, 1939. The war started that year that I was at the high school and this fella that had the garage he wanted to get me over there into the workshop and do the 3 months in the workshop and be apprenticed as a
- 15:00 motor mechanic see. Anyway Mum did, Mum wouldn't hear of it. No no you're not gonna have any more dirty washin' she reckoned see. So we don't go to the garage. We go to the college. Well by the end of the college I didn't do any good down there. it was back to back to English that was my falling down English. So anyway. So I didn't pass that exam at the end of the year so then it was you
- 15:30 got to work. So what happens? A job turns up as apprentice piano tuner. Go into piano tuning at BB Whitehouse's at that time. They've gone out a business now. Been bought and everything else that's gone. But that was a family business then. And anyway I got the job in there see. When I go in there here's a chap I used to go to school with that lived down the road and of all the coincidences all his family
- 16:00 and his relatives were all car buffs. His Uncle had the garage at Taringa. Rubottom Motors at that time. You know and there I was workin' in there with this fella. Who eventually he turned up and married my wife's sister. So so we're still mates from way back that way you know. But car mad see. And and I can always remember workin' at that BB Whitehouse's and that.
- 16:30 Like I can remember he had saved up his money. Cause he'd got a he had a bit more wealthier side of the family in one way to what we had for money wise durin' the Depression years. And he had enough money and this was 1940 to go in and buy a 1931
- 17:00 model tourer from Eager's who used to be in the corner of Adelaide and Creek Street for 90 pounds right. 90 pounds. Now I mean that's only a few dollars innit? You'd say nearly half of that wouldn't ya? \$45 he paid for this 1931 model car I mean. That I mean that car was only 9 years old right. But I mean it was just an old tourer with wooden spoke wheels and that sort a stuff and
- 17:30 there we were. Of course he'd had a few old earlier model things that were before that and I'd been out learned to drive with him. I mean we used to just go out. In those years I mean there was not much Police around or anythin' like that and and. We'd have a bit of a go in the old cars and things and you sort a get to know and feel you know. Anyway that's car talk not pianos. It's car talk all the time see.
- 18:00 Well anyway by that time the war comes along. So then everybody starts to disappear. Like they're all called up. Cause I was the sort a the youngest to bein' changin' schools I was sort of a year behind everybody and then all the fellas were called up to go into the Militia [CMF - Citizens' Military Force] or the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] if they volunteered. The air force or navy and that and 1942
- 18:30 or 1940, when was the Battle of Britain? About the end 1940-41. Forty? Yeah. Cause at that time I was all set to go in the navy see. I was thinkin' of goin' the navy cause a cousin of mine that they'd came. They'd gone down to Sydney to live because of the Depression they've his father and mother had gone down there and he was in the Cadets down there in the navy and anyway I got to thinkin' about this navy because
- 19:00 as the war progressed they had they had an EFTS [Elementary Flight Training School] at that time at

Archerfield aerodrome and Tiger Moths used to be flyin' round and I was thinkin' that navy I'm thinkin', "By jeez it's a long way to swim out there," you know hey. And I'm not that good a swimmer even though we used to ride our bikes out to the creeks and we'd be swimming underwater and all this sort a stuff you know. And I thought, "No." I thought I might have a go at that air force. But then they got all the signs up that time

- 19:30 the few you know the first of the few boys I thought you know. Everybody says "Yeah you'd never get in the air force, you haven't passed Junior," see. So anyway I read in the paper and I see in England they've decided they're gonna start the Air Training Corps. I thought, "Well now there's the thing." I thought, "Now, I'll write away to the Air Ministry," or the Department of Air I think it was in those years. So I wrote away to them.
- 20:00 Yep got a letter back to say yes they were going to decide that this Air Training Corp was gonna come to Australia as well as the Empire Air Training Scheme which was the go because to get all the pilots trained in a hurry you know. And yeah they were gonna send out this were gonna start the Air Training Corps in Australia. So sure enough I think about 9 months later I get a letter. It's about nineteen forty end of '41.
- 20:30 Yep they want you to front up have a look in and see. So we go in and have a look see and sign the papers yeah. Which was like goin' in the cadets and the thing about it was it meant that when you went into the Air Training Corp you were part of the RAAF.[Royal Australian Air Force] It was RAAF was even your records and that still come through to show where you served in the Air Training Corps. And of course in those years their numbers in Queensland started at
- 21:00 20,000 so my number was 20,009 and and that was a good thing because to go in there and we had to go. We had 2 parades a week and we had to front up Saturday afternoon. Now durin' the week you'd do lectures which started off with the history a the air force and all the rest of it. then you'd go on to you'd go on to touchin'
- 21:30 maths again and back to physics. And once you go to that they used to have little exams there too and that's when I started to I had to get a little bit of tuition on the side from a fella who was a friend of me Father's for the maths side of it. But 'bingo!', after about 9 months it finally clicked. I could get logarithms. So then we just then we hit the navigation side of it then. And of course lectures on engines and all that sort a
- 22:00 stuff and anyway I got through there no trouble at all. Cause in the Saturdays it'd be all the typical you know where you learn your, "Left, right, left," and, "Yes sir, no sir," and, "Turn about," and then all the armaments and and that sort a stuff. And then there'd be a visit to the aerodromes and I can always remember the first one we went onto they took us out in the train out to Coopers Plains and then we
- 22:30 all had unit, we were issued with the uniforms by that time. You got you're air force uniform so that when you joined the air force you had part a your gear for a start see. So anyway so we had to march from Coopers Plains railway station out to Archerfield aerodrome. And of course at that time the Americans were just arrivin' out there. And they had an Bell Airacobra out there which was a bit of a flop against the Zeros [Japanese Mitsubishi aircraft] but still it was a big time machine you know. And
- 23:00 so we had a look around all these American aircraft and things and then we had to march back to the station again. Cause everybody's clappin' the boys you know. You're all in cause you're only young these days you know. And I'll never forget the drummer. I'd never heard a fella play a kettle drum. Like when we marched down the road they had a pipe band and we marched along you know and he had this fellow kept this drum and boy was he really hit the thing. Cause the old the old jazz music and
- 23:30 that sort a stuff you know you were all on the drums in those years. And anyway I'll never forget that marchin' down there with that. But of course I used to ride out there from home too like on the if you. Durin' the weekends there was another thing happened that when the Japs came into the war they had these the Air Raid Wardens here like they had in overseas. I mean not that they had an air raid here but there of course there were all the preparations
- 24:00 were on and they always wanted volunteers to come up and you'd always go up on your pushbike see. Something to do you're messenger for ridin' around with messages with the ARP [Air Raid Precautions] and when there wasn't any a that on I used to ride out the aerodrome out at Archerfield on the bike and at that time they had the Boston's and and B-25s which are the twin engine. Yanks were arrivin'
- 24:30 and one day I went out there and I saw this four-engine plane right over the other side of Archerfield aerodrome. It wasn't as big as it is now. And I thought, "That's gonna be interesting to see that thing take off from there." Then I realised the old aircraft recognition that it was a B-24 Liberator. But then of course then I found out later it was a B-24 D, one a the earlier ones with a glass house
- 25:00 nose on the front and I thought, "What's this thing?" I thought, "How's he gonna be getting' off here, see?" Anyway he opens it up and he was only the grass strip and everything see with this big bomber I mean. Well they weighed 13 tonnes as I found out later on and anyway he come hurtlin' across the drome. Yeah and he got off the ground and away he went. I thought, " Well I'll be blowed!" and I thought. And I never realised then

- 25:30 that one day mate you'll be sittin' in one a the seats up the front a that. But anyway that's another part of the story. Away it went and just while I'm there. Might come back to it later on. But anyway it finished up that when the Japs came in they shifted our air force from Archerfield. They shifted the Tiger Moths that were there they shifted 5 EFTS to Narromine in NSW and
- 26:00 they made Amberley a big base and then that become an assembly depot for the American and English and Australian aircraft. And they also when it first started it was 8 SFTS [Service Flying Training School] which was the service flying training, the more advanced one on the twin Avro Ansons, and of course that was another thing. They were flyin' over. They used to do their cross countries and their their turns and flyin' around and things over our place too from Amberley and
- 26:30 course that made me more determined that I was gonna be a pilot. And you know and the and the fellow across the road that had that garage he knows he still had enough petrol to go for a drive up he took me up there a couple a times and sat up there and watched the planes takin' off from up there too and that was the old Avro Anson's. Then I can always remember that one night I came home from from the ATC [Air Training Corps] and I just got home there and I could hear this plane
- 27:00 and of course there's a lot a Yanks around those years and I could look up in the sky and I could see this four dots see. And I thought, "That's exhaust," and then I woke up. It was a B-24. And of course later on when I got flyin' em that underneath the wings a those they had a turbo supercharger. And most probably one a the reasons the Yanks used to fly in the day time I suppose because at night time
- 27:30 when you were climbin' in one a those Liberators you had the turbos turned in and they were just four little red lights up there weren't they. You couldn't hide the exhaust in them, yeah. We had em flyin' down over Burma but of course that was that was another thing. Anyway we'll get round to that later on. Yeah. What else did we do? Oh yeah, we like in bet like some a the fellas
- 28:00 didn't go away straight away. They were still at home and we used to all assemble up at Taringa. Like you know used to have all the fellas in Taringa'd be up there then the suburbs. There'd be an Indooroopilly mob and there'd be one from Ironside's the other suburb and. Not that they used to have fights like they have now. But but they're always determined to see a lot a people used to
- 28:30 grow oranges and things like things. This was kids we used to get up to I mean they didn't seem to go around stealin' cars cause they had no petrol anyway. Not that we would be doin' it but but this thing was go and see who could get some oranges at nighttime see and eat 'em. You didn't throw em away. So we used to go out and nick a few oranges see. So the police in those years didn't have cars in the suburban stations they used
- 29:00 to have a motorbike and sidecar see and they were the old English AJS bikes. The twin cylinder things. You could hear 'em coming miles away see. But I you'd always know when old Sergeant Crank was out cause he'd give you a kick in backside if he'd catch you and send you home to brick you know. But you'd always hear the old OJ comin' down. It'd be, "Phewph!" everybody'd be gone and disappeared. Oh but they were funny old days. Yeah about
- 29:30 no that's about that's about all ya sort a did in those years you know cause there was nothin' much else around. You never had any money to do anything else. And even if you did have a few dollars you had no the petrol was all rationed and then food was all rationed eventually and I dunno it was just one a those things. You sort a grew up with made do with what you had you know. You couldn't go buy this and buy that like they can today. And
- 30:00 you made your own sort a fun but fortunately you had lots of bush around and that. And of course we used we can come back and say, yeah we had had wood stove at home and course. I mean the edge a Mount Coot-tha bush was only quarter of a mile up the road from our place and used to have the old hand cart and that was that was one a your jobs at home too. That you had go out and get some firewood see.
- 30:30 Cause a mate an I got into trouble with that too cause we took the easy way out. We took all the green wood cause that was the easiest thing to chop see. Just chop the trees down and bring home the green wood and the old man'd be goin' crook again cause it wouldn't burn. And you'd get a bit lazy on the axe you know. But oh, used to cause at Mouth Coot-tha I mean that was a playground too really but a lot a fellas were diggin' for gold around there in those years. Just round off Taringa Parade. It's
- 31:00 all where the highway goes through there now that was that was gold mine gold minin' area that fellas used to they'd be fossickin' around there and they did find a little bit a gold there and of course out at Gold Creek where that's all built now up too. That was a lot a old alluvial gold and stuff out there.

**What about the American presence in Brisbane back then. It was pretty strong wasn't it?**

Yeah. They took over Leonard's Hotel. Well used to walk like. I used to catch the train to work cause

- 31:30 that was the easiest way to go. Catch the train and cause had a had a season ticket. Like that you used to be able to ride the train a couple a times a week or somethin' you know bein' goin' to the Air Training Corp as well and used to walk past Leonard's Hotel. Yeah that's that was that, and of course they had all the Cadillacs and and all the officer's cars outside a there and the wife used to catch a tram just about outside a there when she was goin' to work in the Treasury building

- 32:00 across the road and that was another thing about. When I worked in Whitehouse's the one fella started there and he was only a little fella see. And his name was Percy Roberts and anyway at the front a Whitehouse's they had a little balcony and we used to all have lunch up there on the top floor and used to go outside and look outside and of course the girls are walkin' up and down see. One day this Percy's out there see.
- 32:30 He's (whistles), "Hey (UNCLEAR)." I said, "Whose that?" He said, "That's me sister." That's my wife now. It's one a those things that happen you know. I dunno just how we how you sort of things. A note come back to work about something about these fellas standin' up on the awning and lookin' out.
- 33:00 And anyway and it was only one a those things that she just happened to be down there that day to get the results of a, Junior was I right. That's I'm right there. Yep to get the results of a Junior and that's how she happened to be walkin' down there and her brother happened to be workin' there and that's and we all ended up together. You know it's amazing that the friend of mine married a sister. I married
- 33:30 her and her brother still lives across at Moray Field at the moment. Yeah it's amazing. Just all survived this these years and there you go one a those. Oh cripes you've gotta think back for a long time haven't ya? And we haven't even got to the battles yet have we? Yeah. Oh, Air Training Corps. Yeah well that was. Well you got all your gear and everything there and you learnt the basics of
- 34:00 it and of course the part a the thing was that that was it. That you you didn't have to front up for military service once you're call up came you just sent in that you were a air force and it'd be, what's this? 2003? Just about my birthday was yesterday. So it would be 61 years ago I was goin' down to Creek Street to the recruiting
- 34:30 depot to go for me medical in the RAAF. And anyway they put me through there and give me a little badge that said I was on the RAAF reserve. So that was it, and that was in September 1942 and then of course that was the end a the ATC too but you sort of discharged out a there then. You're on the reserve that you'd gone into the air force. And then I didn't get called
- 35:00 up until to go in on 36 Course at at Kingaroy at 3 ITS: Initial Training School that is. The 1st a January 1943 and that was an experience too. We went up cause we had our uniforms but nothing on em. Like they're just all the old ATC things off the shoulder. We had shoulder flashes with Air Training Corps on and just
- 35:30 took those off and and we fronted up at Roma Street railway station and hopped on the train for Kingaroy. Well it went all right because I hadn't had rides on trains not that long before. Like I mean you'd only used the suburban trains you know. And off we went oh what an experience this beltin' up along the flats with. Course I know what the loco's were, I used to live beside the railway line. They had
- 36:00 these B-18 arm the big green engines you see em today runnin' up along the track out a Caboolture along the flats up there boy's really thunderin' along. Bout 50 mile an hour which was pretty fast you know for us. You'd never been that fast in a train before. And we get up to Gympie and of course at Gympie in those years to go to Kingaroy they had to break the train and they'd shunt they'd put the ones to go to Kingaroy down the back and
- 36:30 then once you got to Thebine there used to be a junction at Thebine station that's not there now but you had to stop at Thebine. Then they'd switch those carriages off an then they'd put the little B-17s on then and then you'd shunt of to Kingaroy on the branch line see. Well when we left there away we went see and all we could see comin' out a the train cause it's middle of the night by this time and everybody's a bit tired and everythin' and
- 37:00 there's all these red sparks comin' past and they're red red hot cinders out a the loco see. And how it never set the countryside on fire I don't know but boy. Anyway when it come to the steep hills before Gemary that it couldn't get up the hills this loco and well mate they broke. If they broke the train once they broke it three times to get up the hills and we finished up in in
- 37:30 Mergan about seven or eight o'clock see and the train the engine was still goin' back to pick up the rest a the train. And we had no food they had no and there was nothin' on there. No no tucker nothin'. And there was in those years I spose they didn't have the connection wit the air force. There's no no two-way radios to say, "Well listen here, take em over a café or somethin' and charge it up." You had to wait till you got to Kingaroy see. And
- 38:00 the lucky for us there was a few trucks in the siding there with bags a peanuts on em. Well they got holes in em I'll tell ya. So we had peanuts for breakfast and lunch but of course we never got to Kingaroy till 2 o'clock that afternoon. And I'll never forget on the front a that old loco it says return to Maine for cleaning written in chalk across the boiler a the loco. The poor old thing. Because that was the trouble with Queensland railway's
- 38:30 they were cartin' all the stuff for the war up to Townsville and troop trains and oh mate it was bedlam really. How they survived it I dunno. But of course there's been stories about Queensland rail how they survived the war too. And they real they worked really hard yeah. But oh and those trains. And then of course we went to Kingaroy and then we used to get leave from there like so many weeks you'd get a weekend off and of course they'd take you to Brisbane with someone and you'd get away on a

- 39:00 Friday night you'd get on the train you'd be home then you'd be home on the Sunday night and get back on the Monday and we were all lined up one time to come down and they come round and they said, "Leave cancelled. You've got to spend it in Kingaroy." Because what happened was there was army camps at Gamary and Mergan and the one loco comin' along with a tank on the train and one a the old wooden bridges collapsed. The train went through the bridge. So we didn't get to Brisbane so there we
- 39:30 were. So lucky there was a few WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] around so we tramped around and went out a big swimmin' hole down the back a the old aerodrome at Kingaroy there somewhere and oh we had ta swim in red muddy water and everythin' else there was a. Yeah that was good fun hey. Some a the blokes had plenty a money in their pocket. They went out and there was a, there used to a service car used to run from Kingaroy through Yarraman to Brisbane and course they clipped it and
- 40:00 went home that way you know and but of course they were cashed up blokes. We didn't have enough money. I mean we were getting' what were we getting? Five bob a day or 6 shillin's a day I think it was then and you didn't have any money to spare by the time you allow allotted a few shillings home you know. And yeah but there you go. Anyway.

**Actually I'll just get you to stop there Colin and we'll just change the tape.**

## Tape 2

- 00:30 We did a lot a marchin'. We did a lot a study. We had exams. We had we had maths. We had navigation. Oh yes we had more injections. Oh that's right. We all got our injections up there didn't we? And course you all get your smallpox injection and of course the warning that in 7 days you might keel over see. Anyway,
- 01:00 what happens? Come back into the hut 7 days after we got it after bein' out in the hot. It used to be very hot up there in the in those old wooden huts and fibro roof and that on 'em and. Anyway I didn't feel to good this afternoon and a we were all supposed to go out to get PT [Physical Training]. They give ya physical training exercises and everythin' you know get ya fit. And anyway I I come back this afternoon and I didn't feel to good so I just
- 01:30 lay down on the. Course we oh we used to sleep on palliasses. They didn't have any beds in those years. Which is Hessian sacks filled with straw. You had your palliasse that you had to make up and lay on the floor that's all you had. And you had a couple a blankets and and a pillow that's it. Your pillow that's it. No lockers. Your gear was in your kit bag with a lock on it and your and your uniforms used to hang up on the wire on the coat hanger at the end a the bed. And I laid down on the old palliasse anyway I had a
- 02:00 bit of a fever goin' on. Not that I knew at the time but I thought I was crook see. And any the old corporal comes in "What are you doing in bed Bowden? Get out a your bed!" I said, "I'm not goin' out." I said, "I don't feel too good." Come up and he looks at me. Up up to the hospital with that man. Get him up to the hospital. So up to the hospital. I missed out on the PT that night I thought it was good-oh. So they kept me up there overnight. Had a bit of a fever from the reaction from the smallpox and anyway back to
- 02:30 work again the next day. But the only time I got away with laying down and take tell the corporal to buzz off. Anyway, oh yeah that's right, palliasses. Oh that was another thing that happened. When like when you go in the air force, well the same in the navy or the army, you've got to do as you're told. And you must obey orders right. And when we went in I
- 03:00 had a lot a chaps who'd come into the air force from the army that had been in the Middle East and had remustered and joined transferred to the air force and come into Air Crew. And they were much like few years older than I was and a few others as well and and of course they were wild fellas these blokes. They'd, I mean they'd been through the ropes they knew what was what. But anyway things that happen? Okay, you had to take your turn as hut orderly. Where you had to sweep the hut out.
- 03:30 Make sure everythin' the kits were all set up and they wanted your blankets folded and all this sort of thing with initial training. Anyway the last thing I did this day was when I went out I got the broom and I lifted me palliasse and I swept out underneath it like the stuff'd come out of the straw you know. And I cleaned under me palliasse. So the next thing they got us on parade. There's not gonna be any leave at the weekend because there's so much trouble with you
- 04:00 fellas in the camp that not doin' things properly see. And they started readin' out what had had happened see. When it come round to my name, "Dirt under palliasse." I thought, "You buggers. The last thing I did I swept underneath that palliasse." So that's when ya learnt your lesson see. You don't answer 'em back. That's it. You just gotta take it and leave that's it. So away we went. So no leave that weekend and that was it.
- 04:30 But anyway we managed to get out over the back fence somewhere and we went back to that swimmin' hole. But oh well we used to march around. They'd give us all drill and all this sort a stuff and we. Oh that's right. I had me first fly or me second fly actually. I'd had a fly when I was in the YMCA [Young

Men's Christian Association] before I... Like when I was still at school age I used to go to YMCA to

05:00 and and I'd had a trip in an old Dragon Rapide from there was cost 10 shillings and they shouted me 10 bob ride in a plane over Brisbane and then when I went to Kingaroy they said we could have a little bit air experience and they had a an old Tiger Moth there see. So they give us fly over Kingaroy. We each all went for a circuit everybody in the flight went in the circuit. So I had a ride in that. And then eventually

05:30 they ended up with 5 Squadron up there. I think it was five. With Wirraway's and they were on their way up to New Guinea and they were trainin' doin' their doin' their work ups there and they were doin' practice bombing and all this sort a stuff and we'd get an odd fly in that. Where you could get time off you actually can go down and go for a trip in the back seat of the old Wirraway out over the old bombin' target down and zoom down it this dive bomber in the old Wirraway see.

06:00 So that was a bit of air experience so. Anyway we have our lectures and our maths and physics and engines. That's coming onto the mechanical side of it then. You had to do your mechanical side for that and then also another thing. Why they had to do it? I dunno. But we it was only I suppose that if you didn't pass the exams and you had eye trouble and things or somethin' that

06:30 you ended up in another position other than a pilot well you had to strip guns down. You had to go through gas chambers and and all this thing and learn all about phosgene and mustard gas. You had to go through the test with a with a mask on and go through the tear gas stuff and get all the itches. Of course you used to shave in those days and of course if you'd had a shave in the mornin' they'd bung through the tear gas. You'd get that sore around you're neck you were you

07:00 you'd tear yourself to pieces when you come out of it and and yet the instructor we had, we reckoned he was off his rocker this fella. Cause he he used to be without his. No mask on tellin' us what to do and everythin' and his eyes'd be runnin' and everythin' in the tear gas in the in the gas chamber. But oh we had to.

**Can you talk us through one of those drills in more detail? Like where they happened and what the procedure was?**

What, up in

07:30 Kingaroy?

**For the gas yeah, for the gas training?**

Well it was only just the instructions on like as tear gas. But it was just to get you used to putting, donning your gas mask bein' able to put that on properly and be able to breath through it and do the right drill to get one on. That was a that's the main thing with it is that. The main thing is to make sure you get that gas mask on correctly then you don't get any gas inside it and

08:00 straight away you get it on pretty fast. And they had tight they were very tight to put on and once you got em on I mean it was you know they're real claustrophobia sort of thing. You know. And then of course it'd start burnin' round your neck here that you'd really want to pull the thing off you know. But but that's it. And that was the idea of it and just even learn how to use one properly. After bein' shown how to use it outside and then you go into the chamber so that you

08:30 you get you've got it on when there is gas there. Cause they let the gas go and bumpf! you've got to get it on pretty quick. That's the idea a that and then of course there was rifle drill and then we used to go up. They'd march us out to the rifle range and Course another reason of goin' in the army I thought, "Jeez I couldn't get round the hump and all that pack o me back like army." Cause I wasn't a wasn't a very robust sort of a lad in those

09:00 days. I mean I was only, jeez I was only 10 stone or just 10 stone and no more in those years and and I was pretty thin and I thought, "Jeez I couldn't imagine me marchin' round in the army." I'd never make it you know. And but anyway we still had to go out and shoulder arms and port arms and do all the rest of it and be on parade like the same as the military fellas like for the initial

09:30 training side of it and. You had to even have a go with the bayonet. They used to put you out with the bayonet on and chargin' round at the the dummies and all this sort a stuff you know and. Cause not that we thought much about it. Because we're thinkin', "Jeez we're gonna be air crew what the hell we want all this for?" But you still did as you were asked hey. And when I got to the rifle range cause the biggest thing I'd ever used my father used to have a a little .22 Winchester that he bought

10:00 in America in the First World War. He'd gone through America on the way over to England at the tail end of the war and he brought this little little Winchester. The barrel on it was only about that long and that's the only gun that I'd ever fired a shot out of in me life. And they took us up to the range and they give us this .303 see. Well I couldn't hit a thing. But boy it sure

10:30 rebounded and hit my shoulder. And I can tell ya and it wasn't it wasn't until I eventually ended up in Bundaberg and they had us out at the rifle range again that I finally go the know how to keep that rifle against the shoulder. Then I couldn't miss. But it it took a sore shoulder and a few bullets to find out. But I tell ya but yeah. In fact I we came back to Sandgate before



- 11:00 we went away and that was one a the things. They could they give us the armoury and said take what you want and go out to the range and I grabbed the old .303 and went out and we used to chase ammunition packets up the up the range bang bang bang. Make the sand make em shift around you know and then I went out one day and on the squadron over in India there was nothin' to do one day so I had permission there and I went out and down to the range over there on me own and had a few shots there was
- 11:30 just to see if I was still goin' all right and. But that was it with that place. But I couldn't hit that target in Kingaroy no way. Yeah that was it there and. Oh we did guard duty. Guard duty at nighttime and things you know. You had to go out and stand on guard. Two hours on four off you know. Stand don't know what for. Never saw anybody up there. But one fella
- 12:00 let a shot of one night and woke the whole camp up and everybody's up but that was always the set thing. There was that was one a those fellas that had come back from the Middle East they said we'll let one go tonight and get the corporal out a bed. The other thing that happened up there like were these these DIs [Drill Instructors] as they called em. They were drill instructors and they were a corporal to each hut right and one fella that was the one flight was in the
- 12:30 next hut was a fella by the name of White and he had a nice bald top. Real shiny see and he got mixed up with all these fellas that'd been in the Middle East see. And he was a pretty smart little cookie too but he used to be into the town for the dances with Saturday night or. Curly White we used to call him and he was real up. But he was always wantin' to know that rubbin' this stuff on his hair evidently. Not that I was in the
- 13:00 hut there. But they said that he was always tryin' to get this hair restorer to get his hair to grow see. So one a these blokes set up a thing and they told him the best thing for it Curly is a raw onion. So every night Curly'd be out there and he'd rub this raw onion. Can you imagine what it was? Oh crikey. Gee whiz yeah. Yeah that was that was just some of the funny things. Then one
- 13:30 like they had they'd have three courses right. I was on 36. They'd have 35 Course and 30. Well 34 Course and 35 and 36 and when we arrived 34 was leaving and there was always somethin' happened. There'd be a recce around the camp. They they'd wouldn't get. They were goin' the next mornin' anyway cause they'd they'd go run wild at nighttime see. The end of the training session they'd
- 14:00 just go a bit. So anyway when 30 Course 7 Course come in to take the place and 35 was goin' it was on that night. These blokes are runnin' round comin' through the huts and you you didn't go to sleep that night cause anythin' could happen see. They come pinch uniforms or anythin' see. Anyway when we got out on parade the next mornin' we go out on the parade ground and here's. They used to have the the service police there and they had pushbikes they used to ride around and they
- 14:30 had at the camp they had these big high poles with the red lights on for the airport and where these how they got up there. I dunno where they got the ladder but they used to have the like on a electric light poles they have those little things comin' out where you climb up the pole. But they're a long way off the ground. You can't sort a jump up and grab the bottom one. But here was the service policemen pushbike up on the top one a those things.
- 15:00 Up the pole and toilet paper flyin' off the top it big banners. I'll never forget that. I dunno who got it down but it was gone by lunch time. Oh dear we used. In my hut there was a fella by the name of Gordon that's right and he was a Scotchman and he used to play the bagpipes so he didn't go on parade did he? They used to have him out with the bagpipes every mornin'
- 15:30 for for old Jock. He'd get out there and he'd play the bagpipes and we'd march off. And the the only trouble was he had his little recorder in the hut and he'd be sittin' in there playin' his bagpipes on his recorder at night. It'd drive ya mad. Oh dear. What else was there? Well we didn't get any cookhouse duties there.

#### **What was the food like?**

- 16:00 Oh not too bad there. Pretty good actually. Pretty good. Yeah. Anyway what else was there? Yeah food was all right. Yeah that was where you got your two enamel plates and your tin your enamel mug and your knife fork and spoon and you when you come out there used to be a basin a hot water and a cold one. Same as the army. Dip her in. Wash em. Take em back to the hut
- 16:30 and that was it your charge you know. But food was good at Kingaroy yeah it was no worries at all. We never used to get much leave there. We'd only you'd only get what we'd get? From Saturday morning till Saturday night. 23:59 that was it. Cause then you had to spend all day Sunday readin' up on your books for studyin'. Cause then the exam
- 17:00 came after about a month and a half then there was the exam on what you'd done. Then it came up to the categorisation section where the selection of Air Crew came into it and you. It was funny thing. They gave you eye tests and things that always had me beat this. When you went in to join the air force you had the eye tests and they had those Ishihara plates if you check whether you're colour blind. That was Japanese ones. The only ones

- 17:30 that are really good colour blind testers. They gave you all this in down in Creek Street. When we went up to Kingaroy we had to go for an eye test again. And I was amazed like fellas that they'd passed down there there was somethin' wrong with their eyesight. Where they couldn't cross their eyes or you know. And they had to go back to the hospital everyday for half an hour or somethin' for eye exercises
- 18:00 to make em that if they did get categorised as pilot that they were they could fly with their eyes you see. And I went in and no trouble boompf! I'm out. I don't had any more and the coordination thing. Oh that was another thing. They sit ya on a a seat with a the rudder bar and the control column and they put the cross hairs on the thing and you had to chase the light around the thing to see how your coordination was. And then you're exams at the finish and then you went you went into
- 18:30 this board. There was three fellas there. There's a pilot a navigator and a gunner like they'd been experienced blokes that'd come back and they're there doing their their categorisin' you see what you're lookin' through your reports and. Anyway I went in there and the pilot there and and they all question ya. So out we come. Anyway ended up I did get categorised as a pilot and that suited me right to the ground. But
- 19:00 some a the other fellas thought they were gonna be pilots they ended up as Navs and there was a couple a gunners but that was only cause they'd failed exams and anyway.

**How much competition or tension was there leading up to that categorisation phase?**

None really because no. Not then because they could never get enough of anything. Like they've they's gettin' that many are disappearing as well as they want replacements see.

- 19:30 And there was no sort a rivalry amongst one another. It was just that you did your best that you were goin'. That was it. You were studyin' to be that you know. And away we went yeah. Yeah no there was no rivalry that way sort of thing. There might a been in the in some a the assault course stuff or somethin' like that to see if you could be somebody over the over the log or somethin' you know that way. Physically
- 20:00 wise yeah. But not not for not for Air Crew no no. But yeah that well that oh we finished up we finished up at Kingaroy at that aircraft training aircraft were startin' to fall apart. Cause this is 1943 see. They'd been goin' the poor old things had been goin' since nineteen end a 1940 with the Empire Air Scheme
- 20:30 and all these aeroplanes and and few a em been pranged. These were fellas with their run shorts so so 36 Course slowed down. We had about 3 weeks in Kingaroy and and doin' nothin' and I finished up down here. Oh that's a thing I used to do in that ATC too goin' back again. One a the things was aircraft recognition you had to do right. Well you had to do that in the air force as well but but
- 21:00 then they wanted models and of course I was always handy with me hands. And so they ATC come up and they said we're gonna supply the kits. Whose models airplanes? Me. So they used to supply all these kits and I used to make the models up and put em up in the ATC for for aircraft recognition you know. And anyway when we got to Kingaroy it was it came back to the same thing. They didn't have enough things in the in the hut up there
- 21:30 with the Aircraft Recognition hut. Were you used to that was free time you could go in there and there was pictures of every aircraft in the world in there and you could go through and look through em so you you got it in because you did get a test on that. Which was which and which is. In darkened room and lookin' through things and you'd have to pick out the silhouettes and that you know. Cause you'd get your aircraft recognition and they said they wanted people to make models. So hey this'll do me. I'm down there straight away see. Well
- 22:00 cause bein' seasoned veterans by that time after bein' through and passed the course and categorised as a pilot we'd done our initial trainin' so we'll just get down there. This'll be a good old job we'll. I'll never forget it. I made a a hull of a Catalina and the thing turned out beautifully. Dunno what ever happened to that Catalina cause all I saw was the. We were goin' then. We were posted back down to Narromine. So I never knew what happened to that Catalina but the hull was
- 22:30 all right. But then they had us out as well when we did our turn on that and that was to dig yeah. They put in a pigeon shoot. A clay pigeon you know you seen the mechanical arm for the old clay pigeon shoot? For the officers that's right. They were gonna have the at the back of the officers' mess so they could go out and have that and and
- 23:00 have their shoot see. And we had to dig through this rotten red clay up there. We're out in the sun with picks and shovels to dig this trench to put this thing in. But we only got down so far in that too. I dunno when they tell me it did get finished later on but when thirty we struck someone from 37 they said yeah it got finished. They finished up with their clay pigeon shoot up there. Yeah .yeah. So then we were off to off to Narromine.

- 23:30 Anyway. Can you turn that off for a sec?

**Yeah.**

And of course when you you right?

**Yeah we're right.**

When we went to when we finished that exam and got categorised then we got our LAC [Leading Aircraftsman] hey. And that gave us 7 and 6 a day. We were on 7 and 6 a day. We got an increase in pay. Big time hey. Anyway

- 24:00 off we go down to home 3 days' leave in Brisbane. On the train. This time we're on the 4 foot 6 gauge oh crikey. Never been on one a them before. Only been on Queensland trains. So go off the rattler off to Sydney. Oh big time Sydney. Lucky for me that uncle that had gone down to live he he lived over at Milsons Point just across the harbour. So I had a contact down in
- 24:30 Sydney which was lucky in a way. Cause we did get leave from Narromine and but you could only go to Sydney. You only had 3 days you couldn't come back to Queensland and didn't have enough time. So anyway cause you had to had our trip across the harbour the first time we're down there the three of us that were goin' for pilots that'd been mates in Kingaroy we had a trip over the harbour in the ferry and over to Manly of course and a walk down to the
- 25:00 beach and and that. Cause you only just had the day there. You had to leave on the train for Narromine that night. And that was another experience. In those days of course they had that old switchback railway thing goin' then goin' over the Blue Mountains. Where they used to switch that train round in the top where they've got that Zigzag Railway now. That was part of the main line in those years goin' up over there. Which we didn't see much of cause any time we come over there it was
- 25:30 always in the dark. Anyway off to Narromine and when we pulled up at Dubbo railway station in the mornin' you had to get off for some breakfast and that was the first time I saw those little thin barbeque sausages as big as your finger. Like at home you'd only see the big one's you know. And we see these little tiny sausages I thought, "Cripes things are crook in the rationin'."
- 26:00 And it was on the railway station see. But anyway when we we bowl up and we get into Narromine and it by this time it was what was it? March April. April yeah that's right just before Anzac Day. And it was gettin' pretty cool down there and and yeah I've just gotta think about this for a minute.
- 26:30 Yeah we get in there and of course then the big thing there is that we when they take us in and they put us in the hut we've got we've got beds this time. Which were the iron beds with that k-wire mattress k-wire on it but it still had the palliasse on it which we still had to get our palliasse but we had a bed. We weren't on the floor this time. Cause down in
- 27:00 Narromine it gets awful cold in the middle of winter hey. And we've got 7 blankets. Seven blankets thought, "Crikey." Anyway we needed those 7 blankets I tell ya. By the time it came round to the big the end a June and we also used to sleep in our inner flyin' suit. And that was the thing there. We had to go and get issued with all our flyin'
- 27:30 kit. Our flying boots and our inner flyin' suit and gloves and and outer ones and then our summer uniform as well of all things. With khaki overall and we had to get all our flyin' gear issued to us in one hit. And course there's this great big kit bag full of this flyin' gear and then we of course all that had to be marked and then parade. You had to go parades again and there was
- 28:00 still lectures. We still had to go back and do lectures only this time it it was just navigation and the aircraft we were gonna fly this time. We're goin' onto Tiger Moths you had to learn all about the engines in that and everythin' else. But then in the meantime out we go to the armoury again and we're back on Vickers machine gun and we even had to go out to the range and with the old water cooled Vickers that the army had. I mean they never had them
- 28:30 on planes but we still had to go out and learn how one a those worked. And there was a fellow there he was really good and they've got the trigger on them and he could fire one at a time bang bang bang. And I'll never forget it. He had a piece of 4-by-3 hardwood there and he shot at the pieces one bullet at a time with that that Vickers water cooled. And boy he was fantastic that that instructor. Oh yeah. But anyway
- 29:00 that was little bits and pieces there. And what happened then right. Then for some reason the planes were short. They they'd been had a bit a wind and so it'd been turned over. They'd turned over see and the all taxin' round and or comin' in to land and got cross wind and flipped em and wrecked em. So they're shortage of planes so 3 days' leave to Sydney. So off we go to
- 29:30 Sydney. That's when I go down to the Uncle's then and that the and went down to the Uncles and and good cause they took me round to the place. Down to Taronga Park and and a few other look rounds. In those years in Sydney there wasn't that much there really. And so had a look round there and then when I come out a Sydney after bein' at Narromine and the change from Kingaroy in the heat to the cold down there come back on the train from Sydney I don't feel so good again do I?
- 30:00 I ended up gettin' up into the luggage rack with me blankets and sleepin' up in this luggage rack. How I did it I don't know. But I did. I got up in that luggage rack and I stayed there till the train rolled into Narromine and when I get back there I was that crook I end go up goin' up to the hospital to sick bay again and I had a temperature of a hundred and something. It's in that records there a hundred

- 30:30 and somethin' odd temperature, "Bingo, into bed." And they had be there for a couple a days I think. And I thought the fellas were startin' flying the next day see and here I am in hospital. Oh no I'll get left behind see. But my temperature wouldn't go down. Didn't go down for a couple a days and anyway it finally went down and I got out. "Oh you beaut. Am I still in time for course?" "Yes
- 31:00 you haven't missed anythin'." Something else happened that they didn't get that far behind I could catch up see. But I had to have my air experience. That was the thing I had to get straight away and when when we first learnt to fly these Tiger Moths we had nice leather flyin' boots. Fur lined they were nice leather one's right. You're not to wear those. You gotta wear your shoes. You can't get or even better sandshoes.
- 31:30 Whether it was a put up job or not I dunno but everybody had to go up in shoes to get. They reckoned you wouldn't get the feel of the rudder with wearing these flyin' boots. Well we went up for an hour air experience and I couldn't feel anything with me feet because they were just frozen. Open cockpit plane they
- 32:00 it wasn't even 60 degrees. Like that's Farenheight . In those years it was farenheight it's only about just over 60 degrees down there and of course for every thousand feet you go up you loose a you lose one degree of temperature don't ya? Anyway it was freezin'. And anyway I came down and I got on I jumped off the wing and I dunno whether me ankles broke or what. I couldn't feel. Couldn't feel a thing my feet were that cold and I come back and bloody said, "We're not goin' up again without flyin'
- 32:30 boots. That's it." Now everybody was supposed to be a charge if they were caught wearin' their flyin' boots other than flyin' and you weren't to wear your inner flyin' suit. That was a sidcot thing that was all like kapok lined zip up the side of the legs and everythin' and we used to wear coveralls which are overalls today see. So what do we wear? Everybody's gettin' round with plain toes boots because that was their
- 33:00 flyin' boots. All had their inner flyin' suit underneath. We used to go to bed with that on over our pyjamas as well as our 7 blankets and nobody got put on a charge and nobody said a word. And but I tell ya you had to. You had because you'd come out in the morning and if it. In in NSW you get that winter rain and the rain'd come through in the front and all the puddles'd be sheets of ice in the mornin' and there you'd be goin' flying in
- 33:30 the Tiger Moth. In an open cockpit aircraft and and I used to feel sorry for the instructors. The poor fellas'd be up all the time like they'd take one one pupil up for an hour. Then they'd come down and take another one up and they'd have scarfs over their faces and their faces'd be red and they'd be they'd be all black with oil from the engine. Oh mate cause they used to sit in the front cockpit see and I used to feel sorry for those poor old instructors.
- 34:00 Oh jeez it was cold down there. And I'll never forget there was one night these fellas from the army there some of them real old blokes and there was 4 of em in our hut when we got down there and they're up on the end of the hut. There was a door at the end of the hut each end and they had a bed there and a bed there see and these fellas are up there. Now they used to play cards. The light's supposed to go out at 10 o'clock but no
- 34:30 they had it worked out that they were there. You could wake up at midnight and they'd be up there playin' cards with all their flyin' gear on. Sittin' up there playing cards see. Anyway I woke up one night I thought I smelled smoke. Smoke. Look up bloody flames nearly up oh right up this high. They got a kerosene tin in there with a fire burnin'. It was really cold this night. And here they are playin' cards and they got this great
- 35:00 fire ragin' inside the hut in a kerosene tin. But the upshot of that I found out later on was and I thought they'd set fire to the hut and what it did it nearly burnt through the floor see. And and they used to put all their gear over that when they come round used to have hut inspection everyday after you'd gone out. You had to fold your blankets up and everythin'. They they managed to put their gear over that that and they reckon after we left there the DI walked in and he went straight through the floor.
- 35:30 He stood on this burnt section on the floor. Cripes but oh I tell ya they were wild fellas mate. Oh cripes they were up there and tricks under the sun. And and where out hut was the wire fence and I mean they had the guard was patrollin' there of a night time but we were exactly one mile from Narromine and the fence was just there. It was only just the wire fence a strand wire fence of all things and these blokes'd
- 36:00 they'd be out and gone to town. They'd arrange somebody to pick em up and they'd be gone. Jeez they were wild I'll tell ya. But we never used to get any leave there. We only used to get leave you'd get leave from 5 o'clock on Saturday night I think it was till 23:59 and the only way you could get out on Sunday was to go to church parade and of course everybody went to town. Course they'd always end up in the pub over the road behind the doors. They could have a beer if they wanted one see. Not that I used to drink in those
- 36:30 days. But but that's where they could get over and they could have a beer in town. With then yeah we learnt to fly Tiger Moths hey. Yeah well we had to go out and we had to swing the prop and start the engine. And it always intrigues me these days when you see these little Tiger Moths that still some fellas have resurrected and they're still flyin' that they start em up without chocks and they stand behind the propeller and they pull

- 37:00 it over hey. Oh like I'll like the drill you used to get in the air force you lived flyin'. You ate flyin'. And you did it by the book and that was it. They could never touch propellers. Never swing the propeller over because the thing might have a hot spot in there and if you touch it it could go 'Brrrrppp' and, 'Bing', lose your arm. Might
- 37:30 hit ya on the head and you're dead. So you didn't do any a those sort of things and in case it gets a runaway. I remember taxin' in one day and they used to get a lot a preignition in in the Tiger Moths and because they'd sit burn so much oil goin' through the engines that they'd get a hot spot a build of carbon and I taxied in one day and I was in a line of aircraft and there was the one one line and I was the last one in
- 38:00 and I just taxied up and I got the wings level and the thing was when you switch off you opened the throttle. Well I switched off and I opened the throttle and she preignited and she took off full bore. So I ended up 6 foot in front. Yeah closed the throttle and switch off and leave it closed hey. But that's little things. Nutty things that happen. Okay.
- 38:30 you were only sayin' about I think they gotta get a sayin' about fear or worried about things. Yeah you got a bit of selfpreservation and things. And and things that can happen in planes. We took off one day and we're flyin' round with the instructor and because I was sittin' in the back seat I could see over the top a the
- 39:00 mainplane and the instructor who was under the tank he couldn't see up there. And I it's just things happen. I just happened to look upwards and I saw a Tiger Moth comin' straight down at us. And I just took over. "What'd ya do that for?" I said, "Didn't you see that plane go past us?" "Thanks very much." Hey he didn't see it cause it was in the blind spot
- 39:30 but I saw it but I mean selfpreservation innit? "Boomfa!" just take over. But oh lots a little things. Little things happen you know. But I dunno you you always think you're big shots too. Like I can always remember there was we used to go to satellite aerodromes and the thing is they're always sayin' about "Don't
- 40:00 do this and you don't do that." You think you're good that you've got so many hours. You get a bit a too much self confidence see. And I thought, "Well I'll go for a fly," one day. There's a one a girl there was a friend of these people that had this homestead. They were farmers that owned the satellites like owned the land the air force used the satellite aerodromes and this friend that was a school teacher down the road
- 40:30 at one a the schools further down south a Narromine. So I thought, "I'll just fly down there this day and I'll go round the school," see. So I went down there all right didn't I? Then the weather changed yeah it was "Oh blimey in comes this low cloud and it was rain." I thought, "Crikey I'd thought might you'd better get back boy. You'll be in trouble see. You shouldn't be down here anyway should ya? You're an idiot and you flew you're doing the wrong thing," see. So when I come back from there
- 41:00 yeah I started runnin' into hailstones and here I am sittin' up behind the little windshield in the Tiger Moth and I could see these little white things and hittin' the wing and I'm thinkin', "Jeez I hope they don't put any holes in here." Cause it was fine back where I was goin'. And there you go see. You get caught out didn't ya? And one a the fellas got. Not on our course but there was a bloke on of course ahead of us he'd been doing the same thing only he hit the tree hey and he was killed
- 41:30 when he went in. So but the first start of our course.

**Actually I might get you to stop there Colin. The tape's about to run out so I'll stop there and...**

Cripes we...

## Tape 3

- 00:32 **Okay, we're rolling. So can you tell us what the Tiger Moths were like?**

Yeah the little old Tiger Moths. Well they used to vibrate a bit. Well I dunno because I'd never well as you know we we grew up with nothin' and there we were. We we were gonna be big time pilots see. They said you could never be a pilot right. Well we didn't think we were gonna be pilots either. Because when they take you up in one a those when you got the stick between

- 01:00 your legs and your feet on the rudder and the slightest little bit of movement nearly turns the plane up side down I can tell ya. They were very very sensitive little things to fly and they and you had to hold them between your between your thumb and your second finger. That's where you had to hold the joystick and then you had your hand up on the throttle and then you had to balance the wings and stop the nose from dippin' and risin' and main thing was to keep the wings level and to keep the nose on the horizon.

- 01:30 They had different methods for that. But I the friend that married the wife's sister he ended up in the air force as well before me and he was a 2A at Temora and down there in the trainin' planes they used to have elastic band half way across the instructors windscreen. Well we didn't have elastic band. We just had to remember that's where the horizon was straight and level was half way up that instructor's windscreen in the front cockpit.
- 02:00 And that was the thing to keep that there and to keep the wings level. You had you had your bracing wires in between the struts in the outer edge of the wing and there was a little fibre washer where the two struts the two tensioners cross one another and that had to be on the horizon and then as much as you looked at those they would really bob around. But after after a couple a hours or so you you get the feel of it then and
- 02:30 well if you're gonna be a pilot you do. And and then that's and that's it. Once you get the feel of it, "Yeah that's it," you've got the straight and level. But then
- Sorry can I just stop for a second. Sorry about that. Away you go.**
- So well that's the straight and level bit. But then of course I never found any trouble with with gettin' off ground.
- 03:00 And you didn't the thing about flyin' is you've gotta do cockpit drill. Then of course bein' a trainer in those little Tiger Moths they didn't have much of a cockpit drill. There was only they had slots on the top wing that stopped the wing from stalling too early. You can get to a slower speed these little slots you'd have to keep the airflow goin' over the wings and the main thing about that was you had to have the slots unlocked for take off and landing.
- 03:30 If you did aerobatics you had to lock the slots. There was the mixture control in those they wouldn't touch em because they had that wired up so that you couldn't take em up over 7,000 feet. And of course everybody tried that and that's right. They'd only go to 7,000 feet and then the mixture was too rich. You couldn't lean at all and the poor old things'd be staggerin' up there but they would not go another inch. They'd stay at 7,000 feet. Yeah and
- 04:00 and then the thing was to come in and land. Now that was the thing. Yeah you'd come in. Things I dunno I think my a lot a I've asked young student pilots today about it and and I've actually held the controls of a 172 [Cessna 172] myself. I've tried one a those. It's a lot different today. They've got more power and stuff and and one a the things they used to tell us was when you're coming in
- 04:30 they'd always bring you in on a gliding approach when you started to learn to land. And one a the things on your last turn at 500 feet to turn into your landing path was as you move your controls into the flying position you've got to lift you've got to lift your right wing up cause you're turning left. A little bit a left rudder. But as it starts to turn over it'll tend
- 05:00 to go right, wing'll come up and up and you tend to pull the stick across to hold the right wing down. And one a the things they say don't hold off that bank in a gliding turn because it actually puts you into the position with your controls ready to go straight into a spin. And if the air speed drops low enough because you're tryin' to keep the nose up you're in a spin and at 500 feet you've got no chance of getting out of it. And a lot of pilots I've asked have they
- 05:30 heard about that in these other one's they've never heard of it today in flying. But of course more streamlined aircraft today. The they pick up speed faster and they've got more power. So that was one a the things that you had to watch when you were comin' into a into a gliding approach and landing was that last turn in. And then and then you had to get that check at 20 feet that was the thing. You had to lift the nose and you. Actually it was what we call a
- 06:00 controlled crash because you actually stall the aeroplane before it goes downs on the ground and that's the and that's the point. 20 feet above the ground you just bring the stick gently back. Lift the nose and the aircraft'll go keep it straight with the rudder and it'll sink down hopefully to the ground and you were 20 feet and you'd get a beautiful 3-point landing. Hopefully. But usually with the student pilot they hit the wheels first.
- 06:30 And then you start stick forward throttle on stick back stick forward. And they go bounding across the aerodrome until the instructor goes, "Take her round again." But I was lucky. I had a new instructor was very keen with me and it was always the thing was don't do that. Keep your hand off the throttle and stick back in the guts. And that's it. That's it. It's stops it boundin' because it's got no more power and it just crashes onto the ground. So
- 07:00 there you go so. And the thing was you had to do that solo in 7 hours and that's all you got. You learnt to fly straight and level. You learnt your eight one turns. Your take off and landing and then you got your test when he hopped. You come in and land one day and you taxi it back and you turn round to go into end and he next thing the instructor's getting out of the front seat and here he is takin' the front control column out with him and there you are. And then you know you're goin' round on your own. Well bein'
- 07:30 the last on that course these other fellas had gone before me and they said one a the things when you go up they said and you do that first you take off to 500 feet and then you turn left and you and and they said when you'll start tellin' the instructor what to do he said. You see. Course you're on your own see

and there you are. And sure enough you take off all right. Get off the ground beautifully up to 500 feet to him goin' and say see there. I told you I could do it see. Tell the instructor

- 08:00 to shut up. Anyway around you go and you come in for that landin' mate. And then in you come and you're doin' that glidin' approach and landing again and you're on your own this time. And then it all comes back what he said right. And as soon as that wheel hits that ground the stick back in the guts and that's just what happened to me. I came in and I was just a little bit too high and the wheels hit and she give one bounce and I was straight there. Stick back in the guts bang.
- 08:30 Stop. And there I was. I'd made solo. Taxied in and he said well that was very good. So there we were. We were airborne. So you thought. But then but then you had to go and do it all again every day then. You'd be out doin' different things and you'd be doin' stalls and spins and gliding turns forced landings then you'd be takin' off one day then all of a sudden the plane.
- 09:00 Oh gee he'd chop the engine. "What are you gonna do now?" "Land straight ahead." "Good, throttle on." Cause one thing they teach you never turn back to that aerodrome hey. Never try to turn back. Cause that's what happens. You've heard that plenty a times haven't ya? The aircraft tried to return to the runway. Bang and in it goes. Better to take your chance straight on. Because you've still got flyin' speed see. When you start turnin' you lose flying speed when you got no power so that's it. In you go.
- 09:30 Anyway so we did all those and spins and we didn't do any formation flyin' in those. We did it a little bit of Westerly wind flyin' down there and in the Tiger Moths that's another little bit about flyin' is. Like they teach ya all this in your meteorology and how the wind friction comes down and how the air's got a certain airspeed up above and then when the closer
- 10:00 it gets to the ground because of ground friction and turbulence it all slows down. And then you get your demonstration one day on a westerly windy day when you come into land and then he shows you how the wind sheer works. And if you're doin' an approach to land and don't keep an eye on your airspeed that you'll end up because you're tryin' to come in at the same approach and the airspeed starts droppin' off that you're flyin' into it ends up the nose starts endin' up pointin'
- 10:30 straight at the ground. That's when you and you're only just maintaining your airspeed and you're goin' straight in. So that's when you learn about ground friction and wind. Well they call it wind sheer now but that's it. And you'll learn how to overcome that and power on. What else was there? Then we went to night. That's right we had to do a bit a night flyin'. I think we did about 2 hours I think when the instructor was flyin' but I mean Tiger Moths with their basic instrument panel it had it wasn't made for sort a night
- 11:00 flyin' or blind flyin'. Even though even though we had to pull the hood over with an instructor in and you had to try and work the rate of turn and bank indicator and you had this a U-tube thing that was your rate of ascent and descent that wasn't very accurate and it was hard to see cause it'd been there that long and be nearly blank. And you'd be watchin' engine revs and oil pressure and everythin' else and and you're tryin' to watch
- 11:30 keep that keep that turnin' bank indicator straight up and down yeah very interesting. And one a the chaps that finally got scrubbed they had him up tryin' to do it and the day they were up. They were up pretty high doin' this because it must a been a bit of a bumpy day I think and and they had this canvas hood that used to come over the top a the back cockpit and I dunno what happened he nobody knows what happened to it.
- 12:00 But when they put it back he got the plane into a spin and they couldn't get it out. Eventually they did get it out and whether it was the canopy didn't go back right or somethin' that interfered with the airflow over the rudder at the back we don't know. But they spun and it was nearly down to the time where the pilot was gonna tell him to get out. To bail out. But but it never happened to me anyway. So I. But the only other fright I got in one a those Tiger Moths was
- 12:30 the day we're flyin' along and the instructor says we're gonna try a bit of an inverted flight. And I thought I had my straps tight and when he turned it upside down I seemed to fall out about 12 inches. I think I might a moved about an inch but it felt like 12 inches and all the dirt fell off the floor and in me face and I couldn't. I got the biggest fright I ever had in me life. It just I thought I was goin' straight out. But anyway
- 13:00 that's what happens in old Tiger Moths hey. Tricky little things to fly but as I found out later when we went to England we we had about 25 hours on the Tigers there after we'd had a few hours up. We thought we were big time pilots. They were very nice little plane to fly. Yeah they're good. They're pretty safe really. They're as long as you do the right thing and don't do silly things near the ground you're goin' pretty good. Yeah, good little plane.
- 13:30 There's a lot of em flyin' round still today. In fact in fact I've got a photograph in a magazine upstairs with one I actually flew. It's in me log book. I had 21 hours on. I 12 hours on it at at Narromine and somebodies bought it and it's still got the old RAAF number on it yeah.

#### **Might just. After after Tiger Moth training.**

Well after the Tiger Moths it was the instructor said

- 14:00 he said he said, "How would you like to go to Point Cook?" I said, "You're jokin'?" "No, no," he said, "I'm quite serious." He said, "How'd you like to go to Point Cook?" I said, "No. Too cold down there mate and they got Oxfords. I don't like fancy flyin' on Oxfords." I said, "And I come from Queensland and I'd like to go up to Bundaberg thanks and fly Aggies [Avro Ansons]." See it's warmer up there. Cause it was it was freezin' at Narromine in the middle a winter anyway. So he said, "Well," he said, "You could go down
- 14:30 to Uranquinty onto the Wirraways." I said, "No thanks they've only got one engine and I'd like two thanks. At least I got one to come home on if one goes out." And anyway so that was it. So I didn't go to Point Cook. I didn't go to Euronquindi. I went up I went up to Bundaberg and of course that was that was Eight SFTS which is the Service Flyin' Training School and that was a 4 months stint like where you do 2
- 15:00 months of Initial Training School and then you do 2 months Advanced Training School. Which is navigation and learning and getting all the flight. You get your crosscountries with dual and solo single and that sort a stuff in that one. And then when you go to the advanced one you get onto bombing and low level bombing and high level bombing and
- 15:30 formation flying and long low level cross countries and everythin' in that one. But when we got to Bundaberg that was July we were told the poor old Aggies had been sittin' out in the weather for nearly 3 years and that they're all fallin' to bits. And that we've got a have a month delay and we'll be no longer 36 Course that we were
- 16:00 gonna to be starting as 37 Course. Oh great. So it was one week on guard. Right. 2 hours on 4 off 2 hours on. We had one weeks guard duty. Then what'd we have then? Then it was a job the next one was just goin' into the. I ended up in the up in the the paymaster's section
- 16:30 sortin' out all cards and things and filin' records and all this sort a stuff you know. Then there was another week. Another week was was doin' rifle drill and bloody grenades. And I can't remember what the other week was. It was a sort of a general rouse about round round the camp you know. And then they gave us the 3 days off and then we were off onto course.
- 17:00 And of course when you went to Advanced Trainin' School you didn't have the drill any more. The thing was you were flyin' half a day and the other half a day was lectures. And that was advanced more advanced navigation cause you were flyin' longer hours and and you had to go dual first of all and course bein'. Startin' off with the initials B that put me in A flight and of course when you get there all the rumours are about whose what and whose what
- 17:30 with the instructors and this and that with A B C and D flight and whose the fella that's in charge of A flight but a fella by the name of Tom Meldrum. And he did stay in the air force after the war and a very tall dark complexion and the dark haired gentleman and he he was quite a nice sort of a lookin' man really. And course he knew it too. And everybody said, "You've got Meldrum."
- 18:00 They said, "It serves you right." They said, "He's the worst bloke to go flyin' with. He'll he'll scrub ya see." I thought, "This'll be good." Anyway there's four of us get there's four of us get allocated to Mr Meldrum see. So anyway we go up and meet Mr Meldrum out on the tarmac and we he's gonna show us this Anson. And, "Oh yes who you're so and so and you're so and so," yeah.
- 18:30 Course one I think I remember these names. There's one there was a Mick Bean. He worked in the government. He was an office worker see. Anyway old Tom said to him, "What did you do before the war?" "Oh yeah. Oh well" he said. "You might have a little bit of a touch," he said, "of keepin' track of things with a pen and that." "Yes," he said. Then he had first he Allen. Ron Allen course Ron was a farmer. Well he was workin' with his father on his
- 19:00 farm in those years only a lad and he said he's only used to drivin' tractors on the farm see. Oh god he said this to Tom Meldrum see. "Tractor? An aircraft's not like a tractor." "It takes a gentle touch on an aircraft." He said, "I dunno about you be flyin' these things." He said, "You'll be too heavy." See to poor old Ron. And of course when I'd been workin' at Whitehouse's and I was apprenticed to be a piano tuner I thought, "This'll be good when I tell him I'm
- 19:30 apprentice piano tuner. He'll think I'm a bit of a nut see." So anyway I can't remember what he said to the other fella but anyway he come round my turn last of all things. And he said, "What did you do Bowden?" "Oh, I said I was apprentice piano tuner." "Were you?" he said. He said can you play the piano?" I said, "Oh" I said, "I was learnin'," I said. "But I haven't played since I've been in the air force see." "Well," he said, "You should have a nice gentle touch he said bein' piano work." He said, "You should be all right."
- 20:00 I thought, "Cripes. I thought this'll rope me in good with the rest a the blokes won't it see." Anyway off we go. We all jump in. Up he takes us up and and he used to take four of you at a time for to initial air experience and we're all up there and here it goes again. We get up there and of course you all get your turn around but that was the first day. And anyway the next day we went up there it's the same thing again only
- 20:30 this time it went for a little longer. Anyway I finished up I'm sittin' on the navs table. It was like in the old Ags the two pilots sit side by side then your navigator sat in a compartment behind the first pilot



and it had a table there and I was sittin' on there and of course you're lookin' out of an aircraft all the time because it's always been told to keep a watch for other aircraft. So you keep lookin' out you know. Anyway I dunno whether it was whether he had Ron

- 21:00 Allen in the in the pilots seat this time but old Ron's givin' him a round a the kitchen whoever it was that was in there. "You do this and you do that," see and he's talkin' away to him. And I'm lookin' out past him and I can see around about 2 o'clock here's another Anson and it's proceedin' across our track and it's not movin'. Now it's like when you go boating. If you see another boat on the water and it's not movin' and it's goin'
- 21:30 it's on a collision course with you. And I'm lookin' out and I said, "That thing's comin' over here!" And I'm looking at Meldrum no he's not lookin' out. He's still rantin' at this bloke and goin' crook and doin' this and that and it's gettin' close and I said, "It's about time." I tapped him on the shoulder I said, "Sir, aircraft sir," (sound effect). Did you get his number? As it went across the top? Course you never see his number do ya? No I never saw his number sir. He's gone too quick. "Anyway thank you very much for that,"
- 22:00 he said. I thought, "Cripes here we go again," see. Well while I was on that course with Meldrum on that initial trainin' I never had any trouble with Tom Meldrum except one day. One day we went instrument flyin' and he always used to say. In an old Aggie they had this silk thing that used to click onto the instrument panel and it used to come round over the top of your head and it hooked round your head and you had to sort a lean
- 22:30 forward to keep the keep this cover taught so you only saw the instruments see. And I dunno what had happened. We must a been after the weekend or somethin' and I didn't feel to, I was feelin' a bit seedy this day and I start getting a pain in me back and I and I couldn't fly properly on the instruments. I'm makin' mistakes all the time see. And I'm too slow and oh jeez I got this pain. And he'd always said to me if you get a pain in the back you can always have a break.
- 23:00 I'll give ya a 5 minute break, see. So anyway I pulled the hood off and I said, "Jeez I've got a pain in me back." He said, "You haven't been flying too good," he said. "Never mind the pain in the back." He said, "You get that hood on he said and you fly." He said, "You can fly better than that." I thought, "You rotten old bugger." So I put the bloody hood on and then he said, "Do this and do that," so I kicked this old Anson round and whatever I did went right see.
- 23:30 About 10 minutes more of that and he said, "That'll be enough." He pulled the hood off. He said, "That's good." He said, "I'll take it back." He said, "I knew you could do it." So I never spoke to him all the time I got back but it. But that's the only time he ever went crook at me. But was I lucky I tell ya. Anyway. But that was that was one a those things cause you know old Ansons and things yeah. But I was took off here one day. Oh you you can always remember these things
- 24:00 when you're flyin'. I dunno what it is I I never forget em. I was takin' off one day only just after we'd gone solo and that. And I remember takin' off in this thing and it goin' up and it's not goin' up fast enough. And I thought look at the air speed and I suddenly noticed that this there's one no rudder on there. "What's goin' on?" And I looked down at the rev counter. "Hello, one engine's died. Oh what happened?" And had a look and the
- 24:30 and they got a friction nut on the throttle that you gotta... I couldn't a tightened it or the vibration had undone it a little bit and one one throttle came back and it had closed one engine down. So they're up. Oh beautiful. But that's the only time I ever had any trouble with one a those Aggies.

### **What were the sign of peculiar peculiarities, if I pronounced that right, of the Anson's?**

Well the peculiarities. They had a horrible undercarriage

- 25:00 system on it. It was mechanical and in the training days you never the undercarriage never came up. Like in that cockpit drill you had a bit more cockpit drill. There was you had to check undercarriage and fuel and throttle and mixture and all this sort a stuff on em and to get the twin-engine aircraft. And when it came to undercarriage you had to unlock the undercarriage and then you had to give it a couple a winds because it had this
- 25:30 little handle that used to stick out underneath your seat there. It was all right if you had somebody else with you they could wind it up. Because it was 160 turns to retrack the undercarriage and you could imagine for takin' off and doin' circuits and bumps that you'd be flat out windin' the handle you'd be because it was such an awkward position you'd be worn out after the first circuit. So anyway the thing was you had to un unlock it cause when you came down on the final leg that part a your cockpit drill was
- 26:00 throttle back to get the audible warning that if your undercarriage wasn't locked down that you'd blow this Claxton horn under the seat you know and then you'd have to wind it down and then check it locked again and that was part a the deal. That was one a the idiosyncrasies about em that the only time that you ever wound that up was when you were doin' a 4-hour solo country on your own. Then you wound the wheels up. But otherwise no we left 'em down you only just unlock 'em till till you went round and round.
- 26:30 And there another thing about 'em was too that you had to use the outer fuel tanks first. They had no

they never had a separation in the tanks. The way the the inclination of the wings the diheater on your wings the outer tanks were higher than the inner one and that and the and the petrol used to siphon down to the fuel pump from the tanks. Which meant that

- 27:00 if you used the inner tank and then switched to the outer tank you'd get an airlock and she'd run out a fuel. That's happened a few times to some of 'em crashed on take off on the wrong tank. You always had to make sure you had them on the right tanks and you used your outer tanks first. And I think that's all I can remember about them. Yeah. That'd be about and. And yeah and they had they had a mechanical brakin' system. It was a very good
- 27:30 braking system. It was, what it was a Dunlop airbrake. They had no compressors on the engines but you had to get the tank, they had a tank and you had to get that filled up with a tractor if you were doin' circuits and bumps. Cause when you used the brakes it used the air out a the tanks and they had they had a sort of an annular sacking of in the wheels that expanded and pushed the pushed the brake segments against the drum and it
- 28:00 worked from your rudder peddles about from the centre of the control there was a a brake as well that if the rudder was straight ahead it locked both wheels. Or if you had the rudder on it worked the other one see. So that worked by cable. When I was at the Advanced Training School one night I was flyin' and this aircraft has just come out of a 240 hourly
- 28:30 inspection. Really trimmed up, everythin's working nicely. So I took off and I did a circuit and I came in and landed and I overshot the flare path a little. Not much. I'd have had enough time to get down. And I thought, "I'm not goin' round I'm goin' to come down and have another take off. I'll put the brakes on, cause this has just had an inspection she'll be all right." No worries see. So I touched down.
- 29:00 Pull the brakes on. Start to pull em on pretty hard. Bang. The cable broke. No brakes. There I am. Black as pitch goin' up the flare path and I knew where I was goin'. But up the end of the flare path there was a bit of a dirt runway they used to have there. Then there was all the parked flight aircraft all there and I'm headin' straight for em see.
- 29:30 I must a been doin' about 50 mile an hour when she broke. And I thought if I go round again I've gotta get down and I've still got no brakes and I'll be comin' faster cause I've had a bit a brake. And I thought well if I go right up to the red light at the end a there I know there's a little bit after the red light. I can I'll either ground loop it or it'll finish up on it's belly see.
- 30:00 So anyway I go hurtlin' up the end see and anyway as it starts gettin' near the end I thought, "Well I'm gonna have to start turnin'." So I just put the rudder on. Nothing much happened. It started to go come a little bit and then I had I opened up opened up the port engine full bore and around she started to come see. As soon as she started to come round here I pulled that off and opened up the starboard one got opposite rudder on and it come round just over 90 degrees. It
- 30:30 was nearly round to 120 degrees and started to come back the other way and I was headin' off and I knew where I was goin'. By that time I was goin' the longest distance across Bundaberg airfield at that time. And I thought, "Well here I go." But she's runnin' straight and I just slid and I sort of I won't turn the engine off. I'll just leave em idling see cause I might have to turn again. I dunno how far it's gonna roll see. I'm just rollin'. I knew I was goin' straight across this aerodrome.
- 31:00 Anyway it's goin' over and over and I'm I'm lookin' back out the window cause it's gradually slowin' down and nobody. Cause usually there's a tender truck comes out and there's nobody comin' see. There's no truck comin' across. There's still aircraft taxin' up taking off and here I am goin' took it across. Anyway I'm flickin' the nav lights on and off. Givin' em SOS on the nav lights signals and goin' across the drome. Anyway it finally come to a stop and the engines were
- 31:30 still going. I thought, "I'll leave em," I thought, "Oh" and I looked and finally the truck come the trucks come across. So I thought, "I'll leave em goin' now." Anyway the [truck] comes over and the instructor jumps out. Comes running up opens the door and piles in what the hell are ya doin' over here? I says "I got no brakes." He said, "Oh." I said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "Switch her off and get the taxi or get the tractor to tow it back see." "No," he said taxi it back.
- 32:00 I said, "Taxi it back." I thought, "This'll be good," and they gave me two ground staff. One on each side see with torches. Well that's when I had to turn it around and I'm just blippin' the throttle see. And I mean engines in aircraft they get pretty touchy see. Cause they're higher compression and and it was runnin' all right when I first started but by the time I got back over there with just blippin' the throttle like this to keep it goin' straight and you know
- 32:30 to keep the speed down she's back firin' and blowin' sheets of flame out the exhaust pipe and I thought, "Oh crikey." Then finally one of em went 'poof' and stopped. So that was it. Switch off you beaut. So that was that was it for that night I had to go out and get another aircraft. But you know I read an article about it in the DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] paper about a fella that was flyin' VIPs around and he was up in Cape York and I wrote a letter to him and he was finished he was
- 33:00 turned out he'd been in one a the airlines after the war and he was on an Anson on one a these service flight things and he'd landed on a little aerodrome up near Weipa somewhere. Durin' the war they had aerodromes all over the place you know. And and he'd come in in the daytime and did the same thing

only the cable broke only he was in the daytime. He could see where he was goin' but he was a bit hairy he reckoned when he did the ground loop at the end to turn round. Yeah but he got away with it too yeah. Crikey

- 33:30 but that was poor old Aggies that was a couple a idiosyncrasies could go wrong with em yeah. Had another one one day. Had another one one day that's right. These other fellas had been up in it there'd been two. One a me mates been up. He said, "That things a bomb." He says, "It won't..." He said, "You're flat out getting' off the ground." He says, "It's got no power." "Well," I thought, "this is great. I'm supposed to be goin' up and doin' flyin' on one engine and all
- 34:00 these sort a manoeuvres." They give you these exercises to do and I'm supposed to be flyin' on one engine and all this. I thought, "This is great. This'll be good." So anyway I get in this thing and I taxi out and great this is. So anyway and I thought well I'll run up to as close as I can get to the fence and pull around pull the brake on. Now I'll get her up to half throttle at least. Full throttle wait for the revs to build up. She comes up. Yep right brakes off full throttle. The poor old thing's staggerin' across
- 34:30 the drome this thing. I thought, "By jeez he's right. This things not gonna go up." Anyway it finally picked up speed and up I go. Oh yeah great. Well I finally stagger up get up to about three and a half four thousand feet and I get up plenty a height I thought I'll try her out now. Try this one engine flyin' and everythin'. Oh cripes this thing's goin' as good as gold. Wonder what happened with em. No trouble at all see. So it comes up the hour's up bout time to get back. Come
- 35:00 back to land and comin' round, comin' cross wind, the last cross wind to turn into the final and lookin' up the aerodrome and at just at that time there's nearly every plane in the air was on the ground and there they were. And there was only one gap there where I could get in see and I'm turnin' that can line up to come in. And don't ask me why but I looked out to the right and there was a
- 35:30 squadron aircraft. They had 67. I think it was 67 Squadron and they were on Ansons on coastal patrol and here's one comin' in doin' what we called a submarine approach underneath me and he's turnin' right and comin' in on my right hand side which when you turnin' comin' in on to land you're lookin' left see and he come out underneath me and he had that much speed up he went straight in front a me and I could still see those ground staff fellows in their
- 36:00 overalls sittin' up on the nav table like I was and I could see through the windows and and nobody lookin' out the side see. I thought, "You rotten devils," see. I thought, "This'll be good." So round again. There's nowhere to go. There's aeroplanes everywhere on the ground see. Opened the throttle up. Do you think that thing'd climb? It would not climb. In fact it was goin' down then that. And of course I had I just got full flap on see. I thought, "This is
- 36:30 good." And I got her full bore and I got her up and the nose and I got her flyin' this I get the nose up as far as I could go without stallin'. And I thought, "Well there's only one thing to do. I'm going to have to reduce some flap." As soon as I let a bit of flap go and had to put the nose down a bit and I'm just holdin' me height see. But it's not goin' any fast. Oh no. And of course things happen. You can think you can smell oil burnin'. You think you can smell everythin'. You dunno whether you're gonna push it through the gate cause there was a gate you
- 37:00 could give em extra power. You thought if I do that it'll most probably blow the engines up. Anyway I stagger across that that aerodrome mate. Don't ask me how I did it. I got across there and then at that time at Bundaberg there was all cane farms all and there was anyway to go and force land was the cane farms see and it was dead ahead so I thought well here goes the rest a the flap. So up went the flap down goes the nose and I skimmed across that cane farm
- 37:30 at about 20 feet and she's pickin' up speed and away we went so I thought, "Here we go." I thought, "I'm goin' I'll only go up to 200 feet and I'll do I'll do a low level circuit round here and they can't say anythin' to me," see. So around I went. When I come back to land would you believe there wasn't a plane in sight on the aerodrome. They'd all gone. And it was nothin' just me comin' in. And I came in and landed taxied up in the line
- 38:00 switched off parked got out. Walkin' across to the hut instructors walkin' along he says "Is that you flyin' so and so there?" "Yeah." "Oh," he said, "I was up in the tower." He said, "It was a good job you did there." And I thought, "Thanks." Wasn't my instructor but it was one a the instructors out a there see. So there you go. But boy I tell ya that you know you get worryin' times you know. Oh jeez. That was about the worst time I'd ever had in one a them really.
- 38:30 Yeah. Poor old thing it was.

### **So what happened from there?**

Oh well in that advanced flyin' section. In well there were some other things happen there too yeah. In that advanced trainin' section flyin' down the railway line. That was a low level crosscountry. Out a Bundaberg the first leg was straight down the railway line to Goodwood junction. There used to be a little signal box in the old days and used to be 10,000 telephone wires

- 39:00 on poles on the side a the line you know and they all crossed the railway line at Goodwood junction. And the instructor says, "Oh I'll fly it down here," and he went down lower than me below the trees see. And

I'm lookin' out at the trees, "Cripes!" I thought, "We're low all right," and I look in my front and all I can see is telephone wires so I took over again and "Thanks very much carry on." Oh yeah and there was another day too there was something else happened like that. But oh you can keep

- 39:30 on rememberin' things you know like that. I mean flyin' formation. Flyin' formation and there's always some bloke nobody's got any confidence in you know. And there he is I'm flying the centre this day and I'm leadin' and I got a good fella on this side and this fellas on this side. Give em the signal. No radio's in those old things. Give him the signal to cross over and form echelon to the left see.
- 40:00 So down he goes and he disappears see. And I dunno where he it took him an awful long time to come in sight see and I'm lookin' around and I'm lookin' at this other plane next to me and I could see the fellas tryin' to see out the windows see. Only I saw this bloke first cause he was behind the wing where the blokes lookin' out there and he's comin' straight up underneath this other Anson. He's comin' straight up underneath it
- 40:30 and I thought, "Oh no." And I'm pointin' out the window see. Anyway the bloke finally saw him and he whoa and he I saw him take over from the other pilot too cause he and that was the end of our formation flying. But that's how it can happen. Just like that you know. This silly, and the same fella. I was doin' a solo cross country to Rocky [Rockhampton] and when and I'm motorin' along and I'm doin' all me navigation and writin' me log as I'm going
- 41:00 down you know I look out and here's this Costello. He's alongside me. I thought, "Oh no." Anyway there's a bit of cloud there and I'm just and I gradually sneak up to that cloud. "Now," I thought, "Now I'll just up and into there. Do a turn left for half a minute and then I'll drop out," and I thought he shouldn't he won't know where I'll be gone see. And that's just what I did. I went up turned went along for half a minute dropped out
- 41:30 and nobody in sight but he was gonna formate on me and he wasn't doin' any navigation. He was gonna fly all the way up and just follow me up there see. I thought, "Blow you!" You go and do you own job and get your navigation down. You know what that same bloke we used to do cross countries on that advanced training section where there was three in the aircraft where one was the pilot one was the navigator and the other bloke's an observer or just an assistant for the
- 42:00 navigator. Primitive navigation

## Tape 4

- 00:31 Where were we?

### **You just told us that new story**

Oh that fellow with the Costello yeah. Yeah well as I say we used to do those crosscountries. Right now what happens the draw that I turn up as a pilot who should be the navigator but this Costello. Oh no. And we had, there was this particular cross country was out across Fraser Island to Point B alter course to the left to Point A and then come

- 01:00 back to the coast. And I mean when you're out there at Point B there's no coast in sight there's nothin'. And Point A's the same. I thought, "I got no confidence in this bloke." I thought, "Ow the hell." I thought, "We're gonna get lost." He won't know where he's goin' see. Anyway, away we went. I'm tryin' to keep it like I'm a bit like a homin' pigeon. I get a thing built in my brain that I know where I'm sort a goin'. So I'm sort a goin' out there now he gives me of course
- 01:30 to go up there then we hit this Point A and come in there and I thought we should be so and so and so and so. No map no map or nothing. He's got all the maps see. Anyway we start headin' back towards the shore and I said, "How long before we see the coast?" see. "Oh so and so." And I said, "Well it'd better be hurryin' up I said because it looks like there's a big storm comin' up." Cause it was in the afternoon and those were the days you used to get thunder storms.
- 02:00 Anyway we're gettin' in and this storm's gettin' bigger and bigger and it's gettin' harder and harder to find the coast to find anythin' past the shadow in the water. Anyway I said, "Well when are we gonna hit the coast? Are we gonna hit it so and so?" Anyway we finally hit the coast. I said, "Where is it? Where where's that river?" Blank. He didn't know. So I thought, "well I'm gonna turn a bit left go round to the left a bit."
- 02:30 Give us the map here. And there we were we were comin' in miles to the North of where we were supposed to be comin' in. Like I thought, he was miles away. So I just turned a little bit to the left and we kept on goin' to map read and then we picked up a pin point on the map and that's right. We were miles north of Bundaberg. He was that far out a track I tell ya. "Oh crikey!" And anyway we came in and landed and there was no planes about and everybody had left. They'd all gone to town it was Friday
- 03:00 afternoon and they'd all headed into town for the weekend. And then we parked the aircraft and time we had a shower down come the storm. We how lucky were we gettin' hey? Oh crikey that Costello. But

I was pretty fortunate the day I went out. I had to do one of those sort of things. It was out to Point A then I had to turn to come back to Double Island Point and it's the first time I'd seen Double Island Point and I

- 03:30 found a wind find and I went out and when I got half way out there I took another wind find of the water. I was navigator this day. I took a wind find of the water and I got a complete reciprocal wind. So I had to alter course about 5 minutes before this Point A and use that one I found and then we ran into a patch of low cloud on the way back and we had then made sure we're flyin' on course that I'd plotted
- 04:00 and I got the biggest surprise of me life we come out of the cloud and there was Double Island Lighthouse. Was right there. What an achievement hey yeah for the local boy. Anyway we did a circle round there and that's the only time I was airsick. We circled round and got another wind and then we had to fly up along the coast up to Bundaberg again and we're only at 3,000 feet and it was 11 o'clock in the day then and all the hot air was risin' and the old
- 04:30 Anson was bobbin' all over the sky and I got me head down on the table tryin' to work this log out and I finished up they'd never had any. Like that's the days before I had breakfast in the morning and all we'd been drinkin' was bottles of soft drink and we'd bought a cake out a the out a the canteen and been eatin' fruit cake and drinkin' hot soft drink and and I had just just comin' round into the circuit area Bundaberg and I had to open the window. Like they had the big window on the side and poke me head out.
- 05:00 Cause if you were sick in there you had to clean it up you see. And I thought, "Cripes here I go." Never thought about me log or anythin' you know. It was just on the desk and I opened that window up and it never blew out. Me log was still there and I was sick out the side. Soon as the wheels hit the ground I was right see. I thought, "This'll be good. What's the side a the aircraft like?" Anyway in we taxi and just as it taxis in and we gotta gettin' ready to get out and hadn't shut down. The
- 05:30 door flies open and the instructor yells out, "How much fuel you got there? Got enough for another circuit?" "I said, "Yeah there's enough here why?" He said, "I want a fella to do a circuit." He says "You get out quick." Right we'll get out quick. I get out quick and I walk round that side a the airplane for some just a look and there was a bit of a mark down the side a the aircraft but by the time it come back we'd gone. Oh dear.
- 06:00 Another day we came in to land. I came in solo one day to land and this is what can happen. Now that plane had enough fuel to do a circuit. Now I was comin' in to land one day and when I was comin' in on the final approach across the road over the aerodrome there's lots of open country there then and the trees little low trees and things and here's an Anson crashed on approach and the and the tree's in the cockpit. Looked like it was in the
- 06:30 cockpit and I thought well if that tree hit there the pilot he must a been down the back a the plane. Otherwise he's dead see. When I get back sure enough he was one a the blokes out a one a the flights there and that's just what happened. He got out a the seat when he could see what was gonna happen and he and he took one around for one a those circuits like that and it ran out a fuel. And he ran out a fuel on final come down on this flat country lucky for him but
- 07:00 a tree hit the come right in the cockpit bang and he never got hurt hey lucky. Yeah so that's that's old Avro Anson's hey. We then didn't have any wings parade. Like they used to have a big parade in those years once upon a time when you finally finished your your course and you had your you had your wings test and you passed all the rest you had your assessment they used to put you on a parade and march you out and give you your wings and everythin'
- 07:30 you know. But they're runnin' I dunno what happened to us. We didn't have any a those. They give us they told us we were leavin' on the train the next mornin' and that we'd get we'd get all our change over gear like for the officers we'd be goin' first class to Brisbane. All the rest a the poor old fellas the sergeants'd be goin' down the back and here am I with me shirt I had to pull all me sergeant stripes off I'd brought
- 08:00 and, oh, generally had to leave all our mates behind then. And that's when you basically they all sort a disappeared you know. They we lost you sort a lose touch you don't sort a come together again. After bein' together for nearly 12 months they go one way you go the other when you get a commission. And then it was down to Sandgate then and I
- 08:30 I came home on leave from there and the first thing I did I went round to see me girlfriend. Which is me wife now and and she said, "What's the matter with you? Did you fail?" I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Where's your stripes?" Cause we were gonna be sergeant pilots see. I said, "Up here. Do you believe it." Anyway that's a little bit off the story isn't it?
- 09:00 But anyway that was it. Then of course Sandgate. We had Christmas at home and then we were down at Sandgate. They took us up to up to Amberley for the day. Cause that was a big assembly depot then and we seen all these Spitfires comin' out a the boxes and and everythin' else and the the walk around and lunch in the officers' mess and generally walk around the place and you know big thing then of course we knew we were goin'
- 09:30 overseas. But then of course Sandgate was more rifle range bang bang with the guns and machine guns

and then assault courses and all this climbin' ropes and all this sort a PT trainin'. Cause they they put ya on the ship because they know you're goin' to England they know you don't do much work there hey. So they try to get your fitness up and and that was it and then the end of January we were off down to Bradfield Park. Stayed the night and then we were on the ship

- 10:00 the next day for for England. And that was on the New Amsterdam. Which had been running with American troops between between San Francisco and Australia and it was in done up in maximum configuration to get as many people into one small space as possible. And the poor old sergeants were all down the bottom
- 10:30 and they had all the officers upstairs in the cabins but there was as many as they could fit into a cabin. Like you'd have bunks three on top a the other you know. And it was quite crowded and then of course. The the meals that was the thing. Like we'd had the austerity because of the wartime rationing at home even though we were fed pretty well in the air force
- 11:00 when we got on the ship and went down to the mess, cripes! I'd never seen food like it. And here it was all different cuts of meat. You name it. And the first night out from Sydney they had the biggest king prawns I'd ever seen in me life and I thought, "I'm gonna have some a these." By midnight I was that sick I can I don't remember much `till the next day. I ended up in the sick bay
- 11:30 and all I can remember was this orderly comin' round and he give me this stuff to drink. And he's, "Tip that down," and you could just feel it burn all the way down and it'd hit the bottom come straight up. And that's all I can remember till sort a 11 o'clock when you finally comin' a bit better start to take a bit a liquid and stuff. And then they finally let me out in the afternoon. By that time the
- 12:00 ship had docked in Melbourne in the morning and it was. I remember comin' outside and it was still pretty warm and the fellas reckon they came in and they reckoned it was pretty cold in the morning there and by midday she was the temperature was way up and hot. By the time we left to go out six o'clock we left to go out and in the summer time and the twilight down there a bit longer we went out through the rip and it was really on the run out tide
- 12:30 and it was the bay was that calm and the rip oh boy it was really there. And you could like where they have that danger water you know. I dunno whether you've ever seen it down there? Oh boy it was quite a sight. But we had our blue uniforms on it was that cold. And then we turned West. We thought we were goin' to America cause we picked some more air force blokes up in in Melbourne. We headed
- 13:00 West and off we went and we were goin' to England across the Atlantic across the Indian ocean and it took about 11 days from Melbourne across to Cape across to Durban where we ended up. But all the ship was runnin' into these these great waves were the swells. Those swells that come across that southern ocean and it was just headin' into that all the time. It wasn't really rough but these big swells
- 13:30 and it was goin' up and down. It was about a 30-odd thousand ton vessel. And of course the only exercise is walkin' round the deck and that and when you when you'd walk around the front a the ship one minute you'd be pressed down and then she'd go up in the air you'd be pressin' down then she'd drop over the top and you'd be flying around the corner. And we're just a day or so out a Durban they started to head up. They had a bit a trouble with the vessel and
- 14:00 they said they were goin' up to Durban to go into dry dock and all of a sudden the ship stopped. Then we found out the rumour come round that somebody'd jumped overboard. But it wasn't it was one a the crew. One a the crew had gone off his rocker for some reason and jumped overboard and they tried to turn round and look for him and of course in those years the German submarines were down round there. They were gettin' a lot of
- 14:30 Nazi sympathisers in South Africa we're feedin' information on shipping. And and the blokes were always saying like some a these fellas that were pretty clever blokes they'd worm their way around the place and they'd got information and and this it was Lord Haw Haw welcomin' us all the time. From the time we left Melbourne all the way over everyday they reckon there was a message on the German radio to say they're gonna welcome all this air force contingent
- 15:00 comin' over to the UK, see. And here we are circlin' round lookin' for a bloke jumped over board and the sea was as calm as a mill pond. And and there was another thing that happened. We always used to carry these kapok life jackets around in our. We used to tie em up and make em easier to carry and you could sit on em on the deck for cushions cause there was no seats you know and you could sit on em in the deck in the day time and somebody
- 15:30 sat on one and somebody put a cigarette butt down there in he and this thing caught fire and they never thought about anyone else. Course with kapok caught you can't put it out see. Bloke chucks it over the side. Well wasn't there a ruckus. They grabbed him and took him away. Cause the thing is it wouldn't sink you see and if there was a submarine around it'd know there was a ship about. Cause he pelted this thing. But the danger was it was in the daytime
- 16:00 and it could a blown back through a porthole hey. Oh he got he got the rounds a the kitchen that fella I'll tell ya.

**The guy that went overboard, did he get picked up in?**

No they never found him never found him. They give it away after an hour. No they never found him. And then we ended up in Durban and then they took us off at Durban and then they took us out to the Clarewood Racecourse. I mean Durban was only a small town then. It was only well I dunno how big it must be very big now.

- 16:30 But it wasn't really big in those years. I don't think it would have been any bigger than Brisbane. But it was very much the same climate and of course it's right on the ocean. I mean the sea and the surf and that was it was just like home there and they took us out to this racecourse. It was I think it was about 8 mile somethin' out a town and we used to catch a train in. Catch a train into
- 17:00 into Durban and when we first got there nobody'd speak to us. Like none of the white people that. Cause it was all segregation in those years. I mean the blacks weren't allowed anywhere that was it. And and the white people wouldn't they wouldn't talk to ya anything and we found out why. Because the one of the divisions the 7th or the 9th Division'd been through there goin' to the Middle East
- 17:30 and they wrecked the town. They stopped there. They all got off the boat and wrecked the town. And they'd they carted all little rusts and seven's and put em all up in the city all up the stairs and everythin' and oh they played merry hell. But when we were there for about 3 or 4 days then they started to talk a bit then cause we we we sort a behaved ourselves a bit cause. But it was quite a pleasant place to be in Durban. Weather wise it was.
- 18:00 And had a look around the place and during those years you didn't have that much money really. And the we couldn't get over the people complainin' they were drivin' round 1940 model American cars you know those big Cadillacs and things and they were gettin' 20-odd gallons of fuel a month. Where in in Brisbane you were lucky if you gettin' 5 for the same car 5 gallons a month and they they were
- 18:30 sayin' hard done by they were because a the war. But anyway well then we had that 10 days back on the boat down to Cape Town and we saw the saw the tablecloth over the top a the mountain. We got there in the mornin' and then we had to go into there pick up they picked up a lot of Polish WAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Air Force] of all things. Air force WAAFS.
- 19:00 That had escaped from Poland and made their way down through somewhere and and they got down to far as South Africa and they were part a the Poland. They'd made it into Polish air force and they they put em all on the ship to go to the UK as well. And we left there and you used to have a one a the fellas with us, Hitski was his name. Come from
- 19:30 Brisbane. Oh that's the other bloke that got the Commission on the he was on the course with yeah. And Joe was a bit of a singer so he he formed a choir so we had to have concert parties on the ship see. Anyway I thought, "I'll put me name in, they put me in the choir too." So I thought, "That's somethin' to do." So one night we were gonna give this performance on the boat and somethin' happened somethin' got left behind and Joe said, "You better
- 20:00 nip up and get it." Anyway we were in this, you know ,what a the big ships a got like they like ballrooms and that on those big vessels and that for the for the civvy [civilian] days and anyway you had to go up this big staircase and go upstairs to get on the right deck to get this thing whatever it was. But when I get half way up the air warning alarm bells go bell starts ringin'. I thought, "Hello here's... thank goodness I'm halfway up."
- 20:30 I thought, "This'll be good." Anyway I get up to the thingo and then it all comes through that it's all clear. But the ship had heeled over and you could feel it get full power you could feel the vibration come through the ship. They thought they reckoned they picked up somethin' on the radar that night and it was a pitch black night no moon. They rung the alarm bells and they
- 21:00 swung across to port to go away what ever it was. And the where they were headin' further West full steam ahead and then they they suddenly decided that it wasn't followin' fast enough so they said all clear. Anyway a few days after that the shadows lengthened just like that. And boy it got cold over night. We were headin' north hey. And they some a the fellas that are navigators usin' the stars and lookin'
- 21:30 round and workin' things out on the ships log they reckoned we were a day out of New York because of that thing that the ship had turned gone that far west and we come back up up. Cause at that time the submarines were wearin' off a bit. They weren't a worry. We were unescorted all the way from Australia to England we went right up, must a come up round the bottom end a Greenland. Come round the top of Ireland and into Gourack at Scotland where we disembarked and
- 22:00 and that was a... When these when these ships come in to like that after bein' at sea for so long they start changin' the ballast around in the tanks and I can always remember comin' past the top end of Ireland there was Spitfire's flyin' past us and they must have emptied the ballast out of one side and this ship was leanin' over. It was on you could hardly stand up on the deck it was listin' that far and it was just goin' along steady you know. And the water was
- 22:30 pretty calm and then it gradually righted itself. They must a emptied one side first instead of balancin' things out. But crikey it had a lean on it I'll tell ya. Then when these planes were flyin' past us I thought, "Hello what's goin' on?" Anyway into Gourack and then I don't think we stayed the day they. Well we stayed the night at at Gourack in the in the River Clyde it is and they unloaded us off onto little lighters

- 23:00 and they put us on the train there and we were to go down to Brighton in Southern England which was 11 PDRC which is Personnel Depot Receiving Centre. Which was a Australian RAAF centre. The RAAF were at Brighton at that time and that's where your disembarkation was really down there. But the trip down in the train
- 23:30 was a long one because we they had air raids around London somewhere durin' the night and the train was held up so we didn't get down to Brighton till late in the morning and as I got off the train and the word was around the radio again that Lord Haw Haw had been on to say he'd be around to welcome the Australians to Brighton tonight. Dunno where we get all this information from. But but sure enough I was that tired
- 24:00 out after comin' all the way down from there in this train cause see I never sleep on trains. And and I was where the hotel was that they had us in this hotel on the front near the aquarium at Brighton. It's still there the same hotel. We saw it when we went to England a few years back and I was billeted on the top floor of the hotel next door. And and in the war years all along the front at Brighton about every hundred
- 24:30 yards they had a they had a Bofus gun or they would a had a big 4.7 ack-ack gun there all the way east and west along the the foreshore for low flyin' German aircraft. And barbed wire and mines on the beaches. You couldn't go down the beaches or anythin' like that and that was like that. Anyway I went to bed, I don't remember anythin' till the mornin'. And I got up somebody said, "Oh the air raid last night? Did you hear the bombs go
- 25:00 off?" "No." Anyway the bomb evidently landed in the sea just outside the hotel in the mess next door and it broke all the windows round the front a the mess. There's glass all over the floor and everythin' in there. Never heard anythin'. Never woke me up. Oh jeez I was tired I'll tell ya. Oh gee. But oh crikey then it was up at 7 o'clock in the mornin' again and it was just at the end a March 1944 and it was
- 25:30 cold and foggy. Damp and very smokey because one a the things they used to do over in Europe because the primitive navigation things in those years. There was no radar and that sort a stuff. But the Germans and the English used to stoke all the factory fires up at night time. They all were burnin' coal in those years and they'd lay a smoke screen and especially
- 26:00 if there was a weather condition that leaves an inversion of smoke at a lower level they'd stoke all the fires up and of course that smoke hung in the air for days and days on end and and you couldn't see anythin'. Like when we went to London eventually you you could you could only just see across the other side a the Thames. Unbelievable. I I didn't believe how and I thought I thought to meself this is what a place to fly
- 26:30 an aeroplane. This is this is dangerous flyin' planes around here. And I thought this'll be interesting. But anyway I thought cripes you and it's that cold and I was. I don't like the cold. I like the warm weather. Like I said when I went from Narromine to Bundaberg. Anyway we get down there one day and they said you're you're all gotta go the officers a gotta go down to this Air Crew Officers' School
- 27:00 at Sidmouth in Devon. Right down the south west of England. So on the train we go and when we go down on the train there's austerity meals and they served us lunch on the train. I'll never forget it. And and the and the little green vegetables the gave us was like an OXO cube [stock cube brand] only it was compressed green vegetables. I dunno what it was but that's the only greens you had were these little cubes of compressed...
- 27:30 That was on the train but when you were in the mess it was different. But anyway they sent us down to Devon to do this Air Crew Officers' School and when we get down there this is this is physical training. Marching again. Assault courses. Drill and instruction with an old Grenadier Guard Warrant officer bloke out there with a coat of arms as big as the top of his the top of his arm on his sleeve and he had the...
- 28:00 He was a real sergeant major. He really was. And he could shout and yell and of course we had to take orders from him because anyway he had us out there and all this. Anyway what happened down there? Yeah right. We all had these parades and everythin' and they sent us on these assault courses and boy we used to we used to end up goin' up. They took us up to one a these Commando courses where we had to you had to run
- 28:30 so far and then we had to climb this embankment and at the top there was a 10 foot wall at the top and we had to climb over that and down the other side then run through all these obstacles like you see you know like the army do and all this sort a stuff. I thought, "Cripes what? We're air crew. What do we got do this for?" And I'll never forget it like I was the youngest of these fellas and I get called Junior see. Anyway we were
- 29:00 goin' round this assault course and this fella that was always... there's him and his mate they were always havin' a dig at me cause I was the youngest fella, the junior, see. And we come round to where this pit was, and I'll tell ya what it was a long jump across there, and it was a good hole. It would have been about 6 foot deep, see. Anyway they says I said, "Go on, over you go." "No, no you go." Course muggins has gotta go han't he. Straight over. I just made it. Anyway this bloke
- 29:30 that's jigin' me that's where he hit the bank. Right there. I thought, "Serve you right mate." So I the



last laugh there. But anyway we marched round the country and we got stuck with these big... we got stuck with these fellas out a the army that had been in the desert. Well they were up there and we had to... They they'd take you out and they'd show you the map and they'd say you're here. You've gotta get back to there and you've got a certain time.

- 30:00 "Go!" That's it. Well off we went and of course these fellas are goin' through and you you're pigeon instinct you're cuttin' corners again. We ended up goin' through this big field. Get down in the field in there and here's all these things with big bullet holes and everythin' in em. And we had this they had a lot of Americans down there just before D-Day and we'd ended up on an assault course out this Yank assault course where there's all these obstacles they're full a bullet
- 30:30 holes and things all over the place. So thought, "Better get out of here." Anyway we ended back to our rendezvous point we got back there all right. Then they said, "You're gonna have a contest." Each flight's gonna have to have a march back to town. You gotta do 4 miles in so and so. Right. Well when you started marchin' back with these fellas that had been in the desert marchin' I tell ya. Don't break step. And we were doin' 4 mile an hour. 5 mile an hour I reckon we were doin'. But don't break step. "Left, right, left, right, left, right, left!"
- 31:00 You know and we're singin' songs and everythin' we finished up and I tell ya leg muscles down the back here. Was I glad well you had these big boots on with the steel things in the back of 'em and everythin' you know. Oh cripes and of course when this happened at night time you'd have your meal in the mess then you'd all go down to the hotel. The pubs used to stay open till 10 o'clock and there used to be a NAAFI [Navy, Army, Air Force Institute] canteen open till half past ten with sandwiches and coffee. So they'd go down to the pub down the pub at 7 o'clock. Be drinkin'
- 31:30 cider. Not rough cider. We'd be drinkin' cider till ten. Out of there. We'd run round to the NAAFI and get round there and get our sandwiches and coffee and then go home and get to bed, oh jeez. I tell ya we must a been fit. Cause I know when I got to England I had a photograph taken. As I say I was only just 10 stone when I went in that air force and I was 13 stone there and I this picture my face is like a full moon over there. So we were pretty fit when we finished there I tell ya. But anyway
- 32:00 got up one mornin' and went down and we were all on parade and they "Right parade dismissed," and then they come over to our flight and they said, "We want 6 volunteers for the Middle East for light twins." I thought, "You don't volunteer, but I'm goin' to the warm country. Me." So what do we end up with? About 8 blokes or 10 blokes put their hand up so then it was pull the straws out. You'd draw the straw see. So I ended up with one I got one. "Oh beauty I got one I'm right." So we're
- 32:30 goin' the Middle East for light twins with. They had a lot a Baltimore's and that sort a stuff out there those years so thought this'll be all right. So good-oh. "Pack your bags! Pack your bags!. Back to Brighton! So there was six of us. Away we went. Up on the train to Brighton. Come back through South Hampton. It was bombed durin' the war. Boy there a lot a bomb damage there we seen goin' through and up to Brighton. Then go down and pack all our gear.
- 33:00 Right go down the next mornin', "You're goin' to Elmdon at Birmingham so there's an EFTS. You're goin' to Birmingham and you're gonna to have 25 hours on Tiger Moths." Oh. So that was back on the old Tiger Moths again. So up there we go and at that time it was about 6 mile out of the centre of Birmingham and that was the end of the
- 33:30 city and at our Bowls Club where I play up the road here there's a lady that was born and grew up there. Just just near where we were at Elmdon. And she said she's been back and seen it and she reckons it's the city's airport now and it's huge. Only it was just a little EFTS when we were there. And so now you wouldn't recognise it now I spose if you went back there. It'd be that big part of the
- 34:00 city and everythin'. Cause I know at one stage I did go to Epping in the war where they had the that that American Eagle Squadron used to be at Epping and I went there and it was only just a little street and we went back in nineteen 1975 when the wife and I went over to England and we ended up in Epping and didn't recognise it. Couldn't even find the railway station that used to be there. So can imagine what Birmingham's like hey. But
- 34:30 anyway we were at the end of the trolley line out a Birmingham and and there we were to do 25 hours on those Tiger Moths again. But of course by this time we had our wings and everythin' and we were big time pilots. But we still had a few frights though just the same. And I was with an instructor one day who'd been one a the pilots over there'd been through the one a the part a the war over there in England
- 35:00 and it's the first time I've been in a quarry in a Tiger Moth. He said low flyin' we were and he went through this gap and we were doin' a steep turn and all was the quarry wall goin' round in front a the Tiger Moth and we were in a full steep turn goin' round and out. Cause it wouldn't a been the first time he'd been in there though. He was just tryin' to put the wind up ya see. Oh jeez I tell ya. But how he never pulled the wings off em I dunno. But anyway.
- 35:30 So we did our 25 hours again and it wasn't bad again. But that's when when you appreciated just that light little finesse touch of an old Tiger Moth so that was it. Yeah they were good. They were good little plane to fly. Yeah very good. And then well that was it. Then it was at that time it was just about ready for D-Day and that 11

- 36:00 PDRC at Brighton had been shifted up to a place called Warrington up in Lancashire which was north a where we were so on the on the train and up we go to Warrington. Now when you shift around in the air force like this in a little group you become a little lot of lost bodies that sort a just come from nowhere. You've never been on a station. These people just arrive.
- 36:30 You dunno hear anythin' about anythin' they just come there. Well that's how we were. We just came to Warrington and they said, "Oh well we better put you in that empty hut down there." So down we go into this great big hut. It was huge. For all the people comin' in see from Australia and that but we had only four 6 of us up the end. Three beds each side of the door. Up one end and there was a little
- 37:00 potbellied stove in this inside this hut and it was relaxed a little bit with the food situation over there in 1944. And we could managed to get hold of to get some Ovaltine and we got some powdered milk and we used to get some cake now and again in the shop down the road. So there we used to have our little cup a coffee. Cause it was still daylight at 10 o'clock at night there because they had that 2 hours daylight savin' in the war. And just up the
- 37:30 road used to be an American squadron with the B-17s comin' in with half the plane missin'. Been over Germany in the daytime and we'd be watchin' them comin' in and then we'd sit and have our Ovaltine and pull all the blackout curtains in and go to bed see. So this time one night we got in about mid night here come all these new arrivals from Australia just come through Canada or somewhere just come in.
- 38:00 In they get and they fill the hut up. Anyway six o'clock the next mornin' in comes this officer the RAF [Royal Air Force] officer that's in charge of the party. Well there's always somebody lookin' after 'em see. He comes in, "Everybody up." We we're tucked in our bed with out heads down see. "And what are you chaps doing in bed?" We said, "We're on a draft
- 38:30 to India sir." "Oh," he said, "You're not with this contingent?" "How long ya been here?" "Couple a days." "Oh. Anyway that's all right." He finally didn't like that. We were in bed everyday used to come in and rouse his fellas up and get em out on parade, see. And anyway we we had about 5 days there with them and then we got posted up to Blackpool for this embarkation depot where we thought we were goin' to the Middle East you see.
- 39:00 But that officer when I was sent to India I finally had come in we'd been back again I met him again. It'll come in later on when I met him again that RAF officer. Anyway up to up to Blackpool. So when we get to Blackpool we're billeted again just 5 of us just in local holiday rent apartments you know. Like they've got little like you've got here apartment houses all in a row only this time we were right on the
- 39:30 Southern end of Blackpool way out of town. But there's the tram comes down and then all the way into town in there there's all where the entertainments and area is at Blackpool with all the all those rides and things like you've got at Luna Park and that you know. And of course I'd never been on anythin' like that in me life. You never had any money. You never had anythin' in Brisbane like it you know. So cripes in we go see and there's six of us at a time we go in there and
- 40:00 there's not that many people movin' around then in the war of course but they they still had the place open. And thought, "This is good," cause we used to go in and when we got on those dodgem cars we'd go and buy 10 tickets each, hey. And there's and all of us'd just get on these cars and as you're chargin' round tryin' to knock one another off all the time, you know, bang crash. And finished up we got run out a there. The bloke said there's nobody else could get on em. We bought all these 10
- 40:30 tickets at a time we'd run out, you'd run out and buy some more, see, quick, see. Anyway we got on all the dodgems and these rollercoaster rides and everythin' oh jeez. But you only had a few days up there and then they sent us down to Liverpool to jump on the ship. And this time we got sent on this vessel called now what was this one? This was called the El Kantara and it had been in the war. It had bullet holes all over it. Like on the
- 41:00 up round the decks and everythin' you could see where the shrapnel had gone through everythin' and and they had us in these cabins and anyway off we go. Get out and then they form up in a convoy. By this time.

**Might get you to stop there Colin cause this tape's just about to end. So we might stop there and have lunch.**

## Tape 5

- 00:31 **If you just want to continue.**

We're off again? Yeah that's right. We went down the El Kantara want it was all full a shrapnel holes and everythin' else yeah. Yeah well we got aboard there and then we joined up in the convoy outside the harbour and or the mouth of the Mersey River. And that was just after D-Day started and oh it makes me wonder sometimes whether we were

- 01:00 just fillin' in for some of the back the like for the invasion that they would know where those ships were comin' and goin' from. Because we were escorted but only just by corvettes and things down to

Gibraltar and then once we got to Gibraltar we went through the Mediterranean on our own. And we got down to Portside and then when we got to Portside

- 01:30 we thought we were gettin' off and then we were ordered out of our cabins to go down into the cabin. Well they weren't cabins there were just sort of a conglomeration of accommodation down in the bottom of the vessel. Because they were loadin' a heap of army fellas and everythin' to go out to Burma and that's when they found out that we were goin' on to
- 02:00 India. Oh so there you go. We were goin' to India and we were wondered what we were gonna fly in India hey. We were goin' to India. So anyway that's when the ship got the name the El Catara. Because we didn't agree with em about goin' downstairs because I tell ya what. It was very, very hot. In fact goin' down the Med goin' down the Red Sea. Oh when we went through the Suez Canal that's right that was full of ack-ack
- 02:30 guns like Brighton. They were both shores on either shore of the Suez Canal there were ack-ack guns all the way down along there. Because the Germans used to drop mines in there and there was bits of ships piled up everywhere along the the banks of the canal and when we got down to Tewfik. They anchored us in Tewfik for a couple a days we were there at the end a the canal and the Germans got a you could hear the Germans goin' over at night
- 03:00 time. You could hear the engines out of synchronisation but nobody got bombed down there. They were very high. And anyway then they sent us down on our own then. We were off down to Aden and there was 2 people died on the vessel from heat stroke. And they had to call into Aden to get rid a them. And the visibility it was only bout half a mile goin' down through there because it was that humid and the moisture in the air you it was unbelievable
- 03:30 and very, very hot. And of course we never slept in those places we were sposed to go to. We just slept up on deck and even once we left Aden to go to India we ran into the monsoon or the tail end of the monsoon where it was sort of going into driving rain and wind until we got to Bombay. And when we got to Bombay that was an eye opener for me. I'd never seen so many people in all my
- 04:00 life. Unbelievable. I'd hate to think what it's like now. When I came down the gangplank off the ship bein' a a real rookie I lookin' down towards the ground and I could see all these red spittle marks all over the place and I think cripes they must have TB [tuberculosis] pretty bad here. Never haven't heard about Betel nut before. And they were all Betel nut chewers hey. Oh boy what a mess.
- 04:30 I'd never seen so much dirt and filth and and crippled people in all my life and I thought, "My God, what are you in for here?" So they took us out to Worli. North of it was up along the coast north of the city of Bombay to an embarkation camp called... Well it was Worli, yeah, and but they had these big huts there that had been built for the war and they had
- 05:00 all these tiled roofs on em and the contractor must a gained a few rows a tiles every time he built 'em cause he never overlapped 'em far enough. And it was on the side of the opposite the ocean and the and this end a the monsoon and rain it was sort a blowin' ashore there and all the rain was comin' underneath the tiles and it was raining just as hard inside the buildin' as it was outside. And of course the RAF gear was all this camp gear outfit with our roll like a roll with a swag roll
- 05:30 with our camp bed like a big swag with our mattress and blankets and everythin' in that. So you had to put that on they don't call beds beds over there. They're called charpoys. Got all this coir. It's a sort of... What should it be? Like the husks a coconuts all woven up in fibres and they make these fibre mesh. Instead of the k-wire mattress you get this fibre in there and that can also be full
- 06:00 a bed bugs hey. I remember it was too wet for them in there but we had our beds on there and then it had the four posts on the like one post on each corner to put the mosquito net over. Cause malaria was rife and we had our bein' air crew we were on Quinine pills. And we had to put our mosquito net over that and also a ground sheet our raincoat over the top a that. And then get all our clothes and gear's under our bed so
- 06:30 that it stayed dry because, boy it was it was really muggy and wet. Unbelievable. Anyway.

**Colin I'll just get you to stop for a tick. Rightio**

Yeah. Oh well we went into the Taj Mahal hotel which is right on the front there at that big monument thing that's the gateway to Bombay. And that's when we found out about

- 07:00 puttin' red pepper in the in the peanuts if you go in and have a gin sling or somethin' there you don't eat the peanuts otherwise you'll want more to drink. But anyway we didn't spend much time there. We're only a couple a days there lucky enough. And and we got shipped off on the train up to Poona. There we were. You've heard about Poona. And there I was in Poona. Well there we had a billet there that was
- 07:30 a private house before the war. And I'd never seen anythin' like it. It was a beautiful two-storey house and all the floors were tiled. The whole house was tiled right through and it's such high ceilings it was so cool. And then of course we were in the Eastern countries and course the toilets were in the floor. Like the same old things you see today.

08:00 They were there and of course we still had showers and that but it was quite warm but quite comfortable with the with the beds and things our sleepin' bags and that. And then we were had to go down to the aerodrome there and that's when I met all these fellas that had been in the air force 2 years before me and done all their OTUs [Operational Training Units] in England as a crew to go over Germany and everythin' but they they had an excess of crews there

08:30 so that was it that these Liberator bombers were bein' supplied from America and they were comin' out to India to replace the old Wellingtons they had. So they needed bigger crews and more crew bigger crews. So that's how I came to join up with these fellas. And straight out a training school of all things and a junior again and pop in as a second pilot.

09:00 Well after what'd we used to have? Well there was then we had to go to school again to learn about the Liberator bombers after we were crewed up and the skipper that I had was a a real Englishman. He had a handlebar moustache out here. He was a real ladies man this fellow and I'd always see this fellow on this El Kantara goin' out to

09:30 out to India that he was always up sunbathin' on the thing. And he was always number one sort a bloke see. I thought, "Cripes who's this bloke?" Anyway he ended up to be the skipper and he was a very nice chap anyway. But I thought cripes and there I is I got landed with him see. But anyway he was very good and we got along all right. And of course the rest a the crew except for with the two wireless operators. One came from

10:00 Melbourne the other chap lives in Brisbane here - Len. Len Pearman and myself were the only Australians in the crew. The rest were all English. The rear gunner came from Durham the top end of England in the north east up there. I could never understand him. I used to always let the skipper talk to the rear gunner. And anyway the navigator he was a London Jew

10:30 accordin' to the skipper and he was really good. By Jove he was as a navigator he was there at the minute never missed whether it was cloudy or not. We were right on time all the time and... Anyway we stared to learn about this Liberator all the different sections and bein' such a big aircraft for those years you know they were big machine. But not very big today compared to the one's

11:00 they got now. But anyway and then I'll never forget we came down to learn the cockpit drill. So we got five foolscap pages. Not like they've got today on those little things they use in the cockpit today with the little a little roller and they feed the things through. We had to remember them up here because we had five foolscap pages and then we had to remember

11:30 'em up here and anyway that was interesting. So we used to spend days up in the cockpit learnin' about where the life rafts were and and learnin' all the instruments and things and after bein' in an Avro Anson and hoppin' up into a Liberator here I am sittin' in front a all these dual instruments that seemed to be

12:00 endless. But like everythin' else once you get it you get it. And anyway we learnt that and then we were all crewed up. Oh I got dysentery while I was there. But it didn't put us didn't put me into hospital or the rest of the crew in hospital. But one of the other a couple of the other blokes ended up in hospital there from it. But it kept us up and down

12:30 for a couple a days I'll tell ya. But anyway then the thing was I was off to Heavy Conversion Unit. Like these other fellas had all done OTUs but I hadn't done anything so I go down to this Heavy Conversion Unit and we get on a 2 foot 6 gauge train. Like the you know the rail's only 2 foot 6 wide and we were on that train for 3 days from Poona to Bangalore

13:00 and Bangalore city. Which's a big place now but it wasn't quite so big in those years and we got down there okay. And then when we got shipped out to this Heavy Conversion Unit the accommodation was army tents out in the open paddock. No trees. No nothin'. No shade and

13:30 they had this plaited coconut leaf flooring. They were outdoor charpoys and they had all this matting around em too. And as fast as they put it up the white ants used eat it out. Oh crikey. And that was where we had to learn to fly these

14:00 Liberators. So down we go and we have a look over a couple. And we were very fortunate here because the early model Liberator's had a different sort of a turbo supercharger set up on 'em. The B-24 Ds had had manual controls for the turbo superchargers which had to be set individually and and mixture controls

14:30 for the engine as well but fortunately for us we got onto the B-24 Js the later models which was all electronic. And this comes into the first a these electronics where we had a electronic automatic pilot made by Minneapolis Honeywell which was a beautiful thing and it only needed it had sensitivity switches on it and things that you could get it as sensitive

15:00 if you like and you could switch in each individual control and then it was one knob turn and it never used to wander when it was set on course it would never wander. Like disparities that were in the other one's which are vacuum controlled but anyway that was good. And the turbo superchargers bein' electronic were on one knob and that set everythin' and if you. Well most a the people know about turbo superchargers

- 15:30 now. But the the thing on those Liberators was when we come to learn about the waste gate control on the exhaust and how it was barometric pressure controlled on the waste gate so that fluctuations in air pressure didn't upset the boost and it kept a steady boost on the gauge all the time. It kept the engines at the right running boost pressure. Well then we went out to
- 16:00 fly 'em then and we had this this big Canadian. A Flight Lieutenant Gauntlet and he'd done a tour of operations over there and of course they send 'em all back to these things as instructors. And of course the Liberators didn't have a good reputation - they were a flyin' brick. They'd had they had such a big long thin wing on 'em
- 16:30 and bein' such a ugly lookin' thing they were a bit hard to handle in some ways but in others they were pretty good. As far and so anyway to give us our confidence we had this we had this big Flight Lieutenant Gauntlet. Well he got in there he got in and we took off and went round and had the skipper was flyin' as a second pilot and I had to stand behind and and I had to learn my section while I'm standin' there watchin'.
- 17:00 Anyway in we come and of course one of the things about the old Libs they take a bit a gettin' goin and he starts the goin' round no landin' touch and goes they were but they didn't touch the ground. And he's openin' up full bore hey and you don't worry about this and that and boom around we went. We soon learnt how to go round all right. Anyway about an hour or so of that and then it was our turn. So then that was the first time.
- 17:30 Just had to just hop in the seat while John went round and and sat and old Flight Lieutenant Gauntlet's sittin' up there watchin' so then had to operate everythin' and we he didn't make any mistakes. I was amazed. And away we went and he was quite happy. So that was it. So then it was circuits and bumps and then local flying and gettin' used to the aircraft and the crew and everythin' else. And then there was a bit of gunnery
- 18:00 where they had all the crew on and had to go out round the gunnery range and open fire from all of 'em to have their shot and everythin' else. You know get the used to the gear. And anyway we had a cross country and we went away and when we come back we were in this big cloud and it went from as far as we knew it went from where we were at 8,000 feet right down to the ground. Cause it was at the end a the
- 18:30 monsoon again and anyway I thought, "Oh cripes this is good." But anyway old Mack just says "What do you do?" "Just sit back the Navs there boy." And there we were. He set us right out and there we come out in the open there was the aerodrome right there. And full confidence in the old Mack. Yeah he was good. Anyway we took off on the last flight from there after doin' lots of other.
- 19:00 Oh another thing happened while we were there. They had they had mosquito bombers there as well that were on the same sort of drome that we were on and one of 'em went straight in from about 15,000 feet and that's when the. No it wasn't. Yeah we had one of those as well. But that's right. There's one night they're comin' back again now. One night there was night flyin' on and what happened? The Liberator crashed on take off.
- 19:30 Right on top of this tree at the end and in line with the runway that had a that had one a these Hindu temples in it. They were called the monkey tree. Cripes. And there was a village there and there was a the natives are a bit upset about it but. Cause it crashed and went up in flames and everythin' else of course. You can imagine there's nothing left much a one. Anyway we got on. That was the first time I come across that, had to go and do a burial
- 20:00 party. And I'll never forget that. I thought, "Well by the time we go down there there ain't gonna be left much left of anybody you know." So we walked in down into the hospital section where they had 'em where that mortuary was and here's all the stretchers that they'd bought the bodies in or what was left of 'em in they were just outside bloodstains all over 'em and there was pieces of bone there. I take it
- 20:30 they must a been human bones. And I thought, "Crikey that's good." Anyway I had to go in and pick up this coffin and there was six of us, three on each side and I dunno what they did. They must put lead lining in there because we could just lift it. And there was a little bit of red stuff comin' out a one corner. It wasn't mine thank goodness. And and we had to go out with the burial party
- 21:00 out to the thingo and and stand round and put 'em as a burial party you know. And course I'd never done that in me life either and you think about poor devils. It could a been me hey? Anyway we got that over and done with. And then we came back one night from night flyin' too. We had to do night flyin' and there was a bloke doin' circuits and bumps.
- 21:30 And we knew one of the fellas that come out with us from England was on there. And he was an Australian chap that was a pilot. And, anyway, when we got back up to mess up there we used to drink a lot a tea there and you could get as much tea as you wanted. They'd bring in pots and pots. The Indian waiters'd just keep bringin' 'em in. And I mean you'd sit down there and drink six tea pots between three a ya or
- 22:00 four of you, you know. One after the other anyway we were up there drinkin' tea and it's about one, half past one in the mornin'. Anyway this fella finally comes in after we'd heard this plane come in and said, "By jeez it's a long time getting' up from the strip." And when he walked in the door he was as white as

a sheet. Geez he was white. And we say, "How are ya goin'?" "Oh," he said, "Not too good." "Why

- 22:30 what's the matter?" He said he come in to land blew two tyres. Blew two tyres. Blew one on one side pulled the plane off the strip and when it got off the strip it blew the other one and the under carriage collapsed and the wheel and the wing dropped down. And of course they panicked and jumped out the top a the aircraft and run down the wing he said. And he said he said he didn't believe he could run so fast that he could in the dark on a
- 23:00 run down the wing a the Liberator. Sure enough we went up the next day in the afternoon there was the old Lib. She's still sittin' down the side a the strip. Cause he blew these tyres out. I'll never forget that. But but the last trip we did there was a a crosscountry ex [exercise] they called it. And it was a sort of a a sort of a dummy OTU run where it's sort of a semi-operational thing where you've got to go to this certain
- 23:30 area that's the target see. And we had to and the night we took off the weather wasn't good. And of course John had been flyin' over in England and this is where the experience come in. It helped me a lot and he sayin' about the cumulous clouds you can't see em at night time and you only got to look up and see if the stars are blocked out and of course that's the greatest worry out in the tropics is cumulus
- 24:00 clouds. Cause they go so high and the turbulence in them it pulls... gets that turbulence'll pull the plane apart. And if there's no lightening about it's still cumulus cloud and so we had a bit of a worryin' old night for a while. And we had to go down over Madras way and then we had to turn North East and fly up the coast and we get halfway along this leg a where we're supposed to go to and we're we'd been out for a few
- 24:30 hours and next thing the wireless operator started "John," he say "Hey." He said, "The static's pretty bad because of weather." He said, "But I think we got a recall because of the weather." And we thought, "Well good oh" because it was it wasn't too good either. We couldn't see any damn thing and it was the plane was bumpin' around a little bit and anyway so we said, "Right-oh. We'll head back. We'll backtrack ourselves." And
- 25:00 go back and we'd been out long enough that we had to get back to Madras in the daylight right at first light to go back to this Heavy Conversion Unit at Bangalore. So that we're just that much ahead a time we said well we'll do a dog leg which is out and back out to sea for half an hour to use up a bit a time. Well lucky for us we were at 8,000
- 25:30 feet and when we flew out there we were only gone out about a quarter of an hour and we ran into the ocean. Well you could say it was the ocean. We ran into a wall of water that was goin' down. Cause one minute we were flyin' along. The next minute there was that much rain on the windscreen the reflection you couldn't see anythin' and there was water comin' in everywhere like you see in those submarines and... (INTERRUPTION)
- 26:00 **Water in your plane?**
- Yeah well we were we were flyin' out flyin' out to sea we'd only been goin' out a half an hour, we'd only been goin' about quarter of an hour and we ran into it, was like a wall a water. And and this stuff come down the windscreen. I haven't seen water like it in me life in the plane and it was water was pourin' in through all the perspex everywhere there was a join there was water comin' in and I look
- 26:30 across at the flight Instruments and I can see the... I can see the up and down metre she's goin' 2,000 for the minute down. And I said to Johnny, "Hey we'd better do a U-turn hey." And around we went and we ran out of it and we went down a few thousand feet. So lucky for that's we were at 8,000. So we did our dogleg and went back and flew back to the thingo and when we got back t there's on a the aircraft didn't come back that night. And it was
- 27:00 a fella that had done a tour of operations out there and I'd say he must a run into one and he must a been lower than us and that was it. Because the only way you can get under that weather out there in over that Bay of Bengal is underneath it. You could never get over it and you could never get through it and we were lucky that night. It was a worked out it was the last trip we did there and then we were to
- 27:30 ship out and they said well we all got our orders then. Some of the fellas went to... there were another couple a squadrons at Diggory where we were goin'. It was about 70 miles west of Calcutta. And we were goin' to 159 Squadron the others were 216 and can't remember the. I think one was 216 and the other one but as it turned out when we did get there we
- 28:00 we were fortunate in one respect the 159 Squadron was the night time squadron. When you say the night time squadron we used to do all the odd sorts of jobs. Whether it was mining bombing ship searching. Whether it was daylight or nighttime. And there was another, there was an aircraft with us that was a special that was
- 28:30 I don't know whether it was mainly for weather and radar checking or surveillance of aerodromes or droppin' insurgents into Indo-China cause when I came back from India I spoke to a fella that was on another Liberator squadron that was on that that were droppin' all the all the one's that were trained in
- 29:00 guerrilla warfare into Indo-China at that time and that was when Ho Chi Minh went in hey. So this

special aircraft we had they never used to talk to us much. But they were they had been Coastal Command trained where they'd trained in Bahamas these fellas and they they had all this special radio gear and stuff in the in this Liberator. But anyway that that made when we had 16 air

- 29:30 craft that made the 17th and they a couple a those were Australians on that crew too. They came from Victoria. What else was there? Yeah well we ended up at 159 at Diggory. Now when we got off the train it was a place called Midnapore which is on the railway line from Madras to Calcutta and that was the seat a Gandhi's government.
- 30:00 And standing orders on the squadron that no trucks were allowed in there. The trucks could go in there but they couldn't be left without a driver and they had to keep the engine runnin'. They couldn't turn the engine off. Because of old Gandhi and his crew down there. And they weren't far away from where we were. And and when when when we used to go out on these raids like you'd have to go down to the ops [operations] rooms you'd always know the night before
- 30:30 that you'd be goin' down the ops because we were sort of built in the in the middle of a paddy field. There was paddy fields all round the place. And still had the local villagers sort a livin' in the squadron and all and they used to have these parties and soon as you'd hear the drums beatin' at night time the next day we'd be down there. Don't ask me how the message went through but they did. We always used to reckon they knew we were comin' the day before we even left.
- 31:00 But anyway what'd we do then? Yeah. Just say some of the things. Oh yeah when we were on the squadron there the meals and things in India of course because the cow is sacred any meat you ever got in there was like boot leather. Cause it was mainly eggs, curries, rice, eggs again.
- 31:30 And oh crikey and they had a pig. They got a pig from somewhere these fellas and they'd they'd had it round the back of the mess and it was gettin' fattened up with the scraps for Christmas. So we were lookin' forward to havin' this roast pork for Christmas. They were gonna kill this pig see. Fortunately for us there was a fella with us that came that was a meat inspector from the abatoirs in Sydney before the war and he was a meat inspector of all things. So bad news came through didn't it. Christmas
- 32:00 when they killed the pig. Full a pig measles. That's when they found out that any. Course any I mean the whole ground's polluted in India. There's that many people there you know. They relieve themselves all over the country side and everythin' else and the pigs just go round and pick up everythin' off the ground and they just anythin' the humans a got goes straight to the pigs. That's when I found out about that so. So anyway we didn't have our pork for Christmas.
- 32:30 I got the menu in there for Christmas dinner and at the time I was there then was after that trip when we get round to goin' to Penang Island the longest. At that time it was the longest trip the RAF had done in the war. That was that 3,000 mile round trip as a mission down to Penang Island and back. And they they brought over that Australian Information centre that took the photographs of the fellas on the squadron
- 33:00 and they also... who arrives on the squadron? And at that time he was just in the army and at that time he was only a sergeant. It was Bill Dargie. Who ended up as Sir William Dargie. And I think he got his commission when he was there and he was official War Correspondent. And in that I got a book out I got a book there one a those RAF, RAAF logs his
- 33:30 paintings are in there. And there's also the trip that we did down to Bangkok Railway Workshops. The first one the first real raid I went on is written up in that particular book and and when I got posted away to go back to be his skipper and the crew in in Canada when we left Bombay whose on the boat but Bill Dargie. He'd done all the paintings in India and he was goin' to go to Cairo to go to Greece to
- 34:00 do the paintings of the AIF where they were over in the Greek campaign and Crete Island. So we got to know him, Bill Dargie, pretty good. Yeah he's quite a nice chap. And one of the things he commented on was when he was in New Guinea and they found out that he was an artist and they got him to do the paintings he painted General Macarthur up there and he reckons he's one of the worst subjects he'd ever had and I think he finished up he painted
- 34:30 him on the back of a toilet door. Oh dear that's beside the point hey? But anyway. Yeah so I've got the I've got our our Christmas dinner menu over there in me collection there and it's signed by Bill Dargie when he's and he just gets the caricature of his face with his glasses and his moustache he had then. Much younger man of course
- 35:00 but anyway there you go. So right onto the squadron. Well that was air tests and familiarisation and once again a bit a gunnery for the crew. And now the CO [Commanding Officer] on the squadron which was bein' attached to the RAF squadron was Wing Commander Blackburn was the CO and he'd been in the war from the word go and I think
- 35:30 he was a teacher he finished at Eton I think. I wouldn't be sure which one but one of 'em that's where he was and unfortunately his wife was killed in an air raid at the start of the war and he was a 'dedicated to get the enemy' man. And as the best use the equipment to the maximum and he flew round. Like just before we got there he'd been
- 36:00 flyin' Liberators for days and findin' the best settings for revs and boost and load and attitude in the air

because a the wing configuration to get at least .9 air miles per gallon of petrol. Because we never flew with a full crew. We never flew with full armament. We only carried a minimum and the maximum we

- 36:30 would a had a to go to Rangoon or Bangkok we would have had a nose gunner a bomb aimer a navigator two pilots wireless operator engineer and rear gunner. That would have been what's that? Five and four. Nine. That was to go that far. But anywhere else we went if they increased the bomb load we would only have
- 37:00 seven and they'd cut the ammunition down and the armament. There'd be nothin' aboard because we had to go and get that. We used to average about one air mile per gallon which was pretty good and that was flyin' the way he suggested and that's the way we got down with the maximum bomb load to go as far as we could. And that's how it ended up with that squadron doin' that long trip down to
- 37:30 Penang Island at that time and that was. But anyway the first trip I did they sent us across on a little one. Just a an 8,000 bomb load over to the middle a Burma for a place called Tonga and that was at the where as far as the Japs had come up into Burma at that time and we were bombin' from 8,000 feet in the dark night
- 38:00 and when we got over there we're getting' near this target and the engineer comes up and evidently I dunno what he was. He'd been down the back for some reason and he and he had this little Alders light and he'd been shinin' it out on the wing see and he said I think number 2 engine's on fire. Hey? Can't be.
- 38:30 There's nothing wrong in the instrument panel here. We can't see any fire. It's underneath he said. Look's like the exhaust. Oh. Said to Johnny we'd better turn the turn the boost off. Turbo supercharger see. So he turned the turbo off. Go and have a look now. Comes back on the intercom fire's gone out. But he's says it looks like a lot a black stuff over the top a
- 39:00 the wing he said. The meantime bomber aimer and the navigator start to getting' onto course and Johnny's got a stay there and keep on course and everythin' and he said, "This thing want's to go round to the left all the the time." He said, "There's something wrong with that engine." I said, "Well there's nothing wrong on the rev counter and nothin' wrong with the boost there. Everythin's workin' all right." "Oh." Anyway dropped the bombs. Start headin' for home
- 39:30 next thing. Oil pressure. No oil pressure. "Oh feather number two!" "Feather up." When we got back again we come back on the three engines for the first trip out when they pulled it all down it was a brand new aeroplane this one it had come from America the day before and when they pulled the engine down they found a set of piston rings'd collapsed on one piston in that particular engine and it'd pumped out
- 40:00 28 gallons of oil out the exhaust pipe. So god knows how long that turbo was on fire. It's just as well we weren't really climbin' otherwise it could have been a lot more serious. But anyway. So that was.

**I'll just get you to stop there Colin**

Yeah.

**and I'll change tapes.**

## Tape 6

00:31 **You can continue.**

Yeah well I think. As I start to get memory so its... The next trip we did was they sent us out on our own. We were supposed to go out and look for this Japanese convoy. Somebody'd supposed to be spotted see. But anyway we get up and we're only flyin' for 2 hours and the next thing the artificial horizon, one of our flight instruments, topples. It collapsed. So John said, "That's it. we've gotto go back." I said, "Why?" He said

01:00 "Not flyin' low level over the sea without artificial horizon." I thought, "Oh well, fair enough. Good-oh yep." But we had to fly round to another 4 hours to get rid of the fuel. We couldn't dump the fuel. We had a full fuel load on so we had to fly round for another 4 hours just to get rid of the fuel before we come back. But anyway the next one was the first big trip. That one that's written up in that that RAAF Log and that was down to the railway workshops at Bangkok and that

01:30 and after seein' all the films and things about our target for tonight and all the briefing and all the rest you seen on those films durin' the war. Course little fella comin up out a trainin' school and joinin' all these blokes and in I go. The ops room. Yep there it is. I don't believe it. Here it is just like the movies. It's got this big table and here's a complete model of this particular part of Bangkok on the river. There's

02:00 the river and there's the turning there's the railway workshop and it's all to scale down and this right to



the 'T' you know. And I thought, "Crikey," I thought, "Somebody's spent hours makin' that thing?" Anyway this is when the eyebrows raised cause this is another one a the CO's idea that we gonna go down there and we're gonna come in from the Gulf of Siam where it comes up to that river

- 02:30 runs out from Bangkok and we're gonna fly up there hit the turning point we turn left and go west and then we'll come round and we'll all be at a certain time at a certain place where we'll be turnin' left again and the moon'll be a full moon at it'll be at 45degree angle and you'll see the bend in the river and that's where you're turnin' point'll be to turn at 2,000 feet turn east
- 03:00 and you'll see the target and that's where you'll descend to 2,000 feet in a shallow dive to 800 feet and you will drop the bombs on the railway workshop see. Yeah well that's where we were droppin' the bombs see at 800 feet. This is interesting. At night time. Nothin' no crew much see. Like I said to ya we got maximum bomb loads. "You'll be takin'
- 03:30 maximum load," see. "You'll have maximum fuel for the distance." "Oh, right-oh." So everybody gets there okay we're goin' down and we're gonna dive bomb from 2,000 feet in a Liberator see. Good. So when we come down to get into the aircraft ,oh my goodness, when we get into the aircraft it's got American phosphorous bombs in there
- 04:00 hadn't it. They're all these little things and they're all about this long and they're so big. But now the CO get the bright idea and go the armourers and the blacksmiths to make up metal hooks so that I think there must a been nearly 12 a those hooks to each rack where they used to put an ordinary thousand pound bomb. And when you come in in the Liberator when the doors rolled up to get in that's how you get in through the bomb bay you
- 04:30 could hardly get into the bomb bay because there was double rows a these things all hooked together on these bomb racks. And I'd never seen so many little bombs in there in all my life. And I thought, "Boy you won't wanna crash on take off out a this one mate." You'll never... cripes! It was just unbelievable. Everybody just stood and looked at the thing you know. Unbelievable. Anyway in we get, turn right, off we go.
- 05:00 Anyway we get down there and I told you about the told navigator bein' on time all the time and right on the dot. So the CO said he was gonna be in on certain time and we were to be 2 minutes behind him so we come to the turnin' point and we were on our time but he was supposed to be 2 minutes ahead of us and we're turnin' and there's no target. Like the target's nobody there. There's just the there's the railway workshops. So
- 05:30 well we're not stoppin'. Down we go. That's it. Too bad if he's not here he's not here. Anyway down we went so we pulled out at 800 feet all right and she's she's floatin' along the old Lib. We're getting' about 170 180 mile an hour and level out the bomb doors are all open and then the bombs gone. The next thing the rear gunner said, "Skipper, you've straddled her." There was whole shed see. He said, "You've straddled the whole workshop. It's gone right across the middle."
- 06:00 "Beauty." Well the thing was then that was it. Mission complete as far as we were concerned. Up and away. So off we went kept goin' out to start climbin' and turned right around and when we looked back boy you should a seen the fire there. Holy mackerel and we were only the first one through and then when we got back to the squadron eventually the fellas were sayin' how they were flying through they couldn't see anythin' for smoke. So they reckoned they even turned their nav lights on.
- 06:30 They're going down through all this smoke they said it was unbelievable. And and of course that was the first time I'd been on a thing like that. And when we come back for the debriefing and or the next time we were goin' out they gave us the pictures and the results of what happened to that place you know and I didn't believe it but there was the areal recce picture flat ground. There was nothing.
- 07:00 There was no railway lines. There was no sheds. There was just white, just white. Nothin'. And I thought I thought to meself if that was 16 aeroplanes dropped that there what the hell are they doin' with the thousand bomber raids over Germany? I thought, "My godfather!" And I knew they'd be usin' those bombs we were usin'. And I felt sorry
- 07:30 for them poor buggers over there. But anyway that was just our job I suppose but anyway.

**Were there blokes that did have concerns about the sort of targets you were bombing and, you know, having?**

Well, we weren't so concerned there mainly because there was nothin'. There was no at that time there was in the things there was no houses around here. And we hit the target and we destroyed the target. It was gone. And that's what we went down to do was

- 08:00 to get rid a that. And then and fortunately for us. As I said that squadron there was minin' or bombin' or bridge bustin' or things where we weren't bombin' people you know. I dunno 'bout the other blokes in the other squadrons in daylight. They were goin' over different places and things like that. Yeah I dunno. But.

**And can I ask who was whose job it was actually to take these reconnaissance photos. Like before and after the...**

Oh they had recce squadrons

- 08:30 over there. they had mosquitoes doin' that. Mosquitoes were doin' that. That's where they had those mozzies down at the Heavy Con Unit. They're to recce. The mozzies go down there and back no problem. And they also had Beaufighters from. Beaufighters were down at Cox's Bazaar on the northern coast north western coast there of Burma up near the India boarder. That's the advanced. That was an advanced fighter strip when we were there.
- 09:00 What else was there? Yeah well say that that target there and then the other targets were same old thing. That that we went out one night and the next thing was to drop mines in the harbour at Moulmein. Now I mean you don't see anythin' like that. They just go in the water. Maybe they did sink a ship. You'd never know. Maybe the mine dredged em up who'd know. And but the night we went out to Moulmein
- 09:30 there were some a those Liberators that cantankerous troubles with electrics. They were all electric see. And they and we'd heard of troubles in Europe where American squadrons had had. Like the Americans were different in daylight. They had they had master bombers and he let the bombs go and all the rest when they go everythin' went the whole squadron dropped see. The only trouble was when ya opened the doors of the Liberator if there was
- 10:00 an an electrical fault it used to release the bombs straight away. And that's what happened to us when we went down to Moulmein. We were comin' down from the north into this Moulmein harbour. I can remember this cause on my side of the panel there was a red light for the bomb doors opening. Red light's on bomb door's open. Red light goes out and I look around and all I can see is the wireless operator Len Pearman and
- 10:30 this little Pommy engineer laughing like mad. "Ha ha ha," see. I said, "What the hell ya laughing at?" "All the mines have fallen out," they said. I said, "You're jokin'?" "Na, they're all gone," he said. "I shut the bomb doors they all fell out." Dunno where they went. Dunno. And there was no explosions underground nothin'. Dunno what happened to 'em. They all fell out see.

### **So were you flying over land at that time?**

We were sort of. Well I dunno

- 11:00 where we were cause it was dark and in the reflection of the water down there where Moremain was but we'd come in off the coast and turned to come down and we were still up at 2,000-odd feet losin' height see. And I and I can see they're all startin' talkin' and John's goin' crook at the bomb aimer. What's happenin' down there? You know yak you're yakkin'. They're saying this and that and these two behind me are laughin' they're heads off that this has happened and I can see this 'flick flick flick flick'.
- 11:30 And it that's ack-ack down there. I thought what the hell are we doin' here mate. No good arguin' here Johnny. We'll have to go back and get out a here and talk about it after see. And funny things happen. You okay? These we pulled out and I dunno why they did it that night. But when we pulled out of there we were sposed to fly whether it was showin' the flag or this business I dunno but we were supposed to fly up north. Up over Burma
- 12:00 and then turn left and go back to India. Instead of keepin' out over the sea away from Rangoon and that we had to go round inland and then come out North of Rangoon. And Rangoon used to have fighters there now that you'd never know see. Anyway we had to go out that way and we were just floatin' along on the automatic pilot just goin' along see and the next minute it was pitch black. There were no stars nothin'. And there were two streams two tracers (zooom). Some rear
- 12:30 gunner must a tested his guns ahead of us and just went (brrrrr). But .5s firin' straight down you know. Dunno who that was either. But anyway back we went so that was that. That was that was a short circuit. Then they went out one other night and I wasn't on it for some it must have been when I had that thing cut my finger was cut but anyway I wasn't flyin'. The same thing happened again but they never ever found out what it was really. It happened again.
- 13:00 The bloody... opened the bomb doors and all the bombs fell out again. But most of the targets we were on like that we either had delayed bombs because we were down at 800 feet see. And they'd have 6 hour delays and not you didn't know what happened and then. And anyway we went back we went back one night back down to we went back to Bangkok three times. That was countin' that first time. Second time we went back
- 13:30 and that was to bomb that time it was the Ramasix Bridge and if you go to Bangkok today. We went over... the wife and I went over there a little while ago. And it in a section of the river up through the town where we used to goin' over mainly. Where naval depot in the war so they're ships there's there's so many bridges up the river it's unbelievable now. But when we went there there was only one bridge which was the railway bridge. The big Ramasix bridge. And that was the same thing goin' down to debriefing
- 14:00 there was all the plans of the bridge that foundations and everythin' see and it was it was another 2,000 down to 800 and drop these delayed action bombs on it and then wheel off and come home. And anyway we go down we come in there as we're flyin', flyin' round the north a the city to come round to the pinpoint to turn to come in and bomb the bridge again

- 14:30 where Bangkok's airport now is the Japs has that durin' the war and that was all lit up. They were doin' night flyin' they were doin' circuits and bumps round. See the planes goin' round see. And we're comin' round and we drop these delayed bombs. Anyway we never had... we didn't think we had any success with that because when we when we got back and they took the recce pictures the bridge was still intact see. But the dentist I had in Brisbane strangely
- 15:00 enough was a poor... was in a POW [Prisoner of War] and he was over there. He got captured in Singapore and he was in Bangkok and he reckoned they never used the bridge again after we bombed it until they fixed it up after the war. They're usin' it now. But it upset the foundations in the bridge. So that was that one and then the next time we went back was a another railway workshop. It was a carriage repair shop or somethin' but it was...
- 15:30 it was up in the northern side a the city and and the other time we went down there and we had the instructions that our cam... that our aircraft was the only one with a camera in it and we had to come in and do that bombing. We had to fly across that the... that... oh there's a the King's... the King's Residence in Bangkok. That... it's a...
- 16:00 tourists all go there with all the golden domes and everythin' on it. We had to fly past that and we had to make sure that we didn't bomb it. Any see then we had to get over this railway workshops and drop these bombs. Then we had to climb up to 3,000 feet. Then we had to come across and take a picture. Now the poor old Liberators we had they weren't made for aerial reconnaissance at night because all the old Lancaster's and things used to have
- 16:30 a big chute in the back. A big chute that took this this... well... what do you call it? It's a million candle power when it goes off. But it's a great photographic flash really and it's set to go off at a certain height and the nav the bomb aimer's got to tell him when to let it go. And it get and it's set on the thing and out she goes. But we didn't have one a those did we? So we started to say whose gonna do it?
- 17:00 So the wireless operator won't be doin' anythin'. So he while we were over the target he can do it see and that was Len Pearman that comes from Brisbane and poor old Len. So Len goes down. So on the Liberator as you know they got the roll up bomb doors. But we let him walk down. He walked down the catwalk got down the back of the bomb bay and there's a doorway through there that goes to the tail so Len had to
- 17:30 sit down in the doorway with his intercom still plugged in, and he had to sit there with this photo flash listen for the nav to tell him when was the time and he had to throw it out the door. Throw it straight down. 'Bang'. Cause we didn't want it explodin' in the plane. Anyway while we're doin' the run up for this picture the rear gunner says,
- 18:00 "There's flack comin' behind us and they're gettin' closer and closer and closer." Search light comes on us. They had a searchlight and I take it after bein' down to Bangkok myself that that was in this down in the part of the river where this Naval dockyard thing is now and here's this thing and some of the blokes that'd been on the squadron before me said if ever you get caught in a searchlight they said you'll always pull ya head in if you're lookin' out the window see.
- 18:30 So this searchlight comes round all right and I'm lookin' out the window and sure enough that's just what you do. The searchlight come up and I'm lookin' at the searchlight and I pull me head in. And I thought, "You silly bugger. What'd ya do that for?" He can see the whole show hey. Anyway this flack... this rear gunners still talkin' this flack's getting' closer and closer and he and they said, "Well fire at the searchlight." "Don't." "Fire at that," see. So he did. He opened up with his .5
- 19:00 down the back and you swear the bullets were comin' through the floor of us, see, and this poor old Len's down the back with with this flare he thought the bullets were comin' through at him. And that's when he suddenly realised that if he had to jump out his parachute was still up underneath the radio up in the front a the plane and he's down the back end and all the bomb doors are open. Imagine tryin' to walk up the cat walk hey. Anyway everythin' went out on time. But nothin'. The picture didn't
- 19:30 come out. I dunno what happened to it. It was just a lot a blurred lights but we were straight and level until they said, "It's gone." So and that's when we veered off and started all our diversion things to get away from the ack-ack and everythin' worked out all right and back we came. But it was one of those things that poor old Len. He's sittin' down the back with the thing. No parachute.

**Can you can you explain to us exactly how that thing works?**

Well it it was an atmospheric

- 20:00 switch on it and when it explodes it's like a big Very light. It goes off with a a million candle power. You can imagine it just just goes bang like a firework you know.

**So Len didn't have to do anything special. He just had... you just had to throw it?**

He just had to throw it. And as it goes out it well then it arms it and out she goes, see. The land and it arms it and then but I mean if it slips in the plane or somethin' and pulls the pin out it arms it in the plane. Ya gotta get rid of it quick cause it's atmospheric pressure at whatever it's set to and bang.

- 20:30 It could be a close one... could be a way down. You might be high or low it depends, you know. But

that's that's it. So we only had one of them ever when I was there. That was enough. Nobody wanted that flash. Well that was the third time. We didn't go back to Bangkok any more after that but we nearly got there. Because you ever you been to Kanchanaburi?

**No.**

You haven't been over the Hell Fire pass? Well on the river there there's the bridge. There's a railway bridge and that's on the Burma railway

- 21:00 and that t is on the Burma side of the railway comin' from Singapore. And of course the junction is East of there so all the trains and all the Japanese equipment comin' from Singapore all comin' off the boat at Bangkok all had to come through to go over that bridge at Kanchanaburi. And up over through Hellfire Pass and up over there and the bridge there which had
- 21:30 had three spans on it and they sent us out first time for a raid on that was 6 day delay and it was, and it was another one a those night 2,000 to 800 feet things. And so we went down there and there was eight of us sent on this. The other eight eight had to go on and mine the river comin' into Bangkok as a diversion while
- 22:00 we'd sort a dropped out a the formation and then came round at a lower level into the bridge thinkin' there was gonna be ack-ack on the bridge, see. Anyway we come round and there's a few high mountains around there and of course old Max is a good navigator and he said, "We'll be right. We'll get around," and it's they're not that far away from the bridge actually and and bein' down so low everybody's
- 22:30 worried. Anyway when we're doin' the circuit around to come round to bomb this thing for some I'm lookin' out above my skipper's head, see, lookin' out to the left and when I look up at about 50 feet above us I can see the bomb aimer and the navigator in the in the front compartment of the B-24J hey. Up and there's
- 23:00 and no turbos on that level and there's no exhaust and there was just the lights of the bomb compartment open. And I said to Johnny, "Have a look up there mate." Wow we're moving to the right, see. So then he said somethin' to the navigator so he took us a bit further to let a bit a time get out a the way. Let that cause you couldn't see anythin'. It's pitch black. There was no moon that night. Crikey you know.
- 23:30 Anyway we're flyin' round and anyway we come down we come on approach to the bridge everybody we come rocketin' down on it at 800 feet and you could see the bridge in the silhouette over the river let the bombs go. Bomb aimer: "Yep, the bomb's gone, yep." Can't see anythin' though. Course they're all 6-hour delay, see. So when we got back to squadron and they come back with the pictures the day after yeah guess where the bombs all landed. A way over the other side
- 24:00 a the bridge didn't they? They blew all the railway line up. We didn't hit the bridge. They weren't very happy. Anyway they decided then that we're goin' back again see and the next time we go down there a couple a days later they're gonna use that special aircraft on the squadron and he's gonna go down and he's gonna lay all these markers like they do over in Germany with all these flares fallin' out a the sky and they're gonna mark the target and you're turning
- 24:30 points and they're gonna drop all these flares and light it up like day see. "Cripes this'll be interesting." So down we go and this time it was our lot to carry the group captain. Like in the group of squadrons three of 'em or four of 'em you've got a group captain in charge, see and he wanted to come along for the ride and he chose to come along with us you see? Right in he gets and down we go.
- 25:00 So we're comin' in from the south this time and oh yes there's all the pretty flares goin' out then there's all these parachutes comin' out with all the big flares on em you know illumination flares and I'm lookin' out cause you could had the bubble on the side a the window I'm looking out and I can... I'm looking down... "Oh there's the ground," and it's like daylight down there all right. And there's three shadows of three Liberators.
- 25:30 I'm looking out, can't see ;em in the air. I thought you'd be able to see 'em because of the flares, see. Couldn't see anythin'. All I can see is the reflection on the ground. Anyway we're droppin' down. We're losing height from 3,000 goin' down, makin' a run up to the bridge, see, and I'm thinkin', "Which one's ours? Down that shadow on the ground." There's three of 'em down there. Which is ours, see? The next thing old Johnny says
- 26:00 "Hey," he said. "What's up?" He said, "I can't get the control column back. Won't come back." And there's the bridge down there. Straight ahead. I thought, "Well that's no good mate." I said, "I'll put me feet up," I said, "I got more flat room on the panel here." I thought I'd get me feet on the panel and I'll give it a good reef see. So so I get me feet up on the panel all right and I give it a good heave-ho and
- 26:30 'bang' back it comes and up goes the nose see. We're climbin'. But then it wouldn't go forward would it? And we're still climbin'. Full throttle. Johnnie's opened her up. Opened her up full bore. Anyway the old air speed she's goin' down and down and down. She's comin' down. She gets to 130. Got to 130 and John's windin' the trimmer. He's windin' and windin'
- 27:00 windin' see. And it's gradually comin' off ...it's comin' over the top it come level. Phew. There straight

and level we were. Like it all happens just like that you know. So there we are. We're flyin' straight and level. So all the flares are out there and there's the bridge still down there and the group captain's still sittin' behind me. I said to the group captain I said,

- 27:30 "We can spare half an hour. What say we fly around?" "We're flyin' straight and level now we stay at this altitude," I said, " And we drop our bombs from up here in half an hour. What do ya reckon?" I said, "We'll find the bridge, see." "Oh no," he said. "No, no" he said. "I think you'd better return. Better to return." So I said, "Good-oh. Back we go." So the thing was okay. We were straight and level all right. How we gonna be for a landing? We gotta go down see.
- 28:00 So we get across to the bay. Drop all the mines out. navigator notes the position and the positions... the positions marked somewhere in one a those charts I got. And anyway the thing was then was landing lights on. Cause this was out over the middle of Bay of Bengal. We put all the wheels out and we put all the flaps out everythin' out we could put out to see if we could just get
- 28:30 that nose down attitude see. God. That's no trouble. We got the nose down no trouble. We can plenty a nose down for a landing see. "Beauty." So right we're up and off we go back to the squadron come in to land. Taxi it up. Round to dispersal put her in the bay. It's daylight by this time but there's no ground staff there. But anyway said, "Oh well," and pushed the control "bang bang yep bloody well go hey.
- 29:00 Bang. Beautiful nothin' wrong with it. They never found anythin' wrong as far as I know to this day what happened to it. But never happened again. Never happened again hey. Yeah so there we were. I dunno it was lucky the group captain was with us hey. It was fair dinkum. Yeah so that was that one. But anyway that that Bay a
- 29:30 Bengal trip yeah the.... No not the Bay a Bengal the one, goin' down to to a shipping strike in Tevoy harbour. We were flyin' another fellas aircraft and it it was a panic thing. Somebody'd had daylight squadron or somebody'd reckoned they'd seen a convoy in Tevoy harbour and they had to get a a the squadron away as quick as possible
- 30:00 and it was quick scramble and they armed this thing that we were in and it still had a 300-gallon bomb bay tank in it. But it was empty we didn't have the fuel in it. But he had all the rest of the bombs in. And anyway out we go and we're headin' across the bay late in the night it's comin' on dark when we're just left the coast of India and about half way over the bay we run into this weather. Boy this big weather mate and there was only one
- 30:30 thing. Down and under. Anyway she was rough that night and old Johnnie's sayin', "Give me a hand on the controls," and we're both on the controls in the old Lib and and I'm sayin' to him "What about...?" Like in you're your altimeter's adjustable for barometric pressure that we ran into a low area that means that that that altimeters not readin' the correct height above sea level sort of thing and you dunno what. You don't want to be any higher and you don't want to be any lower than you want to be see. So
- 31:00 anyway we're flyin' along and 'Boom boom.' We thought about three quarters of an hour or more we had all this and it was and we got through there okay. After the war I found out that the wireless operators. I said that our crew had been crewed up and that navigator was that good he didn't need. He plotted everythin'. He didn't need any radio fixes and he never ever asked this radio operator of ours for ever we never wanted a radio fix see.
- 31:30 That night when we flew for that weather for such a long time he wanted a radio fix. And I was talkin' to Len at the 50 year celebration. He said, "That's the one and only time he asked me." He said, "I couldn't give it to him." he said, "I was always askin' him did he want one." He said but that night he said when we were flyin' through that weather he said the sparks were comin' out a the radio set they were 12 inches long he said. From the static in the air you know.
- 32:00 And anyway we went on that night and the thing was with that was that we were over Tevoy harbour at daybreak and we had to come across the hill and there was the harbour. And when we come over the hill there was no ships in the harbour. There was nothin' there. And of course the thing was the alternate target for us was if there was no ships we were to fly the bottom end of the Burma railway that came down to Tevoy there was a little town called Yay.
- 32:30 Or a railway stop on this railway. Course navigators on the job. He navigated us up the railway line above the fog. He was right over the railway line. Course when we flew over where the station was we couldn't see anything. No station. But the Japs saw us through the cloud and 'prrrp!' we got four bullets in the petrol tanks at 800 feet and this fuel was runnin' out and poor old engineer was in a panic. Wanted to jump out there and then and
- 33:00 they said, "Well you'll be dead when ya hit the ground mate." Course he only had 800 feet by anyway he settled down. Said to him hello. "You check the fuel gauge see if you can find out what tank's leakin' and start pumpin' fuel. Get the rest..." and oh by that time the the rear gunner had come in and said, "Get the rest a the crew down there. Get that fuel into that bomb bay tank. Catch it with our lunchboxes." We used to have a lunchbox. "Catch that get it in that fuel tank and catch as much as ya can. Don't let it
- 33:30 run out the plane." Anyway that happened so the poor old gunner he had to come up and take his flight

overalls off cause he was saturated in 100 octane. An electric turret. Lucky for us it was pointin' straight aft and he just had to open the door and step out. He didn't have to use any electric motors or anythin' see. So that was it. No smokin'. Cause you used to smoke like chimneys didn't ya.

- 34:00 No smokin' and no radio. No nothin'. Cause they used to use little electric motors on the radio see. There was nothin'. Everythin's switched off we could switch off. And there we were. Flyin' along just underneath this cloud then. That we it was it was pretty low. It was just down just under a thousand feet. About 900 feet there was a cloud layer as well. We were sort of in between see and we thought we'll just keep underneath the cloud. If anything we
- 34:30 see we'll pop up in the cloud and then and then we'll stay down at this level and follow the coastline and see if we can work out how much fuel we got left. Cause they were terrible fuel gauges in the Lib. So anyway you sort a worked out yep. We we've got found the worst one that's leakin' but it was still leakin' see. Anyway we transferred 'em over. Crosschecked the pumps and pumped in the other tanks and
- 35:00 they're still catchin' the fuel runnin' out and puttin' it in the bomb bay tank and the keep on goin' and he said well listen. He said we got enough fuel to get home to get back to the squadron. And I said to Johnny I said, "Hey." I said, "Why don't we go up to Cox's Bazaar? We're not far away from there." And I said, "And we can have a look at the fighter strip. And I said we got nothin' to worry about. " We landed because we got fuel tanks holed
- 35:30 see. Even if we have got enough fuel we're worried about somethin' else might go wrong see. Oh well yeah why not. So boom up we go. Anyway we get in. Just before we get to the fighter strip the petrol stops runnin' out. It'd stopped runnin' out. It'd finally the bit whatever leakin' it'd run out. So anyway then I said to Len, Better use... You like... See... Get in contact
- 36:00 with the tower." Cause he had all the all the frequencies and that of all the... Anyway the little local set wouldn't work. He couldn't pick up the tower. Whether they weren't listening or whether there was somethin' wrong with our cause he never used to use it see. Dunno but anyway... So anyway in we go. When we go in and land as soon as the wheels hit the ground next thing out comes all the petrol again. It's runnin' again. Just get
- 36:30 up to the end a the strip and there's a banjo at the end. A big turn round section at the end of the runway and here's the little Jeep follow me. He must a seen the petrol. He's thumbs down immediately thumbs down, thumbs down. Switches off see. So switches off that's it stop right where we are. Petrol's still runnin' out. Right open the bomb doors. They were hydraulic lucky enough. Up the bomb doors and out.
- 37:00 So out we get. And just before we got out I look out the window and I can see a fella he's got a braid on his shoulder's from here to here see. He's an air commodore or somethin'. "Cripes," I thought, "What's happened down here?" We we're in the can for not getting' in touch with the tower see. This forward fighter strip. Anyway when we get out who should it be but Sir Richard Pierce. Air Officer Commanding
- 37:30 South East Asia at that time. He's lookin' down at the petrol and "By jove, chaps, you're lucky to get away with that." "What?" We said, "Yes sir." We said, "Do you mind if we have a smoke?" "Not at all boys. Not at all." Oh yeah that was Sir Richard Pierce. Well there you go. You know just... oh well... who do you meet? You meet somebody. They're gone hey. But to
- 38:00 to see the big knobs and everythin' on the one trip like, you know, so there you go. Anyway they we had to stay there for 2 days by the time they they evacuated got all the fumes out of the wings and everythin' and and we filled up the other tanks and and that was it. Off we went back to back to the squadron again. And there's another funny thing about it. Like you like when you're commissioned like that you've got a batman and all this sort a stuff you know. But
- 38:30 when you're in India you had to employ the locals. The Indian bearers see. The air force didn't supply any batmen's on the squadron. You had to employ the locals. I spose this was a matter for old Gandhi and all this sort a stuff. And anyway the poor old bearer he'd been there for two days and we didn't come back see. And you should a seen the smile on that blokes face when ya come in the door. He's got back and he's got the pay packet again.
- 39:00 Oh dear. You know they lived on the smell a nothin' you know. And he'd come out of Burma too of all things. He was a Burmese. That had got out when the Japs come in but. Where was I? Oh that's right then the next one was this Penang Island trip. And as I missed the first one cause I'd cut my finger and I'd had four stitches and
- 39:30 they wouldn't let me fly even though I wanted to. I was all right I could still work everythin' no trouble at all. But, "No way!" CO says no. So oh well that's it. So anyway that was a that was a big involved thing where we carried a minimum load of bombs with a maximum load of fuel. Three thousand gallons of petrol and a take off from another
- 40:00 aerodrome and the other aerodrome was a B-29 Super Fortress aerodrome at Kharagpur. And they used to bomb Japan from there as well as goin' to Singapore and across to Formosa. They used to do their long distance one's there with those. But they used to refuel to go to Japan. They used to go to China over the hump and land and refuel and go on to Japan and come back. But

- 40:30 it was a it was a 3,000-yard runway. Ours was 1,760 I think was the longest runway we had in yards. This was 3,000 yards and it was down hill because we were takin' off at 6,000-pound overload and we had to ferry the planes across to the to the Yank squadron and then they flew us back in a Dakota. So we had a ride in the old biscuit bomber.
- 41:00 They flew us back and you had to stay the night at home and then hop back in the next day and and take off just before lunch. Just before lunch we took off and we used. That 3,000-yard runway we used nearly the lot. And we got off the ground and of course the old engines are warmin' up a bit but we only climbed up to 2,000 feet.
- 41:30 Then we had to level off at 2,000 for 2 hours. Then we climbed up to 6,000 feet and this was usin' special revs and boost to keep ourselves in the air and then back off for 6 hours and then we started loosing altitude. Down to sea level and that brought us in around oh I dunno what time it was
- 42:00 now. But it

## Tape 7

- 00:32 Now we right?
- Yeah.**
- Okay let's see. Yeah must must a been about 9 or 10 o'clock or some time we got to Penang Island. Now when we dropped down onto the water it was in dark by the time we get down to the water it was one a those things that
- 01:00 you see you never forget. And we had we carried little what we called flame floats. They were made of wood and they were like little miniature bombs that had chemicals in that when they hit the sea water they used to ignite into a little flame. So that for the navigator the rear gunner and the top of his turret it had the degrees mark so that he could sight
- 01:30 on the little flare and tell the navigator if they had a certain degree of drift so he could work it out for his navigation at low level on the water at night time. And and there we were flyin' along and there's all these little lights where these other aircraft ahead a us had been droppin' those little flames floats out and that went all the way along and and there was a Position A and a Position B down in the area
- 02:00 where they had a Royal Navy submarine. That if we had got troubles we could ditch in the ocean they reckoned and then we could picked up by the submarine see. And just as we're hurtlin' along there very nicely on my side I'm lookin' out the window and I see this black blob. I thought that's in the water and it's got a big white bow wave in the front and gonna go right over the top of it. And that's what it must a been one a those
- 02:30 submarines. Nobody said a word. We just went straight over the top of it. They wouldn't a got a fright cause they knew we were in the area so. But I sort a look at it for a minute. "What the devil's that thing?" But anyway that was it. And when we got there to Penang what a we got? A towering thunderstorm. From the ground level up till the clouds went out a sight and there it was. And that was the end a the
- 03:00 run to Penang Island. There was no way you could get through that. We didn't have time. We didn't have time and of course we didn't have the petrol. So unfortunately on that second trip we saw the end of Penang Island but that was all we saw. The rest was all thunder and lightening and this crackin' great thunder storm. So we had to turn round and start climbin' up to 13,000 feet and drop the mines at a certain position on the way back
- 03:30 and then make our bay back to base. And we had it up at 13,000 and we had different settings again for the boost and the throttles and ended up where we were gradually losing height all the way back to India and the minimum revs. Down to 1,600 revs on the each of the four engines and the skipper says, "I'm gonna have a sleep." He said, "You all right?" I said, "Yeah I'm
- 04:00 all right." And the bomb aimer comes up he said, "I've had a sleep." I said, "Well you can sit over... You sit there." "Yeah," he said, "I'll sit in the skipper's seat." He said, "I'll wake ya up. It's all right." "Right-oh." 'Boom!' Next thing I woke up with a hell of a fright. I look across the bomb aimer's sound asleep. I look around in the bomb... in the in the radio compartment. There's the skipper, he's asleep on the floor. So's the wireless operator. I can look underneath the panel in front a
- 04:30 me and I can see the navigator and he's workin' his slide rule across the table. And and the bomb aimers asleep and there we are flyin' on automatic pilot. There's nobody. I dunno how long I was asleep but we were all asleep just floating along. Oh dear. I don't think I went to sleep again. Oh that was another thing on that trip. That's when the wakey wakey pills came in
- 05:00 like durin' the war. When we went to that target an hour before the target we had to take this wakey

wakey tablet. So we wouldn't... we'd be alert you see and we took the pill and we all went to sleep goin' home and then we got back to the squadron and landed and everythin' we couldn't stay... we couldn't go to sleep then. Here we were tossin' around the bunk couldn't go to sleep. And we'd been up 19 hours

- 05:30 40 minutes it was by the time we'd taken off and got back again hey. Yeah boy that was a long trip that. But anyway. And when you come to think of it in those... like you fly across there today in a modern jet or something' it only takes about 5 or 6 hours or somethin' to go across there. And that goes from Singapore right to Bombay hey. And we were down and back in 19 hours 40 minutes. Crikey. And that wasn't even full distance. But one thing about it the maintenance on the
- 06:00 squadron and the maintenance the machinery it kept goin'. It never stopped. The engines were tickin' over all that time. You know amazing. Yeah. What else did we do on the squadron? Yeah that's about. Yeah that's another one. Oh they sent us out lookin' for another time we went out lookin' for a convoy and this time
- 06:30 we had the Station Navigation officer with us to for a run. He wanted to have a run. So we went out and we're doin' a creepin' line ahead search and it was the same thing. We ran into this this wall of cloud as far as you could see up right down onto the water. Pitch black. So that was another return to base. So there you go... But that bridge over the River Kwai that was the bridge at Kanchanaburi.
- 07:00 Just near Hellfire Pass. Hellfire Pass is not very far away from there. But course we didn't know anythin' about Hellfire Pass in those years. They they knew the railway line was there. Didn't know there was POWs in the town's camp right next to the railway line where the blokes were bombin' in the daytime and that either. But I think most of our chaps, most of the Australians had gone from there at the time we were down there. I don't think there's much
- 07:30 else I can say about the squadron. Except that trip. Oh we went to we did another mining run down to the mouth of the Rangoon River. Just before I left the squadron and that was another one of those raids where we had to come over with the 16 aircraft and eight of us dropped away. We dropped down
- 08:00 before we got to the bottom end of Burma we came right down onto the sea level again. Cause they had a lot a radar around Rangoon and we dropped right down to the sea level and then we had to fly up towards the Rangoon river and find the creek and come round and turn down stream at the mouth a the Irra Waddy and drop our mines in the main shipping channel going into
- 08:30 Rangoon. And that night it was a moonlight night like crystal. It was clear. And it was at 45 degrees again and it was full moon and we came we came the right way round the way we were to come. We turned onto the river and the bomb doors are open. We came down to our section and the bomber aimers countin' the bomb mines out.
- 09:00 The rear gunner called up and said, "There's a Liberator behind us." That's how clear a night it was. And he counted out our 8 mines went out and it was a hard turn off the river to port to go straight back across the bottom of Burma to go back to base. And we hadn't been goin' a couple a minutes. It wouldn't a even been that
- 09:30 much and we were still down at 800 feet skittin' across the trees and that and the rear gunner called up that they'd opened fire on that Liberator. There was an ack-ack battery there. And he said they've shot him down. And when we got back to the squadron he'd shot down all right. We were goin' away. We didn't see any of that. When
- 10:00 we got back there was another Liberator behind that one. They must have they must have lined up on us with the ack-ack when we came through. They shot the bloke down that come behind us. They never fired another shot. The rear gunner never saw any more ack-ack go up. But there was another aircraft behind him and the pilot of that was Carl Fristrom that lives up at Caloundra today he was the pilot on
- 10:30 the one behind it. So he saw it happen and all in front of him and that was down the river and put your mines down and away you go hey. And when we got back to the squadron it turned one of the officers lived in the hut just across from where mine was and I got called up for Committee of Adjustment. Which is
- 11:00 to sort out all their personal belongings and to make sure that there's no doubling up or you just gotta do the right thing and sort all their gear out and get it all packed up to go back to their relatives and. I'd never done that before in me life. I'd never had to touch that either. But so all in all from the time that I went in the air force in '43 I'd
- 11:30 I'd a only done a little bit but saw enough. Like you know to say that you're goin' to war hey. But anyway that's... We had to do the Committee of Adjustment and of course there was no burial parties on those. Yeah. And well had lots of we had bits a fun there sometimes. One fella... like all these Indians they had always
- 12:00 (UNCLEAR) to the Indians because of old Gandhi's place just down the road we had see. Anyway one one of the fellas had they used to have a a distress rocket. It was... well it was a signal rocket actually. Used to go up to a thousand feet like a big sky rocket you know. And a bloke had one a these. I dunno where he got it from but it was at Christmas time they said better let it go hey. Christmas Day or New Years Eve it might have been. Let her go see. Let her go in the air. Bang



- 12:30 see. So right-oh he get it's out a the thing and puts it in. But he didn't put it in a good enough stand. And when he when he lit the wick on it we all took off cause they go off with a good bang the thing fell over and it took off straight across into the nearly ripe rice paddy. And we thought, "Oh my goodness. We've set fire to the paddy." But it didn't set fire to it. It went off in the Paddy field all right but it didn't burn.
- 13:00 It was oh crikey. We thought we'd get in trouble over that but it was all right.
- Get you just to stop there for a tick, Colin, and I'll just...**
- Now tell me where were we?
- Well you sort of starting to tell us about some of the funny things that happened?**
- Yeah that was the rocket goin' off.
- Yeah.**
- What was the other? I don't Cripes you got me now. Just hold it for a minute.
- Did people have any sort of rituals that they did before they flew or good luck**
- 13:30 **charms or or any of that sort of thing?**
- Yeah well that navigation... Yeah that navigation officer we took with us he always flew with his pyjamas underneath. I don't... but it never used to worry me or any of our crew that I knew of. No we never worried about it. We just got on. That's it. I mean but but that's right. That fella he was the squadron leader but he'd been in Europe see and I suppose it was...
- 14:00 might a been one thing in the way that if he'd if he'd a got shot down over Germany he would a had some pyjamas to wear in POW camps if he got out see. But he flew with his pyjamas on. Yeah he reckoned it was more comfortable under the flyin' suit too another way. Yeah, no but otherwise. No not really.
- Sorry. Part of another story.**
- Yeah yeah oh.
- Just sort of tell us which**
- Are you goin'?
- Which story it's part of?**
- Yeah well that yeah the part of that one where we had the trouble with the
- 14:30 flying controls over that bridge at the River Kwai. That was the night that bridge went in the river. If you go and see that bridge today there's only two main spans and the then the rest is a prefabrication the Japs built before the end a the war that's still there. But the original part of the bridge we put in the river. It we we didn't we did cut the railway line. Yeah that was cut with that bombing trip yeah. So I didn't actually bomb it. We were goin' to but they wouldn't let us.
- 15:00 The grouper said to go back. Yeah that's that little bit to finish that off. Now where else were we? We were up to.
- You just talked about the the rocket being fired off on New Year's Eve or whatever and...?**
- Yeah that went off okay. Yeah okay. Well we we didn't set fire to the paddy's so nobody got on the coals for that. That went that went okay. Now well it was just after that... cause that Rangoon River trip where that plane got shot down that night. Committee of Adjustment that was
- 15:30 about it was a squadron. Cause I went down to the to the flight hut one day after that and walked in and the OC [Officer Commanding] of the flight was there. Squadron Leader Berbridge a Canadian and he said to me he said, "Col," he said, "you like travel don't ya?" I said, "Yeah I don't mind." Lots of... We used to do lots a flyin' around between stuff from Americans and things here or go somewhere and go into Calcutta and that
- 16:00 and he said, "Well," he said, "You're gonna go to Canada." He said, "You're gonna become a skipper," he said, "and you're gonna do an OTU and and fly the new aircraft out to India." "Oh are we?" "Yeah," he said. "And you've gotta leave tomorrow." I said, "Well I better get packin'." Said, "Yes." "So thanks very much sir." So away we went and packed up and another
- 16:30 couple a fellas they they're on the squadron too and we all piled in and I think there was four of us were sent back to go to Canada. And we went into Calcutta for a few days and had to wait for the train across to Bombay again and as luck would have it again this is how you can be. It's all luck like all this war business. We got back to Calcutta
- 17:00 we got back to Bombay rather and when we got on the ship and left we didn't hear about it at the time

but about a week after we left there an ammunition ship blew up in the docks that we left from and destroyed everythin'. A huge explosion. Killed thousands of people. Destroyed the docks and... I spose they're all rebuilt now and everythin' but lucky again.

- 17:30 And then anyway when we left to go back we were we were solo sailing across to Gibraltar and going back to England was the opposite to what it was comin' out that when we came to the Red Sea and came up through there the northerly winds were blowin' and it started gettin' cold. We finished up puttin' our blue uniforms on there and when we come through the Suez Canal it was cold. Boy it was freezin' and
- 18:00 and then it it was still cold all the way back through the Med. And cool when we formed up with the convoy to go back to England and in 1945 that's when when the Germans had perfected that snorkel on their submarines. And when we left Calcutta to go back to England we had twice as big aconvoy protection
- 18:30 than we had goin' out after D-Day. We had aircraft carriers we had planes flyin' round 24 hours a day and we had depth charges goin' off and all the time night and day 'Bang bang.' And and the night we came up to go into Liverpool into the River Mersey we came up the Irish Sea and I thought to meself, "What lot a sittin' ducks." But there we were. We were about the second in the line of the convoy
- 19:00 by the time it lined up we were about the second or third ship in a line. I dunno how many there were. But there was a lot of cloud in the east and the moon'd just come over the top a the cloud and when we turned to go into the River Mersey we looked down and there was all these ships silhouetted all out there. They were lit up like like pigeons in a shootin' gallery they were. Lucky no submarines up there hey. And they and that was a fair
- 19:30 way out from the mouth a the river there and there's all flak towers. They had ack-ack guns and everythin' out there on towers. Cause the aircraft... same old thing as we were doin' droppin' mines and things hey. And anyway we got into there and then our destination was the Air Ministry in London when we got off the boat. And they sent us down to London and we reported to the Air Ministry and because we were on this thing to go to Canada
- 20:00 we had no... there's no billets to go to. We had to find our own accommodation would you believe and we had to pay for our accommodation in London. While we stayed there for over a week or more and finally the Air Ministry said, "Well the war's nearly over in Europe and we got that many air crew now that you're not going to go to Canada." "That you're best to go back to your respective ...please yourself what you wanna
- 20:30 do." So I said, "Oh I'll go back to 11PDRC down at Brighton." And so I can just book in to the mess down there. They'd shifted that back again after D-Day. They moved it back from Warrington back to Brighton again. So I went down to Brighton and and that was just after VE [Victory in Europe] Day there and when by the time we got back to London
- 21:00 it was the first of April in 1945 and I remember that time. That was the hottest temperatures they'd had for years. And it was 90 degrees farenheight for 5 days in London. And it was if you picked the paper up there'd be somebody dead everyday. There'd be oh somebody dying somewhere from the heat. It was that hot there and that's when I went down to that Epping Hotel outside of
- 21:30 London cause I knew a person out there and I went out there and the day I was there for 2 days and I got up in the mornin' and I looked out the window and there it was. I thought that's snow. Cause you never had weather reports you know. I thought, "That's snow." Get up on the roof of the hotel and there's that much snow on the roof. I'd never seen snow before in me life. And it was just a little bit comin' down but that was it.
- 22:00 And I made a big snow ball like that and and and I look over the edge a the roof and there's one a the waitresses came out and I thought. I thought, "No." I thought, "If I throw that and hit her that's a block of ice I thought I'll knock her off." I thought, "I'll kill her." I thought, "geez no I'd better not," and I put it down on the roof. And I've never thrown a snowball at anybody yet. Yeah when you pack it up hey it goes like ice donit? Oh crikey anyway that was a long time ago. But anyway
- 22:30 that was it. Back to London, down to Brighton and then when I got down to Brighton same old thing. I met I met a Canadian off all the things I had to I stayed in the Dominion Officers Club in London. It was in Barclay Square opposite the American embassy at that time and there was a Canadian navy bloke stayin' there and anyway he disappeared one day and when I went down to Brighton
- 23:00 I was somewhere round about and this bloke grabbed me by the arm. Who should it be? But this Canadian. " Hey what are you doin' down here?" I said, "Oh I come down to stop at 11PDRC," see. "Oh," he said, "I'm goin' so and so and so and so." Plymouth or goin' down the naval depot somewhere and he knew somebody somewhere. He said, "I met somebody up in this little pub out of the town here a bit" see. He said, "He's comin' up I'll introduce ya." "Oh right-oh," so up I go.
- 23:30 Anyway I meet the people in the pub and we got along all right so anyway I finished up I stayed at the pub. I stayed at the pub. Now I said to you I'd mention that RAF officer again that was at that was up at Warrington when we were goin' out to India. Well I went into the... I used to go down to the mess to see what was doin'. Used to keep a check on the

- 24:00 the orders on the board to see whose goin' anywhere or somethin' you know and anyway I thought, "Well I'd better go in." These POWs that... The war'd finished and the POWs are comin' back from Germany and they were startin' to go home see and I thought well I'd better go in and make meself known. When I walk into this office down there who's in there but that RAF officer that wanted us out of bed up at Warrington
- 24:30 see. And that was 10 months previous and I walked in and he looked at me and I looked at him and I said yeah. I said, "You know me don't ya?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Yeah." I said, "I know you too." Said, "At Warrington." "That's it," he said. "How are you?" And I said I'd been out to India on the squadron and that you know. "Oh," he says, "what are you doin' down here?" I said, "I dunno." I said, "I'm waitin' for a boat home." "How's
- 25:00 that? Oh," he said. Cause he was the fella he's still doin' that job of lookin' after people that were arrivin' there see. And anyway he said, "Well," he said, "keep in touch." He said, "What are you doin'?" I said, "Oh you know, doin' this and doin' that," and he said, "Oh well." He said, "Just report in the mornin' every day," see. So I used to go down there and I'd say, "Is it okay to go now?" Cause he'd give the other blokes other jobs or lectures to go to see. He
- 25:30 said, "Yeah," he said, "She'll be right." He said, "Just take..." he said, "See me tomorrow." And I walked down here one mornin' and he said, "Listen." He said, "You're on the boat tomorrow mornin'." He said, "You'll have to get all your gear cleared today." This was 9 o'clock in the morning. Well it's the first time I'd ever seen anybody in the air force, go round and get a clearance of every department and not see a stitch a clothing or any item. I had everything signed for
- 26:00 by the time I found 'em all. Got round they were all signed I was clear to go. Everythin' had been handed back in and I had the lot. So I packed all the gear up. Me flyin' gear and everythin' I bought it all home. Yeah one a those things that should've all been gone back and. Not some of it got used for years after. But I didn't believe it, you know, that I I just walked in and you were on the boat home tomorrow mornin' and it leaves at
- 26:30 7 o'clock and there I was. 'Bing' they're out. So it was back up to Liverpool again and only this time the ship they put us on was a one that had been built in 1939 which was the Andes. And it was a it was the same 30-odd thousand tonne and it was a really nice ship. The cabins and that it wasn't so loaded
- 27:00 up in the cabins like the old Amsterdam goin' to England that the Yanks had used and when we came home after goin' round after goin' over via South Africa we we came back through the Panama Canal. So I saw the Panama Canal as well. Back through the Saragossa Sea where the sea's as flat as board. There's no wind. There's nothin' there. Just the sea weed floatin'
- 27:30 around and flyin' fish goin' all day. And then we left the end of the Canal to come to New Zealand cause there's a lot a Kiwis on and of course bein' POWs on there they had all extra food and everythin' on the... You could go up any time and get cans a tomato juice or pineapple juice or whatever you wanted, you know. Anybody could do it on the ship whether you're POW or not and so we all lived pretty well on the
- 28:00 way home comin' back. And we ran into two... they must a been cyclones or the edge of cyclones comin' back cause for for for 4 days it was 2 days each one there was no parades on deck or anythin'. They used to get you out every mornin' on parade but it was that rough. Geez that old Andes it was ploughin' into the waves and it was shakin' itself sideways. Cripes it it was comin' back before we got to
- 28:30 New Zealand. And then they let us off in Wellington for a day just to have a look around the town you know. But we you didn't see much there of course didn't have that much time. It was only a couple a hours or so and then it was back to Sydney. And to see the coat hanger comin' up on the horizon and and then when we got back to Sydney we went into Bradfield Park. We stayed the night and
- 29:00 then the next day 'bang' on the train. Put us on the train in the afternoon to come to Brisbane and it was a troop train. It wasn't the... we were just on a troop train and shuntin' and bangin' all night up the track you know. And we got into Brisbane the next day and they they run us through Brisbane in. They took us off Clapham Junction out at Rocklea way out there and they put us in cars cause all the POWs comin' home see.
- 29:30 And we came in through Brisbane in in the cars all the way down to Sandgate which was that's where that old age home is there now. That was that used to be 3 ED and that's when we arrived back there and they give us our disembarkation leave and that was it.
- 30:00 The war was sort of finished. Cause I did a couple a guard duties down there but it was the same old thing again. You arrive from somewhere and there you were just go down and read the board. And I was down there from the end a July until I finally discharged in December in 1945. And
- 30:30 that was it. Used to just go up and down everyday to Sandgate. The war was over you know it was crazy. Well like a lot of us wanted to stay in the air force and things but that was it. Nobody wanted know anythin' about it. The war was over. That's it. Finished. Out. That was it.

### **Did you want to stay if you could?**

Oh I would've at that stage of the game I would've yeah. But then then after the

- 31:00 war when the Korean war started. Course we were married then we had kids our kids grown up that's when we all got the letter from Group Captain Hannah up at Amberley to come back and rejoin up in the air force. Cause bein' an officer your service is only terminated you know. You're you're members of the Citizens' Air Force once you get a commission. And and they only terminate your service
- 31:30 like you're stood down. And for so long after the war they're still liable to say, "Well do you wanna come back in again?" you know. I know one of the chaps that I was in the air force with he used to live at Sandgate I think he went back in again and he ended up he was a squadron leader in charge a the store down at Richmond. One a the stores at Richmond. And I spose he's retired from there you know. But oh, it was there's too many other responsibilities then to worry about goin' back
- 32:00 in the air force then. Yeah but anyway. But then cause things changed see. You had to I had to go back to piano tunin'. Not that I wanted to. I wanted to go into mechanical business. Into a engineerin' or something you know and they're repattin' and unions wouldn't have that. You couldn't change your trade. That's it. If you're apprenticed that's it. You couldn't you couldn't get out of it. So actually
- 32:30 you couldn't use anythin' like out of remuneration from Veteran Affairs or anythin' like that. They'd only give so much for that particular trade you were in which was only go down to college and do wood work or somethin' like that you know. And anyway eventually after that other chap that was I went to school with who married the wife's sister
- 33:00 his cousin had been a Donar durin' the war and he was a motor mechanic and he was in Pioneer Tours in Brisbane in the buses at those years and of course everybody had a car eventually. You got a car they were hard to buy after the war and that sort a stuff and well you did everythin' yourself sort of thing you know. So to me it came naturally that yeah right I I found it easy to assimilate to be a motor mechanic. No trouble at all.
- 33:30 And I got a lot of help off this cousin of a friend who learnt lots a things. And I finished up I did start work in the garage across the road. And then a job turned up with a engineering company that was just opposite our place our residence at
- 34:00 Indooroopilly it was just down the road from the garage an opportunity came to get onto diesels. And heavy diesels in powerhouses. Into heavy engineering. So I got the job in there and I was only down there for about a week and there was a Dutch fitter that had come ere after the war.
- 34:30 Nice gentlemen and I was sent with him as an assistant up to Kingaroy and we were up in Kingaroy for it must have been 6 months and the and eventually I was drivin' up and down for a few weeks from there. We'd spend a week up there and then come back at the weekends and then go back again
- 35:00 and eventually it was a permanent fixture and it was okay by the boss to get a house. And so we this is we picked up a few dollars. We rented our house in Brisbane to a friend we knew which was good for us and I come down and we got the wife and took her gear up and the kids and we went up to Kingaroy and stayed in a house up there. Another winter and boy it was cold and dry too. That was a big drought on again. So
- 35:30 anyway I was workin' 12 hours a day up there in this powerhouse work and bein' mechanically inclined and everythin' I found it very easy to assimilate to all this and and started to get into this business no trouble at all. So eventually when we did come back to Brisbane where I'd go from there? That's right. When I did come back to Brisbane I was with Martin's again and then there was we're still
- 36:00 muckin' around. Was only sort a waitin' to go somewhere else to another powerhouse and then another mate a mine that had that had used to be the friend that'd come up the road we used to play together to Taringa School Jack Ryan. I'd finished up teachin' him to drive a car after the war. He'd been a clerk in the ground staff and went through the Islands up in New Guinea and I taught him to drive a car. Cause he was gonna go in for truck drivin' see. So he managed a truck with Harpers drivin' trucks around Brisbane and he
- 36:30 finished up gettin' into Paul's ice cream and milk. As the driver deliverin' the milk around town in those years. He turns up he gets me a job to go in and see about as a motor mechanic in the garage at Paul's see. So I go in and have a sit down with the with the boss in the garage and get talkin' with things and. Cause it was he was a Pommy bloke had been in England durin' the war and everythin' else and anyway he said, "We'll give you a try." Cause I never had any qualifications or anythin'
- 37:00 then see. So in I go. Anyway what happens? I finished up I finished up second in charge at a garage and eventually. I must a been there for about 6 years and they they built another garage up in Montague Road in Westend in Brisbane and then of course Paul's started to expand and get bigger they bought
- 37:30 United Vendors out and of all things they bought United Vendors mechanics in and put em over the top a the fellas at Paul's that'd been there for years you know. And one a the chaps that was the boss that was in charge happened to be a fella that worked underneath me mates cousin at Pioneer tours that wasn't worth 2 bob as a mechanic and they put him in charge see. Johnny Maxwell the old speed car driver. They wouldn't even give him a set a piston rings
- 38:00 to fit on. I thought well this is lovely. But I finished up I got on all right with Johnny Maxwell. Anyway I I

I managed I used to get all the picks of the jobs in there really at the finished. But anyway I left there and I went to Coran and Kearny for a while and then finished up another chap and myself we went in together in the business out at Rocklea. And we were there for about 19 years until the garage went under the flood. And

- 38:30 I was getting' out a the business then and the wife and I kids are all grown up and gettin' married and we were gonna go round Australia and a working sort of a holiday with a caravan. So we'd bought the caravan just before the flood lucky enough for us. Which was.

**Was this the '74 floods?**

Pardon?

**Which is this the '74 floods?**

'74 floods yeah. And of course where the garage was at Rocklea.

- 39:00 I'd seen the '33 flood as a kid there and I didn't think the flood'd come up to where the garage was because it was a long way up from where the railway bridge was that I knew had been underwater there but it came a lot higher hey. And anyway it did come up into the garage and it it got a lot a stuff that sort a we couldn't start the business again really. We had to have a month without while everythin' got fixed up and all the motors were fixed and tools and everythin'. It cost a few dollars and things like that. But
- 39:30 eventually we got out a there and we'd bought the caravan beforehand which meant we were.... Because caravans you... they were... the price went up like that after the flood but we had ours before the flood lucky enough. But anyway so then I'd left he business so we got a a few jobs around Brisbane for just fillin' in the time because we were gonna go up to Cape York. We'd bought a Nissan Patrol
- 40:00 and anyway we did that. We went to we went to Cape York eventually and now let me see. We went to Cape York and came back that's right. Now we came back. That's right I went in I went into Brisbane. I went in the machinery department and I sat for examinations and I got
- 40:30 tickets. I'd had a motor vehicle inspection licence from havin' the garage. So I went in and I sat for the exams so I got the motor I got the motor mechanics licence I got that. That was that. And so we went north we come back. Could a had jobs all over the place but we were hurryin' to go down South and it turned out we got back to Brisbane. Now that was 1974 yeah.
- 41:00 We got back to Brisbane and the house was rented. We rented our home and lucky in a way the boy had a our second son that was with well it's Qantas [Queensland and Northern Territory Air Service] now it was TAA [Trans Australia Airways] that time he was he was a an (UNCLEAR) here in Brisbane and he and his wife they had never had a house but they'd rented a house and they had room in the yard and we had the van in there and we stayed there
- 41:30 till after Christmas and we were to we were to had arranged with people in south Australia that we would come down there and they would have the harvest goin' and do work on the farm see as a mechanic. With em anythin' wanted repairin' you know. Anyway when it came after Christmas we had a our daughter had got married and she'd gone for a walk around the world with her husband and she was in England in '
- 42:00 '75 and we got a...

## Tape 8

- 00:30 **Right-oh. Where we up to on the last one? You were just talkin' about you started to travel around Australia and you're doin' some work and talkin' about your daughter?**

That's right the daughter was over in England that's right and we received a tape for 'em just after or Christmas time and it was a talk about the she was at the relatives a my place in England and the invite was to come over to see them in England see.

- 01:00 Well the wife hadn't been over there and I thought cripes what a long way to go see. Anyway I thought about it. Kept thinkin' about it thinkin' about it and my wife's sayin' "Why don't we go? " And I think it's a bloody long way by aeroplane. I dunno bout those aeroplanes see. And I kept thinkin' about it all the time and I thought well she hadn't been over there and I thought, "Well that might be the thing." Okay, well and I come back and I says, "Yeah we'll go." So
- 01:30 we we got goin' we got tickets on the Eurails and the Europass and Brit Rail passes and and we cashed some insurance in we had you know. And and of course with the lad bein' in TAA at the time you could get the concession. Oh we we we were off like lords. Train to Sydney and catch the Lufthansa across. Oh cripes that was a trip and a half I tell ya. But when we got to England they said that your plane'd arrive in

- 02:00 Frankfurt at such and such a time. The daughter had it all worked out. She said but you won't have time to catch such and such a plane. You'll catch the next so and so to London see. So when we jumped out of the plane at Frankfurt we jumped down those travelling thingo's and ran down there. Got the baggage. Got cleared out a there came back and we were on the plane she says that you couldn't catch. And away and I mean I hadn't been. I'd had one flight on an aircraft after the war and that was to Fiji and back
- 02:30 and when we went over on Lufthansa we went over on a DC-10 that the bottom had fallen out of you know. And they even had that in the back of the seat to say that this aircraft was safe and it wasn't the thing. And and anyway when we got over there we they put us on a 727 to go to London and when it when it's goin' over the cockpit door's not closed the hosties talkin' to the pilot and everythin' goin' along. Not like out here where they shut all the doors and everythin' you know and
- 03:00 anyway when he comes into London like you never forget things. Once you learn that that height you're looking out the window you're you're still landin' you know. And I thought geez he's high. And I'm thinkin'. And the next minute this 727 fell out a the air and bang. How that undercarriage never came up through the wing I'll never know. Geez it was a heavy landin' did he hit the ground bang. And I thought, "Well we made it."
- 03:30 And then we went into the airport and of course then we had to sit down for an hour or so and get in touch with the other cousin to come and see us and when our daughter finally arrives she says you didn't do nothin'. We did. We've been here 4 hours. Oh dear. No but anyway it was a good trip over there just the same we had yeah great. Great. But anyway that was that was waitin' then. Anyway we left the caravan with that friend in Brisbane and the lad at Postpad he got transferred to Mount Isa
- 04:00 when we were away and... Cause we were away for 4 months and we travelled around Europe and that with the things they say. It \$10 a day in that time which we we did on that it was good yeah. And sure thing's you'd never see. Well you'd never seen em in the war they were closed and that sort a stuff you know. But anyway we got back here and the thing was then it was off to South Australia. There was a job waitin'. So what do we do? We'll
- 04:30 go up to Mount Isa to see the son that's up there now. So we went up there and we had a little time there with them because there was the rodeo was comin' up at that time and and I had a little fly round in. One of his other mates that worked with him there he had a Cessna 172. So I had a fly of the 172 and we had a... Mum and that we had a fly around in that and off we went down through Alice
- 05:00 and then out to Ayres Rock and saw the rain on Ayres Rock that time and then off we went down to South Australia. We had trouble with caravans on dirt roads broken springs. It took us took us awhile to get down there. Got down to the farm. Had 16 weeks on the farm and boy oh boy. It's surprisin' how good a mechanic is on a farm. There's always somethin' to do hey. Somethin' to weld or fix up. So we had 16 weeks there with them.
- 05:30 I even went back to the days a makin' tanks again. Remember I said that my old man made tanks durin' the Depression years? They had these things to make there which were the storage bins for the wheat and they had the bases made but they didn't know how they were gonna put this tank on. But then it all come back to me that how you put the tank up and the clamps and you put the rope round to each and put each sheet on and and up you go see in no and we had the three of em built in a week and they nearly died. Oh dear anyway then when we
- 06:00 left there we were goin' to Western Australia. So we went down to Port Lincoln cut round the bottom there we come round to a little place called Beards Bay and course this is goin' back to 1976 and boy there was nothin' much down there in those years. There was hardly and they they anyway there's all these little huts there. A kangaroo hops out with one leg in plaster.
- 06:30 So I said to the fella I said, "What's up with the kangaroo?" "Oh," he said, "Dad fixed it and put the plaster on it," this young kid said. Put oh yeah then out comes Mum come out or Dad come out or somebody and anyway got talkin' to 'em and that. Oh they says, "You can stay here with us" and so I said we got plenty a water and stuff and that we we'll put the caravan up there and on the edge a the beach. There we were camped on the beach and the water's there. So they they took us out and showed us the
- 07:00 seals and took the wife out and had a look at some blue ringed octopus and I was fishin' there and done a bit of a tune up in his old Holden he had there for him so he give us a crayfish for that. And then when we left there we bought a cray off and we still had some wine from bein' in Nuriootpa with us in the thing and we were sittin on the road goin' over the Nullarbor with with crayfish for lunch and bread and butter and a and a glass of nice wine. Thinkin' "What's the poor people doin' out there?"
- 07:30 you know. Oh dear and ended up workin' n the Nullarbor Plain lookin' after Mundrabilla Station for a fortnight. Never done that before in me life and things you know and goin'. We go through right through the west and eventually ended up in Broome and I tell ya what. That's a place. If I could a stayed in Broome I don't think I'd come back from there. Very pretty place hey. And places
- 08:00 to go cause it might be all lost now but anyway that was beside the point. So we eventually got round back again to the Isa and then we come back to Brisbane and we stayed with Telecom and then I went in and I did that other test through the Commonwealth and somethin' and go and get a. Somebody said you'd better get a tradesman's right you can use that anywhere in the world and everythin' and I

thought oh well. So so I went and saw the fellow over at the industrial college and

- 08:30 and he said, "You've wasted my day he said I'm goin' home early," he said, "You better buzz off now." He said, "You know enough for here." I said here. So that was the examination over here for that and anyway. What happened then? We came back that's yeah that was workin' for Telecom. And then we went back again that's right to back round Australia again. Only this time it was back over to the Kimberleys. Went back through the Isa again and back up
- 09:00 to Katherine and across to Broome but the trouble with Broome was it's too it wasn't how should. It was only just a tourist holiday destination. Just for the winter months for Perth people. Didn't have the international rating it's got now. And you could only sort a get a job there in the winter months sort of thing. When it came round to the wet season everythin' shut down you know. And a job
- 09:30 turned up to go up to the workshop in Derby. To the public works workshop in Derby see. So I go and apply for that. Yes no trouble at all. Get the job bang up we go. So we stayed in Derby for 2 years and I worked as a Diesel mechanic there doin' the air condition plants or the the generators for for the Abo schools on the stations and that you know. And a few other things on the side and
- 10:00 we learnt a lot around there I can tell ya for 2 years up there and we come back home a couple a times to see the kids and that. And we came back from there in 1980 came back again and came back to Brisbane here. Finished up I got in the Brisbane City Council. Cause that friend a mine worked for Paul's was then workin' drivin' the low loader for the council. So I ended back up at Newmarket Road garage for 3 years and
- 10:30 ended up here with this house that the war service built for us. So here we are. We retired with the old war service at 60 and and that's it. But but as I say for like in the time that I went into the war and that they like people sayin' about the war but you say explain bein' in the air force a lot different to bein' in the army hey. I mean you you don't see the things close up really. But and of course
- 11:00 and the particular incidence I was in bein' so late in the show I didn't you don't see the worst of it you know. So it is a bit of an experience though just the same. And I suppose you worried some times down the line but nothin' you can do about it hey. You just carry on. Do as you.

#### **How have you approached Anzac Day and that sort of thing?**

Well I go to the... I never went. When

- 11:30 when I approached Anzac Day an uncle of mine was at Gallipoli. He went in the First World War so he was repatriated home. The old man went over but he get there the last week a the war. In Belgium he didn't get anywhere. And they used to always go to the parade in Brisbane when I was a kid and
- 12:00 then when I come back from the war and the kids grew up I thought well I used to take the kids out for the day Anzac Day. We always went for a picnic. And then when we came up here to get a bit older and a bit more matured I suppose I went to the dawn service. Cause the old chap next door here he used to go so I've been goin' to the dawn service ever since.
- 12:30 I'd I'd never marched I'd and I only joined the RSL [Returned and Services League] in Derby when I was up in Derby of all places and then I rejoined this one here transferred over to here. I was in the Air Force Association for a while after the war but but bein' kids growin' up and things you never had time to go to meetings and that sort a stuff you know. And and last year after havin' the big
- 13:00 operation and still survivin' it thinkin', "Cripes you're lucky," you know. I've always gone to the dawn service and gone in with the fellas that a gone to the march up here for the 9 o'clock one and and I've never ever gone to the march. I've always come home. And so anyway this time I thought, "Well seein' I'm still walkin' round I think I'd better go to that march. I mightn't be in that one next one," see. Anyway
- 13:30 I went up there and we just formed up to march down the road and they had the air force in the front this year cause it was a commemoration year see. The lady's standing there from the local paper 'click' and I'm in that picture marchin' down the road. Now I've only been once to one march and I got my picture taken. And I thought, "Well I'd better have one a them for posterity." And then there's another one out there with a
- 14:00 chap from the bowls club it was in he was in the he's young he was in the a courier in Malaysia and Vietnam and been in the air force for a few years afterwards but he's retired now. And he's a member of the bowls club and we play bowls up there at night and he goes he was there on the march and we were sittin' in the the commemoration thing at the 9 o'clock service there and the blokes comes up from
- 14:30 the other paper and he wants a picture taken. And we were sittin' in a place where it started to rain and he got the picture just before the rain started and we were both sittin' there together. So that was it so. So that's the first one I've been to the real service. But I've always been to the dawn service over these years. And its surprising it surprises me in this day and age the number of people that keep turnin' up to that dawn service. Like I don't know
- 15:00 what'd happen. Like we've just been up to Rockhampton we seen some of these American soldiers out here for that operation that's goin' on up at Tin... up at Shoalhaven Bay and I'll tell ya what I don't think

I looked as young as them surely. They're so immature and naive blokes that and they are they are in Japan and they came out here for the exercise. And mate I dunno. And it this blokes sayin' he can't get out there

15:30 quick enough with a gun hey. I dunno. That's got me beat. I dunno. Like okay, we went to war because the Japs were comin' down hey. But I mean you went to England but I fortunately as far as I'm concerned fortunately I came back to fight the Japs. The Germans well I dunno. But I mean Hitler settled all that hash at the finish hey. That you couldn't but anyway but comin' back

16:00 here. I dunno.

**Can you go back and just tell us about that story about seein' Smithy when you were 4 years old?**

Oh cripes yeah. I didn't actually see Smithy. But the day that he landed yeah I was down there with me mother and father and they went the day they had the trains running to Eagle Farm. But I mean the there was no station in the

16:30 there was just the rails there and the train stopped there and you got out a the carriages down the side steps out a the old suburban coaches. And I and I can remember that I was only a little kid see and I couldn't see anythin' because of people. There were so many people there that all I could see was people and I wanted to see the aeroplane. And they cause they couldn't hold me up all the time cause I was too a bit heavy that way see. But

17:00 when I got put down that didn't' so I wanted to go and get in the train and thought this is. I can remember that and I couldn't get up in the train. Cause I couldn't climb up the stairs I wasn't big enough. But yeah I remember and they were all waitin' there that's right and he was runnin' late. Because that's it, he was... He got lost. What... He got lost. He just had to get land form and come up and land up here and he was supposed to be at such and such a time and and they had. I can remember layin' on the ground down there when I was sittin' down there at

17:30 one stage and the old biplanes like planes didn't go very fast and I can remember seein' the parachutes comin' out. The man on the parachute floatin' down you know and they had that then yeah. Yeah that's right and then Smithy arrived and of course I mean there was that many people mate. I could see an aeroplane over then it was gone hey.

18:00 It was I couldn't see it for people yeah. Yeah and that was the big paddock down there. Yeah.

**Can you tell us about how officer selection was conducted? How they how they chose officers?**

How they chose officers? Wouldn't have a clue. Don't know.

**Well when when officers were picked was there any problems between blokes that weren't picked and stayed on as sergeant pilots or?**

Not really.

18:30 I dunno. Don't know really because as I say in the air force. When you went in the air force. When you went in the air force you sort of stayed with those fellas while you were trainin' but as soon as that training was over that was it. I mean the sergeant's went down there we stayed up there. But then we all went different places. And they all went different places. Never saw anybody again. But in the army they all stay together see. But I think myself they take it on

19:00 they must take it on the attitude I think. You know where you of how you go.

**So you can't recall ever doing any tests or interviews or anything like that in regard to that?**

No no no. Just only the I'd stay you're conduct report card goes in through from your instructors. And the and the and the DIs and that you know. They must have they'd have a sheet somewhere they'd have to because I say I never got round to that side of it.

19:30 But I did only did that that burial party and that sort of thing but I mean they would come in one section you'd get put in one. It's only if you get put in that section see. I mean I to be an officer you are only a general duties branch as air crew. You're only what they call general duties branch. And that means that they can put you in any section and it's just you've gotta pick it

20:00 up. That was at that time. Things'd be different now thought I should imagine.

**What about the the crewing up process? We've spoken to fellas that were on the Lancaster's and were in England they basically picked each other. How how did the process work for you guys?**

We just went out in a boat and only saw these other fellas walkin' around the deck and then we went to Poona. Oh when we were in Bombay we were just all in all in together

20:30 but nobody I never knew the skipper. I'd never even met him. Never been introduced to him even. And I dunno they must a just gone through and say put that with that fella and that one with that one and



they must a done. I dunno. Don't know. You just ended up that way. Hey I dunno. It's funny because the only thing that well it it give me a pain in some ways when you look back at it

21:00 that's okay. We were crewed up but now they picked each other in England which might a made a difference cause they might a been all sergeant's or all officers or somethin' like that. Where it finished up with us that there was the skipper John Hall. He was he was he was a commissioned officer. Me as second pilot I was commissioned officer. Our second wireless operator our second wireless operator was a commissioned officer. Our first wireless

21:30 operator was a flight sergeant see. The navigator was a flight sergeant. The bomb aimer was a flight sergeant. The engineer was a flight sergeant. The rear gunner was a flight sergeant. Everybody else was a sergeant. Now when we come back like Marshy never ever flew with us because we never carried the second wireless operator. We couldn't because we had to go so far. We never ever had him in the crew see. But he was in the mess

22:00 and he only got sort of in that thing if you look through those crews you'll find that he's flew with somebody somewhere down the line and he flew with somebody else on another operation. And and that's it. There was only John and I and the other's stayed together because we were the one's that were in that plane all the time. So I dunno. I dunno how they get on but I would a rather rather liked it to been together where we could've all been together and you know cause

22:30 when your job's in the plane there's only the skipper and I up the front there it's its on the controls. The rest of them I mean the navigator's got his job to do but he's you're not talkin' to him he's up the compartment up the front and I mean he's tellin' ya what's what. You ask him what. And the poor old wireless operator he's just sittin' behind us listenin' to the radio all the time for messages or somethin' you know. Yeah.

**Can you can you tell us about some a the the tricks that you used to do to keep down fuel consumption on those missions where fuel was so**

23:00 **important?**

Oh well that was it that you kept that boost to a minimum and they kept the revs kept the revs down to a minimum but the still keep the speed a round about 140 miles an hour see. And that we didn't do that though. The skipper the CO of the squadron had done that before we got there and and because of the configuration of those B-24s the wing doesn't

23:30 the that Davis wing it doesn't sit in a horizontal line with the aircraft. It's that way. The aircraft is actually flying in a nose down attitude to get the wing through the air for the maximum lift. You can't fly it straight and level. It's gotta have the nose down a bit. And that's when that boost and things come into it. Was it is? That was a thing happened goin' out one day. Now's another thing that just came back see.

24:00 When you go flyin' English aircraft the engines are always synchronised. German aircraft they're unsynchronised. They fly on engine RPM [Revolutions Per Minute]. We go up with RPM but when we get up there and we get on to cruise and we got a you listen and you can hear the whoa whoa whoa whoa then you gotta bring one back until you get a clean (UNCLEAR) see. So we're goin' out there one day and

24:30 why we used to synchronise is you'd look out the Liberator and the two propeller blades lined up and if they weren't synchronised one'd be runnin' into the other one. So you just change the pitch control until they were both together. There was no blur in the in the propeller pitch you see. Same with the other side. You'd do that one over there too. Flyin' out over the bay there one afternoon. Oh lookin' down at the

25:00 instrument panel. There's nothin' movin'. And I look out the window. I thought, "I'm seein' things." Number 3 engine I can see the propeller goin' round. I can't see the propeller goin' round. There's nothin' wrong up there. Hey Johnny can you see that number 3 engine propeller goin' round slowly?

25:30 Yeah he said. Yeah he said it is. I said what up I said nothin'. I said look nothin' wrong with it see. Oh. So we just turned the automatic pilot off. Oh. The plane was goin' round the wrong way see. He said it's not workin'. I said well there's nothin' wrong with these instruments. So all the engine

26:00 instruments like on a on a Liberator were all were all AC [Alternating Current] current. AC current the same as your household right. They're not DC [Direct Current] and they've got a an inverter. But the Liberators in those years there was 2 inverters. One emergency. No lights to tell ya whether they're on or off. I said well switch the inverter over.

26:30 Switched the inverter over whoa. There's needles goin' everywhere. Hey number 3 engine's goin' and I looked down and in the pitch control they used to have those double pole double throw switches right. Centre off. And they used to have an aluminium flap so you could shift four together up or down whichever way you were goin'. And of course we'd taken off and comin' up we're we're backin' off as we get

27:00 further out and use the fuel you're cuttin the revs down a bit more see. We'd changed pitch see. We'd changed the revs and we'd just clicked her down see to drop a couple a hundred revs or so number 3

engine the bloody thing's stuck in the full course position see. The switch stuck. And there was the poor old engine full course. She's and at that time that happened that inverter burnt out hey. And when I switched it on and I said, "Well

27:30 there ya go Johnny." I said, "We haven't got any more inverters." I said, "We gotta hope it keeps on goin' now." Hey and we didn't turn back. And I mean that was it. I mean that was it with those damn things. That that's that could happen. And there was no lights no nothing' to tell ya if it failed. But I'd forgot about that yeah. So you get a little bit's a experience along the line hey?

28:00 **What about with nighttime missions you've told us about a few occasions where hitting other aircraft was a distinct possibility and you had a few close calls. Was there ever any hits that you can think of?**

Not while I was there na. But I can't understand why there wasn't. Like I tell ya that night when that thing was up there you know. I'm just lookin' up there and there it was. There was was another Liberator and I mean as you say when we went in to bomb that target that night in the moonlight there was there was one comin'

28:30 behind us like but there was nobody in front of us and the other bloke was behind him. That that fella from Caloundra you know. Yeah I know but I'll tell ya when you think about it there must a been lots a collisions over Germany and that hey with a thousand bombers. Oh yeah.

**Did you ever do anything interesting in that repair and salvage unit?**

No. We... oh... that aircraft we got shot up with

29:00 in that fella that was flyin' that one was a Pilot Officer Anderson. You're talkin' about repair and salvage unit. When we were when I was on the squadron one day the fly was that there was an RSU Repair and Salvage Unit opening at a place called Dalbrunga and it supposed to be open and we were supposed to take this aircraft up. Him and I just the two of us in the

29:30 Liberator. No engineer no nothin'. To take this Liberator up there and they would fly us back and he was to go. So late in the afternoon we went bout 4 o'clock and it was a half an hour flight up to there see. Up we go. There was could just map read up there. That was no trouble. I don't have to fly back. Come back get up there when we get up there here's the strips and everythin' laid out doesn't seem to be any activity around any a the buildings but there's all

30:00 the Koolies out on the air strip. What they doin' out there? Dunno. He said I'll go in and come down and do a dummy landin'. So around he go and comin' in and we down got the wheels and everythin' down then whoa. All these wogs they gone. They took off the strip see. So we round we go again. Come round and we land. When we get down there there's nobody there. Nobody no air force. No no Koolies

30:30 everybody's gone. They're gone. Anyway we taxied up to the turn around and I said to him I said I said we we gonna have to be get goin' straight away mate. We're gonna run out a daylight. No navigator. No nothin' see. And they're not expectin' us back in a Liberator. Yeah right boom up we go. By the time we get airborne it's still

31:00 daylight upstairs but by gee you can hardly see the ground down underneath see. And he I said you're on the reciprocal? Yeah yeah he said I'm on the reciprocal. Oh cripes what are we gonna do. We dunno where were are really. We had no beacon to beak off. Nothin'. Anyway I got the map and the sun was just the last bit a light and I see a fork in the river and I look at the map there's only one place

31:30 that could be. Poor old homin' pigeon again see. Only one place that could be. I said you're goin' too far left turn right bout 20 degrees. Yeah he turned right and we're flyin' along and the next thing. The squadron used to have a generatin' set with a big neon blinker used to come on with I forget what it was but it was in morse code.

32:00 It'd come on with this blinkin' light that identified the and there it was phew. And then they lit the flare path and in we come. Yeah and that was that fella that was the skipper of that (UNCLEAR) one we got shot up in that time.

**What about your memories of VE-Day in England?**

I was goin' to Brighton. VE-Day yeah. That's right everybody was runnin'

32:30 round hey. Yeah. They everybody was out on the street and everythin' everywhere yeah. That's right. Yeah.

**What did you get up to?**

Nothin' much. I got down to Brighton. I got down to Brighton and that's when I run into that run into that Canadian bloke yeah. And that's when he said I've been up the pub up there. Come up there. And that was it yeah. But oh they they that London that was they went crazy in London yeah that's right. But down in Brighton they didn't go too much no no.

**What about the**

33:00 **the English locals at Bangalore? They were a bit of a weird mob were they?**

Wouldn't talk to ya. They wouldn't talk. Well not at Bangalore actually we we could go for a bit of rec. leave for a couple a days we could go to what they called 'Cola' 'the Cola Goldfield Club.' There was a... must have been a goldmine there or somethin' they had this big oh an English club and that's what it was called the Cola Goldfield Club and they didn't even talk to the Englishmen either but.

33:30 They didn't talk to any RAF blokes either. Funny crowd yeah but we had we could go there you know. They let us come in there and you could go swimmin' pool and that sort a stuff you know.

**Was there was there ever any animosity between the RAAF guys the Australian guys and the RAF guys? Was there any ever any distinction between the two?**

Oh not not really. No we all got on pretty well. And Canadians too.

34:00 Where I say that squadron that 159 Squadron it eventually ended up it must be nearly all a Canadian squadron cause that fella wrote that book about that thing you know.

**You also you spoke about Lord Haw Haw before did you ever hear any of his...?**

No nope but we were always told about it. That he was and sure enough somethin' happened that night yeah that's right. Same as Tokyo Rose yeah.

34:30 **And what did he do to morale of the fellas do you think?**

Nothin'. Nothin'. He was over there we were over here hey. Yeah nothing. No

**What about what about eating Indian food? Did you how'd you cope with that?**

Well it was monotonous. I mean there was no butter. It was always that ghee stuff and there was the meat wasn't that good because I say the cow was holy and nobody killed or

35:00 only killed the old one's when they fell down dead I spose. But the only thing that I ever had there that I really enjoyed was they we went into a café in Madras when we were goin' up to the squadron and we had some an Indian dish. I dunno what it was. But they they put they put some some I dunno how they did it. They must a done the onion in a in an oven somehow. Baked in onion

35:30 crisp onion over the top of it and by geez it was nice. It really was and I never seen it since. Never seen it since. It was very nice. But that way that way in the like we used to get into Calcutta there there was a big place that they like all the troops and everythin' they only congregated in the one place in there that was a a big sort of a hotel called Firpoes.

36:00 But everybody used to go to Firpoes you know and that was more or less European cuisine. You could get Indian stuff too but it was mainly European cuisine. But you could get the stuff outside if you want to you know. But but as I say when I went there like considerin' I was only 19. I was 19 turned 20 in the train goin' up up to the squadron that mate I'd never seen anythin' like it in me life. I'd never seen so much

36:30 dirt and filth and and it didn't suit me to the ground. I'd never go back there again no way. And I tell ya what when we landed in Bombay goin' back to London that time and the and the lady was sittin' outside the toilet when Mum went in the sweeper woman I'll tell ya what it didn't look like anythin' had changed mate. It looked the same to me. I dunno. Oh cripes.

**Well what were your thoughts when you when you came back to Australia at the end of the war and you saw the coat hanger?**

37:00 We made it. We made it hey. That was it. Yeah very good really. Yes it was. The only thing was after like to leave here and never been away. To go over there and see the green of Ireland and the top end there goin' across to Scotland. Then seein' it stripped bare its like the spring hadn't come when we got to England and all the trees were

37:30 everythin' was covered with fog and it was damp and dank and smoke and everythin' else. And then to come to go out to India where it's like Australia. Where it's brown and dry and red soil and that you know and to see the green jungles and fly down there and come back. Come up through the Suez with all the sand. Come through the Med then you hit Gibraltar and you've got a bit of greenery and big rock and everythin'

38:00 and then to arrive in in London on the first of April and at that time the hot weather was on and the trees were just comin' out. And it was like when when I went over with the wife in '75 that then you saw the transition. That's the difference hey. But to me it was. That was to go to England like who wrote... Who wrote the poem

38:30 Now to be in England now that April's there? Byron or Shelley. One of 'em. Oh to be in England no. Yeah. Yeah after seein' so much brown and everythin' to see that greenery and see it all transition come out to green and all the trees filin' up well it's fantastic. But of course you'd get the same down south I should imagine but now that we've seen an autumn down there. But then to leave there and come home

- 39:00 in 1945 and to get on that troop train and leave Sydney and come up in the afternoon with the Western sun and you're lookin' out at the gum trees. It's sort a they're gum trees all right but they just look grey you know. But that's Australia isn't it, hey? Yeah. You see those gum trees hey. But they didn't have that colour that you see over there you know when you get that green and that.
- 39:30 That's the only thing I noticed really. But anyway we were back home mate and that was the difference hey and then and then what happened. Then what happened? I'll tell ya what happened. We started to go back to work to finish that apprenticeship cause I had to, and you used to catch the train but instead of American Negroes on the train comin' down from Wacol you had all the all the evacuated displaced people from Europe comin' down, and they're all talkin' in
- 40:00 different language to you. That's what happened, hey. Yeah. Oh cripes. Yeah. That's what happened.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**