

Australians at War Film Archive

Trevor Fairbairn - Transcript of interview

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**Some parts of this interview
have been embargoed.**

The embargoed portions are
noted in the transcript and video.

Tape 1

00:36 **So Trevor, where were your born?**

I was born in Geelong and I didn't live there I went to Pakenham with my family. We lived there about ...

Where were you born?

Born in Geelong. Didn't live there.

01:00 We had a farm at Pakenham and I lived there until I was about 6 and then the family moved to Kyabram and I was in Kyabram until I joined the air force in 1941.

And what precipitated the move to Kyabram?

Well, my father sold the farm. It was the beginning of the Depression years. He was offered a job in the Agricultural

01:30 Department as stock inspector, so he took it. I think it was a good move at that time because things were pretty tough then.

And where did you go to school?

Went to school at Kyabram High School and I left at the age of about 16 ½, I was offered a job as a law clerk with the local solicitor and I was there for about 2 ½ years, joined the air force at the age of

02:00 19.

Did you have any CMF [Citizens' Military Force] experience prior to that?

No I was on what they called the air force reserve for about a year but we were just waiting a call up really. They gave us 21 lessons to do while we were waiting to be called up so that kept us pretty occupied.

Yes, I'd like to ask you a little bit more about that later on, the 21 lessons, it sounds like a Herculean

02:30 **task. We'll find out whether it was or not.**

Right, yes.

And so, why the air force, why not the army or the navy?

I think a few of my colleagues in Kyabram thought the air force was the one and they gradually convinced me that that would be the place for me. My other two brothers, Clive and Russell, both joined the army and the younger brother later on

03:00 joined the air force, so there were two in the air force and two in the army.

It must have been a strain on your mum having four boys away.

It was, yes indeed, yes. The boys went to the Middle East initially. Russell was in Tobruk and Russell was in Syria, and they both came back to New Guinea. Russell unfortunately was wounded in the Owen Stanleys

03:30 and he, subsequently he had a bullet in the back and that became a problem and he passed away but Clive's all right. The younger brother he passed away too, the younger brother in the air force. So that's about it, joined in the air force in 1941, in May of '41.

Was that part of the

04:00 **Empire Air Training Scheme?**

Yes it was and I was on number 15 course. Went down to Somers for the initial training school, two months down there, then up to Benalla for elementary flying on Tiger Moths, two months and then we went to Mallala in South Australia, Mallala is about 30 miles north of Adelaide, and that was a four

04:30 month stint there flying Ansons, Avro Ansons, and just before the end of the course the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and of course all the postings that were to be didn't eventuate.

You would've been expecting to head to Britain then wouldn't you, prior to that?

Yes, that was the main area and of course

05:00 the postings people had to rethink. The result of that was there was a great number of us left with almost nowhere to go for a month or two. I eventually went to the Instructors' Course at Camden but the Japanese bombed Darwin and three of us were taken off the course and sent up to Darwin to be what they called duty pilots, really

05:30 air traffic control. I was there for a whole year, it was a non flying capacity.

Were you somewhat frustrated by that posting? Did you want to fly?

I was frustrated, well I really didn't think I would make a good instructor at that stage of the game. I thought I was pretty good just to get through the flying training but to go up there in a non flying capacity was not a good thing at that stage of the game. There were a lot of other people probably in a similar

06:00 situation. I think I was probably on a very unfortunate course 15 because no one went overseas from that course, a lot of pilots, and not too many aircraft around, operational aircraft, so it was a rather frustrating period for me. But I spent a whole year in Darwin at Hughes Field.

When did you arrive in Darwin?

About the 4th of April I think it was, early April.

1942?

1942.

06:30 Yes, 1942.

So just a couple of months after the first and the largest of the bombs then?

Yes, the large bombing was on the 19th of February and I went through a few bombing periods, that's our airfield, Hughes Airfield, one fairly large one in early August which was not so good, I was there on my own,

07:00 on the strip and I got a few that landed pretty close. One was about 40 yards and about four others within a 100 yards. But it was a good run by them across the airfield. They fortunately didn't get any aircraft but they set the ammunition dump alight and there was a bit of damage to the runway and so on.

I dare say...

07:30 So I was there for a whole year. I came back and did a refresher course at Tamworth on Oxfords and then I was posted to Mount Gambier as a staff pilot there, that's a navigation school.

What is a staff pilot exactly?

He flies the trainees around on exercise. This was a navigation school,

08:00 and trainee navigators were there. It would be my task to fly them on a set course, a given route. And, so I was there for about six months. And that school moved up to Port Pirie and I moved with it and then down to Ballarat doing the same sort of thing for a couple of months. And then I went to Bairnsdale to do a

08:30 general reconnaissance course, that's advanced navigation and all those things that you do that fit you

for reconnaissance work and so on. I went to Sale after that to fly Hudsons. I was on that course for just a very short time

09:00 and my instructor said, "I think you need a few more hours before you go through with this." I was supposed to go and fly a few more hours but instead of that I found myself up at, on Cape York Peninsula at an airfield called Higgins Field in the capacity of operations officer there so I was in an Operations Room.

Higgins Field is the first stop back from New Guinea on the mainland?

Yes it was,

09:30 you know all about it.

That's our job. So...

So I was here for about six months. And I came down to Townsville, to 84th Squadron that were flying Kitty Hawks and later Mustangs, they were going up north and I was to be their operations officer. The war ended in August and

10:00 the Squadron disbanded. I went back to Higgins Field because there were a lot of air movements there, aircraft coming back from New Guinea and so on. I was there for about three months and went across to Merauke in New Guinea, Dutch New Guinea and I was there for about two months too, and then came back to Townsville to

10:30 Garbutt Airfield. After that I did a, I met my wife there, in Townsville, that was a big thing, a big occasion.

I'm sure.

Yes, in 1946 that was.

At a dance, or was it across a crowded room?

Oh no it was just party meeting up there. She was in Townsville in what they called the WNES, Women's National Emergency Service.

11:00 I met her and that was it and I kept in touch for about a year and eventually married in Townsville in October '47. I was posted back to what they called Eastern Area in those days, just out of Sydney, and I went on two recruiting tours, we

11:30 had a big van, recruiting van. They were looking for, because everyone was getting out of the air force they wanted ground staff personnel. So I was in charge of one van that went up to northern New South Wales and as far as Rockhampton, so I went on two of those trips and after that I was posted to 38

12:00 Squadron which was part of 86 Wing at Schofields, just west of Sydney and I was there for, well, until we went on the Berlin airlift really. So that was August '48, so I was there from '47 to '48.

12:30 I was newly married at that stage of the game and spent the first Christmas in Tokyo in 1947.

That's no good.

I was to spend the next Christmas in Lübeck in Germany in 1948, so there you are.

What were you doing in Tokyo? Were you part of the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] Force?

No, we were running an air service from Schofields to

13:00 Iwakuni and Tokyo, taking freight up there and so on, bringing personnel back or freight and that'd been going for some time. So I was just co-pilot with the crew that went up there and just happened to be in Tokyo for Christmas '47 and, as I said, we went on the airlift.

13:30 Left there on the 25 August 1948. Went to UK in a Constellation, which was a good trip, went via Singapore and Calcutta, Karachi, Cairo.

A few eye-openers there?

Yeah, well it was just a good trip in a Constellation and Cairo, we had a rest there.

14:00 We had an air raid warning and we were ushered into air raid shelters.

Who was bombing...

Israeli-Palestinian flare up there but we eventually got to London and to Bassingbourn, that was to be our RAF [Royal Air Force] base, Bassingbourn, which is not far from Cambridge and

14:30 we did some training there to fit us for the procedures and so on, on the airlift. We had our first trip on the airlift, I think it was the 16 December 1948, and I think our last one was in August '49.

Yeah, the Australians were there longer than anybody else, weren't they?

Yes indeed, we were there for, well for 12 months, really. So,

15:00 we were away for 12 months.

I was looking at some of the figures, 15 million pounds of freight...

I've got a good photograph of one that we did anyway of a particular group. Yes, went up and down that corridor, in my case it was 213 times, and we were doing two trips a day. And at one stage between mid-November

15:30 and mid-December, we went, Gatow, that was our airfield, Gatow, in the British sector, when that was under repair we went into Tegel which was in the French sector and we were doing three trips a day. A round trip took about three hours.

That's a long time to be behind a wheel of a car let alone behind a plane?

Yes it is. It took about an hour twenty down to Berlin from Lübeck

16:00 and we'd have just time for coffee and we'd be back and then we might have a meal depending on the time of day. We worked around the clock. There was no set time, it was pretty hard going, when we were doing three trips a day anyway. That it was, I came back to Melbourne, to Laverton, in a RAF York flown by a Canadian

16:30 and it was Melbourne Cup Day, 1949.

Who won?

Fox Army and my wife had backed it. I forgot to say that we had a three months old infant then, a daughter, Susan, when I left for the airlift, which was pretty hard. I must say my wife was pretty wonderful with that. I think the worst part was the accommodation around Sydney, it was

17:00 hard to get, so my wife went up to Brisbane to her sister's place and stayed for six months and then went to Kyabram to my parents for the remainder of the time. So it was a very hard for her but she did it wonderfully well and kept the letters coming which, it was good.

A tough life an air force wife, in those days especially...

Yes it is and just briefly carrying on,

17:30 I went to what they called Southern Command down at Albert Park in those days and I was down in the headquarters in the operations area. Then I was posted up to the department which was in St. Kilda Road and I was personal assistant, PA as they said, to the chief of air staff until there was Sir George Jones and he handed

18:00 over to Sir Donald Hardman who was an Air Marshal Officer Sir Donald Hardman, and I was his PA for about eight months or something like that. In November of 1952 I did a Lincoln conversion course at Sale and was then posted off to Amberley to training up there

18:30 to fit me for operations in Malaya. At that stage of the game I was a squadron leader and I was a flight commander in Number 6 Squadron at Amberley. It was fairly good training there. We worked there until we went away to Tengah in Singapore in August of 1953.

19:00 I was up there for about a year.

Were you flying, was it mainly bombing raids out of Singapore?

Yes, yes. The intelligence people would get the target and the operations people would decide what aircraft should carry out the strike and what bomb load

19:30 would be suitable and then we would undertake that mission and that kept going, we were fairly busy. I did 103 strikes in my term up there for one year. Once again we were doing a year up. I must say my wife was left home with two children this time so she knows all about it, she might tell you about it later but

20:00 she did a wonderful job again. She was at Ipswich in a house there, off the base, and she had good air force friends that took care of her and so on. Nonetheless a year away again on top of the airlift was really something.

Were you operational and administration at the same time at Malaya? Were you flying and were you in command as well...?

I was flight commander there. There was a CO [Commanding Officer]

20:30 who was a wing commander more initially and he went home after about six months of my stay there. A wing commander a Spuds Spurgeon was the CO. As I said, I was flight commander so I was looking after the flying schedules, selecting the crews and that sort of thing for the mission but we used to keep

them going, no one

21:00 flew more than anyone else really. Yes, I was directly under the command of CO.

Were you flying as well?

I was flying, yes, that was my job. As I said I flew 103 missions, 'strikes' as they called them. Came back in October

21:30 of 1955 and I was posted to CO of the University Squadron in Melbourne. The following year I went on the staff course down at Point Cook. After that, that was a whole year down there and once again I wasn't home very much, we were living in Beaumaris,

22:00 no, Sandringham, and I was away for a year on that, coming home for weekends but a lot of the time away. Following that, I was posted to 21 Squadron for a very short time and then to the Department of Air as Director of Staff Duties, DSD, I was there for two years. Posted to

22:30 Richmond to command Number 38 Squadron and I was there for four years. In that time, the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] decided to replace the Dakota with the Caribou so in 1963 I went over to the US and did a conversion course on to the Caribou down at Fort Rucker in Alabama,

23:00 came back and made preparations for the first ferry flight from Toronto, Canada and we came back and took off there on St. Patrick's Day, 17 March 1964, and brought the Caribou back which was,

23:30 and decided we'd go the long way around. We came through the Azores and Gibraltar, Malta. We couldn't go to Cairo for some reason, there was a diplomatic problem there. We ended up down at Khartoum, of all places, in the Sudan. Then on to Aden, Karachi, Calcutta, Butterworth where we did a complete servicing there

24:00 and then home via Jakarta and then Denpasar, we wanted to pick up some fuel there, and then Darwin.

How long did that take you?

It took us about three weeks because we had some unserviceabilities. On the first leg going from Toronto to the next base at Canada, I'll think of it in a minute,

24:30 there were three aircraft and one of the aircraft had one of these rubber tanks, fuel tanks, which we had in the fuselage. We could transfer the fuel from there into the wings, a pretty antiquated system I can tell you, and one of those burst in his aircraft and fuel all over the bottom of the aircraft and so on. Ganda, was the airport I was trying to think of, Ganda

25:00 in Newfoundland. We got to Ganda and we landed in a snowstorm. The other boy diverted, the one who lost his fuel tank, he diverted to another airfield there but the two of us went on and landed in a snow storm at Ganda and we couldn't leave there for about four days, it was absolutely socked in. I've never seen snow like it. We used to go down each day

25:30 and just run the engines up and so on but eventually got away and we got home in April. It took about three weeks with the servicing and so on and we didn't try to fly great distances. We would have a good spell overnight and maybe have a day off, that type of thing, we took our time. Certainly the aircraft were right and the crews were right

26:00 because it was a pretty long journey. We eventually go it home to Richmond and did a lot of training there of course, there were crews to be trained and other crews were going over and being trained at Havilland and then flying the aircraft back so it was a pretty busy period. The aircraft was set to go to Vietnam,

26:30 I was told I wouldn't be going.

Did you want to go?

Well, I don't know. I had two feelings there. I had been away a lot. I would have gone certainly, it would've been a good test for the aircraft, but I had been posted to Washington so I really wasn't too disappointed.

I'm sure that was an experience and a half being in Washington?

Yes I was there for two years there. I was staff officer to the head

27:00 of the joint services staff there and that was a very good posting indeed, I appreciated that. Came back from Washington to be CO of the Officers' Training School at Point Cook. I was there for nearly two years and then to Headquarters Training Command. I was there for a year or two and I retired at the age

27:30 of 50, end of story.

What did you do after retirement?

I was offered a job as assistant state director for the Liberal Party here in the secretariat, I took that.

That was a bit of a change...

It was a change, yes, not bad. I quite enjoyed that, met a lot of people, carried out of preselections

28:00 and that sort of thing.

Guess it'd be a little bit different to the well structured hierarchy of the air force? All the politicking and so forth?

Oh yes, but it was a good experience.

I was just thinking when I was reading the notes they give us after your phone interview, some brief notes and the song 'You've Been Everywhere Man' just kept playing in my head. You've been everywhere. A lot of movements around there.

28:30 **(CHATTING)**

29:00 **We might go back and start again and talk a little bit more in detail about growing up. How come you were born in Geelong if your family lived in Pakenham.**

My mother had two nursing sisters in Geelong and they almost ran the Summton

29:30 Private Hospital in Geelong and they said, "You've got to come down and we'll look after you," and so on and that was it and I've been a Cats supporter ever since.

Where you the eldest?

By the way, my parents both came from Geelong originally so my father went to, he was a Geelong Grammar boy and my mother was Hermitage, which was the equivalent really,

30:00 so that was it.

Were you first born?

No, I was the number four. Yes, seven in our family.

Run us through, three girls and four boys...

Three girls and four boys, the eldest was a girl and I was number four as I said.

So Catholics? You were Catholics?

No, no, certainly not.

30:30 I was Presbyterian actually.

Oh well just very fit parents then...

Well they used to do that in those days - big families, they did, totally different to us.

Then over to Pakenham you said. Was it the Depression you said caused you father...?

Well think so, things were pretty grim, it was 1928 or '27 probably. He was on a,

31:00 he was running a dairy farm there and I think things were pretty rough and it was a fairly large family at that stage of the game and I think he was pleased to get a safe job in Kyabram. I remember those years, they were very difficult. Things were pretty rough and I remember trapping and shooting rabbits and

31:30 trapping water rats for pocket money in those days.

What would you do with the water rats?

Skin them and sell them. Water rats skins are beautiful.

Are they?

Mm, you don't hear of them these days. But in those days they were very much sought after.

What would they use the skins for?

I guess, furs for woman.

Are these the big water rats with a little white tail, little white on the end of the tail.

I think they did have but they were blackish-

32:00 brown pelt as a rule, I can't remember the tail. We used to catch them on the channels.

How would you catch them?

In a trap, a rubber trap. Very grim, I wouldn't do what I did in those days now, duck shooting and that sort of thing, I did a lot of that.

Well you've got to eat haven't you?

Well that's right. It was grim and rabbits

32:30 might have saved the day for many people.

I think rabbit saved the day for a lot of people in the Depression. Rabbits were the mainstay for a lot of households.

Absolutely and they were pretty good as far as the health was concerned because they didn't have any fat on them.

And what was your favourite rabbit dish?

I think my mother used to just stew them and put a lot of vegetables with them and I think that was the best one.

You've got to stew them for a fair while,

33:00 **they are a bit dry the old rabbit.**

Yes, she seemed to have it taped. But my father wouldn't eat it, he had to have some alternative.

Why wouldn't he eat rabbit?

I don't know. He just didn't like it.

Did you catch enough... would you rabbit-o? Would you go around...?

I no, no I just got enough. I used to look forward to selling the skin to a local man.

What would you spend your money on

33:30 **or would it go to your mum to buy groceries?**

I can't remember that exactly but whatever I got was well used and it was pocket money too.

So duck shooting, rabbit shooting, catching rats, how did you find time to stay at high school until you were 16?

Oh yeah I did, I used to do that on the weekends, the shooting and fishing, I used to love fishing, still do.

34:00 Used to catch a lot of redbfin in the channels there and in the Goulburn Valley - Goulburn River I should say. Murray cod were plentiful in those days. I used to love catching those.

That's something my generation doesn't get to do, there's not many left.

That was my relaxation in the channels there, catch the redbfin on worms or on a spinner as we called a lure, and that was great.

34:30 **Were you a particularly good student or did your parents insist you stay on till 16½, cause that was quite a lengthy school career for many boys of those days?**

Mm that's right. Well you know I went as far as I could go at school. There was no, we were certainly encouraged to stay on as long as possible but when I was offered the job

35:00 at Morrison and Saws, the solicitor, I took it.

Where your ambitions to go into law or was it to just get a job?

No, not at that stage of the game, it was a job was a job as far as I was concerned. I hadn't really made up my mind, I was quite enjoying what I was doing.

Did you have an ambition? Did you have a dream?

I didn't really have a great dream then. No, it was...

35:30 I found it a matter of survival really in those days.

Yeah, I think that was the case, wasn't it. People just wanted to get a job, get some food...

Yes, I was very much involved in sport there, football and cricket too, so it was a fairly full life. I had some good characters up there to play cricket with and so on.

Where you following...

36:00 **because this takes us up to about 1936-37, doesn't it, when you left high school? Where you**

following, at all, the build up of fascism in Europe? The rise of Hitler and Mussolini, was that something that was talked about much? Or took notice of?

I can remember the Italian-Abyssinian war very well and I remember the build up

36:30 to an extent but not... It sort of came as a bit of a shock. I can remember listening to the radio with my parents and the declaration of war. I can remember the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, say because Britain had declared war that meant that Australia also had also declared war, was at war. Yes it was

37:00 a bit of a shock. I remember talking around the table as to what each of us would be doing. We were all saying we would be going, no doubt about that.

Gee, your mother must have just...

Yeah but I think she expected it. I think my father did too.

Did you consider yourselves, because we've asked this question of many people and we get a different answer, were you Australians or did you consider yourselves British

37:30 **Empire subjects at that time?**

Very close ties to Britain. I didn't ever think we were independent in those days. It was very much the Empire, I thought, and everyone seemed to rally to that cause.

That conversation around the dinner table must have been, I'm sure there were many conversations around, "I'm going to do this," and, "I'm going to go there"?

Yes, yes.

Did it seem

38:00 **just like a great adventure to you?**

Well I suppose it was in a way but it was also the right thing to do, that was the thought that was foremost in our minds. The other boys were going and we were too.

So you said

38:30 **some of your friends reckoned that the air force was the way to go and they perhaps put the seed in your mind?**

Mm, I hadn't flown before. I'd never been up in an aeroplane.

Had you had any desire to?

No, I don't think so. I went out to see Kingsford Smith land close to Kyabram, I remember rushing out and seeing the aeroplane there, and there was an aeroplane that used to come over about 11 o'clock going up to Albury, I think, somewhere there, and

39:00 That sort of intrigued me a bit. I didn't have any great desire to get up there, there wasn't a burning desire at all to fly.

So was it the sharpness of the uniform then?

No, I don't know what it was, I'm not absolutely certain. I remember one boy that worked with me in the solicitor's office, he joined the air force and he had an influence on me and he went to train in Canada and I was on

39:30 the reserve at this stage of the game. That sort of reinforced my thinking towards the air force. I was already more or less committed anyway but I need not have gone into the air force but he convinced me with his letters and so from Canada that that would be the way to go.

What was it about Canada? Was it the girls or the weather or...?

No, he trained out on the prairies there but he like the life. Unfortunately he went to England and

40:00 he was still under instruction at that stage of the game and I remember going to the local theatre and word had just come through. His father used to be on the door of the local theatre there and he'd just received word that his son had been killed which was bad but, and that was before I got into the air force. I was only a reserve [unclear].

Tape 2

00:31 **I'd like to start this time Trevor about the 21 lessons. Tell us about that.**

Oh yes, well I think the air force wanted a certain standard to be attained by personnel going in and

they wanted it to be fairly uniform. And there were such things as navigation and so on and we didn't know all that much about it

01:00 and also the mathematics, geometry, trigonometry and algebra and that sort of thing. They wanted to know that we had reached a certain standard and to do that, they sent all people that were on the reserve this lesson so the school teachers who were volunteers would correct our work and give us any tuition that we might need.

01:30 And I think that was a pretty good system. At least the air force knew they were getting a certain standard down there. Of course, when we got down to Somers, after two months we were selected as pilots, navigators or wireless operators, so we weren't all the same category. But those 21 lessons, I think, were of great benefit when we went to Somers

02:00 for the, which was essentially just ground study down there.

Was it the sort of thing you would complete in a day, a week or a month?

Oh no, this took over, you know, 21 lessons took almost the whole year. The other thing we were doing was Morse code too at the local post office so we had to, or we tried to, reach a certain

02:30 standard in that. And that persisted by the way, that Morse code right up through elementary flying training we were doing that.

So you say you did Morse code at the local post office, did they still have Morse code telegraph there?

Yes, yes indeed. Yes that's going back a bit isn't it?

Yeah, I didn't think of that. Of course, where else would you do it?

Yes, that was going all the time, we used to do it in the post office there so that was a good place to learn.

03:00 So during that period leading up to May when I went into the air force, that was a very busy period. Sometimes the fishing had to go [unclear] and rabbiting and concentrated on that.

That's terrible. One thing that amazes me about your generation at that time, is a lot of your fathers had been to World War I or your uncles

03:30 **or a lot of men had been there and had seen the hellishness but there was still another young generation of boys excited about going to war. What were your feelings about war before you were actually in a uniform? What did you think you might encounter?**

I didn't think it was too good myself and they didn't have the films that you see now about Gallipoli and those places.

04:00 There was not much said about it but I knew quite a few returned people in Kyabram and the majority were suffering from something, you know, either as a result of gas, or some defect, or they'd been wounded. I recall those people and I didn't... I thought war was pretty terrible, you know, as a last resort sort of thing.

04:30 So I don't... although it was going to be an adventure, I wouldn't have liked a Gallipoli situation at all. I think it was absolute out and out slaughter as it was out on the Western Front; I wouldn't want a repeat of that.

Do you think that might have been partly why you opted not for an infantry role?

Even if I say so myself, I was a pretty good shot with

05:00 a pea rifle at 22. My brother had gone into the infantry but there was a certain resistance within me to going into the army. I just didn't have that great appeal. I thought the air force or navy might have been more in keeping with my thoughts at that time and so the air force, I think that was because of the friends that I had in the air force, it wasn't a burning desire to fight.

05:30 **Continuing in this vein, you hear and you read about and talking to men who were there, this burning ambition to get overseas and get amongst it. At the same time, the mortality rate in bomber crews in bomber command in particular was just outrageous.**

Oh yes, dreadful. You know, I guess I can thank my luck stars I wasn't in that. That was

06:00 pretty horrific really under Bomber Harris. The losses were pretty dreadful. When you lost a Lancaster, you lost seven men and the numbers soon mounted up.

Yeah, I think per capita the air force lost, was it more men than anywhere else? I mean, in terms of percentage especially during that period.

Do you mean

06:30 the RAAF.

The RAAF and the RAF in Britain.

I would think so. They likened it to that of the Western Front at one stage of the game. On a daily basis it was pretty dreadful. You'd get a 1,000 bomber raid the [unclear] was pretty high.

So Somers, and your first encounter with the pointy end of an aeroplane, the Tiger Moth...

07:00 That was at Benalla. Somers was largely drill and ground subject. Drill was the big thing, it was an almighty rush down there, everything was at the double, we ran everywhere, getting needles and things like that. It was all a bit of a shock to the system for a country lad, I can tell you that. You had people yelling at you all the time, the drill instructors and this and that.

How did you cope with that?

07:30 Well I suppose I coped all right but it was different, I can tell you that. It was totally different and you just had to be in it because everyone else was doing the same. So you just joined in.

Did you find that you adapted to discipline fairly well or did you end up saying, "Sorry sergeant, I don't think so"?

No, I adapted, I adapted, I think it was the best thing to do. And I don't think it's my nature to revolt really. No, I think

08:00 I took it all right but it was a real shock and by the time we left Somers you knew you were somewhere different to Kyabram, put it that way.

What sort of conditions were you in, I'm sure there wasn't a nice crisp bed for you?

No, we came down to Melbourne and the first thing that happened, they had arranged that we'd march through the city as a recruiting campaign thing. So we duly marched through the city and

08:30 then we were ushered into trucks and down to Somers. So we had to fill these palliasses at, it would've been about 6.30 in the dark it was, May, very cold. And I could, and they had heaters going everywhere,

09:00 water heaters going and I can still smell the coal that was burning there, heating this hot water service. But we filled our palliasses then we were given a meal and off to bed and the next day we were up at about 6 and so it went on. But I remember that initiation, it was something.

I imagine it would've been. Was the sergeant or the warrant officer a fearsome type?

Oh yes, corporal, corporal was big time. Corporal, a couple of stripes and

09:30 we had a corporal in charge of the hut. There would've been, oh I suppose we had 30 in a hut something like. We had to keep it spotless make out beds before we left there for breakfast. And you know... It was like a boarding school, I suppose, but a lot more discipline.

A lot of square bashing?

Square bashing all

10:00 the time. Drill, drill, drill, bayonets, fix bayonets, all this business. Rifle, .303. Yeah and it's amazing what can happen in two months. We were not bad, we could keep a straight line and march.

That's something.

In Benalla, that was the next move up to Tiger Moths and yeah...

So at this stage you didn't know

10:30 **what they'd allocate you to, did you? In terms of it was to be a pilot, navigator or gunner or ground crew.**

Yes a pilot, a pilot at Somers. At the end of Somers we were categorised. As pilot navigator or wireless operator. Straight air gunners, some of them were straight air gunners.

Were you quite pleased to be a pilot?

Oh yes, that's what I wanted to be. And Benalla,

11:00 open cockpits and so on, it was cold, terribly cold.

Can you remember your first flight in the Tiger Moth?

Yes I can.

Tell us?

We got into these great overalls and they were heavily lined, like a bear when you got them on. Big

gloves and things like that. I think that was the only time I wore that sort of thing. You know

11:30 you soon learnt to wear something else that gave you the feel of the control column and so on. Yes I remember it, yeah... It was something very different. It was like the films that you see with the old scarves on. World War I stuff.

Tiger Moths were pretty old even by those days, weren't they?

Yes, yes

12:00 but they were a lot better than the best of the World War I, a lot better than those. But they'd been in the service quite a time.

Was it a thrill or was it a bit too scary the first time?

It wasn't scary but it was just different. I was sort of saying, yeah, I wasn't quite with it, it ended all too soon I suppose, you just didn't get used to it. It was just a familiarisation flight for about, I think, 30 or 40 minutes, something like that.

12:30 **I've heard that one of the keys to being a good pilot, obviously one of the keys to being a good pilot is being able to land. But that was often the thing that sorted the wheat from the chaff in training with those...**

It didn't come naturally to me. I had my difficulties, like a lot of other people did, but some of them were much more adept. Just after a few hours they were able to

13:00 see the ground better than say I could. Some of them had probably flown before too, I think. But, yes, landing was the most difficult thing. The Tiger Moth, you didn't have any power, you used to cut it off at about 500 feet or something like that and it would be a gliding approach on landing. So it called for some pretty nice feel on the control column and your pedals of course,

13:30 the rudder pedals. It was something you just had to acquire.

And I guess if you're gliding you can't pull up and have another go if it's not working for you, can you?

You can if you want to, I mean you can open the taps in the throttle and go around again and make another approach. You know, you've got an instructor there yelling things at you, this and this. Once again, I didn't find it easy, I'll put it that way, I didn't find that easy at all but once you get a bit of

14:00 confidence that's the whole thing, it's a confidence deal.

What about skylarking? Where there any fellows that were doing rolls or doing what they shouldn't do or buzzing people or ...?

No, not that I know of but we had periods of aerobatics where we'd do all that sort of thing with an instructor and then we'd be told to go out and do it and we had a set area at Benalla, I well remember it was over a pine forest there. So you'd go over to that area

14:30 and carry out your slow rolls or loops or spins or whatever you wanted to do.

Loops in an open cockpit would be pretty hairy, I'd reckon.

Yes, what about the slow roll when you're hanging down on your straps, head pointed at the ground.

You can keep that as far as I'm concerned, thank you very much.

And then, Benalla, that was pretty good and then we went over to Mallala and that was an old wheat field that we were landing in,

15:00 the grass was so high. Then the Ansons. I was more at home on Ansons, they were a bigger aircraft.

So you like the Ansons better?

They suited me better because they were just bigger and heavier aircraft and they probably suited my character better.

They were a dual engine weren't they?

Yes a twin engine.

And you had

15:30 **about 3 crew in an Anson, was it?**

Oh we were flying them on our own. It was purely either an instructor or you were solo. Later on, say when we were practising say bombing runs or something that required another person there, both trainee pilots would fly together and take it in turns

16:00 doing it. That was in the second half of that training. As I said, the Japanese had come into the war and

that sharpened the training up I suppose. We didn't have very many aircraft out here, operation aircraft, we relied on America to give us those aircraft.

Yes, the Australian was incredibly under-

16:30 **equipped wasn't it?**

Oh terribly under equipped.

Those fighters, the Wirraways, were just sittings ducks really, weren't they?

Oh yes, up at Rabaul one boy who was on my staff course later on, Skin Hewitt, he got attacked down there. He was in one of those Wirraways and the CO, he said, "We, who are about to die, salute you." That was his statement to the Department of Air, he sent that telex back to them.

17:00 "We, who are about to die, salute you." Up he went against the Zeros, not in the race, that's very bad.

That was terrible, the Wirraways sent up against those Zeros, they were sent to die weren't they...?

They had no chance whatsoever.

Were you tempted or did you have the opportunity to train as a fighter pilot, or were you not interested? Or were you not selected or...?

17:30 At the end of the Ansons, I remember them asking us what we wanted to be and that was before the Japanese had come in. The Japanese came in the December and we had been well into the course by then. I remember them saying, "Light bomber, heavy bombers what do you want to be?" I think this boy whom I talked about trained in Canada, he said, "Go for the light bombers," you know

18:00 and I remember sort of ticking that off. Fighters, no I was not a fighter pilot.

The fighter pilots, are they different to other pilots do you think?

Well I think they probably got a different attitude, I think they've got more flair probably, it appeals to them. Rather than dropping bombs they'd rather try and hack down aircraft, that type of thing. It's a lot up here, mentality you know

18:30 and you've probably either got it or you haven't and I don't think I could ever consider myself a fighter pilot, ever. But the other ones was mainly in transport and bomber. So that was it.

While you are still training, do you get much leave back to Melbourne at all?

During the training?

Yeah.

19:00 I got home to Kyabram, Benalla was not very far. Now and again my father would pick me up for the weekend at Benalla and take me over to Kyabram and take me back again, that type of thing for a day or two.

I'm just wondering if you had any chances to swan around town in your RAF uniform and tease the women?

I don't know about tease them, we went into Adelaide quite a bit, quite a bit,

19:30 we would have the weekend there sometimes. Say, twice a month or something like that, I'd go into Adelaide. Had friends there and they were very kind to me and used to take me out around the pubs a bit and that sort of thing and of course our other boys are there now. That wife of mine, she's just wanting to see that things are going all right.

That's all right. Did you have,

20:00 **what did they call it a tiddly uniform? Was that the word, Stella [Interviewer]? That's the navy. They'd get another uniform handmade by another tailor that fitted much better than the army issue one.**

Yes, some people did that but not until they got commissioned or something like that, they might do it then. We all had very much a normal uniform just handed over.

I think the navy boys call it a tiddly,

20:30 **they'd get it handmade with a skin tight shirt...**

They were pretty odd. You were lucky if you got one that fitted you well when they were handed out.

Did you start out in the Giggle Suits? Did they have Giggle Suits?

Oh they had an overall thing, yes. We did most of our work in those in ... down at Somers and so on, we were in blue overalls most of the time.

21:00 And we'd only dress up perhaps on the weekend. It would be the only time we'd put a uniform on.

Where were you when you were given your wings?

Mallala, that was after the first part of the training at Mallala. We had a wings parade over there. That was a big thrill, a very big thrill for me.

Can you remember that day, the parade?

I remember the parade yes. I remember them pinning the wings on me.

21:30 It was one of the biggest thrills I had really cause it hadn't been an easy battle for me. I had to work on it and I thought that was pretty good. It was Wing Commander N. Breely, DSO, MC, AFC, I can remember. It used to be read out on parade ground. Standing orders by Wing Commander N. Breely. Yes, so he pinned the wings on me at Mallala.

22:00 It was good.

Were you a sergeant pilot at that stage?

Yes, I came out as Sergeant Pilot. I eventually got my commission in 1943. I was up at Port Pirie. Between Mount Gambier and Port Pirie.

And prior to the Japanese coming into the war, you were all focused

22:30 **on Britain and the Middle-East, I suppose, aren't you?**

We expected to go overseas. Just about everyone was, yes.

Were they giving you much information and much training, I guess, to be specifically flying in those theatres?

No, no, we weren't. This programme we were doing at Mallala was very much set out. You know, we had to do certain things, you know, a bit of bombing and all that sort of thing, gunnery. It was

23:00 very much a course, I suppose initially that they were thinking of Britain, they were thinking from Mallala's point of view, bomber pilots I think. Other people went to places like Uranquinty and Wagga where they flew Wirraways and those boys became fighter pilots normally.

23:30 So we were sort of bomber, sorted out at that stage of the game.

Were you given information on the German bombers and German fighters?

Oh yes, aircraft recognition was one of the subjects.

Were you also schooled in the capabilities of those aircraft, in what they could and couldn't do and so forth?

I think so, to a degree. We had a good idea what they were like, once again in aircraft

24:00 recognition and what their capabilities were.

It must have been quite a... I don't know if shock is the word then, but quite a surprise when the Japanese came in and all of a sudden you've got to learn about the Japanese planes and what they do and so forth?

We didn't have that much time to learn much about them because it was December the 7th and I think we would've finished our course mid-way through January, I think.

24:30 Although we were kept on at Mallala, filling sandbags and things like that, not wanting to know where we were going next. We really didn't do much aircraft recognition as I remember, we knew what they had but we didn't know too much about them.

Were the Japanese considered, at that stage, by Australian people in general and by Australian armed forces, to be much of a threat? Because

25:00 **I've heard that people were told that they were very short, their planes weren't very good that sort of thing.**

Couldn't see.

Yeah, were you fed that line?

We did get that line somewhere along the line and certainly came as a shock, Pearl Harbor, there's no doubt about that. I still saw them as a big threat though, despite the supposedly short sightedness and so on. I don't think you could believe that everyone was

25:30 like that. But I think, they'd been building up, we knew that, they had been building up their forces and they'd been buying out pig iron and stuff and they were a lot of surveillance around the shores and so

on of our country I think. We knew they'd been out here. Had them put aside as a bit of threat I would think

26:00 at that stage of the game but didn't train to combat them at that stage of the game. It was only after December 7 that we realised we had a war close to home.

Was there a bit, did it feel like there was a rush or a panic or a some kind of urgency to work towards defending Australia or to learn about the Japanese at that stage?

Well there was as soon as that happened of course but we didn't...

26:30 the people who were flying operationally would've learnt a lot more about that. At that stage of the game we were very much in the training side and we didn't quite know where we were going, really. As I said, we were set to go to Britain really. Japan coming into the war changed that to an extent but we didn't realise that our postings would be affected so much, that

27:00 was the problem, so our mind had been set on Europe and Japan was another thought. It was a secondary thought really until they ... probably until they bombed Darwin.

Well then, so they came in December 7th and bombed Pearl Harbor. By February, sorry by January you'd finished your course, you were saying, February 19 they bombed Darwin, that's two months

27:30 **and they were already on our doorstep, was there any kind of... what's the word, distress? Were people thinking, "They'll be in Melbourne by May"? Was that thought running through people's minds?**

Do you mean after they bombed Darwin or before?

Talking about: December 6 the Japanese aren't involved; December 7 they bomb Pearl Harbor; two months later they're bombing Darwin. Did it seem, and they'd already gone through...

28:00 **down to Malaya ...?**

Down to Malaya. Well I think the papers were full of it. The march through ... through Malaya and the falling of Singapore and so on, there were a lot of army involved in that and the 8th Division. It didn't affect us that much, that's what I'm saying. It did... when they bombed Darwin of course, I was up there

28:30 within about a month of that and so I was... When you're in Darwin you know very much... what's involved in a bombing raid, the type of aircraft involved I mean, so we all knew that when we got anywhere near the front. Back here, I think one relied on reports, intelligence reports that were coming through the papers and so on, and no doubt those boys who were going up north to fly Beau

29:00 Fighters or Hudsons or something like that would be well aware what was involved. But on the training side people were very much occupied flying the aeroplane and navigation and all that sort of thing but aircraft recognition would be there. But just what the strengths of the Japanese would be would hardly be known at that stage of the game.

You'll definitely know

29:30 **a lot more about what I'm going to say next, so correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that the air force copped a lot of flak after the first bombing of Darwin and that a lot of officers were replaced?**

I got up there after that bombing raid, I got up there in early April. Darwin had been

30:00 absolutely bombed out and the city of Darwin too, the town plus the airfield, very little left there. I understand a lot of, I don't think officers so much, a lot of personnel started to head south because they couldn't... I suppose they lacked some form of leadership there to keep them there or they may have been out of control but they certainly...

30:30 I know of people who sort of got down pretty close to Adelaide or Melbourne in a matter of a day or two. How they did it I'm not sure but I heard stories of that. At Hughes Field where I was, 30 miles south of Darwin, we were more or less just setting up camp there. It was a Hudson Squadron, 13 Squadron, they were very much involved in getting that right and they were operational from the outset. Although

31:00 they'd taken a bit of a battering, I think, on the way down. They'd come from up north, Ambon I think, and they'd moved south to Darwin from up in the islands. So they were sort of getting their act together you might say, replacing some crews and so and they were... During my term there, the 13 Squadron became a very effective Hudson squadron so it was all right, there was no

31:30 feeling of panic there but the stories were coming through of the devastation in Darwin so you couldn't feel completely safe and I think that was on everyone's mind. But it was pretty much the front line there, it could be the front line. Whilst this was going on of course the New Guinea business

32:00 was taking place, the Owen Stanleys and so on, that was in '42. So there was a feeling that they were coming towards our country all right, there was no doubt about that.

Oh they certainly were. The Milne Bay and the Battle of the Coral Sea and Buna/Gona and all those places it was just a hop, skip and a jump.

Yes, the feeling was there. We all carried 38s, or something like that,

32:30 on our hips and we didn't go anywhere without being armed and later on when they started bombing the strip... very much involved.

How did you get up to Darwin? Was that flying or on the train?

Yes, I flew up to Darwin from... I went to Alice Springs by Lockheed end then caught a Dakota up

33:00 to a place called Batchelor south of Darwin, that was my first flight in a Dakota.

Was that a bit of a culture shock for a boy from Melbourne, Kyabram, going to Darwin, which in those days was nowhere, really?

Yes it was quite a bit and the climate was so different too, apart from living in tents in a pretty basic sort of camp we had. It was

33:30 quite a shock there but you soon become adjusted, you soon learnt to do without things and make life easier for yourself. We all had slit trenches alongside our huts, came into good use later on. On the strip itself there were Bofors guns, army,

34:00 operated by the army. One of the boys in the Bofors crew, not far from where my tent was, was Peter Finch, you know, the actor, he was in a Bofors crew there. I used to talk to him quite a lot.

What sort of fellow was Peter Finch?

Oh a very laid back sort of a fellow. He read a good deal all the time. He was definitely... his mind was more on the arts than it was

34:30 on the Bofors gun, I'm sure of that. A very nice fellow, very nice fellow. Just I don't think the, he would say that the army was be his preference, you know, as a career. He used to absolutely take over and run some wonderful shows, you know, for the troops up there. He'd be the Master of Ceremonies and, oh, they would be excellent because that was about the only thing that we had to entertain us

35:00 up there.

Yeah, I'm sure they would've been marvellous.

Mm.

This section of transcript is embargoed until 1 January 2034.

36:04 **That's all right. What was the daily life like up there on the Hughes Airfield? What would your routine be?**

Always up pretty early and we would go half... I suppose it would be half a mile to breakfast in the Sergeants' Mess, come back

36:30 and there'd be the flying for the day and these were strikes, normally in the Hudsons. They were striking places like Dili, Koepang, usually in the Timor area, they'd go off in their threes or there might be night flying, but they were the normal targets over to Timor.

And you were in the Ops Room at this stage?

Yeah, we were actually on the

37:00 strip, you know, giving them the green light to take off and that sort of thing.

Was that frustrating for you? Did you want to be an air pilot?

Yes it was pretty frustrating but you had to become resigned to it and make the best of it otherwise you could get down in the dumps. That didn't happen to me. I knew those crews pretty well so we took an interest in... there were three of us, we

37:30 took an interest in how they got on and so on. It was very good, they had a good record up there.

Was there much of an attrition rate.

No, they lost one or two. One was in an attack on shipping in the Timor Sea and I remember a young pilot officer, I can't recall his name, he was captain of the aircraft.

38:00 The ship must have had some light ground fire and got him and he went into the water and lost the crew, which was bad. Others were mainly, there weren't too many more. I remember accident taking place there and the crew and passengers were killed. Other, it wasn't too bad.

38:30 Pretty good, they were a good lot of fellows there.

Tape 3

00:30 **I wanted to ask, I read a little bit about Squadron 13, I read that they were the squadron looking for the HMAS Sydney when it sunk? That might've been before your time there?**

Yes, I think I can just remember when that Sydney, when was that, '42?

Yeah, I think. It was the point...

01:00 I don't think it was 13. Darwin, Sydney was off the west coast wasn't it? Sydney?

Somewhere off...

I don't think it was 13 though, I think, they came from Pearce. That was pretty early wasn't it?

I think it was the point when Australia realised we were in the war.

They certainly didn't operate out of Hughes Field looking for Sydney I can tell you that, not while I was there.

Just a bit of vague curiosity.

01:30 **So on the airstrip and you were saying to John that it was a little bit frustrating watching all these planes taking off and doing all the work. Did you make attempts to sort of put yourself forward to join the bombing crews?**

No because I wasn't qualified, you had to be qualified on the aircraft. No, we were essentially up there to look after the take off and landing mainly, that's what we were there for.

Could you run me through, as

02:00 **if I know absolutely nothing about the experience of that, could you run me through a sort of a bit of a step-by-step process of what you would do to get a plane out successfully?**

Well it's largely, do you mean, mean from go to whoa, I mean they get a briefing at Operations Room on the mission and all our job was to see that they got off the strip properly.

Was there a certain sort of signalling that you'd have to go through?

Yes, yes just a green light. We had an Aldis lamp,

02:30 we didn't have radio. When all was ready and they'd run up their aircraft ready for take off we would give them the green light to take off. Similarly if there was something on the strip we'd give them the red light, "Don't go." So it was largely a matter of that, day and night.

And you mentioned to John that there was a little, a few accidents here and there but was there anything on the actual landing strips themselves that ever went wrong?

Just one coming in to land, just he landed short of the

03:00 strip and that was not on an operational flight, it was coming back from Batchelor which was about another 30 or 50 miles down, and he was coming in to land and he landed short and hit what I recall as stumps really, trees had been cut down and he went straight into them. Aircraft was not, didn't seem to be knocked around all that much but the crew and I think he had two passengers,

03:30 they were killed.

Despite the fact that there's a war going on and there's tragedy everywhere, when something like that happens like that must really hit the unit quite hard.

Well I think in wartime they expect that sort of thing but it does hit them hard when it's, when they got, I know one passenger when he was just of the Mess, he was a steward there, and he was just coming back and that affected people who, at the Mess. And of course the crew,

04:00 there's a great bond between crews and so on. Yes, it does affect them but it can only last a day or two, they've got to get on with it and that's all about wartime.

What sort of, say fire emergency equipment would be used, say in circumstances like that? Would there be a fire truck?

Yeah, fire truck. We, it was one of our duties, we had to operate that fire truck. We didn't have occasion to use it thank goodness. We were

04:30 trained how to use it but I couldn't remember now what we did. But yes, we drove the fire truck and we were on standby every time there was a take off or a landing.

So would part of your training have been fire drill as well?

Only up there what we learnt. I'm sure there would've been someone who knew a lot about the operation of that fire truck and would have told us but my memory won't allow me to recall it. But we did

05:00 operate it. We were in charge of that.

I'm curious about the fuel too because there must've just been so much fuel used in the RAAF. Do you have any knowledge how that was transported around the country, how it got to certain places? Where did Darwin access all its fuel from?

I imagine it would've come up the highway to those fields from the south.

05:30 I just can't ever remember great fuel trucks, it just doesn't ring a bell to me but we had drums of fuel up there. That was a big thing, drums of fuel, that's how they refuelled.

Was that a fairly simple procedure just filling up the...?

I think it became fairly, we didn't have much to do with that but, yes, I think they could handle that pretty well.

And I also understand that there were a lot of road building going on,

06:00 **a lot of the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] were involved in that. Did you see any of that?**

Well I think that was going on all the time really on the main roads and the repairs to the runways on the strip. There was a construction unit up there and I can't remember the name. Aircraft Construction, ACS, they called them. They were on the job most of the time up there, keeping strips and making new ones. Whilst I was there I know Truscott Airfield was

06:30 made, it was some distance away from us but I just recall them going to Truscott, Truscott was the boy who was killed, named after him, and I know they made that in amongst the timber and so on. But yes, construction and repair was going on much of the time.

And given its proximity, were there any indigenous servicemen operating around the area?

No, I know

07:00 there were but not to my knowledge, I didn't know them. I think the indigenous people were mainly along the coastline, going towards the Gulf of Carpentaria, around there, and I know they did have them on the island just north of Darwin who would act as early warning people. They would let the appropriate people know and in turn Darwin would get to know and I think

07:30 that's what happened on the first raid.

Actually that's what I wanted to ask, did you know much about, oh, this is a strange question but I understand that a lot of people in Australia didn't know much about the Darwin bombing for a long time?

No, I think they may have kept it rather quiet. They lost over 200 people there on that first bombing raid.

A lot of them civilians?

Yes, a lot of them civilians and a lot of them in the navy, the shipping on the harbour, and of course on the airfield.

08:00 Quite a lot, the total was some 200 and something. Being here I wouldn't know what the papers had, I was down in Sydney at the time, Camden. I can't recall but I don't think they told the story, I would think.

No, I guess they thought they'd panic everybody, which they would have.

Yes, I think as I mentioned earlier, I think a lot of the boys or some of the boys got

08:30 south very quickly from Darwin and I don't think by publish anything or by publishing something, I should say, that would do any good at the time. I think the Australian population might panic if they knew the casualties.

Yes, well I think they were already getting out the gas masks and building bunkers and so on.

So in terms of getting your information, was some of that through official channels and

09:00 **and a lot of it through rumour and scuttlebutt?**

You mean whilst I was up there?

Yeah, I mean, were you told directly or did you have to learn through other means?

I think it was word of mouth, through memory. I don't recall a proper briefing as to what had happened in Darwin, I worked that out myself. I went up and had a look at the town and so on but the casualties, I don't think I knew that

09:30 number until I got back here after I'd spent a year up there. I didn't realise we'd lost so many.

I was also interested in the Hudsons that you were working with down at the airfield. We spoke to a fellow from Timor and it seems that those Hudsons that were at the Laharus Airstrip in Timor took off basically the day before the Japanese moved in there. Did you have much to do with the pilots that were flying back over to Timor doing

10:00 **bombing raids?**

From here you mean? Oh yes, I knew all the pilots. I knew a lot of them.

Did they give you any information about what was happening on Timor?

No, no, no that was very much, their own knowledge really wasn't knowledge that they would spread. We would not get, I would not get any knowledge of what damage they did in their

10:30 bombing raids or what opposition they had really until a debriefing and that sort of thing. The squadron would know but not necessarily would I know.

I want to talk to you about the experience that you had basically under attack from the Japanese. You gave us a good description of it before but I wondered if we could

11:00 **just go back over that experience and how it was you ended up over there.**

Well I think it was early August really and about midday. The other two boys had gone across to lunch, I know that because they were about half a mile away, and I was on the strip on my own and we'd had a number of false alarms, you know, the air siren would go and we'd say, "Oh just another false alarm," but this particular day

11:30 it went and it kept going and I remember looking up and I saw this, these aircraft coming way up at 20 something thousand and I think there were about 27 of them or something like that and they did a run straight across the strip like that. Not down the strip, just on an angle, and I really wondered what struck me when the first bomb dropped and I can tell you that, it was just

12:00 straight across that strip like that. I don't know how many bombs they dropped but I know there were five within say 100 yards of where I was and I suppose they were about 250 pound bombs, something like that. There might've been one or two a bit bigger but it was quite an introduction to the war I would say, my introduction. And we had,

12:30 that day they set off the ammunition dump which was on the other side of the strip from me and a bit of a fire going on there but they didn't do too much damage with the aircraft as I remember. A few holes on the strip as a result of it but they were fairly quickly fixed and it didn't stop the aircraft operating.

About how many aircraft would have been on the strip at the time?

13:00 They wouldn't be on the strip, they'd be in their inserts, you know inserts, at the end of the strips. Inserts were all over the place, in amongst the trees with camouflage on them, oh I'd say about 10 maybe 12, something like that.

Curious to know how the Japanese had the coordinates or the knowledge of what was there?

Yes they had that and they used to come over at night too,

13:30 and they located our airfield. It was, they were sporadic raids and probably only about three aircraft, something like that, not a heavy raid, didn't go through another heavy raid while I was there, and they'd do some damage. I remember two or three aircraft being damaged, not beyond repair, they'd be repaired fairly quickly

14:00 but they did get damaged.

What sort of craft were the Japanese flying when they did the bombings?

Well I think they were Betties but I'm not absolutely certain of that. They were medium bombers, that's what you'd call them, but the make.... I'd to have to just... I'm not absolutely certain. I think they were Betties.

I guess it's one thing to experience a bombing raid when you're in the company of others, you

can sort of share that

14:30 **fear but yourself that was...**

Yes that was something, I was in this slit trench on my own, yeah it wasn't good, wasn't good.

Did the slit trench seem enough for you or did you feel totally vulnerable?

It was safe I suppose but there were clods and things falling around you just, you just wondered what was going on. You didn't quite know what they were,

15:00 the things that were hitting them back, but there was a lot of smoke and general feeling that things were not that good outside.

Did it happen slowly, like a car accident, or was it over really quickly?

Oh very quickly, they were straight across the strip and you can imagine they were doing probably 150 knots or something like that and it was all over in a very short time.

15:30 There was ammunition going off of course when they hit the ammunition [unclear]

I imagine that was camouflaged as well?

Oh yes, it was in the trees, in amongst the trees. It was fairly good, just sheer luck that they got that. I mean, they weren't aiming at it because I don't think they were aiming at anything at all except the airstrip, they wanted to put that out of action, stop the Hudsons operating and in that regard they didn't do all

16:00 that well because, as I said, the strip was quickly repaired and operations as normal.

I don't suppose you could recall what went through your mind when you were in the slit trench by yourself?

I thought it was all hell breaking loose, I really did. I had not experienced anything like that.

Does one think of their family at a time like that or not enough time?

No not enough time, it was just,

16:30 'Hell what's going on here,' sort of thing and keep your head down, that type of thing. And of course the ground vibrates but really when I think back, when you think of people in London and places like that and Berlin, just nothing, nothing just to a young fellow from Kyabram.

I think it'd put me off solids for a few days.

But being on my own

17:00 probably was the worst part of it too. It probably would've been handy if there'd have been someone to talk to or say something, yell and scream.

Were your other mates watching it? I mean, did they know where you were at the time or were they busy under the table as well?

They were over eating but they would've no doubt...

That was like a half a mile away or something?

Yes, it was over the other side of the raid, no bombs dropped near them.

But they wouldn't have missed it?

Oh

17:30 they were aware and came back and I think they were pleased to see me - in one piece.

Do you know that laconic attitude a lot of Australians have and seems to be endemic in the services, did they actually let you know that they were glad to see you alive or was it a bit, you know, just take it in their stride.

Oh they took it in their stride. You know a lot of joking and so on going on.

What sort of things did they say to you, like, "Pity they missed," or...?

It'd be something like that,

18:00 I'm sure. Probably, "Serves you right," or, "You deserved it." Beaufort gunners fellows were there in their trench, you know, Peter Finch and those boys, they were very close to where I was.

Did they acquit themselves well?

Oh yes, the Beaufort Gunner was limited to about 10,000 feet and these things were much higher than that.

18:30 **Amongst your friends there, how would you spend the down hours? Not so much off duty but when there wasn't anything actively happening?**

I played cricket up there in the team. We played cricket quite often. Trying to think what sport

19:00 we, other than cricket, I know we were active all the time but I just can't, a lot of time up there.

Was there anywhere else to go out the base there?

Oh down to Batchelor, you could go down there. There were a few other strips around the place that you could go and visit people, I did that a little bit. I did, as I mentioned earlier, some fishing in the Manton Dam there.

I'll leave all those questions for John,

19:30 **the enthusiast. How would you get around then, would you be entitled to take a staff car?**

No, I didn't have a staff car, we hitched mainly, any driving we did around there was in the fire truck so we'd get from one end of the strip to the other or over to the other side of the road but we couldn't take it far because it was needed on the strip but that was our means of transport.

It kind of sounds a bit fun I'm sure it probably wasn't but it sounds like a bit of fun

20:00 **touring around in a fire truck?**

Yes well it was all right. We kept our heads a bit and we managed to fill in a bit of time but you're asking me now and I'm not absolutely certain what we did but we did fill in time. We probably had some chores to do I would think.

I'm sure there was a bit of card game playing going on?

I'm not a card man myself, no. Read a lot.

What,

20:30 **was there a library there or were you able to bring your own books?**

No, no library. Jus dependant on people issuing, I think there was some local thing, but we didn't have books unless they were sent up from down south.

You must have borrowed Peter Finch's?

Yes, yes.

Could you tell me a little bit more about the concert that he put on, or be part of the services' concerts that happened?

Well he would,

21:00 I can remember them but it's rather vague as to what actually happened. There were quite a few musicians there who were, who helped set up but marginally he had a play going and he used to recruit the right type of people from around the Officers' Mess or the medical section to play the part of the female. They were very adept at that,

21:30 they were naturals, let me say that. So he was a very good recruiting officer.

Dare I ask what sort of personality traits a fellow needs to play a woman in service concerts?

I'll leave that to your imagination, I'm sure you'd know. They were normally around the Officers' Mess or round about there and they didn't have to do any practice, I'll put it that way.

Oh no,

22:00 **so now I'm going to have to ask? What was the situation there amongst the services? You were quite isolated, I mean were a lot of fellows of, shall we say, of a different sort of persuasion?**

Oh no, there'd just be a handful and I'm, not to say that they were that way, they acted that way. That's all I would say.

I have no idea where the term 'camp' actually originated from but perhaps it had something to do with the services, I don't know.

Which word?

The word 'camp',

22:30 **I guess if that's what you were alluding to, yeah. How was that treated then? I mean Aussie blokes are blokes, they wouldn't have taken to that too kindly. Was there sort of any discrimination or gossip going on?**

Oh no, no, no. No they were just the same, they just acted slightly differently.

Were they still mates with everybody?

Yeah, yeah. Oh no and they were good concerts really, they were really.

23:00 **I'm always stunned at the amount of musical instruments that seemed to get into places?**

Yes, just the basic ones, they just seemed to fill in but I can't recall the exact type of concert it was. It was there and everyone appreciated it and they thought Peter had, did a wonderful job in organising the whole thing but the details are very much faded at this stage of the game.

23:30 **I'd lay bets he was a Nock Howard fan?**

Yes, very good, he played the major role normally. You know he would be the key man and as I said he recruited well too, for the other parts, I know that and they came to Hughes from the other airfields around. So we always had a good crowd there.

Would they be held at night?

Yes.

What was the

24:00 **deal then in terms of blackout and so on?**

Oh well it would be subdued lighting there and of course if there was an air raid siren all lights out anyway. As long as there was no aircraft around it was okay.

Okay. And down in Batchelor, were you able to fraternise with any of the locals? Did you meet any of them?

Down at Batchelor, no. The only reason I went down there was to see one or two people that I knew,

24:30 didn't get to know outside people, people outside the services I mean, no.

Yeah, they were pretty contained I expect. And the mail, did it get to you fairly regularly up there?

Yes, we got regular mail, it was quite good. There was a mail service, a pilot was flying a Tiger Moth and he used to have a bag in the back

25:00 you know, and he'd land at Hughes and drop off the bag, this was one way of getting it. I mean it wasn't all the mail, but this was one way of getting it and he'd gone on to the other airstrips and he was coming up from Batchelor, I think that's where he originated, maybe a bit further south.

And what were you able to write home at that point?

As I remember, we could write certain things but there was a

25:30 restriction, there was no doubt about that.

Did they give you instructions as to how to restrict your letters or did they leave it up to your own imagination?

I think it was generally known what we shouldn't write about and I think everyone knew that. It was in their own interests anyway.

And did you come up with a code to let you family know?

No, they just wanted to know that I was still alive and kicking.

You've talked a bit

26:00 **about this so I won't labour it for too long but I'm curious to know if you can give me any kind of a sort of a word picture about how Darwin looked when you went up there after the bombing and saw the damage that had occurred. I mean there wasn't a lot of infrastructure up there.**

No, I remember the post office and so on, I can't remember much else. The direct hits were around about there, that's all I remember and the Darwin airstrip was put out, completely out. There was

26:30 bomb craters everywhere.

And in the harbour, were there wrecks in the harbour?

I didn't see the harbour because they'd cleared most of it. I know there was damage there to the wharves and so on, I remember seeing that, but all the shipping and so on was either on the bottom of the harbour or taken off.

And given how large the land mass is up there and you just can't protect it in the way you could the English Coast...

No.

Was there any special security

27:00 **in operation where you constantly had to show your pass or were there...?**

No, no there wasn't. No, I don't think that was a problem because anyone landing on that coast in small numbers would've been sighted, I think, by the locals. There was not much point in that unless they were more or less spying for someone but large numbers,

27:30 that was not on, and small numbers wouldn't count for much. It's pretty hostile countryside anyway and they need all their wits about them to survive up there.

Yes, I'm sure the Japanese would discover that the landscape was enough for them to contain it?

Oh yes, it's a big problem up there.

There was apparently a boatload of six or seven that landed in Western Australia but they didn't survive long.

No, no, they've got a big hurdle if they

28:00 try to come south. They've got the desert anyway but just up there, just living in that country up there, they'd be able to get water but not much else.

There was an enormous amount of troops up around that area, though. Did you have any evenings in and around the pubs?

Pubs, no pubs.

Nothing, no drinking places of any description?

No, no, I think we got,

28:30 probably got two bottles of beer a month, it was some ration that was pretty ridiculous. You didn't get any more than two bottles at the one time, if you got that.

And warm, I bet?

Oh yes that's right. Liquor was not on really, didn't have it, it just wasn't there.

Did you have any knowledge of radar in operation amongst the [unclear]?

Yes we did, I had knowledge of it but I didn't know

29:00 too much about it but I knew there was radar and certainly since, I've learnt a bit more about it, where it was stationed up there near the Gulf and so on.

And did you have occasion ever to receive information coming through from radar, like I'm assuming the radar guys would've known about that bombing raid at the Hughes airfield?

Yes, I think so. We certainly got warning that's for certain, they would've picked that up

29:30 before they got to Darwin I would think. They were coming in from the north so we were only a few minutes south of Darwin, yeah, I'm sure radar would've picked them up. I don't think they did on the first one, I don't think there was much there. I think that the people on the islands notified them and I don't think anyone took any notice, that's what, from what I've read about that.

Yes, I think those arguments are still raging.

30:00 **What about access to general knowledge about what's going on in the rest of the, basically around New Guinea and so on and the rest of the services? Were you able to get a look at a newspaper at the time or were you isolated?**

We would just get the odd headline about what was going on, we didn't have anything in depth at all as to, I had a brother, as I mentioned earlier,

30:30 that was in the Owen Stanleys in the 2/14th Battalion and he was in the infantry and I was very interested of course as to how they were getting on there but we got very little information up there.

Was he able to write to you?

No, or we didn't. He wouldn't have been able to anyway. He was

31:00 wounded up there and he had to be evacuated. There's a big story about him actually.

I'm just checking John, 2/14th, they were the reinforcements that went in after the 39th on Kokoda?

Yes, 2/14th and 2/16th, they were both there. Yes he was in the 2/14th.

And was he part of that operation?

Yes, yes he was wounded there, the boy ahead of him was killed and Russell, it sort of diverted

31:30 into his spine and it sat there. And the big thing was, the big decision to be made was as to whether he had that removed because it was so close and my uncle was a doctor and Russell was evacuated down to Tamworth, I think it was. And he said, "No don't let them operate," so he carried that around until he passed away. So you know I was very interested in that, in the Owen Stanley

32:00 thing, the battle, because of Russell.

And how long after that incident did you find out about, say for example, Kokoda and your brother's involvement in it?

I'm trying to think of the date there, it was in '62, wasn't it, Kokoda?

'42

'42 I mean. I don't think I learnt about it

32:30 until I came home. I might've just heard about it but I know he was in the hospital up there in Tamworth and I went up there for a refresher course after Darwin so I learnt a bit more then, that was in '43.

It was probably just as well you didn't know at the time.

Yes.

Okay, we are nearly at the end of this course but I'll move on to, a little bit to that refresher course.

33:00 **Refresher course, Central Flying School in Tamworth. Oxfords? Was it the first time you laid eyes on an Oxford?**

Yes, yes it was.

And what did you make of that craft?

Oh that was a good training aircraft and it was good training I had at the Tamworth Airfield there. They had Wirraways and other things there too at the same time. They were Central Flying School, as they call it.

Would you,

33:30 **say for example, have a staff pilot who would take you through an operation?**

An instructor.

An instructor. Okay, can I sort of hear a little bit more about those experiences? I mean you were equipped to fly a plane by now but...

You require instruction on, when you go on to a new aircraft, you just can't hop into a cockpit and fly.

So a pilot couldn't just sort of figure it out from basic training, they'd need to go through all the instruments and...?

Oh yes, I mean there's

34:00 cockpit drill you carry out and so on, you must know that.

Can you tell me what a cockpit drill for an Oxford would be like then?

Well yes, it'd be the same for an Anson I think, I'm just trying to think. You're asking some good questions here. I can remember this: TMP, fuel flaps and Sperry. Right, temperature. TMP, mixture, TMP pitch, that's the propeller pitch.

34:30 What did I say, fuel? Make certain you've got your fuel, adequate fuel. Flaps on the wings, make certain they're up and not down for takeoff and Sperry means instruments, just to make certain your instruments are working you know, instrument flying panel that you've got in the aircraft, in the cockpit.

That's a funny word, Sperry?

Oh, Sperry made them.

35:00 **Oh okay.**

Fuel flaps and Sperry. That was one way of learning it, you know, set off. And before you did it you'd touched the things you know, like that. In that way you wouldn't overlook anything. Some aircraft of course you used port and flap and so on. Later on we had a checklist. The co-pilot would read it out or if you were solo you'd read it out yourself but you wouldn't do anything from memory later on

35:30 as the aircraft became more sophisticated. But an Oxford was the equivalent of an Anson, it was much the same.

Did you have a favourite craft in all your years of flying?

I suppose if I had to name one it'd be the Dakota, later on, it was the 'queen of the skies' as they called it. It was ahead of its time. That's the one I flew on the airlift.

They were big fellows weren't they?

A twin engine.

36:00 **I thought they also called them 'biscuit bombers'?**

They did. That was in New Guinea when they were dropping supplies. They were being used, I think they were being made, produced, in the early '30s and you know they're still flying now.

Are they?

Mm.

Where would they fly them now?

Well, I see one up every now and again and I can tell it by the sound, you know, and I go out and have a look at it. They do joy flights along the

36:30 coast here, down to Nepean and back again, I think it's Qantas probably.

I might have to treat myself to one of those one day.

Yes, they fly at about 1500 feet maybe a 1000 feet. It's probably good for the look of the bay and suburbs.

I reckon it might be good for a tax deduction too, we'll see.

Yes, I think ... I quite liked the Lincoln bomber and later on I flew the

37:00 Caribou back from Canada. You know, you get used to them but if you had to ask me one, I'd say the Dakota.

Do they have personalities in the way, say, a ship might?

Well I think aircraft and some of them are more docile than others and I think that suited me. I'm, I think I'm more suited to that type of aircraft, they're not

37:30 difficult to fly as long as you treat them right, any aircraft will bite if you don't treat it properly.

Like a horse?

Yes, yes, if you treat it properly and do all the right things and you've got adequate skill you can get by, I think. Some aircraft are more difficult than others to fly.

And what about comfort? Are some more comfortable inside?

Oh yes, oh yes, I think the American aircraft are very comfortable, the Dakota happens to be

38:00 like that. The Lincoln, I think they built the aircraft and said, "Hey we've got to put a pilot in there somewhere," and they just went like that and put it in and you got a very basic sort of cockpit and so on but they're not a bad aircraft. It was, it was the follow on from the Lancaster, just a bigger aircraft.

Yes, I think John mentioned that this morning, beautiful craft the Lancaster. Just quite remarkable

38:30 **looking.**

Oh yes they were a good one but they're not, just generally speaking they haven't got the comforts of the American aircraft but it was wartime aircraft. All you had to do was get an aircraft that flew well, did the job and make certain that the crew could get in so it was more basic. They're probably just not as comfortable as the others.

And what about nerves? You'd have to have fairly cast iron nerves to manage

39:00 **to fly and I'm not sort of trying to be patronising and saying 'especially in those days'. But you know it was pioneering aviation at the time?**

Oh yes, I think that they'd progressed a bit from the pioneering side. I mean we had good instructors

and so on. I supposed once you leave the ground you've got to have some sort of a nerve and hope that you might get back again. I suppose it was always in doubt when I did that

39:30 but managed to survive without pranging any aircraft or doing anything like that.

Tape 4

00:34 This what's his name, Bear, he got wounded too and he and Russell, Russell had been wounded, Teddy, Teddy Bear, he spoke at Russell's funeral, he was wounded in the legs and couldn't walk and Russell had been wounded in the back so

01:00 he got a long stick and Teddy Bear hung on to that and Russell used to pull him over the hills. Otherwise they crawled and got back to the RAP, the Regimental Aid Post and there's quite a story about that. There was, it was quite a thing, they did well.

That's extraordinary. Some of the accomplishments

01:30 **during those experiences were well above the yardstick anyway.**

Oh yes it was good. It was tough, fighting there was really tough and that 39th, goodness gracious they got cut to ribbons and they were only kids too. They were the militia and the 2/14th of course had been battle-hardened by their experiences in the Middle East and so on and the 16th

02:00 and they took over from a battalion that had, that was just sent up there too early. It was ridiculous really, not enough training and very young and the odds were against them but they did a wonderful job, an absolutely wonderful job.

Was that your younger or your older brother?

Older.

Did you already kind of

02:30 **hero worship or did that really put it over the top for you?**

Oh I think when I heard about it, it was pretty good. I didn't know much about it, he didn't speak much at all. Did a good job.

Very circumspect kind of generation?

Mm.

What, speaking of heroic acts, heroic acts, I guess, are normal people

03:00 **doing extraordinary things, did you experience anything like that in amongst your services?**

No I didn't, not really. I think people have done a good job but I don't know of any great heroics but I've read of them of course but I haven't been present when it's happened. I haven't seen any.

This section of transcript is embargoed until 1 January 2034.

04:10 **Some of the RAAF we've spoken to either had a love for the machines themselves or a love of the actual flying, they had a love for something. Was there one particular thing that really kind of got your blood running?**

No I don't think so. I don't think I had,

04:30 I got used to it and I liked achieving something and I think in that regard the Berlin airlift was the one that I really liked because your mind was set on helping people. It was not one of going out and inflicting the greatest damage you could. It was more pleasant to do that and more fulfilling and got a lot of satisfaction all round

05:00 on the airlift because people needed you and you could help them.

Well you were saving lives.

Mm.

I meant to ask earlier before the tape finished before, in terms of learning to fly new aircraft what about parachute training, did you ever get any of that?

No, thank goodness no. Had them strapped to me a few times, the parachutes, but I didn't ever want to use them. They did do a bit later on, afterwards, I think they did have a course

05:30 where they dropped off Point Cook and so on but I was never one and I don't think I would ever volunteer either, I don't think so. I'd use one in danger of course, we had parachutes to use if we had to, but I wouldn't use one unless I was in dire straits. I wouldn't do it for practice that's for certain, might do an ankle, be out of the team.

What sort of instruction did they give then, if you were in the air

06:00 **and you're...?**

Oh you knew how to use it. You, it would depend on what aircraft, you either sat on the parachute in the single engine thing or if you were flying a Lincoln, for instance, you had the harness on and you had a parachute alongside, you'd just pull it out and put it on like that. The parachute went here and you'd just pull it when you got clear of the aircraft.

Did it have one of those things in front of you to release...?

That's to release the whole thing.

06:30 That's to release the harness when you want to get out.

Oh that's to release the whole lot.

If you did that you'd be up there, "Hello Mum," you know, waving.

"No hands!" The other thing I'm curious about, these days we have access to aerial photography and imagery all over the place, we already know before you go up in a plane what it's going to look like on the ground. But the pilot was in a rare position

07:00 **to have that perspective. Do you recall the first time you suddenly went from being on the ground to looking at the, you know, 'God's great Earth' underneath you? Was that impressive to you?**

Do you mean the first flight?

Yeah, or early flight when you start to appreciate the geography that you've been standing on.

When you're trying to identify your house or something like that?

Yeah, things like that or you can see the shape of the maps that you've been looking at.

Yeah, everything

07:30 looks so small from up there and it depends entirely on the height at which you're flying. Yeah, it takes a little bit to get orientated properly. As I said they're so small and you'd say, "Well where's that orchard out the back of the house?" sort of thing and, "It looks such a tiny thing." Yeah, but you get used to it. You'd do a lot of cross countries,

08:00 where you've got to sketch the town or something like that, in your training. Then when I was flying at Mount Gambier, that's what the navigators would do, they'd be asked to sketch or get the main points of Dimboola or one of those towns there when I was flying from Mount Gambier, that's in navigation training. Well when you're flying the aircraft you get to know it a bit too.

You did a bit of navigation training, yeah Mount Gambier. You did navigation. What sort of, were there

08:30 **regular landmarks and so on that you would start to work out your co-ordinates or ...?**

The boys were doing the navigation, I was just flying. They would have a set route to go, town to town or turning points anyway. They were briefed by their navigation instructors as to what they had, yes they'd have the latitude and longitude of a point if there wasn't a town there, but they'd have it anyway.

09:00 They had to identify the town but it was a very small turning point so they'd have the 'lat' and 'long', as they used to call it, and they'd know all about it and turn when they reached that point. They would know their navigation was accurate by knowing the lat and long of the town if they came out at a certain... They'd be able to take a check on their wind, that was a big thing.

09:30 They'd do a wind check halfway along the leg and make certain that the wind that they'd got, that they'd been briefed on before they took off, they'd want to know if there had been a wind change, a wind change would throw them right off course. So they'd have to do that and apply it and adjust the next course, give me a different course to fly to get me to that place.

I

- 10:00 **can understand literally how the wind changing course would affect the flight but it would change it in terms of speed? Would they need to match their speed or ...?**
- No, groundspeed yes, air speed remains constant, you're doing 140 or whatever it is. If you've got a head wind, your ground speed, it could be 100 if you've got a 40 knot wind, so that varies, so in other words they would work out the change of wind,
- 10:30 their ETA, estimated time of arrival. So instead of getting there 10 minutes past 12 they're going to get there at half past 12, something like that, whatever it is.
- Yeah, I'm sure that would make a huge difference in terms of security and so on.**
- But that's in the training, that's a navigator, he does that.
- Sure, but you were flying the students at Mount Gambier?**
- Yes.
- How did that operate, was that up to them to tell you where to fly and if they were giving you the wrong instructions,**
- 11:00 **what would you do?**
- We knew what the route was and we also had a wireless operator in the craft too in case we got lost. He could check and get a couple of ...
- That'd be a bit like crimping?**
- Yeah, we didn't get lost. I mean those country towns I knew like the back of my hand really, that wasn't a real problem.
- So did you kind of have a native knowledge of the area anyway?**
- Yeah,
- 11:30 you get that knowledge after flying up there a while, you know the towns, but you can't get far off course anyway. It takes a tremendous wind to push you too far off course, you might get a degree or two but not too far away.
- Had most of your navigators come straight out of the EATS [Empire Air Training Scheme] course?**
- They would come from, they did the ITS [Initial Training School] down at Somers
- 12:00 like I did and then they would go to Mount Gambier whereas I went to Benalla.
- Where they all good or did you have a couple of duds on the way?**
- You always get one or two who would like to lose you if they could. Yes, a few of them not too good.
- Could you pick them from day one?**
- No, no if they're messing up horribly and you know quite well where you are going and they're way off the beam you know they're
- 12:30 not doing everything right but, you know, as they mature and as the course goes on they improve and if they're not good enough they miss out anyway.
- Just a sec, for a moment, women have this terrible reputation for not being able to read maps and therefore men would make better navigators. So what would it take, do you think, in your observation of training these guys or flying them,**
- 13:00 **what would it take to be a good navigator then?**
- I'm not quite the right guy to ask that question to.
- I'm sure it's a little bit out of your...**
- Map reading was only one thing, it was only part of it and you only use map reading to confirm where you are going. They used dead reckoning most of the time on a course,
- 13:30 it's worked out, 'DR course' they call it, 'DR heading'. They work it out on their maps, they draw lines and adjust the wind, that's where they get the course to fly from. It's all worked out on paper first, knowing the wind, they can apply it and so they know exactly what they got, and they do it on the ground and then they adjust it in the air
- 14:00 when they get a wind change.
- It's fascinating. And you said you knew the land really well, what about night flying? Was that just marginally more complicated?**

Yes it is. It was probably a greater chance, I suppose, than flying by day but you're still never very far away and you can always get home anyway and the wireless operator will always get you a course to fly if you get into trouble because of the beacon,

14:30 he can give you a course to steer to get to that beacon which is at the base.

Well how sophisticated was wireless reception between the operator and traffic control?

Well, it was, we didn't do much talking, it was mainly using Morse code and so on

15:00 so they kept in touch with the base, that's all. It was okay, they'd have a timed schedule on which to call and they could give the base an idea where they were, so that's how they got by there.

In Port Pirie and Ballarat was it a similar ...?

A similar sort of thing.

I'm assuming here but you can give me a kick if I go too far, all this time this business is going on overseas are you

15:30 **sort of feeling really fed up that you're not being sent over there, are you feeling wasted in your service?**

Mm, oh well yes, but it's all flying and you know you're learning a bit.

And you're safe as houses.

Yeah, as far as the enemy is concerned but I wasn't, the thing I was looking forward to was getting up north, you know, flying up there but I was denied that.

Why was that?

Well I did the course at Bairnsdale

16:00 and then I got to Sale and I was flying Hudsons and my instructor said he thought I needed a few more hours before I went through with that course. So I thought, "Okay, I don't agree with you, I think I'm doing all right myself." But he thought otherwise and instead of coming back to do that

16:30 course, I went up north as an operations room officer, up to Higgins Field up at Cape York. That was frustrating, that was frustrating going up there I mean.

So it sounds as though you'd done hundreds of hours of flying by then?

Well I'd done some, yes I'd done a few hundred. At that stage of the game they were closing down the Hudson flight and I

17:00 just thought I was progressing all right and he just thought differently and I don't know what it was. I just didn't make it and that was very frustrating for me.

Were there avenues to take if you felt you weren't being dealt with properly?

Oh I suppose there would've been but at that stage they had more pilots than enough, they were all coming back from Britain. There was an influx of

17:30 pilots everywhere. It was just frustrating really.

In all that time did you get much leave to go home and see the family?

Oh yes, from time to time I did. I'd just go home every three months or something like that.

And what about, you know, again with your brother and the other members of your family, were there chances that you were actually all together for a Christmas in that period of time?

No, no

18:00 I don't think we ever got together. Clive, my other brother, who is still alive, he was in Tobruk and then he went up to New Guinea, he was in one of the landings there. He was in the 2/12th. I didn't see much of them. They were always elsewhere, we didn't catch up really till after the war.

18:30 And Clive was down in Melbourne, Russell was still up in Kyabram, saw him quite a bit. And the other boy was down in Melbourne here, Alan, who is no longer with us either. So there you are.

I'm wondering then, was it a bit of an isolated experience for you at that time because guys in the RAAF couldn't necessarily rely on seeing the same friends all the time because everyone was posted or...?

That's right we went in different directions

19:00 really. Yes, you'd meet up with them at one flying school and wouldn't see them again in maybe a year's time on a totally different set up, not like the army where you stuck together. Russell had the 2/14th

boys for ever and a day, he went to their reunions and so on. It's very hard to get a reunion in the air force, with the people you knew I mean, it's not much fun

19:30 going to a squadron reunion if they're totally different people, people you didn't know. It's not worthwhile, that's what I found. So just summing up, most of my flying was done after the war.

Don't worry we're saving loads of tape time for that.

That was, from nothing to everything.

20:00 They didn't ever, in my view have enough aircraft out here, operational aircraft to cope with the situation here.

No, it doesn't seem in retrospect that it was given its due.

And once more the Americans moved quickly towards Japan, island hopping, and I think our aircraft here were left to mop up certain areas in New Guinea and so on that they'd left behind.

Yes, I think the Australians were given the scullery work.

Yes, that's right.

20:30 **What was it like then to have been in the RAAF all that time in Australia when the war ended and people were coming home? I mean, I'm sure you were pretty happy about it finishing but...**

I was up at Townsville, went to Higgins Field which is on Cape York Peninsula, I was up there for six months. Came down to 84 Squadron which had Mustangs and I was their operations officer.

I think that one up there, is that a Mustang in the painting up there?

21:00 No, that's a Spitfire, and they had Kittyhawks and then Mustangs. I in fact flew the Kittyhawk a little there, no not much, a few hours. When they got their new aircraft they allowed me to fly something like that. But war ended there so they disbanded. I went up to Higgins Field again. Aircraft coming through, a lot of transport

21:30 aircraft and squadrons coming home from New Guinea and then I came back to Townsville and I think I said to John, I went on to a couple of recruiting tours in a van and so on and then I got posted to 38th Squadron so I was back to flying again. In the meantime, as I said, I met Pat and we were married in '47.

22:00 **Well I wanted to talk about that in two ways. I mean, after the war there was an extraordinary number of weddings occurring for obvious reason but I wonder also whether, it strikes me that the end of the war sort of gave great opportunity for people to stop holding their feelings in, you know, stop having to soldier on and there was probably this wonderfully, a wonderful sense of emancipation and an opportunity to love.**

22:30 **Was it a romantic period of time for you anyway, regardless of the time that you met your wife?**

Townsville was a good place we had a lot of parties and things out, we were based at Ross River, once again living in tents and things there but every now and again we would run a great big party there and ask all the people we knew round about and so on. We had a pretty good time, Townsville was the hopping off place really.

23:00 It was a very big servicemen's town really. Out at Garbutt, the airfield, that was a busy place. It always had a lot of entertainment going on there and other units around the place. Yes, Townsville was quite a good place. I don't know that it made any difference to me, I always seemed to have someone to write to along the line, just kept in touch with certain

23:30 people.

Female mates?

Oh yes, just ones like that. We met in Townsville and married about a year or so later.

Well set the scene for me a little. Were you still in uniform?

Yes, yes.

And Pat was in the Women's National Emergency Service. I don't know anything about that?

WNLS.

WNLS?

WNLS, yeah, they were a service that drove

24:00 Americans, they were employed mainly by the Americans.

Pat hadn't been swayed by any of the men in their uniforms with a slightly bit better cut of [unclear]?

A bit more money too. Probably she had but there you are I don't know, it was a fair fight.

Was it the first time that you fell in love?

Oh,

24:30 I couldn't answer that question. I don't think so.

All right, I'm getting a bit personal.

I shouldn't say that, but I don't think I'd fallen for anyone really, I had acquaintances, that's all.

I'm sure she'd forgive you after 50 years.

Good question that, God that was a good question.

What was it about

25:00 **Pat that caught your eye then?**

I think she seemed a little bit different, she had a lot of get up and go in her. She was pretty attractive in those days and still is I hope. We seemed to like the same things and so got on well together, seemed to enjoy the parties together.

And had she been based north, based up north for most of the war?

She'd been

25:30 up there a good while. I'm not sure, I think she went up there somewhere in '43, but I'm not certain, somewhere there.

There's still rations going on and coupons, I know the people in the services weren't as affected from restrictions and so on but...

They weren't too bad here, I didn't think it was too bad up there. You know here were certain things you couldn't get but I think that compared with Britain and Germany and so nothing really,

26:00 we got all, everything we wanted up there I think. Meals were quite good and so on.

Sure it wasn't that much hardship I guess but...

I remember the coupons and so on in Kyabram, my mother and so on would say when I went home what the hardships were but they weren't too great really. I don't think we were badly treated.

What about for a young couple that want to get married though and find somewhere to live [unclear]?

Oh

26:30 housing accommodation was dreadful. I will tell you later on but going on that airlift we had very temporary accommodation outside the base, this was after we were married. It was almost impossible to even rent a place, let alone build one and no one had the money to build anyway. No it was a very poor time between say 1945 and,

27:00 I would say, up to about '49. Housing was dreadful, absolutely dreadful where we were.

Did that have an impact on when you could get married?

No, I think we took a chance. It was sort of temporary accommodation but it was, that wasn't, even when I came back from the airlift in the early

27:30 50s, the accommodation in Melbourne was dreadful. I remember having to pay key money to get into a flat. You know, dreadful that was, 1950.

Well boom and bust and boom and bust, same again now.

Yes, you just couldn't get them. Rental wasn't a problem, it was a matter of finding a flat you could get into.

So what occupied you then in the years between the end of the war

28:00 **and getting married in Townsville?**

That was '47 married in Townsville. You mean after that?

I'm curious. I guess a lot of people wanted to stay in the service but they didn't all get in. A lot wanted to get out, obviously, and they did but how did you manage to stay in?

I was, after that recruiting drive I was offered a short service commission and I had that when I was

posted to 38th Squadron.

28:30 So I had a short service commission which sort of guaranteed a few years and when I was on the airlift they offered me a permanent position so I took it.

Okay, and was that based on merit or was it luck or is it just a ...?

You'll have to ask them that.

Yeah well...

I don't know I think they wanted a certain number. Probably a certain number of pilots that could

29:00 carry on doing the things and I think a lot of people were getting out at that time and I think they might've been thankful for some who wanted to stay on a bit longer.

In that period of time then, from the end of the war to when they sent you over to, oh you started doing the courier runs

29:30 **to Japan before then, what were you occupied with in Australia at that time?**

On Dakotas, yeah I was co-pilot and then I got checked out fairly quickly as a captain.

Sorry, checked out?

Well, you apply as a co-pilot and then say, "Right, you're just about right for captaincy," so they give you some pretty tight old

30:00 instruction flying in the circuit area and check you out as a captain. You trained around a bit as co-pilot around the place, you knew how to fly the aeroplane but you weren't quite right for captaincy. So they'd give you a rather intensified period over a week or two and then say, "Right, you're okay." Then you'd go off, you'd have your own co-pilot then and go off as captain.

30:30 **Were they sort of encouraging or were they, did they sort of try and psychologically, you know, put the... Did they give you a hard time is what I'm asking?**

No, what, as captain? No, you had to be confident. I mean you'd take off and they'd pull an engine on you and make certain you did the right thing, that type of thing, and give you all sorts of conditions and you had to apply yourself properly as captain to get that aeroplane

31:00 down or whatever you were doing. But that's the part of training. They call it asymmetric flying, just pull one engine on you and make you fly on one engine and do a circuit and come in and land on one engine and that's normal training and they'd ask you to do a flapless landing. They won't let you use the flaps so you've got to use a different technique. They have cross wind landings

31:30 where there's strong ..., that type of thing. They give you the more difficult situations so you can cope with it, they check you out.

And all weather?

Instrument flying, big thing instrument flying, probably the key to flying, instrument flying, because that's night and day heavy cloud and at night you've got to be able to fly instruments or you're in trouble and I think a lot of these

32:00 light aircraft that don't make it, they can't fly instruments. They get into clouds and they don't know what to do and that accounts for a lot of crashes around the place.

How did you go as an instrument flyer? Did it come quite naturally to you?

Oh no, I don't think it comes naturally but you get used to looking at instruments and your life depends on it and so you soon become fairly proficient. On that airlift I can tell you we did more instrument flying, almost more than

32:30 we did visual.

I was thinking that's a pretty dazzling kind of a screen to be looking at, any time of day or night, but if you're up in high altitude and laugh at me if you like but I'm just wondering, does the change in altitude affect your brain capacity and is it easy to get dizzy under those circumstances?

No you don't, if you're on oxygen it makes little difference really. But we didn't fly, those aircraft that I flew mainly

33:00 were not much above 10,000 feet mainly below, 9 ½ thousand feet or 10 ½, something like that, where you didn't really need to use oxygen but on a jet when you're up top there, you're just breathing normally but you've got oxygen, you've forced oxygen into your system.

Okay. Just in the last 10 minutes of this tape, I thought I'd ask you a little bit about getting sent down to Schofields and what that was like.

33:30 **That must be, perhaps, starting to fulfil some of your interests at least.**

Yes, it was good getting into the wing there. The 86 Wing comprised 38 Squadron and 36 Squadron and a maintenance squadron, 486 Maintenance, and it was good to get back in the system.

How did Patricia take to the news that you were going to start doing courier runs to Japan?

34:00 She adapted very well I think. As I say, housing was the main thing. We had, I think Susan was about three weeks old when I went off on that airlift, she coped very well but very, very adverse conditions as far as she was concerned, it was pretty dreadful.

What was your attitude then to, or what was your knowledge then to the Japanese

34:30 **after that? I mean, you'd probably heard about the horror tales by now?**

I didn't really have much to do with them. We were in Tokyo for about a week I think but I was interested in sight-seeing and that sort of thing in that short time we had there. I didn't have much to do with them. I really couldn't comment on that. Pretty rough old tales on what had happened in the islands and so on,

35:00 it wasn't good.

No, and I'm sure your brother had a bit to say too.

It was, I was very much aware of that side of things but you couldn't sort of take a dislike to the general population or anything, nothing to do with them really.

No, but you know two years fate, the surrender of Japan and you were in Tokyo, I mean, was it apparent to you that they were a surrendered country?

No, I found that

35:30 more in Germany I think, I didn't quite notice it in Japan. There was milling, thousands of people, you know, milling around Tokyo. We were staying in a hotel there and they seemed pretty pleasant and so on. I didn't notice a great change of attitude or anything like that towards us, I mean.

What about the BCOF units that were over there, were they sort of obvious to the eye when you went out?

36:00 No, no, coming home I think we landed at Iwakuni, I think that was one of the places that had our fighter squadron there, 77 Squadron I think was at Iwakuni.

How would you make a courier run to Japan? Where would you take off from and where would you ...?

We'd take off from Schofields and we'd probably go to

36:30 Brisbane which was Archerfield and then probably Cloncurry and Darwin, then go from Darwin to Morotai. And then I think we went to the Philippines, I'm trying to think of the airfield there. I'll think of it in a minute. Then to Nahar which was

37:00 Okinawa and then on to, I think we went direct to Tokyo from there, otherwise Iwakuni.

And they'd all be military bases?

Yes all military bases, yes.

And were you sort of given instruction as to what you were taking or were you just given your orders and off you went and no questions asked and so on?

Oh we were loaded at Schofields with whatever freight was required really.

37:30 There was, they had a special section that did the loading and unloading. They would balance the weights in the aircraft, they were properly balanced so you didn't take off tail heavy or anything like that. It was well organised there, it was, they were professionals at that sort of thing.

Without incident?

Yes without incident. Yeah, except coming

38:00 back from Tokyo I was co-pilot and Slim Summerville was the captain and we had to go into Osaka. We iced up so heavily and we couldn't get rid of it on the windscreen and everywhere else and to land he was looking out the window. We were trying to scrape ice off the front window there and so instead of getting to Iwakuni where we were bound we had to go into Osaka, overnight there, the Americans

38:30 were operating there but that was the only incident. Oh the worst thunder I've ever been in on my way back, I will never forget that, it was the roughest ride I've ever had in an aircraft, was over Mindanao which is Borneo really. We were going up like that and coming down it was right in the

39:00 middle of an cumulonimbus.

We've only got about a minute left.

Tape 5

00:36 **So when did you find out you were going to Berlin? How did that eventuate?**

Well I think it was about two or three weeks before we went that we were actually notified that we could be going and in preparation they selected 10 crews, five from each of the flying squadrons there, 36 and 38, and

01:00 we were sort of on stand-by from then on, once we were selected. We got recalled to base over a weekend in August, that was about 20th somewhere there, and we came back for briefing and kitting and told we were going, in fact we were going the following week.

So that must have been just around the time of the birth of your first, second child?

Susan was three

01:30 weeks when I left which was about the 25th. Three weeks old. There was Pat three weeks out of Schofields on the edge and in very temporary accommodation.

And what did she say, "Oh that's nice dear. Hope you have a nice time," when she heard the news? Bet she wasn't happy?

It was a big strain. Well she was absolutely supportive throughout my career I must say that. She realised I had to go

02:00 but it was most inconvenient, really inconvenient.

I think you're putting it very politely there.

Yeah, yeah I had a few sharp words to say about it. You couldn't do much about it and we were selected crews and off we went.

That's an air force man's lot isn't it? They're rarely posted as a unit, as a person from spot to spot.

Yes, we don't go as a team. This time we selected 10 crews as I said and we were together for the whole

02:30 12 months except for a period there where three crews flew three Bristol freighters back to Australia. Australia had purchased those from the UK and so three crews came back with those and instead of flying with two pilots over there we flew with one. I went over there actually as a co-pilot although I was a captain, I checked out as a captain.

03:00 When those other three came back there were three of us went to Bassingbourn in England for a little bit more brush up training and we came back and we were captains with just one pilot. So we operated with a pilot, navigator and wireless operator for the rest of the term, that was from about April.

Now travelling to Britain, that's a pretty long haul?

That was a pretty long haul in a

03:30 Constellation, they were the big aircraft of the day. It was a pretty comfortable trip I must say, turbo prop job, and we went to, via Darwin and Singapore and so on, what was the next one, Calcutta, Karachi, Cairo and I think then to a place called Castel Benito

04:00 and then London. We were held up at Castel Benito, which is in Northern Libya right on the coast, because London was fogged in and I know we had a very uncomfortable stay there. It was very early hours of the morning, it was hot as anything, we were just getting, drinking 'Coke' and drinking goodness knows what trying to keep cool and remain awake. But there was

04:30 no provisions for stitching and snoozing off for a while except on the floor, that's a bit uncomfortable. But we got there and it was good and RAF Medicine took us to Bassingbourn in Lancastrians, which were the civil conversion of the Lancaster.

What had they done to them to convert them? How different were they from the military version?

Well they took out all the turrets and things like that and all the areas where the navigators and wireless operator

05:00 did their job and just made it into a seating accommodation there.

Was it a civil aircraft or ...?

Yeah, it became a civil aircraft, yes. They were flying those around for a while after the war.

And how was it for someone who considered himself to be a British Empire subject to finally get to Britain, to London?

I thought it was great, I thought it was great to get over there.

What were your impressions of London?

05:30 Well, it was Bassingbourn at first of course, on to the air base, and they gave us a tremendous welcome. A couple of heavy nights there and the training and then we got into London just before we left for Limburg and yes because I'd seen pictures of it and so on it wasn't anything different. Rationing of course was very much in vogue at the time.

Was that much more

06:00 **severe rationing than you had encountered here?**

Oh yes, yes, oh much more.

In what respects?

Well they hardly had any meat at all. Living in the Mess they had gluts of vegetables and you'd get Brussels sprouts morning, noon and night at one stage of the game and then you'd get potatoes in about three different methods of cooking and, but very little meat, very little. It was the same in Germany too.

What was,

06:30 **this was 1948 so the war has been over for three years so London's starting to rebuild ...**

The cricket team, the 1948 cricket team had just about finished their tour there, Bradman's team.

Did you get to see any of that?

No I didn't get to see them. They were there for just about another month while we were between countries. I think all the tests were over.

The Invincibles?

The Invincibles.

Did you get any ribbing from the English for

07:00 **being you know an Aussie, one of these ...**

In the pubs you know you'd get a bit but because we'd won so comfortably we were on top of it there. They like cricket more than anything else, the Brits, they really do, so they'd just been beaten.

Nothing's changed really has it?

No it hasn't. No, they were good, the English Pubs were wonderful, I'd never been in one before.

What were they like in those days, that's going back

07:30 **nearly 55 years?**

Yes, well I was over there in '99, they still had the charm. You know I don't think anything had changed much, I think they were like that in the '30s and certainly they were again in the '90s. I think they're much the same, a wonderful acquisition to any city I think.

08:00 **I don't know if you were able to sense this in the small amount of time you were there. What was the mood of the people like? Was it a people who were exhausted after a long slog of war or were they excited ...?**

I think the Brits were relieved and I think they were reacting very positively there because they could see blue skies ahead. They'd

08:30 been through a fair bit and I think in that way they were a bit different to perhaps over on the Continent. I found them pretty good and they were very friendly and I think just relieved to have it all over and done with, that was my impression.

Did you have much opportunity to mix with German civilians at all?

Not very much, we had little time in Germany

09:00 you know, we'd be flying five days a week and when we got a break it was after about a fortnight and we'd go back to London, Bassingbourn and then London for a couple of days in London, that type of thing. So apart from going into the shops, and we bought the odd camera and that sort of thing, I found the German business people pretty much on the beam. I thought the Germans in the

09:30 street looked as though they were sort of in a recovery stage. It was very hard to assess them, I think on the one hand they were pleased that Berlin was being looked after, that we were flying their stuff down. I think they were pretty happy about that. I think they'd taken so much and when you had a look around Hamburg and to a lesser extent Lübeck to see what damaged had been done from the bombing,

10:00 it takes a long time to get over that sort of thing I would imagine and I think, as I said, they were in the recovery stage there. Didn't quite know what the future held, they'd been through so much.

Plus you have that defeated mentality to get over too, don't you?

Yes, yes, well I sort of avoided saying that but no doubt that had a big impact on the personality of the people.

10:30 They didn't really have a great deal to look forward to at that stage of the game. Once again there was heavy rationing on in Germany, the Cold War had begun and they were wondering, you know, "What next? What can we put up with??"

Just aside for one second, Hamburg was a bit of a cathedral town wasn't it, prior to World War II? Am I right there?

11:00 Lübeck more had a lot of cathedrals. I'm not sure about Hamburg, it's a big port and very busy business but I saw a whole street laid low.

You know I thought a lot of Hamburg was bombed flat, wasn't it?

Yes, bombed flat going in from Lübeck to Hamburg it was, you might see a building, one building with a light on top or something like that at night

11:30 the rest was rubble. It had taken a hammer.

Can you place Lübeck geographically for us?

Well it's up on the Baltic, north of Berlin, roughly north and it was about an hour and 20 minutes flying time.

And you were based in Lübeck?

We were based in Lübeck.

There wasn't much opportunity to mix with Germans at all there?

No, we had the staff in the Mess and they were very friendly and

12:00 helpful, the girls who were serving on the tables and doing all those things around the kitchen. I shared a batman with about three or four other guys just to keep our things in order. He was good and helpful and there didn't seem to be any resentment there.

Did you talk much, I assume he was German?

He was German.

Did you talk much with him about

12:30 **the war or what he thought about Hitler?**

He didn't have a great understanding but we did on occasions talk to one of the barmen, and he was an ex-Luftwaffe [German air force] to his credit and sometimes we used to have a good conversation with him. But he was a jovial sort of type, we didn't ever get too serious.

Well there's no point in really getting serious after time is there?

No, no

13:00 he was a very good barman and everyone seemed to like him. But we got to learn he'd knocked a few over.

What would you talk about with him, if you can remember?

I can't really remember. It wasn't too, it was mainly joking with him. But here he was behind the bar serving us and we were in the right place having a beer or two. We didn't get too serious with him.

13:30 Now and again I think he might've spoken to one or two of the lads about what he did. But he was one person who had a good personality and, as I said, showed no resentment whatsoever, very friendly.

I imagine it must be a very, obviously it is unusual, but quite a strange sensation to be at war with a country and then three years later to be there

14:00 **with the evidence of war still very much extant and to be there and to be working together? There's so much unsaid. It's like working with, if you get divorced, in a bitter, acrimonious divorce and then next year you'd be working together.**

Yes, that would be rough. I think I'd take my chances over in Lübeck. We were in Luftwaffe barracks, very solid brick, well built barracks and they were very comfortable as far as

14:30 we were concerned and the Mess was the same. So there we were, they were occupying those barracks about three years before that and here we were, we'd taken over and doing the same sort of thing only in a friendly way this time.

Well let's talk about that time a little more. It'd be peacetime obviously and as you said the Cold War had begun and so...

There's no rail or road into the west part of Berlin,

15:00 it had been cut off completely.

There's still the feeling in the air that something might spark off with the Russians?

Yes, well no one was agreeing, that was the point. Russia wanted to get rid of the Allies out of Berlin completely because Berlin happened to be in the Russian zone. The Brits occupied one zone and the Americans the other and in Berlin itself it was divided into the four, the Russian, British, US

15:30 and French and they just made it as hard as they could by stopping the trains coming into Berlin well out from Berlin itself, stopping them a few miles up the road sort of thing with the result that no provisions got through to the western sector. That's what happened, he threw down the challenge,

16:00 'What about getting out of here now, we've stopped everything,' and the challenge was taken up by the Allies and that's how the airlift came about.

So there was no road or rail access at all, was there?

No, absolutely not into the heart of Berlin, they stopped them miles out.

And where was the airport at Berlin that you flew into?

We had three airports there. We flew into a place called Gatow, G-A-T-O-W, in the British sector. The Americans went into

16:30 Tempelhof and Tegel was the other one, in the French sector. We used Gatow whenever we could but one time during, I think it was, mid-November to mid-December, Gatow was out for repairs. A tremendous amount of traffic on it as you can imagine and we went into the French sector, Tegel, that's when we flew three trips a day. We normally

17:00 flew two into Gatow but this time we had to make up ground and they asked us to fly three trips a day, which is a pretty long haul, a long time. And when you think of it, a take off out of Lübeck with a full load, landing at Gatow and back to Lübeck, a quick meal or something like that

17:30 and into that again, knowing full well that you've got to do another one after that. So that was pretty heavy going.

I've got some figures here, and you probably know these, over 2,000 sorties flown during that year the Aussies were there, carried nearly 7,000 people in and out and over 15 million pounds of freight. So you must've been non-stop around the clock?

Mm, we did a lot of night work when I think of it.

Where you aware of what you were carrying?

18:00 Oh yes, yes we did in fact in the very early days, we were flying at 5 ½ thousand feet, we were on top and at 3 ½ we had the British Hastings, they came from Schleswig Land. Americans flew at 2 ½ thousand and the RAAF's Yorks at 1 ½ so you've got a pretty crowded sky. We used to track down to a place called, in Berlin itself, Frohnau beacon

18:30 and just before we got there we were instructed to record on our load, what we were carrying mainly. To facilitate unloading at Gatow which was 15 minutes away really. So we would just call out what we had aboard and in those early days we carried lots of absolutely essential items such as baby food and

19:00 flour and anything at all, even condoms at one stage of the game.

A whole planeload?

No, no, just a mixed load but we'd say what we had aboard, and pharmaceuticals, absolutely essential things that they needed to survive on. That was the big thing to get that stuff in early and then after that we carried mainly coal

19:30 in bags and coal was absolutely essential too. But in those early days they needed those other things. Rolls, big rolls of newspaper that we'd have to push out the door if anything went wrong, great big roll, real big, bad cargo to carry.

Well it seems to me that carrying coal by aeroplanes would be a very inefficient way to carry

fuel because it's quite heavy isn't it?

We had it in bags.

Even so you wouldn't get

20:00 **as much in a plane as you would in a train for instance, would you?**

Yes but if you haven't got a train or truck, not much other way.

It must've made everything incredibly expensive?

Oh yes, it really would've been. It really would've been if you think of it. I think at one stage they were talking about an aircraft movement every minute in Berlin, from the three airports that is.

When you were flying in on that very strict corridor, could you see planes in front of you and behind you? Were you that close?

20:30 Three minutes apart we were, at the same altitude - 5 ½.

Does that put you within visual range, 3 minutes?

Oh just, 3 minutes apart can just about be [unclear] but it required good navigation because 3 minutes apart on the same altitude, you start getting that in civil aviation here and you'll know all about it. The navigators were good and they had their essential equipment to track accurately

21:00 down that corridor which was about 20 miles wide. The thing that we did have from time to time and was these Russian Yaks, fighters, coming across our bow. I think it was purely intimidation but one hoped that in conditions of instrument flying, crowded conditions, that they had common sense and wouldn't be putting their nose into

21:30 the cloud when we were around. I'm sure it was intimidation when they came across in those early days.

Did they often come across?

I wouldn't say it was often but just often enough to make you aware that they were there. They just wanted to let us know that they were there.

So were they, was the notation of airspace around then as in 'this is Russian airspace', 'this English airspace', 'this is US airspace'?

22:00 Because it was, they knew the corridor had been allotted to us, it was 20 miles wide, they shouldn't be infringing on it but once again the Russians were taking a chance in those days. It was their zone, Berlin was their zone, and they didn't like any part of the Allies being there and that was what it was all about and from time to time we would get, notams, notices to airmen, just before we took off,

22:30 that there'd be ground to air firing on the edge, it was always on the edge of the zone, or there'd be parachuting of some description and these were, I'm sure, to just let us know that they were there. They were nuisance activities more than anything else.

Were you ever required, or do you know of any other crews that were engaged in reconnaissance

23:00 **during that time? Like would there be areas of the Russian territory that you'd be able to photograph?**

Oh I couldn't tell you that. We didn't ever get out of that corridor. We had a corridor to go down and a corridor to come home, a separate one that took us out a bit and then past Hamburg, out down that way. So we'd come down this way and go out the other way home, around the back door you might say. Sometimes we

23:30 carried displaced persons out of Berlin and flaxen haired kids who were, you know, they were in danger of not eating enough or something, like the Brits took their kids out of London and those places that were being bombed and put them up north where they could live more happily and safer, we did the same with some German kids from Berlin

24:00 to Hamburg or Lübeck.

And when you say, I know sometimes you flew passengers as opposed to cargo in, did you ever fly passengers into Berlin?

No, no, didn't fly passengers down, it was always cargo, the last thing they wanted in Berlin was personnel.

You've got to feed them?

You've got to feed them, clothe them.

Right, what about accidents or casualties, where there any that

24:30 **you know of at that time?**

Oh yes, in all, 70 persons lost their lives, they were not all aircraft crashes but as a result of refuelling accidents. Someone ran into a propeller for instance, that type of thing. The Americans lost a few aircraft, we didn't lose any. I think the early days the Brits may have lost one or two.

25:00 One aircraft crashed at Lübeck and he was an Australian pilot, Mal Quinn, but he was not flying with us, he was on RAF exchange duties. And RAF used to rotate their crews every three months and he came over in very bad weather. I think he missed his approach on an instrument landing. When he saw the flare path, when

25:30 he broke cloud, saw the flare path he wheeled round and dug his wing in on the last turn. His brother was in the RAAF too, I knew him quite well. I knew Mal well too.

Yes, it's sad, I was just reading about that, he was the only Australian casualty.

He was the only Australian killed. That was at night and pretty bad weather. We ran into a lot of bad weather though.

Well how did that, cause you know when they were doing the bombing raids over Europe

26:00 **in the Second World War, if the weather was too bad the raid would often be cancelled? Was that the same for you or did you fly rain, hail or shine?**

We flew unless the airfield was closed at Gatow and of course at times the cloud base would be little more than 300 feet. We all had what we called 'green cards', green card instrument rating which meant that we could go down to a height of 300 feet.

26:30 A white card would take you down to 500 feet and so on but we were all green card anyway. So if they were green card conditions, it was 300 feet, we could all fly. Some of the RAF may not have been able to fly because they didn't hold green cards but that often happened but we entered cloud soon after take off at Lübeck and we wouldn't see ground until we broke cloud somewhere

27:00 near the 300 feet or 400 somewhere there. You know, pretty much an instrument flight throughout, it was.

I guess that's something as a pilot that you become used to? As a non-flying person I imagine if you were in an aeroplane and you can't see a damn thing out of the windows you'd look, a little bit unnerving at times.

Oh yes, I think so, it could be. If you're comfortable with the man up top

27:30 who's pulling all the sticks and things, pulling all the knobs, there's no real problem with that because instrument flying is there, the equipment is on the aircraft and also on the ground.

In terms of Australian participation in the airlift, correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe it was an open-ended commitment, you weren't really told how long you'd be there.

That's correct.

Whereas the Brits were relieved after 3 months, were relieved and the Kiwis after about six?

28:00 Yes, and South Africans.

Yeah, it just kept dragging on for you guys?

Yeah and we ...

Did you kick up a stink about that?

Well, I've got a photograph there of George Jones coming out. I was his PA once and he was, later on I should say, he came over to have a word to us and when I was made PA or appointed PA he said, "Were you one of those men at Lübeck who attacked me?"

I

28:30 **heard he got quite a shellacking?**

He did, he really did. My wife is a good correspondent and I'm not too bad and we kept up a good correspondence but it was terribly hard to write letters when you had no idea when you were coming home. That was a great weakness I thought. When we embarked to, on this airlift I thought it might be three to six months, something like that, I didn't envisage a year, I thought

29:00 that would've been a bit rough but we didn't know. If they'd said a year it would've been something, it would've been something to look forward to. I think that was probably the thing that worried me the most was not knowing when we'd get home and making provision for it you might say.

Well it's very morale sapping to have no end goal in sight, isn't it?

Yes, I think it is. And it was so consistent, the work that we were doing, I mean there's a limit to how much you can do and at the end of

29:30 the 12 months we'd just about seen the, just about reached the end, I'd say, without a good long leave of some description.

You could've easily envisaged going on for another 10 years really, couldn't you?

Mm.

During that time, during that year, were there ever any times when the tensions between the Allied forces, I suppose, and the Russians became more intense? Were there any flash points or ...?

There were a couple, well I remember,

30:00 recall one incident because it was near to us. One of the RAF Dakotas were forced to land in the Russian zone, just over the river from Lübeck, and the Russians wouldn't allow them anywhere near that aircraft for three days. It didn't affect us so much but it was an incident, a type of incident that was going on all the time. They were just trying to get us out of the area really.

30:30 And so the RAF and the engineers and people like that who wanted to inspect the aircraft didn't get over there, as I said, till three days.

Well who was it, was it Roosevelt, who said at the end of the Second World War, "Well we can either fight the Russians now or we can do it some time in the future." There was talk on both sides of these two great armies meeting in the war and not necessarily stopping just because Germany was defeated. Did you ever get the feeling that, "Here I am, flying into Berlin

31:00 **and any day now the war might start again," or there might be an incident or ...?**

No I didn't get that feeling but I was very much aware of where the Russian zone was, flying down, you know, I thought if I have to land somewhere it won't be in the Russian zone, it'd be in the corridor somewhere. In Berlin itself we had barely time for a cup of coffee, it was about 20 minutes unloading time and then we'd be off again. So I didn't have a chance to really think too much.

31:30 There were a lot fellows going down that corridor and I was one of them. So you were in a stream, you might say, of aircraft going in and out and there wasn't all that much time to think about that, didn't really give it a thought.

Well speaking of thinking about what you were doing, what you were doing was a humanitarian effort I suppose. Did you see yourselves as doing that? I mean talking about humanitarian aid and so forth is a very modern kind of

32:00 **year 2000 kind of concept. I mean, in those days you would've just thought, "I'm just doing my job." Did you think you were involved in something special?**

Well we knew they had to get that food, I think that was the big thing, they needed it and we had to get it there and if we didn't fly, they didn't get it sort of thing. I think that was a great incentive to do as much as you could and I think that's what we did. I didn't think in terms of, as they do now about humanitarian

32:30 thing, this was essential. They were living from day to day you might say and we were just a cog in the wheel that was getting it there. That was how I felt, I didn't think it was any, it was just, got a lot of satisfaction out of delivering the stuff, I'll put it that way. That was it.

And can you remember when they told you, you were going home?

Yes, it was, yes I remember the last,

33:00 it was August but it had eased off, we were just flying cold, nothing else, and we got the message it was easing off a bit and, but they wanted to, just in case the Russian went back on their word and didn't let the trains and transport in, we stayed on a bit longer. Or the airlift stayed on a bit longer, just to pile up a bit in Berlin so they had

33:30 a little bit of a bank, you might say, of coal and that sort of thing. It was a great relief when we knew that. We went back to Bassingbourn and then we went to a place called Manston and waited there until we were all ready to come home, that was in October of '49.

I bet a few pints were sunk in Manston?

Yes, oh yes, it was a

34:00 great celebration, it was quite a relief but I was just so happy that we were all there and no one was lost and we sort of achieved the aim I think, it was pretty good.

How did you get back home?

Came back by York, flown by a Canadian. British York was a four engine transport and we came home via the Middle East and Karachi, Colombo.

34:30 Colombo to where, I don't know, and Darwin and Amberley and then back down to Laverton.

As someone who thought about going overseas a little bit as a younger man before the war, did you take advantage and do a bit of sightseeing in these cities as you came back or was that not an option?

Not coming back this time we were just there overnight or something like that. I know we were entertained by the Australian High Commissioner in Karachi,

35:00 I remember that. I can't remember the others. I remember getting into Darwin, that was a nice night in the Mess there. And eventually got down to Laverton and there was my dear wife waiting for me, which was good.

That would've been a great day. Can you remember what you did that day?

It was Melbourne Cup day. 'Fox Army' won it 16 to 1.

How much did she have on it?

I'm not sure, probably about 5 bob

35:30 in those days. Yeah it wouldn't be much but she'd backed it, which was good. And we had a bit of a celebration that night and went up to Kyabram the next day, I think it was, or a couple of days after that.

So that was the first time you saw Susan since she was just a bub?

Yes, she was 14 months I think when I got home.

Was she walking?

There was some doubt about that. She was only just,

36:00 she was only just but she, but Pat used to show her my photograph and as soon as I went there she was in my sister's arms and she sort of said, "Dada," straight away, which was pretty good.

That would've been a hell of a thrill.

Mm, yeah, it was good but she was just walking, not quite I would say. But she soon did after I got home, walking everywhere.

You must've, was it, I mean obviously it must've been wonderful, wonderful

36:30 **but to come home and this baby you'd only seen for a few weeks is all of a sudden yours, was that a little bit overwhelming?**

Oh it was good. It was good, yeah, you can get fairly emotional about that sort of thing. And she was there and didn't look back and knew me straight away which was wonderful.

That's great because we've spoken to other men who were away during the war and they thought daddy was that picture on the wall. When the real guy came in they couldn't associate

37:00 **the two. So it was good she did?**

Oh no, it was good and we had a good long holiday up in the Hills, Hillsfield around there, it was wonderful. Over there I had a good, I think I told you, I had a good stay on leave up at Innerleithen where I was able to shoot and fish and so on, in Scotland there, that was a good trip and another one into the Cotswold Hills and that was

37:30 pretty good too but they were the only two times. Went to Windsor Castle once, we were invited there with my CO, Si Greenwood, and we were shown over the Castle and we had afternoon tea with Lord Gowrie who was our Governor General out here for sometime. That was a wonderful day, I remember that very well, he was so interesting to talk to

38:00 and he was so interested in what was going on in Australia after those few years. We stayed overnight about two miles away with Sir John and Lady Aird who I think had something to do with the Windsor Castle too but that was a good night too, Si Greenwood and myself, they entertained us very well.

I'm sure it was wonderful.

Mm, and we went to the Australia Day dinner, I went with Vic Cannon who was another pilot over there, Australia Day dinner

38:30 in 1949, the Duke of Gloucester presided that night and that was an interesting night too. Apart from that I didn't do too much.

Well on that note it's time to...

Tape 6

00:55 **When you came back to Australia, Trevor, did you think then,**

01:00 **'Right, I've done my bit?' Were you tempted to step out into civvies life or what did you want to do? What were your plans then?**

No, I wanted to have a period of consolidation in my marriage for one, I didn't want to be posted somewhere, you know, overseas.

That's why I thought you might be tempted to step away?

No, I was never tempted, I had a permanent commission and things were going pretty well and they posted me to southern command and I was able

01:30 to get home each night and so on and then I was posted to personal assistant to Chief of Air Staff and so that carried on until 1952 and that's when I started on Lincolns down at Sale. Did a conversion down there.

When you were personal assistant to the Chief of Air Staff were you able to keep your flying up to...?

No, I didn't try either. No, I think that works sometimes if you can do it regularly.

02:00 You need to fly every week or two. I don't think flying once every four months or anything like that helps you at all. And I think its, in my own opinion, it's a bit dangerous really.

So were you happy to be in a ground role at that stage?

At that stage I was, I really was but not for long, it gets you after a while.

What does personal assistant to Chief of Air Staff involve?

Well I looked after his appointments

02:30 and made certain he got there on time and that sort of thing and answered some of the correspondence for him. He would sign it but I'd draft it, that sort of thing. Just generally looking after him. He had a staff officer as well who did all the heavy work on the administrative side but I was essentially on the person side, visits, this and that. And I travelled around with him or course

03:00 wherever he went. I'd just make certain he had the right dress on and didn't do anything wrong there, that was my responsibility. Invitations that was a big thing, a lot of invitations and answering those and so on. Just liaising with him, just seeing that he was happy and he got everything he wanted.

And that's 1949, towards the end of '49?

No, that was

03:30 I went to, as personal assistant in 1950, I think it was.

Well then that's Korean War time isn't it?

Yes, they had 77 Squadron in that, they were initially on Mustangs and then they went on to Meteors.

Meteors would've been the first jet fighters we had, wouldn't they?

Yes, well they had Vampires but Meteors were their first combat aircraft.

Where you

04:00 **then involved in the, being PA to the Chief of Air Staff, were you involved in the directing of the Korean War operations?**

No, nothing, had nothing to do with it really.

Was our squadron under US command over there?

I'm trying to think of that. We had our own set up there. I don't think they were controlled by the US from memory. I can't remember that.

04:30 Didn't have anything to do with that. They were initially based at Iwakuni and then after that I'm not quite sure in Korea. That's an area I'm not sure of, I can't recall it I mean.

So the Chief of Air Staff, apart from obviously being the overseer of situations such as the Korea operation from an Australian point of view, what other duties does he have within Australia that you would be

05:00 **involved in with him? Obviously you said you were looking after him so is he, are people trying to say we need to buy this aircraft or you should be recruiting more men or ...?**

Oh he would definitely be involved in that, in the equipment of the RAAF he would certainly there but he would have a very high ranking equipment officer at that stage and engineering officer. They were part of the Air Board

05:30 and it was the Air Board that made the decisions in those days and he was chairman of that. They would be liaising with the various aircraft manufacturers and so on.

What was the state of the air force in particular at that stage, because after World War II the armed forces were reduced quite dramatically in size, weren't they? You said they were laying off or people were leaving the air force yet you were recruiting at the same time.

Yeah but we were

06:00 recruiting ground staff. When I went on those recruiting things it was essentially for engine fitters and, you know, any of those ground roles that were needed in the air force. There were cooks and that type of thing.

What about the introduction of the jet engine? Did that involve a whole different kind of mechanics and air crew?

No, the same fellows just graduated, they would do a special course on that and before we ever

06:30 purchased aircraft in the RAAF, not only the air crews would go over there but the ground crews would go over and learn, they would do a proper course on the new engine and the air frame. So those, they were very competent people, our boys, by the time they flew the aircraft out here.

What was the political climate like at that stage? Because with the Korean War

07:00 **you've got the potential, Americas in there, there's the potential for Russia to be in there as well. Were people thinking we could be going to war again?**

It wasn't a good time there. It's very hard to recall just how I felt at that stage of the game but the mere fact that we had Australian over there shooting was enough. We had a fairly large army over there too, doing their bit, so

07:30 it was very much on but it didn't seem to be a threat to Australia in those days at all. It was just a very important battle but it was a long way from us and I don't think that hit home nearly as much if it had been around Singapore or somewhere like that.

Were you ever required to go to Korea with the Chief of Staff?

No, no I didn't go there.

08:00 Can't remember him going, I suppose he did. We did have a change as I mentioned, of an RAF took over, Sir Donald Hardman in 1952. Don't know whether he went up or not, I'm not sure.

So how long were you PA to the Chief of Staff?

I was PA from 1951, halfway through

08:30 until the end of '52. So probably a year and a half.

Were you getting itchy then, you wanted to fly again?

Yes, time for that. Normally two years on flying and two years off in those days. That was about it. So it was time to go back again.

What rank were you at this time?

I was flight lieutenant, the same as I was on the airlift, and I was promoted to squadron leader at the end of

09:00 1952 just prior to being posted to Amberley, to 6th Squadron there. It was posting [unclear]. The rank, promotions used to come through at the end of the year or the beginning of the next year, that type of thing, in those days.

And was a squadron leader on a reasonable wicket? With a young family was it a

09:30 **reasonable...?**

Yes it was, it was not too bad, not too bad. Once again in those days the accommodation was the hard thing.

Post-war housing was shocking here?

It was shocking, it was really, really bad. It was the most depressing time that you could go through for

housing, post-war, really bad. We had to put up with a lot really.

So where were you living at that time?

We were living in a flat

10:00 in East St. Kilda. So I used to go into work every day there by, sometimes by tram, mostly by tram I think.

And what were the events that led to you going to Malaya, did you want another combat position?

I wanted to fly another type of aircraft and the Lincoln seemed to fit the role

10:30 and there would be something at the end of it, there would be a mission, a reason for doing it and because we were then operating in Malaya, as they called it in those days. So I thought that is a good, you know, a pretty good thing to do some solid training and then go up to Malaya and back again.

Let's talk about the Lincolns because I don't think we've spoken to anybody, I haven't anyway, before who's actually flown a Lincoln.

11:00 **Were they a modified Lancaster or an extra model?**

No, extra, they were longer and bigger, bigger all round. They were introduced into the RAF right near the end of the war to take a real blockbuster in the bomb bay, that was the reason for it. The war ended and our squadrons at Amberley, two of them, they were equipped in, I think,

11:30 in about 1950 or somewhere there.

How many crew?

A crew of seven.

Can you tell me, starting from the nose of the plane ...?

Did you look at that photograph?

Just on the camera, a word picture. Who did what and where did they sit and so forth?

Oh okay, there were two pilots up front, there was a bomb aimer in the nose, he would actually press the button when the bombs were to be released, there was a navigator that sat just behind the pilot,

12:00 there was a wireless operator, there was a mid upper turret gunner and a tail gunner, rear gunner. How many is that, pretty close to seven?

That sounds about sevenish, yes. It'll do.

I can fill you in if you want. It was a crew of seven. In actual action when you were going in for the bomb run

12:30 they would all be manning their positions. The rear turret and mid upper and so on and the bomb aimer would be stretched out in the bomb aimer's compartment right in front, just underneath the pilot's feet.

That's a lovely position to be, stretched out there?

Mm, yeah.

Does he look through an actual...?

Bomb, what do you call it,

13:00 bomb sight. You press it down just like that, don't ask me how it works, it's too long ago since I was there. But he's got this bomb sight, he knows where the target is and he goes in on that but we were doing timed runs from a known datum point up there. You see it was jungle, absolute jungle and we were bombing

13:30 a position where we thought the terrorists were and so we would do a timed run from this known datum point and we knew what course to track and we would do a timed run from that datum point to the target and we would, well there was a routine to go through, you know, bomb aimer ready to go sort of thing and [unclear] he was

14:00 tracking on to this target, this known target and at the correct time the bomb doors would be opened and 'bombs away'.

What were the words you would say? You said there'd be a set routine. Can you remember what words you used?

It was mainly between, it was the bomb aimer just saying we were on track sort of thing. I can't recall that really. It's just a bit too much

14:30 but let's say they were, the navigator and the bomb aimer and the pilot knew exactly what was going on when the bombs would go. We would at a certain time say, "Bomb doors open," and they would open and then there'd be a countdown until the bombs went away. Don't ask me to repeat it because I can't remember that. It was well under control.

15:00 **I'm sure it was. Did you, you were fighting communist insurgence in Malaya, did they have any air power?**

No.

Did they have any anti-aircraft?

They would've had light,

15:30 light, it wouldn't be anti-aircraft, it was rifle and machine gun fire. You couldn't call it anti-aircraft, it was stuff they used in the jungle and they'd probably shoot it up at the aircraft but it was not a great consideration, it didn't have any great role.

Was it ever effective? Did they ever bring down any planes?

No, no they did not

16:00 and I think we were too high for them probably. Not that we were very high, we'd fly at about between three and six thousand feet most of the time, four or five would be the average height.

That's still a bit too high for a machine gun isn't it?

Yeah, yeah they were ineffective and I don't know that we were that effective except that I'm sure we kept them on the run and I think they you know they

16:30 could've got word that we were coming or they got out of the target area in time, most of the time. I know one day they got, it wasn't while I was there, but one day they got 21 of them I know that from a bombing raid which was pretty good. But mostly we, I just think we kept them away from the villages. It was over a period of six or seven years, I suppose, and they weren't able to operate effectively

17:00 against these villages. They were playing havoc and I think the bombing was a great help because they had the army up there too at the time so they would move in after we bombed and that sort of thing and give a report on the effectiveness of the bombing.

I was just wondering, if they had no air defence was it kind of pointless having gunners

17:30 **on board?**

Well the Lincoln was set up for that and you wouldn't want to be flying around without those fellows there because if you've got a turret and so on they may as well be there because we used to sometimes if we were doing a low level we'd go in and strafe the area anyway, just keep their heads down. So I think it was worthwhile. If anyone was around there they would know that they were being hunted all right so they all got a chance

18:00 to use their guns.

And you were squadron leader at this stage, weren't you?

Mm, I was flight commander there, next to the CO.

So you were in the operational commands side of things aren't you? In terms of working out who goes where and so forth, is that right? Planning the sorties and the [unclear] as well?

Oh the crews, oh yes, I was in that on the allocate, they would say how many crews they wanted and I would say who goes. That was it unless the CO wanted to

18:30 move in and have his say. He'd tell me if he was flying and take over but as far as the day to day activities were concerned I had a responsibility there.

Did you enjoy command?

Oh yes I liked that, it was good. It was satisfying in another sort of way compared with the airlift. I don't think you could really compare them because one on the one hand you were doing something for someone on the other hand you were trying to knock

19:00 the hell out him. So it was a totally different mindset I'd say.

Yes I'm sure it would've been. Something just popped into my head but I'm not ever sure if it's even in the right area. Operation Termite, was that a Malaysian?

I don't know that one.

All right, maybe I was thinking of something else. The bombing when you were there, before you were there, there was much heavier bombing, I think, when [unclear].

19:30 **When you guys were there it was more strategic, working in co-operation with the army. Like you said, keeping them away from the villages and they would move in.**

I don't think there was ever any heavy bombing there. I think the heaviest bombing we did was when we linked up with the RAF who had Lincolns there too. I remember one night we went out, there were six of us and six of the RAF in formation and that was a pretty good sort of a

20:00 bomb load. I can't remember what we were carrying but it would've probably been close to 14 thousand each and it really would have left a pattern on the ground that night.

Yes, a very big pattern. That's 80 thousand tonnes.

Yes, it's a lot but it must have been a good target. I just remember that because the weather was just fair that night.

What were you carrying in those planes? What kind of bombs were they?

Just high explosive, HE, high explosive

20:30 bombs. Just ordinary bombs. They're not daisy cutters or anti-personnel, just the normal ones.

And where were you based during the Malaysian campaign?

At Tengah, RAF Base Tengah on Singapore Island. It was close to the Straits there, between Malaya and Singapore, very close to it.

Did you enjoy your time in Singapore, was it a good place to be?

Oh yes it was a good

21:00 base, Tengah, I quite enjoyed it. The weather's pretty warm there all the year round, it was a bit monotonous in that regard but, and it was a long stay, a year away, more than that, slightly more than a year. So I wasn't sorry to get back once again.

Patricia was still in Australia I take it?

Oh yes she was there. She was up at Amberley but I think well looked after there because you're just off the base in Ipswich and the

21:30 RAAF personnel look after them pretty well when the husband's away. That's fairly good.

What do you mean look after them? What do they do for the wives while you're away?

They just keep in touch is the main thing, see if they want anything, I think that's it, and if they can help in any way they will. It's just to know that they're there and that they can call on someone if they need help. They certainly kept in touch with Pat on that and

22:00 the neighbours were quite good too.

It must be hard in the RAAF or in any air force really to say the neighbours were good. It'd be hard to make friends with the neighbours because you're moving around so much?

Yes that's right, you make some very good friends and you don't see them again, sometimes never but usually they keep in touch you know. The wives do anyway and they send Christmas cards and that sort of thing. We're still doing that to the neighbour next to us in Ipswich as a matter of fact,

22:30 we left in '55, Pat still sends. I think she, I think the last one might not've got home, I think she was ill or something. We often think of them. He was pretty good too you know, the neighbour, he looked after Pat pretty well.

It's one of the quintessentially

23:00 **female roles I suppose and also typically unremarked upon and unappreciated outside of the people who are directly involved, that role of holding things together, maintaining relationships while the men are away, that's what woman do.**

Yes they do, the really do and you know, it was only last year we found out that our friend in America

23:30 whom we had corresponded with, Pat had, for a long, long time, had passed away. We'd known them since 1965 and it was only the other day we found she wasn't with us any longer but always an exchange of letters during the year and so on, it was a wonderful relationship really. As you say it's particularly good for the women, they can talk about things that we probably don't normally,

24:00 womanly things I mean.

Well also just keeping those bridges and doorways open so when you come back there is a world for you to step into rather than just an empty flat.

Absolutely, we've made some very good friends over the years. We don't see a lot of them but we keep in touch with quite a few of them.

When you were back in Malaya, you were based in Singapore, obviously World War II everyone

24:30 **basically thought was a just war, a war that we should've been involved. Did you have any opinions at the time or do you have any opinions now about the validity of the Malaysian confrontation for a want of a better word?**

Well I think they were just worried about communism generally at that stage of the game. We'd had a lot to do with Russian communism, China was the same.

25:00 I think there was a fear that communism could take over in Malaysia and that would make it a little closer to us and our near north was not exactly stable and it could be a threat to us in some way and that's as far as I knew and our aim was to stop it

25:30 increasing in Malaya. And we were just doing our best to contain it really or wipe it out, one or the other, and the big indication was that the villages were not being threatened nearly so much as they were say a few years before that. So the threat gradually disappeared you know, over six or seven years, but it took a lot.

26:00 A very expensive undertaking.

But it wasn't until 1958 that it sort of wound down?

That's right.

It was a long, long time.

It was a long time really, a good many years. Well I think the Australian Government was going on the assessment from up there and if the threat was still there they'd keep going. That was about it.

You would've been 30 then,

26:30 **32, 33?**

I was born in 1921 and I was up there in '54.

32, 33.

33.

In World War II, 33 would've been quite an age for a pilot?

Yes, yes, yes.

But not so in the 1950s?

No, not so much, well there were more personnel who'd made a career out of it

27:00 so they were doing ground jobs as well as air jobs. In World War II, if you got into, say, Britain there in the bomber squadrons you wouldn't be doing a tour on the ground necessarily, you might be having a rest or something like that. You'd either go home or do another tour. And they were short lived, I mean the war only lasted, what, four years

27:30 whereas this, once you get in the permanent side, it's an ongoing thing and there were these brush fire wars around the place. If you were in the permanent air force you'd take your place there.

Was there a ceiling to age for a pilot? Was there a time at which the said, "You won't fly any more?"

No, there was no ceiling on that. I mean, the Chief of Air Staff could fly if he wanted to, provided

28:00 he was proficient and got some refresher dual instruction type of thing, had someone to fly with him just to keep current, as they say, keep current. I don't think you could take anyone out of the headquarters and say, "Right, fly this," even if he wanted to. I think it's essential that he get a bit of a check to make sure that he's on the beam.

Do you have any opinion about,

28:30 **is it better to have 23 year olds as bomber pilots, or 33 or 43 year old because you're a different man at those ages. Is there one that you think is better suited to...?**

I don't think, the big thing is that a 23 year old is normally, I mean that was wartime that was a totally different thing. You throw people in and they can fly the aeroplane and carry the load to where you want it to go,

29:00 that was it. As they make a career of it you can do two years flying and two years off and you can keep going as long as you like but as you get more mature and so on you're more inclined to get a headquarters job. Later on a senior administrative job and that's how they work their way up to Chief of Air Staff or senior officer.

The reason I asked that question is,

29:30 **we interviewed another chap a while ago who was a bomber pilot in Britain in World War II and they were saying, he was saying that he wouldn't want married men in his crew or a man who was in love or engaged because he thought they'd have other things on their minds when they were up there and would be a little less inclined to push themselves further into danger and I'm just wondering, as a father of two flying in**

30:00 **Malaysia made you a lot more circumspect about where you were and what you were doing than it might for a younger man?**

No, I would say not. I think the fellows in my crew, I think four of us were married and the three younger ones were not.

It's such a different world to World War II where it was basically kids?

Oh there were kids, they were 19 and 20 and so on. They were thrown into a Lancaster pretty early in the piece.

30:30 **I find that quite remarkable that people of that age were in charge of these huge machines.**

Yes, but when there is an urgency you learn pretty quickly.

All hands to the wheel.

Yeah and I think safety is a thing but you don't get time to be, I would say smooth, the big thing is to do the job, get airborne,

31:00 get to the target, drop your bombs and get home safely and you can do that without being a very polished pilot, safe but not really polished.

You mentioned how in the Berlin airlift you were bringing good things to people, obviously in Malay you were bombing, did that weigh on your mind at all? Did you think,

31:30 **were you ever uneasy about flying bombing raids or was that your job and you just ...?**

No, I didn't really, I thought they were playing up a fair bit down there, they were giving these villages hell and if there was any way I could stop them doing that, I would. I didn't think twice about it, didn't give a thought but my mind was quite different to the airlift, quite different, but it didn't vary at all from the

32:00 safety point of view. You wouldn't be doing anything that was erratic or could be risky in any way. It's always a risk when you're flying but I mean you wouldn't be doing low-level stuff when you shouldn't and you took the normal precautions, just safety was a big thing.

Speaking of safety, did you ever have any occasions where an engine dropped out on you or your instruments packed in?

32:30 Oh yes, on the Lincolns I had to shut down the odd engine or two, oil had spurted everywhere but you know there was no problem there, you had three engines. On the others, no, I didn't have any engines go on Dakotas.

Never had any undercarriage stick that wouldn't come down or anything?

No, no but up there the RAF did.

33:00 They were flying these, I can't think of the name of them now, they had a tremendous number of aircraft that had undercarriage problems. These aircraft were about to be phased out but you know they'd just land on the belly on the strip. They couldn't get the undercarriage down or something like that. They'd handle it pretty well but no, we didn't have anything like that, it was uneventful,

33:30 but we used to practice that sort of thing. The CO introduced this training programme at the end of the airlift, towards the end, midway I should say, and he said that we were to practice our manoeuvres and so and we'd close down an engine and come in and land on one engine in an empty aircraft at Lübeck or do a bad weather circuit or do a flapless landing or something like that. All the time

34:00 we had to keep a log book, a separate log book on what we'd done and so on. That kept us on the beam I can tell you that.

It would indeed. So Malaysia, you get the word, did you go there for a set period of time?

Yes, 12 months.

So you knew that ...?

Oh yes we new exactly when.

You knew the end of [unclear]

Yes, a 12 month period.

And how was it to set foot in Australia again after that?

Yes it was good.

Another child there then?

Just had the two, David. No, David was about

34:30 three when I came back. He was born in '51, I know because Geelong won the premiership in '51 and they won it again in '52.

And we all know who won it in '54.

Yes, yes I can tell you that I was up there in Malaya and the Bulldogs won their first premiership. Are you a Bulldog man?

Yes unfortunately. So

35:00 **you came home...**

From Malaya.

... and what was your post when you came back?

Posted to the University Squadron.

Was that Melbourne University?

Yeah, Melbourne University Squadron, based in the city.

What's the Melbourne University Squadron, I've never heard of that before? Is it still in existence?

I don't know that it is, I'm not sure but they were University students, medical and so on, they wanted

35:30 a certain number and the air force paid them a certain amount of money and they did their training. They had a set schedule. They used to go down for Camps at Laverton and sometimes Wagga and places like that but they'd have to do a certain amount, turn up a certain number of times each month for meetings and they'd be lectured to and so on.

So they were reservists in a sense?

They were reservists. It was good for them and good for the

36:00 air force.

And good for you and your family.

And they had to serve a certain time in the air force after that. Yeah, it was good. I did that for about a year or so. The Olympic Games were on then, I know that. Yes, 1957 I went down to the staff course, that was a year down there.

Down at Laverton, Point Cook?

Point Cook, yeah.

36:30 That was a whole year and that was...

What is a staff course?

It was fitting you for promotion. It was a very lengthy course where we had a lot of problem solving, a lot of exercises like that to do.

When you say 'problem solving', what sort of problems?

Oh they'd set out a big problem where you had to move armies

37:00 or air force, that type of thing. It was concerned with the military.

Logistics?

Yeah, that type of thing, you had to work it out. There was always a programme going through where you had to give lectures on this or that, on a country or a subject of your own if you wanted to, that was the initial one I remember.

37:30 **Did you do fishing?**

I did as a matter of fact.

As your lecture?

Yes I did, it was a 15 minute lecture of your own choice and the heading was, "The redfin and how to catch it," and I can tell you I produced a redfin just at the end of my talk and I said, "I was going past, I was at the Albert Park Lake on Sunday and I thought I'd throw in the line and here's what I got," and I held it up like that. I

38:00 in fact got in touch with the sporting globe fellow who wrote on fishing, I rang him up and said, "You wouldn't happen to have a redfin?" he said, "I've got a few in the freezer." He gave me one so I was able to do that, which was pretty good.

That's a fine ending to your speech and a good end for this tape.

Tape 7

00:52 **Back tracking, first of all a Constellation, can you just tell me a little bit about that aircraft?**

Yes, it had

01:00 a cigar shaped fuselage. It had three fins on the back. It was four engine. It was a, what else can I say about it? It was a very comfortable aircraft. I don't know how many it took really, I can't remember the number but it was a goodly number, you know, probably 150 or 200,

01:30 something like that. Its range was not great because we'd have to stop at those places for fuel, that's with a full load of passengers, but very comfortable and a good trip over except for that one at Castle Benito where we had to stay overnight.

So it was a civilian plane?

Oh yes, it was Qantas.

And I wanted to ask a little about Qantas because I'm assuming Qantas really got up and running after the Second World War?

02:00 Yes, Qantas were doing the overseas, mainly we had, ANA [Australian National Airways] we had in those days and, what was the other one, I've almost forgotten. The government airline anyway, I can't remember what it was then.

ANA probably became TAA [Trans Australia Airlines].

No, TAA and ANA had separate ones, that was the thing, so they usually had two aircraft going on the same

02:30 route about 15 minutes apart.

Oh, competition.

Yes, competition.

I wanted to ask because I'm sure very few people flew overseas and afterwards I have a feeling it probably picked up quite a bit and there was probably a lot of international travel.

Yes I think so, when I came back from Malaya later on I came back by a similar aircraft, a Constellation in 1955.

And would a number of ex-servicemen

03:00 **have become civilian pilots?**

Oh a lot of them, yeah, a lot of them at the end of the war in 1946 and 7, a lot of ex-RAAF pilots joined both companies, TAA and ANA.

Well the question I'm most burning to ask about the Constellation was what were the stewardesses like?

I can't even remember them, I don't know that they were stewardesses. There may have been, what's the word for steward men?

The stewards...

03:30 Yeah the stewards. I think they'd be all right but I can't remember them.

Well it might have been later then because it became the height of fashion to become a...

Stewardess.

Or now a 'flight attendant'.

Yes, a flight attendant, they called them air hostesses.

Air hostesses, gosh even forgotten that.

I can't recall that. See what concentration does you know. The task ahead. I can't remember.

04:00 But I remember going to Shepherd's Hotel and having goats' chops for the first time, I remember that and the air raid siren that went off at Cairo while we were there and the stop at Castle Benito, they were the only things that I remember about that trip.

Okay, you did talk to John a fair bit about Britain but it was in such a bad way for such a long time after the war.

04:30 **Like Germany, did you see lots of bombed out sites?**

Didn't see much in Britain. We were not there long enough. I know Coventry was badly damaged but I really didn't see too much. I saw damage in London itself to, what was the name of the church, right in the heart of London ...?

Westminster Abbey got hit.

Yes, and another one there, I can't think of it. But I didn't notice it in England

05:00 nearly so much as in Germany. Hamburg was the one that sticks in my mind because it was, just seemed the length of the road, it was just plastered and that was all about it, big damage.

I appreciate you were barely in Berlin long enough to swallow a cup of coffee but was it possible to ascertain the situation that had occurred for the Jewish people there?

No, I couldn't tell you a thing

05:30 about that. I do not know. I did, the only thing that I remember about Berlin, I never ever got into the city while I was there until 1999 when we were invited back. We used to track over Hess, you know the prisoner, right over his prison every time we went into Gatow and I used to think of him a bit. Bad luck he bailed out over Scotland and

06:00 captured by the Allies and then he went back and he was doing his time in, I can't think of the prison's name but he was there forever and a day and I felt a bit sorry for him because he was one of the better ones, he was a Nazi all right but he was one of the better ones. I used to think of him quite a bit because we used to go right over the top of it every time.

Did you get any chance to read up on the Nuremberg trials when they were happening then?

I think I did at the time, yes I did but they were

06:30 before we went there, right after the war, about '46, I think, somewhere there, and I knew of them and I knew what had happened to the various ones and so on.

I wanted to ask a little bit more about the batman that you had while you were there,

07:00 **I find them a very interesting part of service and so on. So you shared a batman between a few of you?**

Yes, with a few of us. His name was Heinz, I remember that and that's the only thing that I did know about him except he was very good at what he had to do but his knowledge of English and my knowledge of German made it very difficult to talk to him. He knew what I wanted and we learnt a few words of course and he just kept everything just right as far as I was concerned.

07:30 **And did you say he was also ex-Luftwaffe?**

No, the barman was. He was a good fellow too. A jovial sort of a fellow.

Do you know what Heinz did during the war?

No, I think he might not even have been in it. He was a young boy you know, a young fellow.

How would he come to be working with Australian air personnel then?

He was just appointed. All the messing staff were German. It was a RAF base but

08:00 like the people, similar to the people loading the aircraft they used Germans a lot for that sort of thing, under British direction most of the time but they were quite competent and very trustworthy and very good all round. They were looking for employment and peace I think, if they could get both of those they didn't worry too much about anything else, and I found them

08:30 to be very good and the girls in the Mess waiting on tables and things like that, they were good, very good.

Who footed the bill for the airlift?

That's a very good question, I would think the Allies would split it. I think America would

09:00 have to take the brunt of it I would imagine. I mean, their aircraft anyway, they outnumbered all the other countries with their C-54 Skymasters. They took a good heavy load and they were there right at the outset and they were there at the finish and I would think that America would've just about,

09:30 taken the brunt of it anyway. They were very keen to get Germany going so that they were a good trading partner so their interests were there on the trade side to resurrect the Germany economy and get it moving.

And what did you make of the Russian aggression at that point?

I think they were just nasty, plain nasty people to have around. Really,

10:00 as I said to John, they didn't want any part of the Allies in Berlin, they wanted to control the whole lot because it was in the Russian zone anyway, Berlin. We were intruders in other words and they didn't like that and they were being intimidating with their flying down the corridor and of course their actions in Berlin itself. Stopping the

10:30 transport to and from the western sector which was not good.

Did you get a look at any of the Yaks on the ground?

No, didn't see them on the ground, they just went past us just like that, 'shoo', like that. Just kept my fingers crossed that they didn't do that in conditions of cloud, you wouldn't want that.

Look, this is kind of a silly question but I often wonder if pilots see birds up at any distance?

11:00 Yeah you do, mainly at the medium altitudes, that'd be up a few thousand feet when you're flying around and of course nearer the ground you often get very close to them. In fact I remember hitting one, where was it, in Townsville or Wagga, one or the other, but I was doing training with another pilot and a bird

11:30 went smack into the windscreen. A lot of feathers and a bit of blood around but you can still land you know. I remember that quite well.

It's not funny but it's kind of comical.

Of course the birds get sucked into the jets on take off. They just about got a tip at the end of every runway and they shouldn't have because it attracts seagulls and things and it's a real hazard, bird, they ingest

12:00 the bird in the system, lose an engine easily.

It could, could it?

Oh yes, they're a real hazard to jet aircraft. I remember they were at Townsville too.

Well I guess it wasn't such a silly question. I thought I ought to ask a little bit more about Air Marshall George Jones. I know we had that chat

12:30 afterwards and it was sort of light-hearted...

Yes I've got a photograph of him there. Yes, he was Chief of Air Staff.

Why didn't Australia have a policy on the airlift?

Oh their policy would've been to join the RAF. They would've been asked if they could supply crews, which they did. They would've had a policy, it was either yes or no. "Yes we'll help,"

13:00 or, "No we won't." If we could we helped, it was very much an Empire thing in those days and South Africa came in too and New Zealand. But the, what do you call them, not colonials but part of the Empire countries all contributed in the number of crews they

13:30 supplied. New Zealand only had three. We had ten, South Africa had six.

I imagine it was an unusual time in that prior to the war Australia was full of British for the realm. After the war they had so much to do with America's involvement that you could sort of feel the split happening and yet here is Australia again answering to the call

14:00 of the British needs even though they might've wanted to act in their own rights anyway. Was that an issue at all, that Britain was basically decimated and still calling on its [unclear]?

No, no I think Australia would've been quite happy to contribute because if we were not there we would've been training or flying round and not doing anything better

14:30 then as a cause than the airlift, I mean that was a big cause, it was urgent, really urgent and I think if it ever, it was a time to contribute, that was it, and we did and, as I said, even New Zealand contributed in its own way. Don't forget that the aircraft were all RAF, not ours, we didn't have our own aircraft so it was only crews and when you think of it,

- 15:00 the training that we got out of that or the experience that we got out of it was probably far superior than we would've got anywhere around here. So in other words, long term, it was a good policy probably.
- Well that leads to my next question, what is happening in the Australian RAAF? We've got business going on in BCOF and the airlift and so on. Do you know where else Australia began to concentrate its energies in terms of its air force?**
- 15:30 Other than those two, well we had Malay.
- That began straight away?**
- That was in 1952 round about.
- Sure but I mean just post war, around about BCOF and the airlift?**
- Don't think so, I can't recall any other place.
- But was there, would they have maintained a fair number of men in the service without**
- 16:00 **sort of active service being available for them?**
- Oh yes, I mean it doesn't have to be active service, you can't have a war all the time.
- No but I'm sure that they would've had a huge bill, they would've had a lot of people to pay. They would've wanted to get rid of a lot off the books. I'm just wondering if you have any knowledge about the size of the air force at the time and where they were concentrating their energy?**
- Was that round about Korea or not? Before Korea?
- 16:30 **Between '45 and, say, '50?**
- Well Korea came up when, '50?
- That's '50.**
- Well we had that fighter squadron there in Korea and we also had a transport unit that was flying between Japan and Korea keeping that squadron supplied and flying personnel and so on around the place. There was a,
- 17:00 I can't remember what squadron that was, maybe 33 they called it, but it was up there during that Korean War.
- Yes I'm interested, I understand at Fisherman's Bend they continued to keep building aircraft and they would have had an enormous amount of surplus so I was just curious to know how they managed it all?**
- Yes, when the aircraft has had its day, like the Lincoln did eventually, they just to
- 17:30 put them out on the rack there and they use them for fire or something like that. If they can't fly any more, or they don't want them any more, there's nothing much you can do about them because there's no demand for them, no one has a requirement. What can you do with used aircraft that ...?
- Can any part of it be recycled?**
- I don't think so. The other thing on some of those Lincolns, we did have occasion
- 18:00 while I was training before we went to Malaya to track one of those atomic clouds, you know, from Maralinga in 1954 or '53, I can't remember, we had occasion to track that cloud up north. You know, when the cloud came over and we picked it up in Queensland and
- 18:30 tracked it up top to around about Townsville or in that area. That was one of the things so they had to be done over properly too when they came back, made safe. But to answer your question, at the end of a day for an aircraft there is very little you can salvage unless it's
- 19:00 got something fairly modern in it and those aircraft like the Lincoln didn't have anything really.
- I'm curious to ask a little bit about tracking the cloud from Maralinga, would various pilots have been doing that from its position of detonation?**
- Yes, well they did have some right there at Maralinga. There was one squadron was there, not Lincolns, they were Canberra I think.
- 19:30 And we had the other one, we were over here based at Amberley, went down to Richmond actually for the thing but we did a bit of tracking there, I think, for one day which was interesting.
- How do you track? What does it require?**
- Well we had Geiger counters on the wings that picked up that sort of thing and they

20:00 let us know in the cockpit when they hit the cloud so we'd keep in it if we could track it.

What would be the purpose of keeping within it?

Just to test what happened when the bomb went off where the cloud went and what intensity it had at various points. It went off at Maralinga and went in a north easterly direction up the Queensland coast.

Do you know how much further it travelled

20:30 **from Townsville before it broke up?**

No, I couldn't tell you.

In retrospect, does that sort of seem like a dodgy thing to have done?

Yeah.

I mean you look like you're in pretty good shape, so it looks like you survived it but ...?

Well it was interesting because in The Age not so long ago, Norm Geskey who was the ombudsman, he was flying at the same time as I was, he was interviewed by The Age again

21:00 and his photograph and quite an article appeared in the paper, and that wasn't too long ago and he was in touch with me to just check the dates on which we flew up there. He was interested because I flew an aircraft by the number of A7321 up there and I came back in, I think in 26 and he took my aircraft, I think he was unserviceable or something. I brought his aircraft back and he took mine and we just exchanged views on that

21:30 and he wanted to get it right for the article in The Age that was appearing. I was able to give it to him because I've got a book here that outlined the operation completely and then I checked with my log book and it confirmed with what I thought. It was interesting because some people had suffered soon after that and there was no

22:00 proof that that caused it but tracking of the cloud, but I still think it's still up in the air really. I think one of Norm Geskey's crew passed away or certainly got cancer as a result of that, maybe two people. So there you are. So it was sort of left up in the air without any proof, just mentioned it because it was an interesting

22:30 flight and one that could've had repercussions really. But I'm doing my skipping and deep breathing and that sort of thing.

Yes, you were on it and was it the only one you were asked to do?

Yes, we positioned ourselves at Richmond and waited until

23:00 it went off and got word and we were airborne, I think there were about three or four aircraft involved and we all did the same thing, it was quite an interesting experiment. I don't know what they would gain out of all that except they knew the direction in which it went and they would know

23:30 the intensities. Whether that met their requirements or they were able to gain something from that knowledge, I wouldn't know.

When you see that footage of the scientists just turning their back on the explosion, you get a shudder but in a similar way it seems incredibly naïve to ask air force personnel to just go and check it out.

Well there you are, it's a hazard of the game.

What did

24:00 **you, what were your views on the two atomic bombs over Japan then? Did that give you cause for thought when they asked you to do this?**

If they'd ask me to do it?

No, you had seen the results of Nagasaki and Hiroshima but...

No, you wouldn't be too happy dropping them. No you wouldn't be too happy, at that stage of the game they had to weigh up how many people they might lose if they didn't drop it and they would be their own Americans.

24:30 There was pretty heavy fighting in places like Okinawa and to go into mainland Japan could've resulted in hundreds of losses and I guess to shorten the war they made that decision. It's one you wouldn't feel inclined to be in it but that's war and it's pretty hard to

25:00 argue against that sort of thing, wouldn't like to see it happen any more.

No, I don't suppose you'd be able to refuse a direct order anyway. What about your views on being asked to track that cloud after what you probably knew by then about what had

happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When they dropped the bomb they were unaware of what radiation would do to [unclear]?

I didn't hesitate, I don't think any of us did. We were there,

25:30 we just did it, didn't think too much about it. It was only after that you realised that you'd been subjected to something that probably you shouldn't have been.

Did you ever make enquiries into the air force about that?

No, I'd just let them know that I'd been in it that's all. That has been an ongoing thing for quite a few years now.

26:00 I know Norman Geskey brought it up some time ago and he sort of followed it through. It came up again and, as I said, the article appeared in The Age, his photograph and so on, and it was quite a good article, once again bring up the subject of cancer being a possibility or even a probability,

26:30 going into cloud like that.

Well as I said you look like a man in his early seventies.

Who's just given up golf who's 82.

I understand that you were quite happy being on the ground but did you have a little bit of trouble adjusting to what to do with yourself?

No.

Not at all?

Absolutely

27:00 none, I didn't at all. I saw Geelong win two premierships and I went fishing, I used to regularly go out to duck opening. I'd always be mad when they cancelled it because there was lack of water in the lakes or something. No, I didn't want to go anywhere at that stage of the game and it wasn't until the end of '52 that I thought I should move on. That was the normal thing as I said,

27:30 two years on the ground and two years flying.

The other thing I'm quite fascinated by is by how quickly Australia kind of got over it and got on with it. There were complications obviously post-war but the more I talk to people the more it seems that everybody was very keen to put it behind. At the same time the whole bogey of communism was really becoming an issue in the press. Before you took off to Malaya

28:00 **and even around, yeah, it was after Korea had begun, there was that 1959 referendum, do you recall that?**

What was that on?

Whether to suppress the Communist Party in Australia?

Oh yes, I do, I remember that now.

Do you recall the feel of it? I mean, in retrospect it's easy for me to say it was a load of hogwash, but at the time there was

28:30 **great fear about communism.**

I don't think it stirred us very much. I don't think it was, it wasn't close enough to us really. I know the Malayan thing came on a bit but it wasn't anything too serious. I think later on the Vietnam thing was a different thing, there was a real push by

29:00 Red China in those days, but I thought the communism, while it was way up there, was not a great threat to Australia. As long as they kept it contained up there it wasn't too bad, it didn't affect us any.

And just for my interest, did you recall that referendum?

Very vaguely you know, it didn't strike home as being anything too big to me.

29:30 They were trying to outlaw the Communist Party wasn't it?

Yes, it was a push by Menzies and it looked every bit like it would go ahead even though Australia were famous for voting 'no' on referendums. Curiously The Argus came out that morning saying, 'Don't vote for it,' and it seemed to sway the general population.

Yes,

30:00 some of those issues are pretty big in the minds of some people but it didn't register with me. I just can't recall it anyway.

Well I guess my line of questioning is probably because during the Second World War it seems fairly commonplace that people went and did their service and they didn't necessarily have an understanding of what the global geopolitical politics were actually about and that wasn't what their issue was, they just wanted to defend Australia. But of course

30:30 **the media has really started to kick in, in the '50s, and people have much greater access to international events and for the first time, I guess, people are starting to protest at Anzac marches and I was wondering if you, you might not have had the time, but were you present at the Anzac Day marches after the war?**

Yeah, I've got a photograph marching with George Jones if you want to see that later on?

I'd love to have a look.

31:00 **First question about that is, what was it like to be in the Anzac marches after the war?**

Well I only went in the one, I thought it was pretty good. There were big crowds along the marching route and George was leading it so I was right at his side on the left here. I got a bit of a kick out of it I must say. It's not something I'd

31:30 volunteer for, going to Anzac march, not that I dislike it, in fact I watch it on TV but I saw nothing wrong in it in those days. It was a recognition I think of the duties carried out by the forces in wartime, a recognition of those who didn't come back and if you didn't do something

32:00 like that well it would all be forgotten and that would be a very sad thing for those who probably gave the supreme sacrifice. So I think you've got to keep that going. I don't think a war is something you necessarily want to support or anything like that but I don't think you want to forget the trials and tribulations that some people went through.

No and

32:30 **the recent resurgence of interest in Anzac Day has certainly been a ...**

With the young kids and so on. I think it's more of a memory more than anything else. It's quite unlike some other countries who have armed forces marching through the streets, such as Moscow and Red China and so on, they show their might, their military might which we never do really. The only thing you see is a fly past or something like that

33:00 on Anzac Day. So no, I think we're doing the right thing and I think we did the right thing from the end of the war really.

And so were you at all aware of the rising anti-war sentiment that was beginning sort of around the '50s?

No not really. I think I was just too involved in doing things. I don't recall it, it didn't affect me.

And the work that you were doing in those years after the airlift and before you went to Malaya,

33:30 **were you able to go home and talk to Patricia about your work or was it all still a bit hush-hush?**

Oh yes, I talked about it but she's not too interested in detail and military secrets and all that sort of thing. But no, she knew where I was going and what I was doing and that was okay. There was nothing too classified in what I did really.

And what about post-war get-togethers? You mentioned that it was kind of

34:00 **difficult for you to have reunions because you were constantly shifted around. Was there regular events or places where you would meet to discuss things? Because I'm just assuming it must have all been so fresh still, all the events of the war, and pretty sure people would've talked about it a fair bit afterwards?**

Oh yes, we always had the Officers' Mess of course and we used to get there once a week or maybe more, depending on that and we used to have some great times I can tell you.

34:30 That was very good and various bases around the place. I was at Headquarters but we used to go down to Laverton or Point Cook and that sort of thing and keep in touch that way but not necessarily were they the guys I was flying with, they would be just people I had met over a long period. You get to know a great number of people and they're spread far and wide at the moment. Even these airlift people or Malayan people, I know where they are but

35:00 I don't get to see them too often. Call in now and then going up to the Gold Coast or something like that.

And during the years that you were on the ground, do you have to maintain a certain number of flying hours to keep you, not like a commercial pilot would these days?

No, because there's no guarantee that you're going back to flying anyway.

Sure. I'm going to jump forward in a second and ask about your trip in America but before I do

35:30 **I need to ask about your DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] from Malaya? How did that come about and how was it presented to you?**

There was a cutting in the paper you, so that, I was a, there was a CO and I was next to him. I suppose if they're going to give out DFCs you've got to be realistic about it and say he may have deserved it

36:00 on behalf of the squadron. I did 103 strikes as they called it up there and I was there for 12 months and don't think anyone did any more strikes and they thought perhaps I should get something if they were being handed out and I just happened to be in the right place at the right time I suppose.

Do you think that's all it was?

Recognition of the squad at doing

36:30 a pretty reasonable job. I think they did, they didn't lose any aircraft and didn't damage any and dropped an awful lot of bombs so perhaps the squadron should've got it and not me.

Again there's that self-deprecating quality. I think you probably cracked a ton and that was probably enough, wow. And in the ceremony, was there an official ceremony to present it to you?

Yes, we went to Government House here, Pat came along, and

37:00 received the DFC.

And the kiddies, how old were they then?

I got that about '57, '57 I think I got that. I'd been home you know, I was on staff course and I know I couldn't go on a set date, they write and tell you that they're presenting these things. I had to defer mine until the following year, I think it might've even been

37:30 '58 I was on the staff course and couldn't meet that appointment, and they came along and it was quite a pleasant little morning. There was not much to it, names called out, I think the citation is read out, I can't remember too well. But it was the Governor who did it and it was something Brookes,

38:00 I'm trying to think of his name now, anyway Governor of Victoria.

You kind of make it sound a little bit like getting a medal at the end of the school year or something, I'm sure it was a little bit more special than that?

You know, there were quite a few people getting various things, quite a few civilian awards and that sort of thing. I know the air force officer who took over from me, Leo Britt, he also, he was a flight commander too,

38:30 he got one too and we got it at the same time because, as I said, I couldn't meet that commitment the year before and we both arrived on the same time getting the same declaration.

And are there any entitlements that come with it?

Yes they do, they give, there's a very small amount, I can't remember, it's just paid into my bank account. It's just a very little, you know, two or three dollars or something like that.

How funny, I didn't actually mean that but how interesting?

It's not a monetary thing

39:00 but they wrote and said you are entitled to this because of your declaration and I was absolutely shocked when they said it. It was a very small amount and I wasn't you know I wouldn't say I was deserving of it but they do pay it in. It's a part of my, it's added on to my pension, I'll put it that way, a very, very small amount.

I thought maybe it would give you entry into a special golf club or something like that?

Oh absolutely not no. I'm

39:30 a member of the MCC, Melbourne Cricket Club but now that I've given up the gold at Woodlands, that's the only club I belong to.

Tape 8

00:34 **You mentioned to John a little bit about the University Squadron and fish lecture, I wanted to ask, there must have been a lot of advancements in technology in other areas apart from**

aviation? Was that sort of apparent to you living in Melbourne then, that things were progressing quite quickly?

Well we had TV in '56,

01:00 that was the first thing that I noticed. I went down to the Staff College in '57, for the whole of the '57, and that was advanced studies, you might say, in war activities but we also did, it was a very interesting year and a very

01:30 useful one as far as I was concerned. Visits to the Snowy Mountain Project which was in force at the time, we had a visit up there. We went to several coalmines in New South Wales, things like that. Any big projects round the place we went there.

And why was that?

Because it gave us a broader view, we were studying to become senior officers

02:00 and we just needed a knowledge of industry as well as air force and service conditions, we needed to know what was going on in Australia, what was making Australia tick, what our industries were, how we'd use them in wartime, things of that nature. So it just broadened our outlook on both civilian and service matters.

Okay, so it seems the Second World War really brought it home to

02:30 **Australians that they weren't that safe actually, that they needed to look after their own...**

Well they needed to keep a good service going, yes. The numbers were something that had to be considered by Parliament and it's a matter of how much you can afford really, that's in aircraft and equipment as well as personnel so it's dictated to by the Treasury really.

03:00 **Yes, I mean the air force had been in existence since 1916 or something...**

1920, yes, they had flown but 1921 at Point Cook, I think that was recognised at the formation of the RAAF.

Like Duntroon, was there a cadet school that, cadets ...?

Cadets started down at Point Cook, I didn't go there but Point Cook

03:30 Cadets started round about '47 I think. It was after the war, '47-'48, somewhere around there. I remember some of them coming off number two course. I think they had a four year course there and they had a degree when they left there. It was either '46 or '47. Somewhere there I think they renewed the cadetship. It was in force

04:00 pre-war.

A few questions then, the first time you saw a television, when was that?

In '56.

In home, in the shops?

Here.

Here in your house, sorry?

Yes.

You bought one and that was the first time?

Yes.

Do you remember the first television show you saw?

I did go personally to the Olympic Games but I can't, I've no doubt, I can remember the guy selling, it was a Motorola, I can remember the name,

04:30 that was the name of the machine, a Motorola, but I can't remember the first programme I saw, testing my memory.

I sure am. What about the Snowy Scheme and the number of migrants that were working on that?

Yes, there were a number of sort of, would you call them camps, or different projects? A tremendous number of

05:00 teams there. They seemed to specialise. They'd get a team say from Finland to do a certain project and they'd get a team from Italy to do one and it was all like that. We were only there for a couple of days so I well recall it because my gear, all I had was what we stood up in when we landed at Cooma, I think it was. My bag had been left behind in Canberra together with, I mentioned his name

- 05:30 earlier, Skin Hewitt, the boy who was hacked down in New Guinea in the Wirraways. He and I had just what we stood up in for two days and the boys used to give us the brush off and go 10 yards away from us sort of thing, leave us on our own. Big joke there for two days but it wasn't good for us, we didn't have anything, that's why I remember it so well.
- 06:00 **What did it seem to you then, to see all those new Australians?**
- I thought it was a good thing because they were specialists, you know, they knew their job, I thought it was a great thing. They used to have the equivalent of a Mess at night and you know they'd be singing and that sort of thing, I thought it was like a breath of fresh air just to hear them. They were from different countries and that made it
- 06:30 all the more interesting really, I thought it was great.
- And what about food, did it become, did it start to become obvious in Melbourne that you could have something a little bit different than meat and three veg?**
- Here? Yes, that was, yeah I thought it was a little bit later than that, I noticed that the people started to get into the restaurants and cafes. I'm not sure about the year but I thought it was wonderful when it happened because just
- 07:00 so much better, so much competition going on too. They all seemed to come in too at the one time, the Greeks and the Italians and so on. I think that was the making of Melbourne really as far as the restaurant business is concerned anyway.
- And, forgive me if I sound a bit naïve, was it strange, less than a few years earlier everybody had been at war with each other and then a few years later...**
- Yes, it was, it was strange
- 07:30 but when they came out to another country and got away from their own country and we accepted them they sort of became one of us anyway, different language but more or less thinking the same thing, it's a new country. After all we were pretty new too and I think they just mixed in very well.
- Okay, well your career starts to take you to a few different places. The refresher course**
- 08:00 **on the Dakotas at Richmond, what was it about the Dakotas that you needed to be refreshed about?**
- I think I said I did a refresher course when I was at Canberra. I was still in the Department of Air and I went there because I'd been off flying to do a refresher. Just what it meant, I mean, I just wanted to get back, get a bit of dual instruction, do a few cross country
- 08:30 flights up to New Guinea and so on with an instructor just to get back in the groove and renew my knowledge of procedures. Just so I could go over to Richmond, I was going to be CO of 38 Squadron so I needed to be up to date. I didn't want to go up to 38 Squadron and get dual instruction I wanted to go there as CO and be able to
- 09:00 command.
- Okay. Is it a bit like riding a bike?**
- Yeah, it doesn't take long, really it does not take long. Particularly if it's the same aircraft, the same type of aircraft that you've flown before that doesn't A new aircraft is different because it's got different characteristics really. The Dakota that I'd trained in before that was no problem, that was just a matter of renewing old acquaintances really.
- In all your years of flying and all the different crafts you've flown**
- 09:30 **on, did you begin to think that you could design the perfect plane?**
- Never, never, ever. No I did not. No, no I had no knowledge of that I'm afraid, I didn't think about it. I just wanted everything that was in there to work properly. That's all I wanted, serviceable aircraft.
- What was the best invention that the engineers came up with for aircraft, apart from being able to take off of course?**
- 10:00 That's a hard question, isn't it? I think one that was a great invention was the reverse propellers, when you landed you'd just push them in a certain way and instead of blowing or sucking the thing would blow and use as a brake which they do now. It takes the, even the jets do it,
- 10:30 it takes the pressure of the brakes and you can just about stop the aircraft by putting it into reverse. I think that was a great invention. The Caribou had that and that's why we could do such very short landings. You're coming onto Caribous anyway.
- Well we're onto Caribous right now, it's 1963, the war in Vietnam started. It's not yet the summer of love but I guess things are changing all over the place. Your**

11:00 **kids must be getting on by now too?**

Yes they were born in '48, Susan, and '51, David. Just before you get on to that Caribou, I did do one pretty interesting trip and it was on Aboriginal voting rights. Remember when they didn't get a vote at all - '63?

The 63 Ref...

And I flew two lots of Parliamentarians to

11:30 first of all Cape York area, went into the various missions and so on, Weipa, and we landed at Horn Island and went across to Thursday Island which was a big Aboriginal centre, as well as other places. I did that one time and we came back and then I flew them up again, the same team, up to the Darwin area and we went into

12:00 the various paces up there where there was a big mission station where there was an airfield and a mission station and they had meetings. The Parliamentarians met the locals and that was an interesting one really, I like that one.

I bet it was. What was it like seeing Darwin again?

Darwin, I'd been in there a few times before you know,

12:30 Darwin was just rebuilt really, couldn't recognise it. It was a totally different, permanent buildings and so on. No, that was pretty good but we did go to a couple of those islands just to the north, Melville Island I think, what's the other one, I can't remember it? We just dropped in there and they had their meetings with the natives, the locals,

13:00 and we pushed on to other places and went down as far as Alice Springs to places like Hermannsburg and another place where they do a lot of Aboriginal painting and that sort of thing, where there are big missions there.

I noticed some of your artwork here, I don't know if that's when you...

I didn't get it there but that was an interesting trip because you had

13:30 half Liberal and National Party, they were called Country Party then, aboard and half Labor, 16 all told, anyway. It was a very interesting one and enjoyed flying them round, they were good. Kim Beazley's father was on that one. There was a fellow by the name of Lucetti who came from Bathurst and he weighed about 18 stone and we had to watch where we put him in the aircraft.

14:00 He made it a bit tail heavy at first so I moved him up front a bit and I started to land a bit better. And then in '63 I went over to America, that was about October I suppose, somewhere there, maybe a bit before that.

Okay, I've got to ask about the Aboriginal discussions, that was the only referendum that Australia ever voted 'yes' on as far as I understand.

Yes, that was a good thing

14:30 because they did it thoroughly and went to the places of population really and met the heads of those missions and I think that was a good result.

Did you sit in on the discussions?

No, no, I didn't. I got to Catherine one time there, Catherine was one of, we all went swimming and there was only one taxi, or taxis run by man and wife

15:00 by the name of Brown. We went, they dropped us out there and we came back and it was on a very dusty back road and we were coming home and out of the Mulga came this policeman, and Mrs Brown was driving us, and pulled us over and I can still hear him saying, "And how many passengers are you supposed to have, Mrs Brown?"

15:30 and she said, "Five." "And how many have you, Mrs Brown?" "Six." "What speed are you supposed to be doing, Mrs Brown?" "Forty." "What were you doing?" "Fifty." And so it went on and got Mrs Brown on about six counts and he looked round and here was Mr Brown coming about two miles behind and he said, "Okay Mrs Brown, you'll hear more about this, looks like my lucky day," he said and

16:00 Mr Brown came up and he went through the same procedure apparently and it turns out that he was a new fellow, a young fellow from Alice Springs, he was just up there relieving and he didn't know what the Territory was all about. Because you know a back road, dusty back road, and picking someone up for speeding [unclear]. Anyway the head of the mission I think his name was George Pearce from Capricornia,

16:30 he got in touch with head policeman in Darwin and I understand that other boy went home to Alice Springs, went home to Darwin the next day and all charges were dropped on Mr and Mrs Brown. You know that was one incident that I recall.

I still think it's still a little bit the case up there. I don't suppose you heard the politicians speaking in the plane while you were flying, you would've been well down in the cockpit?

No, we used to, their discussions were,

17:00 mainly were, when they got back to Canberra they probably put in a consolidated report and it ended up the right way anyway but it was an interesting experience.

Okay, let's talk about hunting the Caribou? How did you receive your orders that you were going to take off first of all to Alabama?

They,

17:30 we heard at the Headquarters at Richmond that we were buying a Caribou and the next thing the Department of Air said I should be going over there and doing a conversion and making arrangements for the ferrying of the aircraft back to Australia. And I went over there and I can't remember, I think it might have been September. I went down to Fort Rucker in

18:00 Alabama and flew with the American army, they were running the Caribou. It was support aircraft for the army and my instructor was Sammy Sneath, he wasn't the golfer but he was a good fellow and I finished that and went up to De Havilland at Toronto, got to know the people there and did a few more

18:30 flights in the Caribou, came back and made arrangements for the first ferry. As a result some of the crews had to be, they needed to be training on the aircraft at De Havilland, made arrangements for that and I did a bit more flying there too and we were in good shape to take off on the

19:00 17th March in 1964.

What was it about the Caribou that interested the Australian ...?

Oh it was short landing and take off. You could land in probably with a load and so on, you could probably pull up after about 60 yards or something like that, very short. You'd hit the ground and put the prop into reverse, as I said, act as a

19:30 brake and you could pull up very quickly, similarly on take off. It was really designed to land in rough fields, you know, it's a good solid undercarriage on it, you could land and take off in pretty rough sort of fields if you had to. We didn't do that as a matter of choice but it would be useful for the army to have an aircraft land alongside them in

20:00 a field that they didn't have time to repair or prepare properly, an unmade field in other words. So take off, you'd do the same, you'd get airborne in 50 yards, something like that.

I'm going to have to reveal my utter ignorance, is a Caribou a bomber, fighter, transport?

Transport, rear loading, short range transport. We had to make it go a bit longer to ferry it out

20:30 but it is a short haul job really, I've got a photograph there.

I'm sure the air force don't tell you why they want to do things, but did it seem apparent at this stage that this was going to be used for something like Vietnam?

Mm.

I mean would you know that as a matter of course?

Yeah, we knew it would be used before we got it, before we ferried it back.

By that stage, Australia's involvement in Vietnam was only about

21:00 **30 men as far as I know.**

Oh the army would be up there then, wouldn't they?

There weren't many. They'd started to add ...

Do you remember the date? When I was in Washington it was pretty furious then. It was '65-'66, Vietnam was hot then, so it would've been ...

Oh okay, if it was 65-66, yeah ...

I remember when the Australians lost a few at one stage of the game when I was in Washington.

21:30 It was quite a big battle that took place then, so probably '66 I think.

Do you know what planes were sent over to Vietnam at that stage then?

What aircraft we had?

Yeah, I know I'm asking you some tough questions now but what had we sent over to Vietnam?

We had Canberra aircraft, I think they were the main ones, and the Caribou and the helicopters, the ... what ... the Hueys.

22:00 **John, the helicopter names - the Iroquois...**

Yeah, Hueys they called them.

Hueys, cause Iroquois is too hard to say.

Yes, probably. So we had yes, Caribou, Canberras as a bomber and the Iroquois.

22:30 **Okay, I'm gong to [unclear] when you went over to collect the Caribou though that was few years earlier, you said '63-'64.**

'64.

Did you have occasion to talk about the Vietnam War with any of the American army?

Well I guess I did down at Fort Rucker, we had some Australians down there training on the helicopter so

23:00 Vietnam was discussed a bit. Fort Rucker was so spread out, if I wanted to go to an office you had to go about two miles sort of thing and at the end of a flying day there I didn't feel like conversing too much with anyone. If I could get a meal and got to bed I was happy but our boys trained there, down at Fort Rucker, on helicopters, that was the base for them too.

Did you ever fancy flying a helicopter?

No, I've

23:30 only been in one, once. I don't think I've got any great desire to do it. It's very handy aircraft, so useful and I have no doubt that you can fall for them pretty heavily but I prefer the other type myself.

Okay, so you've got this unusual ferrying job to

24:00 **do, a conversion course, is that also to convert the plane to suit Australian needs as well as ...?**

It's converting a pilot onto a certain type that all that's about, I could use another term but I'm trying to think what but we call it a conversion course onto a different type of aeroplane.

Was it that much more difficult to comprehend or ...?

No, a Caribou was not difficult to fly at all. It was using it properly was the big thing, the short landing and

24:30 take off was the thing. We did a bit of flying at Toronto and landed in the snow and so on which was bit of diversion, not that we are likely to get it out here but interesting to see what it would do in those conditions and it responded very well really.

Did aircraft continue to impress you as you worked with them, did they continue to impress you?

What aircraft?

Did you sort of maintain an admiration for the machines

25:00 **quite apart from your work with them?**

I don't ... I think I admired an aircraft from a flying point of view if I felt comfortable in it. Certain conditions, some aircraft are good in turbulent conditions and others aren't and the Caribou wasn't good in turbulent conditions, it was a high wing monoplane and other turbulence, you

25:30 used to feel it quite a bit more so than the Dakota, which was not a high wing monoplane. It was a low wing monoplane. So you know, they were both good to fly, their uses were different that's all. The Caribou had the rear landing, rear loading which was very good, very handy, easy to load, easy to unload whereas the Dakota, you had to do it through the side, not so good.

And was it all work over in the US or

26:00 **did you have occasion to step out and meet some people and ...?**

Oh yes, when I went over there for the two years, oh yes, yes a fairly good cocktail circuit there. We did a lot of entertaining and we entertained a lot so, yes, it was good two years.

Did you send the kids to school there?

Yes, Susan graduated from high school there.

Gosh, cause

26:30 **if you went to US high school you got to do band practice as a subject ...**

I don't think she did any of that but she graduated, I know that, I saw her photograph the other night. I remember her getting dressed up and she had her escort with her and she was a great one for dogs and cats and that sort of thing around the place and turtles and here she is dressed up, gloves and all and she

27:00 got about a 100 yards away and there was a turtle on Rock Creek Park crossing the road and she got out and got the turtle and came home, you know, this turtle and she was all dressed up to the hilt, quite funny, we joke about that.

First I want to ask what the scene was like then in Washington? Was the protest movement in much action at the time?

Yes it was, let me see, I get mixed up with the date but

27:30 J.F. Kennedy, I'd just got back from doing that course at Fort Rucker, I'd just got back to Richmond and the President was assassinated, that was at the end of '63, and when we got over there, there was a new President of course, Johnson, so things had changed a bit and things were hotting up quite a bit.

28:00 Protests were on, I'm just wondering when the other boy was assassinated, I get mixed up there, Robert, he was assassinated soon afterwards wasn't he?

I think it was '65 but I could be wrong.

What about Martin Luther King?

That was somewhere in-between, wasn't it?

Yes somewhere there, the protests were on but

28:30 we were not involved, it didn't affect us very much. We were in a fairly nice area on Rock Creek Park in Washington. I took over from a navy boy whose job I took and it was a pretty nice sort of a house and we didn't get too involved, we kept clear of it.

Did it ever kind of collide with your sort of views on what you were doing as a member of the air force?

29:00 No, we had a lot to do with the Pentagon and so on, we didn't get involved with civil matters very much at all. It was very much a service thing except for aircraft firms, there was a lot of liaison there with aircraft and so on

29:30 and we were entertained quite a lot around the place and we got to know quite a lot of people.

Can you do any name dropping in terms of the Washington circuit there?

No not really. No I can't, no, it was pretty good though. I enjoyed there.

And what about the situation with the Cold War, does your position in the air force require you to take a,

30:00 **to have a position or does none of that affect you at all?**

In the Cold War?

Yes, I mean effectively that's what's going on in Vietnam isn't it, reaction to the stoush between Russia and America and China?

This was when we were in Washington?

Yeah, when you were in America.

I'm sorry I got carried away there.

That's okay I'm just wondering whether you're supposed to have a stand, being a member of the air force.

We would have to be

30:30 behind the people we sent there and our thoughts foremost would be supporting them, whatever it is, and we would not say, ever say we shouldn't be there. Wouldn't have.

And your teenage kids, teenage kids will rebel against their parents for very little reason, but ...

Oh yes they do. They didn't, I don't think, they were having a good time too and they weren't about to think about that war going on. No they had a very good time there,

31:00 the kids, and when they came back they enjoyed themselves. David went down to Geelong College as a boarder and we wanted to get him Australianised again, he came back with a pretty heavy accent. They

called him the American kid down there for the first term and when we came back on the ship he said, "Oh G'day Mum." He was very much Australian again, I can tell you, that

31:30 was a good meeting.

Now why did a man in the air force come back to Australia on a ship?

We went over on a ship and came back on a ship.

Isn't that letting the team down?

Hey, that was great. Everyone went by ships in those.... What did we go over on? I can't think of it now? But it was Arcadia, we went over on that, it took us three weeks. Sir Robert Menzies

32:00 was on it.

Did you talk to him?

Yes, we had a very good cocktail party on there.

What did you say to him?

I don't know that I said anything to him. But there, all the Australians going over there, and there would've been about 10 couples I suppose on board. Hazel Craig was his secretary at the time and we arranged that we'd have this party and Sir Robert, we'd love to see him and so we had a very good

32:30 night there, it was a lovely, lovely evening. He went as far as Vancouver. We went on by rail, by rail across Canada to Toronto and then down to Washington by rail, it was good.

Okay, just to wind up here

33:00 **in the last minutes of this tape. Back to Point Cook, I've got OTS written down here ...**

I came back, I was CO of Officer Training School, they came in off the street to train as air force officers on ground staff duties and they would do such subjects as air force

33:30 administration, law and that sort of thing, things that would fit them to be an administrative officer on a base or in a headquarters.

And I can only imagine that in the 20 years since the end of the Second World War, things have taken some serious shape in the air force, do you think there was a point where the RAAF kind of really came into its own?

34:00 I think probably with the new type of aircraft, with the F-18s and F-111. They were getting the F-111 when I was in America the first time, they were over there purchasing, the purchasing people were there and so on and everything was in order to get it and I think that's when they became a very

34:30 modern air force. They've been pretty good the F-111 and the F-18s. The big thing about that is they can complement the Americans because of the type of aircraft we're getting, they can go in together such as they're doing now, or they were doing, in the Middle East. They can operate with the Americans,

35:00 from the same base, same aircraft and that's very helpful.

Well you've pre-empted my last question for the interview which is, what are your views on the recent intervention into the Middle-East?

That's a very tricky one that, I'd prefer not to comment too much on that. You'd have to know, I'd have to have

35:30 a lot more background to make a good comment on that.

That's all right, I'll ask a different question then. What do you think about the sale of the F-111s.

The sale of it? Do you mean getting rid ...?

They're getting rid of them aren't they?

Yes but I don't know whether they're selling them.

Oh, I figure they'll sell them for scrap or something?

Oh I see what you mean, to replace or ... The F-111 has been good, you'd have to be pretty close to it now to see

36:00 what the expense was in keeping them serviceable. You want to know what your possible targets are, what the range is away from our bases, it's a pretty complex question that one. I think they would get the very best advice and they'd weigh up

36:30 the use of the F-111 against the cost and so on and what they can do with perhaps another replacement for the F-18. It may be able to do a dual task, I don't know. The F-111 is essentially a bomber, if they can get another aircraft to do the same job as well as a fighter interceptor,

37:00 well and good, you'd have to be in the know on that and I've been out of the air force far to long.

All right, we'll button off.

INTERVIEW ENDS