

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Roderick McDonald (Rod Wick) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 15th August 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/685>

### Tape 1

- 00:35 **Rod I was wondering if you could start for us today just with a brief introduction to yourself, starting with your childhood?**
- I was born at Glebe while we were living at Willoughby, Mum and Dad had lived there before, on the 24th March 1921. And strangely enough that was the day the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] was officially gazetted
- 01:00 from the Australian Flying Corp. We lived at 35 Hector Road, Willoughby, in a street where we knew everybody. I was the only child but I had lots of friend. And we had a lovely childhood and I had a particular friend Dick Decane who lived at the back, he was rich because they had two blocks of land the vacant block on which we played
- 01:30 and... when they set off fireworks we used to go in and we used to play football there with others. I went to the local Catholic School at Naremburn, Marcus Street. And then I went to the Brothers at North Sydney. I left school in 1935, after getting 7 B's in the intermediate.
- 02:00 I was appointed as a telegraph messenger, at the GPO (General Post Office) on the corner of Pitt Street and Martin Place in the telegraph counter. Well we looked after telegrams, and international telegrams and especially, on a Saturday morning, when the ES Bookies used to send telegrams to their clients, and I used to have to stamp every
- 02:30 telegram. They were really long then and I was fortunate to know the 'hello' girls next door. Quite a number of them, Miss McGrath, Evelyn Delacey and they were beautiful people and one of my solicitor friends Cathy Lyons also worked there with Evelyn McGrath.
- 03:00 In August 36 I was appointed to the Child Welfare Department I had been getting 51 pounds per annum, and it went up to 78 pounds per annum. I met a lot of lovely men there Ronny Murden and others, who used to play solo at lunch time. And in November 1937 they decided to transfer
- 03:30 me to the Master of Lunacy's Office, which was then in Queens Square in the old barracks on the top floor. I stayed there until May 41, made a lot of friends there, and particularly the elderly gentleman there, who
- 04:00 were (UNCLEAR) gentlemen to quite honest. I remember John Sutherland who used to wear the turned up collar and a bow tie, or the equalivent. And everybody was called Mr, they are very fond memories, there are still some of my friends around who were with me then. In May 41 I was called up to the service [Army], to the 7th Field
- 04:30 Regiment to do 3 months compulsory training. My Dad would not let me enlist because of what he put up with the First [World] War, and at the end of the 3 months, went to Narellan, which was a very cold place, to Wargrove where I decided to say on because I could see the war was going to continue and then we had an input of people from Penrith
- 05:00 and Manly, lovely young men. And eventually, we went down to Wollongong to the top of the Bulli Pass and we did a shot over Wollongong onto an Island there. After that they decided to take the whole brigade, 80th Brigade, the 7th Field Regiment had 3 batteries and 25 pounds of guns
- 05:30 and they took us up to Greta and from there we proceeded eventually, to Chitlows Bend in WA [Western Australia]. We arrived there from memory in March 42, and left there in October 43. We ranged from Chitlows Bend where
- 06:00 we started up the Coast, Hygiene, Moree, Gin Gin, Geraldton and various other places. And also went south to places like Rockingham and were all the jarrah forests are. They treated us beautifully, they were very kind to us but unfortunately, due to a lack of vitamin C

- 06:30 a lot of us got what was called Barcoo Rot. The explorers on the Barcoo Rot in Queensland, on the Barcoo River in Queensland they got it in the 1850's for the same reason. But as you will realise Captain Cook, provided for that and his sailors didn't suffer. Incidentally a lot of the explorers and their staff died for the same reason,
- 07:00 lack of vitamin C. But anyhow we used to get in the town and have orange drink and lemon drink and eventually it went. It just showed up as dirty sores. Unbelievable in this country isn't it. Now when we came back from Western Australia we did a lot of exercises, we had two Armed Division[s] over there which would have been very handy with us for their artillery if the Japs [Japanese] had of invaded.
- 07:30 And we came back to Melbourne and back to Wallgrove from recollection, where they decided to split up our 7th Field Regiment, and sent the rest of the Brigade, 4, 30th and 35th Battalions to Bougainville. So a lot of us decided to join the air force. Eventually after
- 08:00 failing as a Pilot at Nerandra, for lack of depth deception, stigmatism in the eyes. Started a bombaimers course at Evans Head in May 44, graduated in September 44. Came down to Sydney and was married at
- 08:30 St Mary's Church at North Sydney on the 16th September 1944 to Winifred Ferguson. From there 4 of us were picked out to do a special course at Tocumwal (?) on the northern bombsite, which was part of the Liberator Aeroplanes and also the Flying Fortress. It was a very accurate instrument as long as you had the right
- 09:00 information in the machine. We did this course and even did some instructing, and eventually they decided to send us up to Fenton airfield and the 4 of us, one of whom is still alive, Rushbrooks, he did an interview with your people and we waited for a week before we got a DC3 up to Darwin and
- 09:30 then down to Fenton which is at the Adelaide River. And when we got there they said 'What are doing here?' And we said 'We understood you were short of bomb aimers.' He said 'We're not short of bomb aimers', the CO (Commanding Officer) said. What they usually called SNAFU (situation normal, all fouled up), typical of the army, navy and air force.
- 10:00 Eventually we did, keep practicing our bomb aiming on the particular machines they had a 3 of us joined crews. I didn't do my first operation of flight, until February 45, with my friend Ross Brook's crew. Incidentally we arrived in Darwin just before Christmas 44
- 10:30 and from Fenton airfield we used to fly over the (UNCLEAR) doing patrols and the like. And on one particular day we sent out 6 planes to attack a cruiser, and 2 of them were shot down.
- 11:00 And a number of my friends I knew along the way, those that I knew there, were only young people. And Keith Shilling was a survivor and Keith parachuted out of his skipper's plane and got into the water, I can't believe I picked him up, so he through off all this clothes and then the Japanese came along and set that on fire. And
- 11:30 he managed to survive and, he was sent back south and then the doctor said 'You can go back up there again', and the doctor sent him back with rather a terse note and he never went back after what he'd been through and the others of course. The Catalina's operated from Morotai and other places as air sea rescue and at Morotai there was a board which indicated
- 12:00 how many had been rescued along the way. This was regular. No on the 14th April 1945, after some practice dropping of torpedos which we had never done before, low level stuff, we took off about 1.30 in the morning
- 12:30 and went to Longbot to drop supplies to Z Force men. And this was at low level all the way and when we got there there was a smoke signal and Wally Black, one of the survivors, said 'Your skipper did a spit fire turn came in and I dropped the bombs and they were within 15 to 25 yards
- 13:00 of the smoke signal.' This eventually resulted in them getting a radio and supplies, and on the 2nd May 45, they were rescued by Catalina, with a Liberator flying top cover and I have all the information in that regard from the intelligence people. You could realise how hazardous it was,
- 13:30 because the Catalina flew at about 100 knots or less and he wanted, the Catalina wanted the Liberator to get down low, and stay with him. But of course their stalling speed was not the same as the Catalina. Anyhow, Swandalina Bowmen survived and I heard from him and
- 14:00 he said 'We managed', but they took them back to Darwin. And he and his friend Hoffy were medically examined, Hoffy wasn't very well our friend Wally Black managed to survive. Z Force group comprised 4 men, Black, Hoffy, Moss and Gillies.
- 14:30 Moss and Gillies got separated just before we dropped the torpedos, and eventually they just lost them. But they were both captured by the Japanese and their bodies are buried at Ambon where was a lot of trouble and I have photographs of those. We
- 15:00 moved from Fatham to Morotai for the Borneo invasion which was a much shorter trip to the likes of Balikpapan, where they had all their oil, in which we bombed. And it was anticipation of the invasion

with the help of the Americans but mainly our troops. We had no idea of the situation at Sandercan and in my

- 15:30 view, it would have been preferable to try and rescue those men and just let the Japanese wither on the vine that they had since the Americans before us, and us kept them starved of supplies. I have a friend Tom Coloney in the local sub-branch who's dad was one of those that died. But it seems as though it was a lack of will from either [General Thomas] Blamey or [General Douglas] MacArthur.
- 16:00 Because they wanted to get on with the war, not that I think it achieved much, because we lost a lot at Balikpapan including 3 planes, Group Captain McLean First Troop, some of his crew survived. Squadron Leader Redman and Flight Lieutenant Beattie. And they were doing low level consons over Balikpapan, with guns that could shot you out of the
- 16:30 sky at 20,000 feet, with coloured flack. Anyhow as the French say 'Ca le blur (?)'. Eventually we continued on in that fashion, and on 1 occasion on Peto [air]strip (?) shortly before we left we were doing some bombing of the Halameras over the road as practice. And we had 300 pound bombs on board and we always
- 17:00 used to stand on the cat walk and the bombs were along the bomb racks. And as we were taking off just to do this, our brigadier used to leave the bomb bay doors slightly open, because we had an ancillary motor, what we called the putt putt motor, which was left on to supply energy to the batteries until we took off
- 17:30 and the props took over. Anyhow a 300 pound bomb decided to drop off and it forced it's way through the Bomb bay doors, damaged them, we could do nothing about it and we just came back and it was supported and the strip at Peto was made unserviceable, we used to call it US [unserviceable] and they blew it up that
- 18:00 night because it was at the stage having been forced into the strip too dangerous. Some people have asked me did it go off. It's fairly obvious it didn't go off. 3 of us were charged in regard to this incident by our CO, who no time for our skipper Kevin Gilgara, who died some 4 years ago.
- 18:30 And we were charged with causing damage to the aircraft. I have no idea why it happened. The LAC (Leading Air Craftsman) Armour was reprimanded, Flight Sergeant Armour was reprimanded and I was fined 10 pounds. And of course shortly after that we were sent home because the crew I eventually joined had also had fine, were fined before I joined the crew.
- 19:00 And then I arrived home in July 45 then thanks to the atomic bomb that was the end of the war for me. I went back to the Master of Lunacy's Office as it then was. It is now called the Protective Office, and enjoyed my work again, because we knew where the people were and they'd come and see us when they would come, and they would thank us for
- 19:30 looking after their affairs. But unfortunately that has all changed, you would realise the Richmond Report what has done. And when I left there at 65 to go elsewhere, we had a Staff of 65 and we managed it we moved from Hyde Park Barracks over to the MLC [shopping complex] Centre in North Sydney in
- 20:00 62 and it was the first high rise down there. And I was concerned that the chemist payed 50 pound a week rent. Lovely building. Then I resigned and went elsewhere and finished up for a short while with department of Labour and Industry, which look after industrial matters and accidents. I enjoyed my experience there because I had some court experience. Then I went to main roads
- 20:30 in September 1967, that right and stayed there to March 81 when I retired on my 60th birthday. I enjoyed my work there very much, because the attitude of the engineers there was positive. They got on with the job but I don't fell this is continued,
- 21:00 still that's my opinion. I had experience in contracts with big road works and the like, and I also did some prosecution of, for overloading. I did a number of inquests and the most tragic of that was, in 1973 when a rust bucket of a bus from Salisbury,
- 21:30 South Australia, down the snowy lost it's brakes and went into the pond, Chain of Ponds, and 18 pensioners died. I said to my boss, Geoff Sheldon, I have to go to this and I spent 4 weeks down there. And all I was allowed to ask was questions about the state of the road, which wasn't even our road, it was the Snowy Mountains road.
- 22:00 But that bus had no brakes, it was a rust bucket. And one of the people representing the bus company suggested that a pile of roadwork material on the side was responsible. I said 'No, we got no claims for anything.' And fortunately for the bus company they were all pensioners. And I met the Barrister and
- 22:30 became friends with them, from Adelaide, afterwards. Met him over there, but I just felt that was an unnecessary loss of lost. Like my experience in the last week or so, that particular bus company had a similar accident at Hay later on, and one of my young fellows went to the inquest and they had re-built a broken down burnt out semi trailer and had added on

- 23:00 by welding and extra piece to the steering, and that's what caused the accident. And I met a Father, I took the inquest results here, from the young boy, the friend who did this. And he said 'What happened to my daughter?' Schoolgirl, and I told him. But anyhow that was sad, but my job was to make sure that the department wasn't blamed for something beyond it's control.
- 23:30 Along the way I did not mention the fact that, in 1956 I decided to do the Solicitor's Admission Board Exam with 6 children, and I have actually qualified and was omitted on the 24th August, 62. Terry Rela, QC [Queens Council]
- 24:00 a lovely man, who represented us, lead my admission and thanks to my wife, who helped me with my studies, going to the Uni (university) or going to the public library, to check out particular precedent and former exam papers. And when my wife has been given me support all those years, and I was
- 24:30 made a life member of the RSL (Returned Services League) where I have been active from 68 till 84 and as they said, 'Without your wife you don't get anywhere, and that support.' And I also mentioned the fact that in 78 I decided to do a BA (Bachelor of Arts) at Macquarie, thanks to Mr Whitlam, and I met some very interesting people over there. The BA was in history, philosophy, and politics.
- 25:00 Most enjoyed all the experience and I graduated in 84 and I was pleased that Mr Justice Kirby gave me my certificate. Our family are all managing, and it is not easy for younger people these days as you realise.
- 25:30 I also mentioned the fact that we have lost our eldest son, Peter, who was born in 1947 he was in America for 15 years, and he died September last year after 5 years battle with kidney cancer. Where his family were and he had a very successful computer business.
- 26:00 He went there in 1988 and we had visited them in 1990, went to Colorado Springs, stayed with him. Went to Jekyllstone, beautiful place. And while we were at Colorado Springs, the local academy, air force academy, played another academy. And every time they did a touch down they went down and did push-ups on the field.
- 26:30 The hospitality there was wonderful, particularly with the ordinary people and then one of those stealth bombers flew over and we also saw a restored Liberator, which costed them over a million dollars, and I had a look at it but I had no desire, because I regarded them as insolence of death. One of our people, who visited there, paid \$400 to have a trip in it.
- 27:00 But I have no affection for the plane. And incidentally they built 18,000 of them, amazing what they can do when there is a war on....I have mentioned the fact that we have 7 children, haven't I
- 27:30 and as I said they have all gone their own ways and they're battling out there. The only concern for me at this stage is the fact that I have seen this hideous cancer invade our family, our immediate family, and other extended family and there is nothing we can do about it except recall the times we spent with
- 28:00 them. When our Victorian relations, Liston, my mother, my grandmother, paternal grandmother was a Liston, used to come up from Melbourne and stay at The Entrance with us. Wonderful times because we had two weeks of complete rest, no worry about food, and it was usually in May when the weather was good
- 28:30 and it was complete relaxation. It went on for years then we moved onto Coolangatta, as we got older. We had this trip to America in 1990, we did one in 82, but, jet set, and that was interesting but the one in Yellowstone in 1990 was more interesting because we were the only Australians. And we found that the average American,
- 29:00 had retired to the fact that they couldn't trust their politicians. And we had a wonderful lady, university trained looking after us and along the way she bought us some watermelon, which I don't like, you think they had won the lottery. But at the end of the trip, which amazed me, the way she looked after us,
- 29:30 she thanked us and thanked the driver and then they all got up to walk out. I did a useless Australian trick, hit a glass and I spoke in praise of her because she was a lovely lady. And that was one of the highlights of our trip Yellowstone. I didn't see Yogi or Boo Boo [American cartoon characters who live in Yellowstone national park]. Which I enjoyed.
- 30:00 I have found, as an only child, that I have had no particular problem relating to people along the way in the studies, I was getting involved with some particular aspect of, I nearly gave it away, so I joined Rostrum, lunch time and you got a bad time from them but they were teaching you to be confident on your feet. And of course eventually I
- 30:30 did quite a bit of court work and then later on I went with Toastmasters. And I recommend to anybody who wants to have some confidence in themselves, join a group like that. As I said earlier I have been involved with the sub-branch up at Forestville since 68, we moved here in 67. I have done pensioners work, hospital visitation, I've been secretary, I've been president for 6 years, I'm a
- 31:00 trustee and we negotiated two years ago a sale of a premises to the club, for \$3.825 million, after a long

battle, because we were only getting token rent of \$1000 a week for a big premises. Now the sub-branch is financially secure and we have the money to look after our widows, and also our men.

31:30 And give them advice and provide cab charge vouchers when necessary. This is what the RSL which was founded during the First [World] War was about. I am also a member of the RAAF Association and the B24, Sub Branch and we only recently had a luncheon, at the City RSL,

32:00 beautiful place where we had complete privacy and it was, this was advertised in Vet (Veteran) Affairs, a quarterly magazine, put out by Vet Affairs. And I got responses from WA, Tasmania and a gentlemen even for his wife in a wheel chair from Bravewood. They were so pleased, but of course a lot have dropped off along the way, this is the sad part.

32:30 Is that okay.

**No that's great thank you very much Rod. What I'll down now is just take you right back to the beginning and just ask you about Glebe or Willoughby during the Depression, I guess what evidence did you see of the depression around you as a child?**

I didn't, my father was a secretary, I heard it on my word programme

33:00 the other day, you know what definition of words, which he was a of secretary, and he was an expert, in shorthand, and he worked on the railways. And incidentally he kept a diary in 1970 of his experiences at the First [World] War, but basically he worked at the railways and did that sort of work and took notes and he was still working, but they suffered

33:30 a production drop during the Depression of some 10%. He was paying off a war service home at 35 Hector Road, Willoughby and we managed, and we didn't notice in Willoughby the suffering that other people went through, losing their income and their homes and being on the dole. It never affected us.

34:00 And I don't remember it affecting any people in our street. But Willoughby was a different area to other people. So you never lost any, we managed.

**Can I ask, as an only child what did you get up to with other children around the area?**

As I said before

34:30 Dick Decane's backyard was very handy, very handy for the fireworks, we used to, after the fireworks, get fizzers and let them off. And we let one off that didn't go up and we used to pinch apples off their tree. We used to go down to Artarmon in the Bush. And, I was made play football at school, I didn't like it particularly,

35:00 but we used to play cricket down at the, although I took up tennis at an early age and that stuck with me all my life and I have played golf since. We were never short of anything to do and when, when I left school we started a young centre at the Church at Naremburn, where they had the 2nd best floor in Sydney. The Trocadero was the best, and

35:30 we were let to run our show by Father Rowen, a real Irish Priest. And I've got a balance sheet inside where I gave him, we gave him 4 pounds and we can thank that towards the (UNCLEAR) that there got down there. But I met Win down there, we made lots of friends there. And strangely enough, although I can't think, we had Sir Watkins who was lost in the Battle of Britain,

36:00 as our president. We were (UNCLEAR) there no body worried. Isn't that how life should be. But I had no problems, we had large families, the Olivers there, Dad was on the Sydney when it sank the (DEU) Emdon in the First [World] War. He used to, work at Garden Island and one of this favourite saying, I can still remember it, 'How you popping up Rod?'

36:30 We knew everybody in the street. It doesn't happen now does it, sadly. But we moved to Castlecraig in 1949 and we lived with Win's people, at Par Street, Cammeray and they had to put up with us then sadly she lost her mother, just after Anne was born in June 1950.

37:00 And that was very sad for her as I said. Because she had rheumatoid arthritis, and she was on the gold injections. The registrar at the Mater Hospital rang the doctor and told him he had no right to treat her that way. But it was sad to see her from a very active woman, always busy, always knitting, always doing things for people, played the piano beautifully. We used to have sing songs around the post war, of course,

37:30 around the piano and she had lovely uncles, they were good day. But I had no problems. The thing was to get involved with other people because we went dancing at Chatswood Town Hall, used to go to the Ice Palais. The Trocadero which was all jazz. I learnt dancing very soon, after I left school in 1935. The only way to,

38:00 the ladies used to line up and, you'd order your dances in advance. Wonderful way of meeting people. That's how I regarded it as. The army was a bit of a shock, because Narellan (?) was, cold as cold and it was the first time I bought a pattyballen sleeping bag. It was a cold place and they used to take us on treks through the middle of winter with a, ground sheet

- 38:30 and a blanket to sleep out in the cold and walk across rivers. It was a tough 3 months but at the end of it I got used to the army boot. But I hated getting into them, but once you got used to them. I hated getting out of them. The Americans had the nice rubber boots, which were necessary on planes in case there was any sparks raised by the old army boots.
- 39:00 **I would like to just ask you a little bit about your father and what you knew about his service in the First [World] War?**
- He didn't say much about it but I got the book, which I lent to another friend who lost an uncle, as I mentioned earlier. But he wasn't keen for me to join up. But
- 39:30 one of the letter that he wrote to me, Arthur Cloons, said 'I'm going back to hell', but he wasn't keen for me to join up for the obvious reason. This is a war between France and Germany and I saved the Empire and all that but he never discussed it but he did go regularly every Anzac Day.
- 40:00 And I had an Aunt called Cathleen, see I had 3 people well, I had an Irish Grandmother who lived with us, my Aunt Cathleen who married later in life and Mum and anyhow, Mum and, had invited Cathleen and John over Anzac Day and on particular day he turned up and he bought some woolly beef to have for a meal. Which I remember they had to put up with in the First [World]
- 40:30 War. He wouldn't hurt a fly and he was a gentle as you like, but, strangely enough I got a letter of Dad's where he wrote to Mum and he said, 'I hope you are going to vote in favour of conscription if not you're in trouble when I get home.' Now he was a Labour voter if any there was one. But the other thing he said 'I wish that Starcey was over here for a real
- 41:00 stouch [fight]. you've heard of the stouch? Actually he died in American from an infection caused by rotten teeth. That's what it was in a fight. But Dad was a gentle man and he took up tennis at the age of 40 and if you played in coytes, 6 after 6 after 6 he had a good eye. And when he retired at 70 they kept him there. He sat down and did nothing, he used to go on
- 41:30 hikes, he used to walk over to Artarmon station, till he had to get the tram or the bus in, he just sat there, it took him 5 years.

## Tape 2

- 00:32 **Rod we were just talking about your father beforehand and that he didn't tell you about the war. Did you know anything about it from other sources?**
- Yes, the books he had, well as he was the top General at the end when they got the 5 Divisions together, plus the American division at the Hamilton.
- 01:00 And Monasis book of the Australian victories plus a history of the 5th Division, and strangely enough when I read it and when I gave it to a friend recently, I said 'Were the officers the only ones involved in the war, because all they mentioned from brigadier, generals down?' That sort thing. And my friend Peter Burns, who's in their local church, said
- 01:30 'Yes Rod you are right and this is how it happened?' But I read those books and that was my remark to Dad years ago. But this would have been post war because he went to his marches, he did those things, he never, and his brother Pat he enlisted and Pat finished up getting blown up, shrapnel,
- 02:00 gassed and he came back and he suffered with asthma, and eventually killed him. He tried to enlist and they knocked him back because of his asthma, then the next thing, he had asthma like his dad did, his dad was Angus suffered from it, and came up from Berrigan (?) on the farm, but anyhow Pat was a lovely man, finished up in hotels, he had been a Wool Classer
- 02:30 and he finished up dying up at Mount Southport that area, his lovely wife Nancy. But anyhow she told me about all his problems, mass problems, because when he used to do wool classing he finished up in a room and suddenly he though he was being gassed and he'd smash the window. So I got all that together, sent it to Vet's Affairs [Department of Veteran Affairs] and she got a War Widow's Pension,
- 03:00 it was justified. And you know he suffered, but they managed, and they had a good time. Now my other uncle's there was Jack, Jim and Gus, Gus was Augustine and they were in the Second [World] War and nothing much happened to them, but they subsequently all died, lovely fellows and
- 03:30 my memories of Haberfield were four of the boys used to go out there and spend all Saturday, all afternoon and night playing 500 while their mother Bridgett looked after them. And I remember one Christmas I got a Warby train while I was out there and guess who played with them. My uncles, you know there the sort of things you remember, I've got lovely photographs taken out there. Good days, but you can
- 04:00 imagine travelling from Willoughby before the [Sydney Harbour] Bridge to Haberfield and back, but we did it and they used to come over and see us after the Bridge of course, March 32.

**Can you tell me Rod about when you heard that the war had been declared in Europe?**

Well I was horrified

- 04:30 Because it had meant so much to the world, that 20 years before there had been a peace treaty and Marshall Fox the French general said this is the start of the 20 year armistest. He was right wasn't he and that's how I felt. What those people had went through. Win's Dad survived Anzac in the 2nd Battalion and
- 05:00 then got a nose of a shell in his right arm. But he lost it, but fortunately the maggots saved it, that's what they do to your arm. I have a photo taken at Brighton when he was sent over. And he got a rough time because along the way they reduced his pension, they had problems but he worked in a printing office. But I felt the same as them, why. I feel the
- 05:30 same now too, why the terror, particularly when you see the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) show the other night, in 1946 the Jews blew up the King David Hotel, an act of Terrorism. What's his name Saddam or something and he became their Prime Minister and got a Nobel Peace Prize. Now the Israelites are complaining about what is happening to
- 06:00 them. A lot of history of colonialism is causing all this trouble and I don't know what you can do about it because, the reason capitalism has taken over.

**Talking about colonialism, I guess as an Australian hearing that the war was in Europe what sense of empire did you have, what sense that it was Australia's war as much as England?**

I didn't have any

- 06:30 sense. Personally because of what Dad had told me and when I was growing up that I started to realise that war zone, post the Second [World] War you go and don't realise what colonialism has done to all the world, and it's getting worse. And well you might call what happened in Iraq and the Solomon's neo colonialism; they don't like you sticking
- 07:00 your nose in their affairs. And when's it going to stop. I just concerned particularly for younger people. What's the prospects, when will happen here. I mean I have spoken to a young, couple of young people from Peru on Anzac Day and a lot (UNCLEAR). They came from Peru. I said who were there. I think he said the
- 07:30 Portuguese, 500 or 600 years the Dutch were in the Indies for 400 years and they were in Africa for along time before the British kicked them out from the goal lines. We went to that war. Why? I just don't see the rational at all.

**Can you tell me**

- 08:00 **about your enlistment day?**

I don't recall it, quite bluntly I don't recall the episode at Longbok too clearly, but we were called up from Willoughby and that area generally, and I don't have any particular clear recollection, I just turned up.

**What was your reaction to being called up?**

Had to happen and that's why I decided to stay on.

- 08:30 It's fair enough. But what you've got to realise is that the 1918 war diggers [servicemen], most of the them were overseas, 60,000 odd killed, terrific casualties. They never came home on leave did they and Dad didn't get home until 19 September 1919 and I understand the Canadians arrived because they were just over the Atlantic.
- 09:00 But I just felt that it, and the impressionist of the First [World] War written by Valences the artist, what did they say? I'm just trying, I can see the cartoon with the British general on it, Save the Empire or something like that. And they wrote that all the war and they advocated conscripturing the war. And I don't regret,
- 09:30 what happened in Vietnam although, I support those that went there. And that's how, I'm intrigued as how they were treated not only here but in American, they were doing what they were told like these poor other people that are now doing in America in sorry, Iraq and being killed. I wish I
- 10:00 knew the solution.

**You said that you were called up and you had to go?**

Oh yes, I didn't worry about that. I knew we had to go, but I mean basically what I should have said earlier was eventually we enjoyed the RAAF and we had a lot of trouble getting into the RAAF. We

- 10:30 became a RAAF unit. And as I mentioned earlier the majority of our troops in the First [World] War were over there and stayed there until they were killed, or wounded and sent home. But they never came home on leave. Now we spent a lot of time from May 41 waiting for the Japanese, and then I came back

- and went through a process, and I didn't get into any active service until February 45. Now a
- 11:00 lot of those people get no particular benefit's, what could have happened arising out of the war service, some do for some particular reason, but then when it comes to benefits it's just not allowed. Some of my friend who were in the air force were doing patrols of the coast, but after a certain period because there were no Japanese, we had a lot of ships,
- 11:30 sunk around the coast, I don't know whether you know or not, because the Japanese hadn't been there and they patrolled it, and where they went they weren't around, they were refused pensions. They were still in, once you get in a plane and you go out early in the day, some years ago rather, the people that came back on the new Amsterdam, including myself from Fremantle to
- 12:00 Melbourne, they were allowed until recently, to be regarded as being on active service, because of what was happening to the boats. And even I heard about WAAAFS being allowed the same thing when they travelled from Tasmania to Melbourne. Because a lot of boats were sunk, but once that stopped, although some of our friends, got the benefit, now they decided later that
- 12:30 there was nothing happening therefore you weren't entitled. Now I think that's unjust. Because how do you know there wasn't a submarine there. I was only reading some of the history recently there was a German submarine sinking boats up of the East Indies it's a long long
- 13:00 stretch as far as I'm concerned.

**Can you tell me you mentioned the Japanese, when you heard that Japan had entered the war...?**

Oh that was the catalyst, I wasn't concerned, I was concerned, that we had been physically attacked. Thanks to the lack of defence at Singapore and all our men that were immediately sacrificed there. I had no argument about.

- 13:30 I turned 21 in 42 so, but I felt, for a while we weren't allowed to join up. But we eventually joined up, but unless you had some active service like I did you get no benefits. I am fortunate to have a gold card, which is important and I met one of my old friends who served up, and he got nothing except, I met him yesterday, worked on the tote [?] with him as
- 14:00 he said, 'I only get a small pension.' I've got a gold card but it only covered for the dentist. He didn't but he's blind in one eye, and he can't walk anymore but anyhow he's managing and the spirit is still there. That's important. They were good times on the Tote (?) because you didn't have to get extra money to buy a car, buy a washing machine and send you kids to Catholic
- 14:30 Schools. Where I went and when Trisha went to the nuns at Willoughby, Win said 'How much?' The sisters of Joey (St Joseph) said 'A shilling a week dear if you can afford it.' They were pretty wonderful primary teachers. They all went there for primary education.

**Having been called up,**

- 15:00 **did your Father have anything to say to you, you mentioned that he was against you being in the forces?**

He was against me joining up the AIF (Australian Imperial Forces), I think he worried about me, I mean no one could have checked if we could do something to stop the Japanese. No he just didn't he was very keen for me to stay in the field regiment rather than a Infantry Battalion but still that's one of the

- 15:30 reasons I joined the air force. I felt if you're going to go you go quickly. And seeing what they put up with in the First [World] War. But he never complained, but he had that spirit and friendship and who he went with I never knew. But of course Anzac Day has grown out of all proportion now. It's nice to go along there and we have our meeting and we go out to the CTA [Commercial Travellers Association] Club in Martin Place, afterwards.
- 16:00 And the spirits still there, and were getting to that stage of our dance. My friend Russ Brooks his dad died very early. And that's what they suffered. There wasn't the treatment or care for them it was taken for granted.
- 16:30 **Can you tell me just about the Japanese entering the war? How great was the fear of invasion amongst you and the unit in the regiment?**
- Well the nearest that we got was the attack at Sydney Harbour, wasn't it, and a few shells. But Darwin was the catalyst and that has been covered up, we lost bloody more people then we have ever been told. And it will
- 17:00 never come out because what's the first casualty at war - truth. So the people won't panic, but there goes their history well documented, and we've had a few trips up there with the bomb group, the Americans who were there for years before we took over and they were moved up to the Philippines and we had a reunion with them in 1988, a wonderful reunion in Adelaide.
- 17:30 We had a wonderful reunion, we were flown over, the 24 Squadrons, and the Yanks (Americans) turned



up and left the memorial plaques in Adelaide, left memorial plaques in the Adelaide River and in Darwin. They have preserved the history of the war, better than anyone. And people don't realise what they went through, up and down the coast. And I don't know whether you have read anything on it, it's just something

18:00 that they have done and we were very pleased to have a few trips up there ourselves and we went down from Darwin through to Perth and on the way, I rang up and said is Keith Shilling available. Keith Shilling being the fellow who survived April 45 and they said 'Which one do you want?' I said 'Two bob' Because that was his nickname. And then I got in touch with

18:30 Frank Hale, our Engineer, who looked after the engines and everything, and he enlisted at 39 and he was our engineer. He was a bit older than us. But they were the good times and that's what we did then. But I had no argument about joining up once the Japs come. Because I felt the other was, purely colonists. Now being a lot of history

19:00 about Australians, and you think from that we were the only ones in the war. You realise how many people were killed in Belgium, 750,000 and you realise that the Turks and Anzac suffered 75,000. Our casualties I think were about 8,000. But the colonial troops the blacks and the English, they suffered more

19:30 than we did. The Indians, but that's my attitude to that and I have seen a documentary when Ghandi told the Indians this is a imperialist law, or, don't fight for the British, too many of them listened. 250,000 joined the Japanese and they were the only ones in India to get war pensions.

20:00 It's hideous, Fiji, who runs Fiji, the Indians, who took them there, who runs Kenya, the Indians, not the American's the Indians again, who took them there.

**I was wondering Rod just talking about Colonialism again, what did invasion by the Japanese mean. What would, did you think would happen in**

20:30 **Australia if the Japanese got here?**

I reckon we were well prepared as far as Western Australia was concerned. We had an armoured brigades and we had a 8th Division Brigade all ready to go. We had the advantage of waiting for them. I think we would have done very well with all those resources, most of us during the war waiting for something to do. That was the difference to the First [World] War. All those people that went

21:00 there in 1918 they just stayed and we had to, we did manoeuvres and practice shoots and all that but you can image 18 months over there and I think we'd have done well. Because the armour brigade were well prepared than we were. We had plenty of trains and then they disbanded us. A lot of that sort of thing went

21:30 on. A lot of people were killed unnecessarily, particular in training accidents, particularly Air Force. When we were training at Evans Head, in [Avro] Ansons, Flight Sergeant Knoble was doing a stunt over his girlfriend's farm and took the plane in, a WAP (?), the ground staff and two trainees, they were bored out of their

22:00 minds. Just being circuits and bumps, we did our bombing practice in those and never gave us an exercise. And that's what happened. Our planes that took off couldn't get any height. You'd think that, some of them put chocks on the flaps. These are the things

22:30 that concerned you but. And we had one plane that, my first experience just before I joined my crew February 45. They stopped and they had 6 planes without any, including my crew who hadn't joined they stopped at Truscott on the coast to get petrol, 6 one of them never got off the strip, Squadron Leader Nichols, the other two took off to go to Fenton, Theo the

23:00 other skipper, I think there was a party on Fenton, landed safely but the other one when he went over like that, to get to the strip lost his engine, bombaimer and gunner killed. You know what it was blamed on fuel starvation. He didn't get charged, and I believe in fairness to him, his lived with it for the rest of his life,

23:30 but how many times could that have happened. And I got fined 10 pounds and I didn't kill anyone. You wonder.

**You mentioned somebody had put chocks in the flaps?**

Well it might have been while it was on the ground, to even it out, it might have been for that reason. I don't know that was the only theory I could come up with and my friend had the menial task as an officer of having to go through their gear,

24:00 including the watch of one of the fellows. But yeah, I just felt that I had no option but to join up and most of us did when we were allowed. They restricted us for a while. But a lot of those never saw any action and no one saw the action that the First [World] War did do.

**What were you expecting to happen, when you were called**

24:30 **up into the militia what did you think you would be doing and where do think you would be going?**

I had no idea because that was the way it went, no I didn't. We were just pushed around and what, what method or sense or there was to it I don't know. When you hear of the wasted time, I could have done Law, by correspondence

25:00 in all the time that I wasted. So many other people could have, but it was, Singapore was the problem and of course the Japanese recovered there. It was a colonial war where they liberated the latest. And I was reading a report on the intelligence on that Longbok trip and I read where the Japanese

25:30 never warned the natives that we were coming. On one occasions 1000 natives were killed for this reason. That what was always in your mind. Whose down there because you never saw anyone. I don't mind the oil fields but just reading the intelligence report and this is what they have of the Japanese. They wouldn't warn them that they could be bombed.

**As a bomb aimer and**

26:00 **in the air force in general were civilian casualties something you worried about, the natives?**

Well you had no idea, who was done there. I mean it's not like the bombing of Hamburg recently, 42,000 in one go. We didn't have that all we had was fields, we weren't bombing cities or anything. Just airfields

26:30 and the like. I'm not too sure we were just doing a job then but what happened in Europe, it was a matter of doing what they had already done to us wasn't it. Not that that justifies that at all. What can you do about it.

**Can I ask, going back to the militia,**

27:00 **what training were you receiving when you first?**

We were trained to plot particular areas into which we would shoot to get the guns and the range and so forth. And we had plotting boards, that sort of things and that was our job to do that sort of work and support the Gunners in that field and we used to

27:30 have a slide drill, I've still go my slide drill to calculate, we did it by range table, the same as the bomb aimer, you had particular, information to put into the northern bombsite assuming certain speed, assuming a certain height and the bomb site itself and that allowed for wind deviation. And we did that, we couldn't allow for that up to set up for you regiment. But it was the same principal, knowing what you were doing,

28:00 because the northern bombsite was suppose to be deadly accurate business. And of course a lot of the stuff you hear about mass bombing, we all bombed individually, even though we might be in a group of half a dozen, that was fair enough too. But that show the other night on Hamburg because, Win's Grandfather came from Hamburg and we went to visit him and, in 75 while we were in England.

28:30 Ordinary people like us, dentists from the First [World] War, dentists from the Second [World] War. And we met our equivalent there and Helga, started singing it's a long way to Tipperarie, you wouldn't believe it. She didn't sing, (UNCLEAR) of course but they were nice people and the equivalent of her Grandfather was wiped out financially in the First [World] War and the

29:00 Second [World] War, now there is a Michael Lay up here and his Father is Win's cousin, the same family group and he's a dentist too. Now 2 of the children we met 75, who were also dentists and Dad was a dentist and their Grandfather was a dentist, that's life isn't it.

**How much, going back to your Father in the war, how much of a sense of hatred towards**

29:30 **Germans did you grow up with?**

None, no I don't think so, not the Germans but the people that leave them. That's what upsets me, but of course this went back to the First [World] War at about 1875, how can you because there is a lot of good in people, and did the majority of them know what was

30:00 going on, particularly what happened to my son Peter who bought himself some time ago a Mercedes and I said why didn't you buy a Lexus, who are those people. I don't see the difference. But of course militarism started to be getting into the previous century and all the artists all the bright people were persecuted or killed and

30:30 we went through a National Gallery to see Monet and the Japanese. There is Monet around here of course, but they were the impressionist movement from the Japanese artists, from their postcards, and in the beautiful book I've got there's 48 paintings by fugitives basically the ordinary people as I said are good, they are artistic.

31:00 It was the militarism that took over what happened in Korea then Chile and China. And that was allowed to go on wasn't it. And look at what happened in Iraq.

**I wonder, talking about the Japanese, when you were in Western Australia**

31:30 **how much news were you getting about what was going on in the rest of the war?**

Sweet FA (f\*\*k all), excuse, I am talking about as far as Fremantle was concerned that was the base for the Yankee submarines too, you probably knew that. And, a lot of things happened out of there, strangely enough an American Sub got

32:00 that cruiser that we lost the cruiser, around one particular straight. Any how the Americans are wonderful for preparing for war and the way they look after their troops and a lot, what happened in the Pacific was that, really properly done the way they went in and the slaughter that happened. Thank go for the

32:30 atomic bomb, although I'm not in favour of anyone being killed in that situation, because we were going to back and the next place was Singapore and that was red hot. But I've got Camry, by the way and I didn't worry that Peter, I felt like saying well what did the German's do. You can't carry it onto to other German

33:00 generations.

**I was just wondering if you could tell me I guess being in the militia, what peace did you have that you wouldn't be sent overseas and was there a relief in that?**

Well to be quite honest I don't know, I don't remember. As I said, 7th of the 7th 41

33:30 and that's the day that the American capitalist say that World War II started. Intriguing isn't it. No I didn't mind fighting for my own country. Just but what have the colonials after all those years. It's all right for these royalists.

34:00 **Were you keen to get into the action and maybe go overseas and fight to Japanese?**

Well it had to be done. We were, excuse my French, we were fucking around and I didn't know where we were going what was happening. You can image a long train shipped from (UNCLEAR) to Western Australia. Not that it worried us, we worried, all that pushing around

34:30 but still we were there. And then when the possibility went away, we were bought back and, the Brigade went to Bougainville, as a holding operation against the Japanese and I gather, that was about all it was. That's what we did in the war. Kept them away from supplies and basically got rid of all their aircraft and fields, they were ineffective. That was the end of the war.

35:00 And I only read recently they had 1million troops ready to fight us. One of our fellows sends us all this stuff about the Japanese, I'm not interested personally. And they though it was a just war didn't they. Not what they did to the Koreans and then Chile then China. And that's still happening in Korea, isn't it? That's still there. Which is sad.

35:30 I had no objection to doing something to defend our own country. And a lot of people just never got to it. You can image the boredom from waiting and the old diggers didn't have time for that did they.

**What kind of pressure was there on you as a young man, to be involved and then**

36:00 **what you were doing?**

Nothing, that's like the First [World] War, and all that sort of thing. That was thanks to the propaganda put out by the press including the Boys. Save the Empire. As a catholic I'm radical,

36:30 I have no time for the way the Church conducts its business, money seems to be the main thing that these people, episodes particularly with Alowishes and what Father Wraper did, people are unimportant, useless. But this is, you allow a particular person in power. They keep going until there pushed out whether you like it or not.

37:00 This is the way it's in the world. And what you can do to influence it. Does it ever concern you? No it worries me.

**How important was your faith as a Catholic during the war?**

Well it was there and we had separate services. But, very black and white believed everything we were told. You must

37:30 conceive, you must have children. Thout shall not, because if you believed god, some of the prayers at mass, dear god, if there is a god. A friend of mine say 'You can't prove it but you can't disprove it.' But if there is a god he must love his creation. And our priest at mass the other day, he is a lovely young man, he said 'You realise that god

38:00 created you, you are part of god, that was his faith.' But they shalt not and all the man made rules, confession and absolution and all that sort of things, that was made to keep the ignorant out, because they weren't allowed to read, they couldn't read. And it's only in the late 20th Century that they had something to read

- 38:30 from. There was no participation, the priest had his back to you and spoke in Latin. We put up with it but as I said at Naremburn, we had a good time, nobody worried us. But of course you had to go to confession regularly and all that. But all that's gone, people are more educated and they go to their own way, it's your own free will. Although there is a lot of marriage break-ups even in our own
- 39:00 family. I think it's come in from the fact that if it doesn't work why, live in that state of hatred and distrust. Its better to break up and I think Christ would have said so. But I mean it was incidental, but when you leave a Catholic School, you're out in the world. I didn't have any problems. I don't
- 39:30 think I was discriminated against. But once in the old protective office one old fellow, he would have possibly less than my age, let the boss know that I preferred Catholics and he spoke to me about it and I was very annoyed. I said 'Why should I, I don't begrudge them?' What would happen to me, come off with a good Samaritans patting at home. Beautiful young men I mean we ran
- 40:00 out of work. Had another one Marie O'Connor who since died from breast cancer she was the same, I mean get on with it. And I had a German Austrian working for me, he wouldn't work in a fit. Difference in the attitude. I mean to say that I preferred Catholics, you don't do that in the world, when you go dancing as we used to do,
- 40:30 we didn't say I'm a catholic do you want, never never believed in it I never struck it except that fellow, weird. But he was a nasty man anyway. But we had a lot of older people working for us, because it was difficult to get staff, they came and they went. And Jan and Pauline left us. I still treasure those two, you know how there's just particular people.

## Tape 3

- 00:31 **Yes as I was saying I'd like to take you back to your, training days with the militia, can you tell me about the mates that you met**
- 01:00 **at that time and how important they were too you?**
- Yes, I've got some photographs of them, Timmy McCue who, he had a permanent limp he was a lovely fellow. Jim O'Brien, Don beat a few of these, but most of those fellows disappeared along the way, one way or another, and
- 01:30 they were all nice fellows, as I said it was cold at Narellan, cold hole. And they were good fellows and they were called up like me, but we had to go through a lot of training, which as I said earlier, it was hard getting used to the boots. Which were lovely once you got used to them, but killed you until you got used to them. And you cried when you got into them but you cried when you got out of
- 02:00 them because they were so comfortable. But these fellows were good news and we had a lot of training learning how to, drill, how to use a rifle, target practice, a lot of marching and then learning the elements of our job as a battery staff which had to plan for the gunners who fired the guns. And learning what that was all about and
- 02:30 it was very intense. An old friend of Wins from tennis, whose name is Teddy was our Sergeant Major and I knew him well because Win played tennis with his wife and he was good news. And a lot of these fellows the officers came from shore and they were in the militia as it was then called, before the war. And they'd been in the camps and larks and those places
- 03:00 and they were, but they really put us through the ropes because we were busy. And going out in the cold, with a ground sheet and a blanket and swimming rivers without a towel in the middle of winter and we came out of there fairly fit for obvious reasons. No weight problems, and at the end of the period I don't know if anyone else stayed apart from me, but I could just see the writing on the wall that
- 03:30 the war wasn't going to finish tomorrow and some of us stayed and some of them went along the way. Timmy McCue came from a very rich family. I think he was, eventually boarded out and I remember years ago finding out he was at the Liverpool Men's Home and I went out to see him. Unfortunately the family had abandoned him, his wife and family and his brother, had abandoned him. But
- 04:00 he was one of these fellows you might say was eccentric but he still a head above me. But I remember those people as I say I have a look at some photos the last few days but that hasn't. Getting back to that we had a 7th Field Regiment reunion and we got people back in town on a few occasions that have sort of faded out, we have quite a couple of, quite a good couple lunches. Now we just
- 04:30 say well be there on a certain day and go to the city RSL and enjoy each others company. But it's not particularly organised. But the couple that we have are very successful. I put an ad in the Sydney Morning Herald asking people to come along but the only reply I had was from a photographer who came along and took photographs. But that the comradeship and it goes back to 1941 and those people came along the way. I

- 05:00 mentioned Penrith and I mentioned Manly. A lot of them have gone of course. But the spirit of the Army is different of that of the Air Force. The Air Force you go through various stages. ITS, Initial Training School, then I went and did 10 hours at Narrandera as a pilot, and failed because of my eyesight. And eventually this is between October 43 and May
- 05:30 44 before anything else happened and I went to Evans Head to train as an observer and the observer did both jobs, he dropped bombs and he navigated. And as far, then they said your going on Liv's straighten out, as a straight Bomb Aimer, so I decided to become a Bomb Aimer. Now along the way as I mentioned earlier we lost a plane up there and my friend Russ Brooks flew with this Flight Sergeant Noble
- 06:00 who was a local from Glen Innes and he said he was mad. And there 5 people died through his stupidity. Now there buried up there at Evans Head but even then after training we went to Tockawore, Adelaide, Fenton, eventually but there wasn't the unit spirit, that there was in the Army.
- 06:30 I don't know why, but one regiment and even when you're flying separating the officers and the NCOs (Non Commissioned Officers) is not a good thing I reckon. You haven't got that unity. I got with strangers, and then I finished up at Morotai with my crew. Otherwise I was sleeping out in the tents. But what you mention about regiment,
- 07:00 you sort of had a unit but the air force I found very different. Which is sad because your not all together all the time because of the various postings and changing of crews, but the Army was something special. But comradeship came out of it, if nothing else. And we were well trained
- 07:30 as I said earlier. If the Japanese would have come we could have given them. I don't know about our air force whether they could have supported us in those days, but that's how I felt about the army.

**What did you understand at the time was the purpose of the field regiment?**

To support your troops. Engage in the enemy, engaging

- 08:00 the use of the counter battery work too. You'd find out the gun regiment on the other side and you'd engage with them to save them engaging with your troops. And that's what it was all about, support of your troops. On one occasion we had a drop short at the, short of the target and just one
- 08:30 round came over and something was wrong with the charge and it dropped behind us and one of our old, First World War diggers came along and said don't go near it don't go near it. So that was the end nobody was hurt. But fortunately, or unfortunately one of our wonderful fellows, Searl Curtis, who was a teacher with a wife and kids went up to Cunderin
- 09:00 to do some training, you've heard of Cunderin , up in Queensland, and he threw a grenade which rolled back and he dropped out at himself and took the force. I didn't know him, I knew him well as one of our WO's (Wing Officers) and a gentlemen but that's what killed him. And he never go near the war, did he. As is respected him as most of them. And the city RSL, Peter Hast Williams was in our regiment,
- 09:30 he's been the president there for about 12 years and that's how I've organised a few functions for them. Field regiment and the air force wings, which is nice but most of them I don't know. But I knew all field regiment field. In the army although we had 3 batteries of gun, regimental head quarters and that sort of thing. But the sprit was good and all rosy-cheeked people,
- 10:00 good people a mixture from Manly and Penrith. Good memories. We had some odd people but we managed.

**Well I'm also curious how you as an only child, were able to fit in to a team, how would you react?**

Well

- 10:30 the first thing that occurred to me was how basic, how different the life was instead of sleeping in your own bed, sleeping in a tent and sharing with other people. Although I have all this contact with other people from when I left
- 11:00 school in 35, you didn't have that sort of life, you didn't realise what a life, you had have, a sleeping bag full of hay, which you were suppose to sleep on. You had to fill up yourself. No pillows, you might have a blanket that was a bit different. I hadn't roughed it. Yet in 1940 I went down to Kangaroo Valley with a dear friend of mine, George Betts, who died in Italy a couple of weeks, years ago and we
- 11:30 roughed it down there, but I've got some of those photographs, but were living in a hut on the banks of the creek and we managed. But the army was so different, the regimentation, the routine and the food, as I mentioned, in Western Australia we finished up with basically scurvy. But fortunately we were able to get out, get
- 12:00 leave to Perth and stay at a nice hotel and have some good food. And my only brush with MP's (Military Police) as my Dad used to call them, red cap or military jacks. When they came out of a restaurant one day I had my hat banned. Put on your hat Sergeant. I was not impressed. But we had our larrikins and so forth. And all sorts of people

12:30 that reckon they got into sexual offences, but I think they had a vivid imagination, personally most of them. But the people in Western Australia were tops and even the week we spent in Adelaide, when I was in the air force, waiting to get up to our squadron, they were tops. Taken out to places and all and we spent a week there. It's just after I was married.

13:00 But it was a shock to my system, me being used to your own home and all that. But you got used to it but you were bored in the army. And then while you got out from October 43 till May 44, to get onto to

13:30 a course. And I might add that every opportunity that the ground staff could do, well they had air force trainees to make us do guard duty or something, well they'd do that. He was in Adelaide when we were waiting to go up to Darwin to fly, well see my friend Russ Brooks had a commission and he stopped that. But, not that I,

14:00 devalue my experience in the air force at all, because those people were good people and when you got out, on a harassing raid, like we did in April and the boys next door are gone. Including some people I was in initial training school Bradfield. The petty cops.

#### **Well I'd like to hear more about**

14:30 **what you think makes up a larrikin spirit that you've mentioned?**

Well some people are just like that I don't know why. And particularly when they get on the grog and, this is the worst drug out, if you realise what it does because it is available 24 hours a day and the things that

15:00 it brings about. As far as Western Australian beer is concerned we thought it was a joke. But when we had a night on it we realised that it was very strong beer, and I do feel that, that it's a matter of how you are brought up. And look at the things that are happening at the moment. Look at the people in the last few days that have been killed on the roads. What is it, are we not caring. Because I think as I said earlier,

15:30 a lot of these people are showing off that go on like larrikins. And I remember one of our friends, suppose to be playing up with women, and I found out he'd sleep in the park and he'd have some women's shoes on, under the bench you see. But I'm not sure about this going on, but I don't think

16:00 having seen people drinking in the pub at Willoughby from 10 to 6 every Saturday, nothing else to do no games, and this is what used to happen. I often wondered what happened when they got home. And you hear some much of the violence. I mean in the day of the case of Ned Kelly, is making me sick. Who was he, and all about his armour, what is it. How would you regard it.

16:30 I just don't see the point and they're examining his armour at the moment. I think there is far better things, the good that's done in the country irrespective of that, it doesn't get any praise, does it. And there are people out there doing good and I listened to Angelia McTell (?) regularly and she gets the doctor in charge of the casualties at Vincent's regularly.

17:00 He's a lovely man. After the marathon, what did he say, they put on extra staff and the people they look after, that's going on all the time, but do the papers tell you this, only bad news.

#### **Can you tell me how you came to being**

17:30 **assigned to heavy armour in the militia?**

To?

#### **The armoury?**

You mean the shells we used, I don't know because I'll tell you mostly why because it's like a regiment at Willoughby. This is, it operated Willoughby pre-war the last war, and it just happened to be

18:00 that we were in the area I think. Why the boys from Penrith got pick up, called up and the ones for Manly, in August 1941 I don't know. But it was well known that a lot of the boys went there and Peter Hayes, as I mentioned he was there pre-war and they were interested in by they only had the 18 pounder cups then not the 25 which were the new weapon. And I don't know the mechanics of them,

18:30 bureaucracy, that called us up. I don't recall anybody that I knew particularly until I got in there. You mean locally.

#### **Well I'm just asking because quite often if you've got some kind of experience before you join up in a particular field, you might get assigned in a similar?**

All I was was a clerk. That's what I was a junior clerk

19:00 looking after filing files and all that sort of thing.

#### **Well how did you adjust then to learning these new skills that were being asked of you?**

I don't think there was much problem, one of the things that I enjoyed at school was geometry,

trigonometry, and that's all about angles and that's what the artillery is about. The various angles that you've got to use to get a particular projector to reach a target and how you plot. I found geometry and

- 19:30 trigonometry good but I couldn't understand algebra, double Dutch to me, but that was no problem. And I had Bob Cutler the, the late Governor's brother with me and other fellows, they were delightful people. Bob is still alive and he's like the boy he used to be. And we went down to Sydney RSL every 3 months. Bob's one, he graduated as a pilot,
- 20:00 but, and he was a orthodontist, Bob. They didn't worry about your skills they just called you up. That's right, and this has happened to every soldier particularly, you just had to learn your trade. And
- 20:30 Dad's only trade was skill in shorthand writing. And which he learnt and my Grandfather, he was taught, he came out here as a republican and started teaching at Bathurst and Orange. But he also had his own newspaper at Narrandera. And he was into shorthand too, but
- 21:00 Win's an expert still. And she discovered Dad's 1917 diary and she used to talk to him on the phone, they hadn't found the diary yet, about shorthand because they shared this common expertise. So I think you have to be tuned to that. Did you ever learn shorthand, no? I started but it wasn't for me. Also started accountancy, but it
- 21:30 bored me to tears. And a friend who finished up a chartered accountant. But no it was pick a box I'd say, you could adjust your skills, I mean look at the way they were trained for all sorts of things.

**I am wondering if there was any aspect in your training that you found difficult and that you didn't like doing?**

- 22:00 Not particularly certain about that. I mean at times you had some minor things to do because you didn't do the right thing in your training, run up there and back with your rifle. But it never worried me particularly. It
- 22:30 wasn't brutal like we see in some of these American shows. The brutality, there was no brutality in it. I remember some fellows arrived back late from leave and I was going to do them in, and I thought what will that do, they haven't done any harm here. But in a front line situation you couldn't stand that could you. Someone missing out of the job. But it was a matter of you physically adjusting
- 23:00 to the training, marching and learning how to do rifle drill, but we managed, and I had to do that in August 41 and I was starting from scratch basically. And I found some of the officers would come along and say 'Stand up straight Sergeant Sampson.' That's alright. But no, no
- 23:30 I didn't find it. We had some very good teachers at ITS, Initial Training School, at Bradfield Park including a fellow called Macarthur who taught grammar and my first introduction to science. Did you do science? Was the electricity rod, and fur and what does that produce, static electricity. Right.
- 24:00 Nothing like that at the Brothers, and he said to one of our trainees, 'So Cat, what do you think of that?' It was beautiful, you know that sense of humour and we did have a fellow called Cat, that stuck with me all those years, because I just liked that attitude. No that I complain about the way I was taught at the Brothers.
- 24:30 Certainly you'd get the sock if we didn't know our lessons. But I didn't see any brutality or anything, but strangely enough in the years I spent down there. Only one fellow did Latin. Only my favourite subject was French, I loved French, Fattie Card [nickname for Jeff Card], Jeff Card, but Latin is so basic, isn't it. I don't know I think 1 out of 24 but I enjoyed
- 25:00 my school days but we weren't pushed in any particular direction, all my concern was I get a safe job in the public service and that has continued because of the Depression which we mentioned earlier, but we managed. Willoughby wasn't an area like that, but there must have been other, to see how they suffered and lost their homes,
- 25:30 all those things.

**We've talked about your mateship in the army being very solid, and you had a bit of time to get to know your fellow mates, I'm wondering, can you tell me about the nick names that you called each other?**

Well

- 26:00 I used to be known as Mac, by the air force friends. I got Scottsy at school, and I know this is going beyond what you said but in the, youngest then said 'I was known as Wick, Rod Wick.' And when we were in England in 75 there is a town called Wick up on the East Coast of England,
- 26:30 and there was a comedy with Rodney Corbit in it where he had been posted to Wick. So when I got up I got in touch with George Betts and Lenny Halen, 2 of my dear friends that have gone, and I said 'There is a place called Wick you know?' That was the sort of label, but I used to get Scottsy, Mac, Wick and I don't know whether we got round to it much in the

27:00 Army. I finished up as a sergeant and later, we had some problems amongst various people, including our officers, but I'm not lagging because they're gone. And I think Mac was the main one and I'm still called Mac by our co-pilot, Bruce Tomas who's out at Condobolin. I don't worry about it and,

27:30 I object to Rodney, one of my friends up here calls me Rodney, I said 'No not Rodney that was sunk during the war.' Like the poor old hood.

**What did you know of your movements and who was organising your movement when you were sent to Western Australia?**

28:00 God only knows. No we were just told. I presume that it was a great strategy to get over there and I could see no objection to that because that's where we were, and are still (UNCLEAR). We just had to go you weren't told but this is what happens with our policies anyhow doesn't it.

28:30 But no we got very little news, not that I figured I took much interest in newspapers. It wasn't the same that all the country get, these days. But it was kept, they weren't supposed to know where you were when you wrote. When I was over there I managed to get Teddy Burke, one of my friend how was a jeweller,

29:00 and I got an engagement ring for Win. I remember that part of it, but no, we had no knowledge at all.

**Well I'm wondering if you're officers, you've expressed and mentioned your own frustration, your personal frustration, I'm wondering if your officers also felt that frustration?**

29:30 I don't remember it being expressed, but if you weren't there when you were wanted you were told that you should have been there. I went down from Bulli Pass to a dance at Wollongong once and Jimmy said 'Where are you sergeant.' And I said 'I just went out for a while.' 'I wanted you here'. I said 'Jim, fair enough. But no there was some that made promises,

30:00 that had no chance. I only found out recently about Wargrove apparently nothing much was happening and this particular major told all the officers, people to just go off on leave, don't worry about it. I don't remember but I believe that the MP, the military police, never stopped us. Well I've got no recollect, it was so big that I don't remember it. I can't recall, if you can recall something like that,

30:30 because again as I was saying bored out of your mind. And this is in late 41 just before the Japs came.

**Well I can imagine with time on your hands and frustration and boredom setting in that maybe some of the blokes went AWOL (absent without official leave), or played up a lot?**

Well what you were saying is we didn't know what was happening, what the general plan was.

31:00 And as I said earlier, truth is the first casualty, when there is war. Same that's happening now, when do you get the truth. But what I said earlier, World War I people they went, they got killed, they got wounded or they survived, never came home. Never.. you know

31:30 they go away for a few weeks the politicians, and there's the Prime Minister leave them. I don't know what it achieved personally.

**So how important then was it to go to the pub on a Friday night and have a beer with a mate?**

I never got anything out of it. I mean I remember getting a keg over Western Australia and I was in charge of it and I don't remember much

32:00 after that except waking up in the wrong tent. There was a way of relaxing and we did that as sergeants, but when we were, officers down at Haymarket, you know the Great Southern Hotel, well we were in a Commonwealth Bank Building, I think it was called Marks House, at one stage, but for a while down there I decided to go up to the pub,

32:30 particularly with the boys, then I found out one thing. All they would do was talk about work. So I came home. I'm not a regular drinker, I used to go down and see my Dad in the last years of his life on a Saturday at the Bridgeview Hotel at Willoughby, have a beer with him and Arthur Jim he used to come over occasionally and we used to go down and have a beer. But that's not for me I say

33:00 occasionally I have very dear friend that have been up to the pub at Kilara, what's the name of it, but drinking and boozing, no. We were bad after the war chasing beer, and we used to have to find a pub open, the service stations were closed, the pubs couldn't open until 12 all that situation. The North British down at the [Circular] Quay got fined for this sort of thing. But I don't see much in it.

33:30 And I go and have a beer occasionally with one of my friends from the Church, up here, but just for a while, but I couldn't be a regular. I can't remember the last time I was in pub. Talking about larrikinism and mateship, I forget most of them went to a lot of abuse unfortunately.

34:00 And no one enjoys a beer more than I do, I drink Tooheys light, that's a beer and it satisfies me and you don't get silly on it. I like the red wine, so does Win, Mateus and Riesling and she's not a drinker either, but we have a drink at night, relax. But as for being regular pubs well they had nothing in them, just a drinking



- 34:30 post, just beer and stand up, no where to sit. Look at the transformation. We went to the pubs a few times. But it's not like that you go along and listen to somebody ask questions. Went down to Mona Vale the other night but that was quite constructive. We had Geraldine Dude, he was the priest, I think his
- 35:00 the Cardinal, and we were talking about life generally, it was very good, 200 people.
- Are there any wartime songs that you recall that you used to sing?**
- Yes but I wouldn't repeat them they were very rude. Most of them.
- Why were they rude, can you give us a line?**
- 35:30 Oh, if you change sex. No they were rude.
- I don't think anything can shock me, try me?**
- This is not particularly rude, but Bill Cambridge went to a school, and used to sing,
- 36:00 My girl Calabritty works in the WC (toilet), pulling the chain for the water to wash away the wee wee wee, and that's not very rude, there were worse than that. I can remember Bill doing that and I've got a photo of him taking a bath in baby's bath during our army days. But some of them were, I'm sorry. What's another one.
- 36:30 I got these from air force fellows as well, I can't recall. But there still there. I don't know whether I should do that. You learn it along the way, even at work.
- 37:00 I think well live it.
- Maybe we can come back to that later. What other activities did you get up to in Geraldton?**
- 37:30 We used to go to the town, allowed to go into town and possibly buy food and the beer there, the grove beer was dreadful, as I mentioned earlier we used to get orange and lemon drinks which possibly made up for the lack of greens that we had. Cooks never got crock, but we didn't even, obviously clean men, although you had to take your shower out in the bush, and these scabby sores,
- 38:00 but I just try and think if we... in the air force I just try and think we were in the army in Geraldton, we had a... Oh Christmas day the Catholics were invited to mass and given Christmas dinner. Beautiful Spanish type, church, wonderful church,
- 38:30 and I don't know why that happened. I know we had a WAP's ball at Lismore, form Evans Head and some of the boys got very friendly with the WAAAFS. We used to
- 39:00 play Chinese checkers, bridge, I never liked bridge, 500 I preferred, the other game. Chinese checkers we played those sort of things, cards, they used to make me play football which I hated. You didn't have any cricket or anything like that. Surfing,
- 39:30 lost a few of Geraldton, surfing beach, a lot of people were there. We brewed up melanomas, getting round in a hat and pair of shorts. I had one of in 79 on the left side and I had another one last January, there on that side and Win's had a lot here, hanging out the washing, I'd say. We go regularly, I've even got one here at the moment that I have to see the specialist,
- 40:00 Dr Struss, his operated on me a couple of times that this one here he had to dig rather dig. Strangely enough an osteopath, young fellow found this. I saw him in November and he said come back in May. I go to the osto down at Newtown, and he spoke to his lady in charge and said 'I think you've got a melanoma there.' So I saw the specialist and he said I think you've got a blood
- 40:30 blister. Then he rang up and said 'Oh you've got a melanoma there you'd better see Dr Struss.' He said 'How long it's been there?' I said 'How would I know?' the moral of the story is you should bath with a friend shouldn't you. To look at your back, and I believe ladies are more likely to get them on their legs, but I started at Balmoral, who else didn't start that situation. I've got photos of us getting round in a hat and a pair of shorts.
- 41:00 I mean 18 months in Western Australia, doesn't help. And up north it was no different, and of course it was a bit hotter up there, but steamier of course, because there was more moisture around. Western Australia was very dry. But I'm not joking about melanoma, I hope you ladies check every 6 months because you can get them anywhere. On you feet, in your eyes, under your feet,
- 41:30 I remember the coal miners in England getting them from the radiation from the coal, unbelievable isn't it?

## Tape 4

- 00:32 **Rod, I meant to ask you about having a girlfriend because you got engaged during wartime**

**and when you were in service. Can you tell me about that and how you kept in contact?**

Mail, wrote regularly. Something to do, there wasn't much else to do, you wrote a regularly as you

01:00 could and the same with Win. But of course her people were ahead of us, they had the phone on, I could ring her there. But we never had the phone at home, neither did my aunt and uncle at Lakemba (?) until my aunt died and I made my uncle get the phone. And Mum and her sister used to row like mad and they would get all the way over to Lakemba and they'd have a row and they would go home. Thanks

01:30 to the two girls. But then again mother would write to her and say sorry. I came across that after they died, it was fair. Because unfortunately the bloke finished up in an orphanage, so it very personal of course, and I only found this out when Mum and Dad got mentally ill. Her Mum and Dad. I don't know what happened to him but the grandmother suffered in

02:00 childbirth. She spent a lot of time in Orange and when she died, I knew her all her life. Mum and I tried to get her out during the First [World] War but she had no one to take her. But she lived with me in the same house and that was sad really, sad.

02:30 **And why did you decide to get engaged?**

Well we had known each other for about 4 years and we corresponded regularly, and it was while we were in Western Australia, I just felt there was a bond, I didn't know then that Dad had married in March 16th before he went away. And I thought back and say 'Why did we get married?' I felt we had something all those years

03:00 and I often say 'Why?' But still you did it and it was organised and, I realised what a lot of trouble I put people to do it. Including my Dad who had Pat, his brother in the beer trade, and we had the problem of getting round. I don't know how we got round from Willoughby to Northbridge, all that sort of thing. Didn't have much fun, but it all went off well, it was very nice.

03:30 But of course we didn't have Trisha until she wasn't conceived until after I came back from the air force, but. I don't know.

**You got married in 1944?**

16th September when I came off course on the Friday.

**The war was still going on?**

Yes.

**Can you tell me how you managed to put on that wedding?**

04:00 Well it was thanks to Mum and Dad, and Win's Mum and Dad, and my uncle who got the grog. At the Northbridge Golf Club. That's how it was organised and we were married, on the Saturday, and then went to Cronulla to the Cecil, on the electric train. Got there and found the place was closed, but they opened it up and fed us.

04:30 They fed us well, and that. But I think it was possibly wanting to be part of somebody you know for so long and was separated unnecessarily. I often wonder how Mum felt, you know from March 16th to September 1919. But Dad was a great writer and a regular,

05:00 getter of postcards. He wrote to everybody. Had a nice hand and see a lot of these things only surfaced after he died. I just think of, I've got some lovely photographs of them at Glebe and a dog called Digger who they bought to Willoughby. Digger the dog. Of course Glebe was a very up (upper) class

05:30 sort of area. There are still some lovely places around Glebe. But I don't have any knowledge of it.

**Well can you tell me what type of parcels your wife would send you when you were in the Service?**

Well I remember her sending apples and putting grease on them. I remember her sending us cakes and melting moments little

06:00 lovely sugary biscuits. And they used to arrive and we used to shares these sort of things with our friends in the tent. Some thing different something sustaining. And on the reverse side, my Mum had bad rheumatism during the war and she was put on a diet of gin and sulphur and going to bed. And she could hardly walk, she wasn't a

06:30 drinker, she finished up in a pub after they left, Edwards at Manly, we never knew about this. But while they were there they were well looked after, you could tell by the way they were dressed. But she used to take this gin and sulphur and go to bed. Well sulphur is the basis of lots of drugs isn't it, and she got over it. So I managed to get a gin, while I was in the air force, put it in a tin and sent it

07:00 back to her. So that's the other side of it. That's, I can recall her being in an absolute agony and... a lot of things used to arrive for people, gloves, and we were issued with woolly underwear. But I could never stand that, I could only stand the synthetic things and so forth. Which is in good for these

07:30 particular, this particular sort of weather. But that went on regularly, and it was just part of our culture I think. It was a long wait.

**Going back to when you were over in Western Australia,**

08:00 **you mentioned earlier on that there was a Yank submarine base at Fremantle. I'm wondering what type of contact you had with the Americans?**

None at all, you wouldn't have even know they were there. I read a book on the submarines, Win's brother Kevin is living over there, which he gave me to read, and it was rather

08:30 peculiar that they said the regulars, so keen to go off on patrol to get shot at. Volunteers, well they were like us, a job had to be done. But it was mentioned, I don't know why, I don't know whether it's true or not. I was very upset about that because nobody wants to follow a plane and get shot at or shot out of it. It was our country

09:00 as far as I was concerned, I was worried about. Not the other colonial empires but... look at the Dutch, we had a friend who was taken POW (prisoner of war), he was an alderman here but, I said 'How did you look after the others, when you were in trouble with the Javanese?' He said 'Oh we just go the army out.' That was their attitude, 400 years ago I think.

09:30 And look at what they did to the communist over there too. Around the time of Sahara but... we wouldn't have know they were operating from where the Yanks. And

**And what about other Australian army presence in the area?**

We

10:00 didn't have any contact with them to my recollection or any body else. But they were an armoured brigade and, bombs, and tanks and the like, ideal for that sort of country, because there is nothing there. If you got a map and there would be nothing on it. There was nothing there at all. Of course all that's changed with the fighting of the ore and all that sort of thing and diamonds. But it was just no, occupied. Although they have done a lot

10:30 around Perth and that area and wrecked the water tails and so forth. With their over farming. But the only time we had any contact was when we got a bit of leave into town or into Perth. We felt a bit civilised then, but still we managed. I don't think we were as hygienic as we are now.

11:00 **Why do you say that?**

Well there weren't the facilities. I'm talking about even at home. You had a cooper and that was it, you had a gas bath heater and that was it. You never had any hot water, and you can image what it was like in Western Australia. You had to get a shower put it up there and put some hot water in it. Or you went surfing

11:30 or we used to go swimming up at Bachelor near Fenton in the nice, pure water, people said 'Weren't there crocodile around?' I said 'I don't remember anything about that, we weren't near rivers.' And that's one of the things we used to do for a rest, we came down from Morotai, to Mindel Beach in Darwin and had a few days off then went back again. But

12:00 yes tennis at Lismore, and Geraldton was a nice area and so was Perth. But most of the time was in camp along the rivers that's about all. But there was a unicity about, the

12:30 spirit.

**I'm wondering if you were aware at the time of any stories or tension between the militia and the AIF?**

Well... I don't recall at all, although we were anxious to get enough people to become an AIF unit.

13:00 And I mean you couldn't enlist until you were 21 then. Like now you could enlist when you were 18. But I do know that some of our people who were sick in bed with, chased it up the AIF to make up our percentage. I remember this particular fellow he was a bit of a character, but, that's how it was.

13:30 If we like to take that forward a bit they didn't hesitate sending conscripts to Vietnam. So there was an absolute disaster, a lot of them offered them extra money and they could enlist. Cause as I said earlier the Yanks had mainly volunteers in the First [World] War, 2 millions of them, they might have had conscripts,

14:00 but at coming in at the end they only lost 40,000, still 40,000 too many. But we were always in that regard different until now. Couldn't see the reason for that couldn't understand. That went on for 10 years didn't it?

**When the 7th Field Regiment**

14:30 **came under the AIF while you were in Western Australia, did that make any difference at all?**

No some didn't bother to enlist. That was their business. No. because again as I said earlier we were just waiting around for something to happen or someone to direct it to happen. And if you look at lots of wars you wonder how we ever won

15:00 it. Did we win the last one the way we treated Japan. The Americans got all their secrets on experiments the Japanese carried out on the Chinese. And then the hero, Adolf [Hitler] if anyone should have got the chop he should have. I blame Tito [Josip Broz Tito] and the wrong people died in wars as far as I'm concerned.

15:30 The ordinary people.

**I've heard, from others who were posted to regional outposts in the northern part of Australia who describe their unit as a little bit scruffy, because they were so removed. How**

16:00 **do you think the 7th Field Regiment scrubbed up?**

I think we were fairly civilised. Our cooks weren't the nicest people in the world. But sometimes the things they said at times when they were giving you the food, rather rude. But in the main, they were from good a district, nice people. But in any

16:30 situation you get the odd people, that as you mentioned, our AWOL do stupid things. And we had a gunner down at Wollongong who was going on duty and he had a .303 rifle, and he shot his foot off. Accidentally, well you know the power of a 303 don't you, it will kill you, but that was sheer carelessness,

17:00 as far as I was concerned I never liked guns I distrust them. As a young fellow I went with, George Betts, down to Canberra I was carrying a rifle around, well apparently we killed some wallabies, or something, I can't recall it but I've got it in writing and I was talking about it and I just pulled the trigger and went, he was there

17:30 12 months later. But Jimmy Gates who's Father had a jewellery shop at Crows Nest and Jimmy was pushing down a hole and George went straight over night, you can't trust guns. I always regard them as loaded, and that's what concerns me about the frustration of guns and the death from them. I think the road tolls

18:00 worse at the moment. You noticed the last few days dreadful, what is it. It's like the war the unnecessary deaths caused by frustrations or anger or boredom.

**It's interesting to hear you talk this morning about your**

18:30 **frustration and your boredom of not seeing any purposeful action, can you tell me how you came to leave the army?**

Because of the fact the unit was broken up. There was no more 7th Field Regiment, it was just disbanded. Some joined, I think other units and went elsewhere,

19:00 and I always wanted to be in the air force, so I decided to join. I lost that, sense of unity and quite a few of us did the same thing.

**Can you tell me a bit more about why the unit was disbanded?**

Because there was no place for them at Bougainville. That's where they went to, Bougainville. Bougainville is part of the Solomon Islands which originally belonged to the

19:30 Germans, colonialism again, and when the First World War was on we took over Bougainville and then Mr [Gough] Whitlam gave it to Papua New Guinea as part of the Solomon's. And why did they want it because of the mining, material available there. And they did a holding operation, like at Morotai where we were, had a group of them and just

20:00 kept the Japs out. And quite a few people were killed at Morotai, Japanese used to come in and cut their throats, across the front and some of the officers were around the bend about what happened at Bougainville, but I didn't know whether it was his own imagination or not,

20:30 I never heard, I never had an intelligent conversation, in regard to those who went to Bougainville.

**I'm wondering if you got an idea before the regiment was disbanded that that was going to happen?**

No, not a clue, but that's how it was done,

21:00 that's how it's done now in politics. Look at the fuss that's going on, no different. Its like Iraq we've won the war, everyone for peace. How would you like to be an Iraqi, no thanks. At least they have some water there, but there wasn't the sort of water that was right.

21:30 How do you replace it? And they don't think about democracy I often wonder if we do, the things that

happen now because we are such a conservative society, we've changed, you know, if you're not with us you're against us. It's an

22:00 old expression. And oh yes I wonder. But of course I've always been a cynic, for some reason or other. But I think a cynic often looks for the truth too, because you hear them saying what's happening, nothing. But still we battled through and had our own problems

22:30 and this is what most people get one with. There's a fellow walks up the street here and every day, can hardly walk, but he's doing it. I don't know if his wife's at home, but his just struggling up the street. It's a long way from here up to the shops and back. And I dare not pull up and ask him if he'd like a lift home. That their therapy isn't it keep him going?

23:00 **After spending so much time with a unit that you would have got to know so well, and you described that you had good mates, I'm wondering how you marked the disbandment or the breaking up of that unit?**

Well obviously we weren't happy about it is was just something you had to accept because it had a long history

23:30 back to the First [World] War and it continued after the war as the militia unit. Where a lot of people got a lot of experience and enjoyed doing that. I wasn't particularly interested in it and, followed me to a particular school I might add. But as I said a lot of the shore boys were officers, nice fellows too. And but I had no inclination that way.

**And where were**

24:00 **you demobbed?**

Wallgrove. I think it was Wallgrove. Yes we didn't go back to Greta at Newcastle, although we went from there to the West, but I'm sure it was Wallgrove. The pay book doesn't tell you anyhow, they never tell you anything the pay book as you realise.

24:30 **Can you tell me then about why you didn't just quit the Service altogether?**

We couldn't.

**What I was going to ask you was why you made a decision to join up with the Air Force?**

Because I wanted to be in them from way

25:00 back. As I said earlier I felt myself, if it happened it happened quickly. I wouldn't have to put up with what the First World War people did, years and years in the trenches and those that went away and fought in the desert and Greece and Crete and got caught in Singapore it wasn't the sort of thing that appealed to me. And like all of us I wanted to be a pilot but that wasn't to be.

25:30 'Ca sera' [what will be, will be], as far as I'm concerned. No you realise it was very uncertain times because you didn't know what was happening, you weren't told much, a lot of things were concealed and you didn't know what was going on. Darwin's the example I mentioned earlier too.

26:00 **Well you've just described yourself as a bit of a cynic and you had just spent several years being completely frustrated in the army, why didn't you give the service away altogether?**

You couldn't. I had enlisted I couldn't just walk out. I had been conscripted and then I joined the AIF and you couldn't say I've had the war and walk out. You couldn't,

26:30 really it isn't.

**Can you explain a bit more about that?**

Well you had to be in the service as far as the Government was concerned, and I was conscripted into the army and I had a N number instead of an X number. N170294, you remember those things. Do you find that with the people you deal with.

27:00 And I did get X110765 and that was made the difference. But you couldn't say 'Ta ta (good bye). I'm going', you were there for the duration of the war, whether you were militia or the army, navy and air force. The only way you could get out was possibly on compassionate grounds. I know I was granted leave in my first

27:30 camp for the death of my Grandparents. And you had no way of getting out unless you were medically unfit. And you just couldn't say 'Ta ta' or you just disappear of course. I had no intention of doing that seeing the Japanese were involved. But getting back to knowledge we had no idea what the Japanese were up to, did we.

28:00 You realise that bastardry they got up too. And two of the fellows at Longbok were be-headed they were caught, and this is what happened to the Z Force people. It's anarchy, we didn't know about that. It was Blamey and Macarthur that knew. We were in there wasting time when we should have sent somebody

in to get those men out but they allowed them to die

28:30 and you wonder why I'm a bit cynical. Cause they weren't concerned, at Kokoda (Track). You know what Blamey did after they banished them with straw and let them bleed, then push them back, he called it, its recorded, he called a.. 'meeting', parade and he called them rabbits, run rabbit

29:00 run. Anyone else might have got up and killed the so and so. They had to retreat, it was a orderly retreat and they left behind food with holes in the tins which the Japanese opened and they got very sick. And the lines of communication, and then when the time came back they went. And when they got to Gona it was the next place. Macarthur and

29:30 Blamey wouldn't allow them to do some reconnaissance before hand to see what was there and the casualties there were horrible, this is after they pushed them back over the Kokoda Trail. That doesn't give you much faith in your leaders does it? Same as Hagan in the First [World] War, he never went near the frontline, but those of his staff that went there just cried their eyes out. He didn't see

30:00 what was happening, all his idea was was that numbers will overcome machine guns, which they wouldn't but... All it does is kill young men doesn't it. And civilians as it did in Europe and Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When do you get the truth from your leaders, even now.

30:30 But still we battled through and managed, had our ups and downs, that's about all you can do. The same with you people.

### **Well you were in the unusual position**

31:00 **of having served with two different services, the army and the air force, what did you think of the air force after having been in the army?**

Well one thing I expected was better food. And they did get better food initially, but it never happened. I think the food was reasonable but I remember at Fenton where we used to get steak from the,

31:30 Somali people but I don't think we starved in the air force, but I don't see how the air force, there was a lot of pettiness. The way I was treated over that bomb falling off. Where the fellow who should have landed at Truscott and killed his crew, that was petty, not petty. One of our fellow up here

32:00 who was flying a plane and, from Eurenkriti which was a Service Flying Training School and the damn thing packed up and he landed and got out and went and telephoned the base to say there he was. And the Service [Military] Police charged him with leaving a valuable piece of equipment

32:30 unguarded. The officer in charge of the flying got that dismissed. I found a lot of pettiness in the air force that you didn't find in the army. So paltry, and my particular friend told me that, and I have no reason to doubt it. I mean being fined 10 pounds for a bomb door being

33:00 damaged. And as a bomb aimer, which I had no control, because he didn't like our skipper. And I've heard so many incidents like that, but that's personality isn't it. What does it achieve? And the fact that we were going off up north to fly and they wanted us to do guard duty for it. I regard that as being petty, because I want to be treated as anything special, because

33:30 some time ago it was announced that the Eagles wanted us to fly down in Western Australia. All aircrew were invited, all crew. We didn't respond and the reason was ground crew weren't invited. And a lady rang me and said why aren't you going. I said what about the ground crew who looks after our planes. They were an

34:00 essential part of the team. And I though that was another mentality. We wouldn't fly unless they looked after us. And our people were far better at maintaining these things, and had much better ideas how not to over strain the planes, like the Yanks used to do, they didn't consider them, after a certain time, that certain things had to happen. They just kept flying. And then when we

34:30 dropped those bombs, those torpedos, there were trees in front of us, 300 foot high, which were not on the map, and the co-pilot had to put the throttles through the gate and we survived. But when that happens you've got to do certain service on the plane, because it's been put to its ultimate load.

35:00 And I heard a lot about these petty things. They were trifling in the air force I don't know why as I never struck in the Army of course. Except for that promo in Perth, put your hat on Sergeant . That's how I felt. But I also found that, just tell me if I'm getting off the track, but in our Air Force

35:30 Association Group Captains, Air Commanders, Wing Commands like to be known by that name. They want to be known as that still. And a friend of mine who did the same after war, became a colonel he was in a rush once recently, you know this is post war,

36:00 because the air force and aircrew didn't make it. In the Army he became a lieutenant colonel never saw any action. He was someone to be proud to have known, and what's this attitude and particularly with these people in the air force, raised half a million dollars, you know what for, to refurbish a memorial. Isn't it better to look after the living then the dead?

- 36:30 Now there putting memorials, in everywhere, giving 300,000 medals out. I mean what do you want those for. And I just, why I mentioned this is because my friends whose the secretary of the RAAF Association, tries to stop this happening all the time. Money doesn't mean a thing to them. But the Air Force Association going broke but they have recently
- 37:00 re-done a memorial. The main one is the one at Canberra, and all the others are subsidiary, apart from those around the towns, you've seen them, I love those, and look at country villages, English villages were just decimated, because they finished up in the same unit didn't they. If you wiped out a regiment or platoon that was your village, or your country town.
- 37:30 **Well you just bought up something interesting before we go onto talk about the air force, you just reminded me of your local contact with people in Western Australia. How are you received in local towns?**
- Where?
- In WA when you were in the army?**
- Oh they gave us wonderful tours,
- 38:00 no problem at all. Although at one stage apparently, someone in the armoured division raped an aboriginal girl or something or other. Red Robby, Robinson, they never got any further leave. That's what he did to them. That's why he's called Red Rob'in. But the Western Australian people were, lovely to
- 38:30 us as far as I was concerned. They were very kind, but there's something else going on in mind but I can't think back at the moment. Oh yes.. now recently there was a show on television about the F111's. I don't know which station it was on but this boy and his co-pilot
- 39:00 just went into the ground and no one can give an explanation and no one would, and Angus Huston, my second name is Angus, had to finally agree after years that it could have been some technical fault in that aeroplane that caused the accident. I met him first at an air force function.
- 39:30 But the family were very disturbed about that. Now this happened some years ago when a [Boeing] 707 also went in off the coast and no one could give an explanation. And it is sad, nobody wants to, I mean you are going at such speed these things can happened. It's
- 40:00 just a matter of cover up, but it doesn't bring anyone back from the dead does it.
- Well just going back, you were talking about the locals welcoming you I was wondering if there was any local resentment do you think about having the army in the town?**
- Oh well we were out of the town. We weren't even located in towns, outside the towns.
- 40:30 But I never had any problems. This is possibly off the track a bit but, when we were at Narrandera, we had an ex-flight leader who decided to join the air force and he came back to being an AC2 (Second Aircraftmen). And we were in a town full of army fellows having a beer, and some local fellow got hold of a poor old duck or something, and stuck its head in the beer and this fellow
- 41:00 objected and he punched him. But the army boys came to his rescue. They stuck up for him. The fellows who have been in the Army and been through its frustration and joined the air force for something to do, but, that's another one that stuck in my mind. It wasn't the people, people were friendly. They were very good to us top marks.
- 41:30 As we'd go into these towns but we lived outside the towns, well outside them. Geraldton, Gin [Gin Gin], Chitlows Bend, Moura, Rockhampton all those places we went to. And the people were very good, and we got to the stage where we didn't like the beer and we used to have porter gaps. Stout and lemonade. Can you imagine anything worse.

## Tape 5

- 00:32 Something we'd have when we didn't like the grog or we couldn't get grog, we like the orange and lemon drinks we used to get in Geraldton, but it was just a substitute for beer. No I only remember what Jazzy did but I'm not going to tell you people. How rude
- We were wondering, Rod if you had some**
- 01:00 **not necessarily dirty ditties but some of the songs from the day that you remember and really enjoyed?**
- Oh well as I said, 'Oh Shannon Boy, that beautiful song, I love to hear you, a way beyond the Shannon', it was a beautiful song, we used to sing all the old songs. We sound round the piano as kids, for Mum, she was that sort of... for Win's Mum, Danny Boy. The Irish hate that song,

- 01:30 you know why, composed by an Englishman. But no they were the sort of things, but we just, and we enjoyed each others company it was usually all the Sergeants together but we didn't have them in the army, the loss of comrades like I did in the 5 months that I flew. Particularly
- 02:00 as I said we had 3 planes off Balikpapan, zilch speed, zilch height, 20,000 feet you met this pretty flack outside. Predicted flack and they never shot any of those down, but. Because the Dutch didn't give us any proper landing fields. Otherwise you could have bought the small planes down, still that's just,
- 02:30 there gone and some of the crew were saved. But it was rather sad that Mclean was coming into land, and the most difficult thing to land was a Liberator, he was going to land it and a boat came across and he had to stall it, and broke its back. I'm not sure how many got out of it but it was his first stop, as group captain. But you can't bring them back.
- 03:00 **How did hearing about casualties and having casualties in the squadron. I guess how did the men in the squadron react, how did affect moral?**
- Well you just had to accept it.
- You were about to say the effect of the casualties.**
- Well my first experience was the plane that crashed
- 03:30 due to lack of fuel in February 45, and to go out there initially and just see it was a shock. Because the front gunner and the bomb aimer, were in the front naturally and the others escaped. But this was just along side the strip. But then again in
- 04:00 April when we lost the planes over the cruiser, I had people sleeping in the next tent to me, Keith White and Ian FASTER, Johnny Wadell I was with and other people. And you suddenly find they're gone, and, that's it. But the only thing that I have thought about since, I made no effort
- 04:30 after the war to get in touch with their next of kin. I don't know what I could have done, but some parents liked to know, but it was all over quickly. And it was always that link between aircrew and in that respect, and irrespective of what I said about other things. But
- 05:00 as you can imagine what it was like in Europe when so many went so regularly. But it is a shock to the system when you view them. And strangely enough one of my army friends, Ken Collins, his brother was in one of the crews, Sergeant Roger Collis, I believe he went quite round the bend when he found out he lost his brother. That's the 7th Field Regiment people.
- 05:30 But I didn't have any of this in the army because we never got that far.
- You mentioned that in the army there were training accidents, and accidents at the beach?**
- Well there was drowning, but none of them was in our unit, but one of the infantry battalion or some other groups but. I mentioned the
- 06:00 fellow shooting himself in the foot down at Wollongong, and also Cyril Curtis who died at Cunderdin when he threw a grenade and threw himself on it and died. But that was the extent of my Army experience, because it was all non-operational, wasn't it, nothing you could do about it. But at the start of any,
- 06:30 problems in the air force was the one, with Flight Sergeant Noble, up at Evans Head, cause we had to go to the funeral and the old Ansons, which we used for our bombing practice, quite a lot of people went through Evans Head and they've had a few reunions up there. But nothing like the carnage,
- 07:00 again, close carnage as in the First [World] War.
- Did the death of someone in the squadron make the others reluctant to fly, would there be problems?**
- I never knew of it, but without any names or peck drill, one of our bomb aimers who went with us never wanted to fly again. He never wanted to, he finished up as a
- 07:30 guard, and two of our officers, navigated off course, they never wanted to fly either. Why bother, I found it weird. But this is before they saw any action. One of them of course, the bomb aimer, never saw a shot fired, as far as I know. I don't know what happened to the other two, they were very good tennis players. My wife knew them...
- 08:00 pre war and their wives too. But I can't understand that.
- How would these men be looked upon in the squadron?**
- Well if there was knowledge about it they would be ostracised, I mean, when you join up in any of the service there is always the possibility of death
- 08:30 or injury. But just to get off the track completely, a friend of mine is an author, I was at tennis with



friend down at Wollstonecraft, having a few beers and we were talking about homosexuals and those sort of people, I mean It's the same thing isn't it basically. And he said he did a favour for one of these fellows

09:00 and he started to you know, make passes at him or he disappeared. Does that answer your question? It was John Cleary the author, heard of John Cleary. But that's how that was dealt with. But all that's gone the other way now hasn't it.

**Did you ever encounter**

09:30 **any homosexual men in the army?**

Never. But it's gone too far now hasn't it. But it happens in both sexes doesn't it, and I'm not to point the finger at anybody who is interested in somebody of their own sex. How do we know that is not a genuine relationship. I mean Michael Kirby is in that situation. But how do we know. I know two ladies at our church

10:00 and there very friendly, but they've lived together for years. Who wants to point the finger? Very nice to be judgemental but always look at yourself first as Christ said. A woman taken adultery and look how they treat them overseas. Did you see that documentary on that women in Jordan had to be kept in jail,

10:30 otherwise the family would be allowed to kill her. Anyhow.

**I guess being Australian men, from Sydney on the other side of the country. Were the men having problems, you hear a lot during the war about the Americans coming to Sydney and a lot of women running off with them and leaving their family?**

No,

11:00 we weren't in the cities as I said and of course the Americans looked after their troops very well in regard to pay, clothing and conditions. As I said to your friend earlier they didn't know how to fight the war properly and the unnecessary casualties that [General Douglas] MacArthur, was dreadful. I mean there was the Battle of Brisbane that

11:30 you're talking about isn't it. That one of the ones that they had the battle up there. What was I saying. Overpaid, oversexed and over here is that right, is that the one. But we came back on the Nieuw Amsterdam from Perth, Fremantle and...

12:00 there was a market on board and I remember buying a pen I think it was, and there were watches and things, and I remember one loud mouth yank yelling out, 'What GS (good son) of a bitch pinched my pen?' You can work out the GS. But I can recall that well because

12:30 the mixture we were accompanied by the Dutch destroyer Van Trough, cause there was a whole brigade on their, whole unit. Those conditions weren't so hot but still, why worry.

**If I can just ask before we move away from your time in Western Australia. Was there a day to day routine that you would be**

13:00 **doing when you were in camp?**

Oh yes.

**Can you tell me that routine, what you'd be doing?**

Oh we'd have a parade and have to make sure that the kitchen and everything were tidied up. It was a bit different than the bush, it was much more easier, at Creta (?), where all those facilities were built. There were things to be done and parades were just to get the troops together and tell us something for a change, or what was happening or whether we were going out on bivouac

13:30 or doing something. It was fairly routine, but again we weren't told much about what was going on in the war. Because you got bits and pieces out of the paper, but you never knew whether that was the truth or not, but we got the papers, but I wasn't a paper reader in my calais years or even during the war, they didn't mean much to me. And now they've gone from one extreme to the other,

14:00 lack of information to too much information, and how much is truthful.

**I wonder Rod given that there was not much to do other than the routine, and a lot of young men with a lot of energy. What would some of them get up to, I mean without any names, was there any mischief?**

14:30 I don't have any particular knowledge of that. In any respect whether it be, sexually or thieving or fights and things I don't recall. I was a fairly peaceful sort of life and again I go back to alcohol, people

15:00 get it just brings out their worst and then there's a fight and somebody hurt or killed. And alcohol, is a far above all other things percentage wise. Cause you know that they only had the pubs from 10 to 6 and there was nothing else to do. But men used to go along to the pub and swear and go on, going off, arh arh, and say we've

15:30 had enough and go to another place. Peer pressure didn't mean a thing they were just words. But as I said earlier I didn't get much satisfaction going down the pub every night, but I went down every Saturday in the last 5 years of Dad's life. Cause he deserved it and he never did anyone any harm.

16:00 And the only swear word he ever used was shite, isn't that funny shite. I have used worse words than that.

**I wonder being around local towns, would there have been much interaction with local people in general or with local girls?**

I've got no idea to be quite honest, because

16:30 we were out in the bush. I could have happened, men being men and women being women, it could have happened. But I wasn't particularly interested although at times you had the company of other people and that was all there was to it. We'd met them somewhere or go to a dance. I did that from an early age, it never worried me, it was a way of enjoying the music

17:00 and the company of a woman, whether you were that keen on her or not, but it just, I think there's a lot of pressure in dancing. I remember seeing a movie with Jack Lemon when he was in the last stages, and one of the things he was asked, he said what's the thing you miss most and he said 'dancing'. You look at the 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's, big men. Bangkok and the Trocodero

17:30 which is gone. All the dances went off company, you went home tired. You were too tired to get in any trouble. I mean it Win used to walk from Naremburn (?) over to Cammeray with her friend. And that was part of the course, I used to walk her home on a push bike. But I don't really know, but it could have happened. I was a good boy and always stayed where I was

18:00 supposed to be. Its just a waste of so much time. Look at Russia and Germany what they were engaged in. 20 million in Russia the last war.

18:30 Then the German are upset when they did the same them to them that they did to the Russians. 'Tis nothing.

**I was wondering Rod if you could tell me what you would hear about local people, local families inviting serviceman in for dinner?**

That's right, yes.

**I was wondering if you could tell me about**

19:00 **some of the experiences you had?**

Oh it's very vague, but I do remember we did have hospitality which involved them and, because it so vivid but its so long ago. Its like the hospitality we had in Adelaide in the week. It was overpowering and was so nice. And they had this particular hut in Adelaide and

19:30 we were probably more together as a nation than we are now. Because it become all breed as far as I'm concerned.

**What kind of hospitality did you receive in Adelaide?**

Well we were invited into their homes, for a meal, and I don't know whether we went to dances sort of thing, but that's what it was, just for a meal and company. I think nothing further as far as I was concerned.

20:00 But some of the others used to base their prowess but I think it was all in the mind. No really nothing would go on.

**Why were these families inviting you into their homes?**

They knew we were from NSW (New South Wales). And that's what they are and,

20:30 it's a very lonely place over there. We were over there in April 41 when I retired and there was a strike on in the airlines and we came home on the red eye special but you feel it. The isolation, there very vulnerable, but it's kicked on ever since and a lot of people say that it's thanks to Mr Bond,

21:00 I mean the things that have happened there since. But I don't know whether there was much out side particular areas because it's just nothing. Apart from the iron ore deposits and the diamonds I suppose. The maps we had were just blanks firths nothing there.

**How do you think it made**

21:30 **Western Australians or the people who were close to you in Western Australia feel to have the Army so close by?**

I think it was good news for them, because you look at our coastline, no settlement, at Broome and the other places. And I feel it was necessary but no doubt about that, and it was fairly shortly after the

Japanese attacked

- 22:00 Pearl Harbour and.... as I don't think there's any ever chance of invasion. Because when you take on America god help you. And that's what worries me. They can't rule the world they can't even run their own country, and they've just run out of electricity apparently. I thought that was funny.
- 22:30 That's one of the problems that worries me at the moment, apparently we've sold off all our electricity plants and were leasing them back in NSW [New South Wales]. I only found recently from friend. Just like problems, sold all our departments and are leasing them back. How do we manage? But anyhow

23:00 we just keep going.

**Can you tell me Rod, you were married during the war?**

16th September 44.

**And you were still, obviously in Australia and you hadn't been away at that stage?**

That's right.

**What did Winifred say to you about the possibility of overseas service?**

Oh we accepted it but I didn't expect to get shoved in

- 23:30 so quickly, only 4 of us, I don't know why, whether we were top bomb aimers or not, but I never mentioned to her while we were flying that I was flying. That was just not said. She didn't know I was flying until I got back. And when Russ Brooks came home earlier, I said 'Well don't tell Win I've been flying.' What else could you do that's how it was.
- 24:00 And it took a long time, May 41, February 45, so many others. And when I came back as I said I felt as though I should have got in touch with some of the parents, but life had to go on and what could we have done. As I said about the inquest I went to they never brought anyone back to life. And that's what intrigues me about how they make an inquiry into a plane crash,
- 24:30 and they don't make much of an inquiry, you know how many we've lost this week, 6, 12 or 18 dreadful. That's its sad, but... as I said before 'ca sera', one of my favourite songs. Means a lot doesn't it. Who sings it?

**I don't know.**

And there's another song

- 25:00 by Jane Crowman, who at the end of the war, its just belief in faith and babies, and worth and everything, beautiful song. She got badly injured in a car accident and came back to sing and I think Susan Hayward. They made a movie about it. Have you ever sung that song, 'I Believe.' The only one I must say (UNCLEAR). Bit of a comparison isn't it.

25:30 **What kept you going Rod, what was the one thing that really kept you strong throughout the frustration?**

Well I think comradeship, people that you were with in the know, the ones you could relate to and then there were the ones that you couldn't relate to in some respect. They were good friend, putting up with what I had to put up with.

- 26:00 We had qualified professional people there, solicitors, other people, and I guess as I said I could have went through law at that time, by correspondence. I suppose but I never had any ideas of doing law until I got back to the old office and then realised we dealt with a lot of legal matters, deed, conveyances and all that sort of thing. And that's when I got the idea

26:30 of doing law in 56, never regretted.

**Was there something special in your overseas service that you carried from home, photos, a lucky charm or a personal item?**

No. I suppose the only thing you carried is your only personal faith, to keep

- 27:00 going. Harry Lauder was a comedian, a singer in the First [World] War, Scottish, he lost his son in the song, and his song was keep right onto the end of the road. Isn't that it, the road although short for some people. And we've only been speaking to our relatives at Canberra when all the troubles, not all trouble

27:30 that there in Victoria recently and there (UNCLEAR) son down there John Liston, son's, Margaret there got a lovely little girl 18, she said its getting overpowering. And she's not that sort of person because she lost her husband years ago and John met her when he was De La Sal Brother, married her and when we rang last night I spoke to Kate, the 18 year old, a beautiful young lady she is,

28:00 just so nice. And I though well what am I complaining about, and we had a long yarn, because Margaret has got an aged brother, whose also got a another youngest girl whose sub normal although they've

managed to get to her to do things now, she's helping at home. Her Mother's 89

28:30 and (UNCLEAR). And Mary's got MND [Motor Neurone Disease] she has to be shifted regularly because of bedsores. This old Elsa Vale during the day other than Margaret or a nurse, she's got to be turned regularly. And the other sister's away, John's sister's away in Melbourne and and all this about the other two continues

29:00 and Margaret's not that sort of person, because they've had their own tragedies without going into detail. It got too much for her. But we had a long talk to her, and she said we haven't been there for a while, I said how about we go down, Canberra's a fair way but if we take our time. We had a bus trip recently, a one-day trip, but getting in and out 10 times, Win was in real trouble. But life's got to go on.

29:30 **Were there times up in the Islands, when you just didn't want to get in that plane?**

No I just accepted it. I just regarded it as you volunteer for this you've just got to go on with it, for a good reason. But when you read the intelligence report about 1000 natives being killed because the Japanese didn't tell them,

30:00 that's what's always been, that's happened what can you do about it. When you read about Hamburg, 43,000 people in one night.

**Rod I was wondering if you could tell me as a bomb aimer, whereabouts in the plane you were**

30:30 **and what you would be doing during a flight?**

Nothing, just putting your calculation into the machine and keeping an eye out for anything. You're in the front near the nose wheel, top front gunner's up on top of you, that's about all you can do is put your calculation on the basis of what height your flying. What particular bomb your dropping, what speed your going, and that

31:00 determines how accurate the bomb is, if all that's in order. Otherwise you just have to look out the plan and, that trip we did to Longbok, 13 hours, just to drop a bundle of torpedos. And we only had about 2 hours training on that 2 days beforehand. So I said to our skipper [captain], why did he pick us, because there was a special squadron mentioned in the intelligence report that used to do it but they

31:30 weren't available. But when you read these intelligence reports there very objective, you dealing with peoples lives in foreign countries. And the way they were treated.

**How vulnerable did you feel in your position in the plane?**

Depending what happened.

32:00 I don't know if I ever felt vulnerable, accept for the acco, at Balikpapan, but I only landed in the plane once, in the front and the skipper dropped us short of the runway, but it was a successful landing, but our CO (Commanding Officer) didn't like our skipper and sent us back to,

32:30 Morotai, on the basis that it wasn't the thing to do in front of the Americans. Of course he might of saved our lives in the long run. That was another funny incident. I never got any thanks out of that. Because we had a Skipper and he never said, 'G'day Kev how are you?' He said 'How are you's?' I mean G'day Kevin how are you, no first name it was just, designated job, bomb aimer the

33:00 Skipper. And when you saw that one on the [flying] fortress, there communication was dreadful, you can't afford it in the air, because things can happened quick enough in a car, you can imagine an aeroplane, we were only going about 160 knots, although they advertised my speed as 320 which was all lies. That's just like a motor car you've got to be careful and we all had our jobs and one time I got into the

33:30 front gunner's compartment and let off a few rounds and the skipper let me do a bit of navigating at one stage. Not for long because he checked on his navigator too, Harry Rickson, who was a teacher from recollection, but it was team work and on one occasion we couldn't take our engineer, so one of my friends, my particular friend, decided to look after petrol tanks, which is most important, switching over.

34:00 And poor old Frank, god rest his sole, was most upset that we flew without him, but we got back, being a mechanical instrument it was amazing what went wrong. And I think I told you 18,000 of them there were, and we were left with the lot. And were now rebuilding down at Willoughby. A lot of young people think it's a waste of time and money, because the one we got into a Colorado Spring, it cost

34:30 them over a million. And during the war they were turning them out for about \$200,000 there were factories all over America, various types. It's amazing what we can do to spend money on when there's a war. But there's 40 million people in American without any help for medical benefits. The land of the free.

**What did you think of your skipper?**

I thought the

35:00 world of our skipper, he was Irish. And we went over to see him, 3 of us went over to see him and spent

a lovely day with him and his wife but she died before him. He's been gone about 4 years, but that's the best thing we did. And we met him at the reunion in South Australia, where we were flown over in a Hercules, wives and all for the

35:30 50th Anniversary of 24 Squadron Air Base. And we saw him and went over and spent a day with him. It was something special. Why not? But he was a mans man, straight as a dye and I believe he used to have a few arguments in the Officer's Mess with our CO, Wing Commander Bell and I often felt like saying I wonder if Bell picked us

36:00 in case he thought we might have not come back, being a bit nasty today. But I'm intrigued we had no training at all, you're suppose to bomb from 10,000 feet or above, it's a very risky exercise and particularly when you're flying low, unless you flight at the right speed you're likely to stall.

36:30 Anyhow they're only pleasant memories and the crew. Which is good. But that's how it was just your crew. There wasn't that feeling, cause we used to have parades and all, none in the air force because you were flying and you came and you went.

37:00 That's why when so many turn up you don't know too many apart from your immediate crew, and the friend of your immediate crew. There's how many of us left? There's 4 of us out of 11. Cause when the plane went there were 11, and when we lost the planes over Balikpapan we had Dutchman flying over, they didn't want us to

37:30 bomb the oil wells, colonial Dutch.

**How did you learn on the job, you said you didn't have much training?**

No we had training alright, we had plenty of training at Tocumwal on the northern bomb site. And then we had a machine up there which we

38:00 could simulate a bombing run. And the nearer you got to the target the better you were. But we were training after we got there. No I was talking about training for low level that's what I meant. Low level flying and there were special ones that were dropping crew and stores did practice that, but we had none. I had plenty of training in regard to

38:30 our bomb aiming, and navigators and the wireless operator and the gunner they'd had plenty of training, but it was for low level stuff. It was for Catalina's that you can low rescue. They were very stable slow aircraft and they used to go to the coast of China and drop mines, imagine how far that is.

39:00 Some of our friends at the club who flew in Cat's (Catalina's), but we were very pleased with what they did. And a lot of the operators from Morotai and I think I said earlier they had a sign as you went to the strip saying how many they'd rescued. And it was altered quite regularly, cause you can imagine landing of the sea, depending how it is.

39:30 And they dropped, I think the submarine took in the crew at Longbok and a Catalina picked them up later on. But there very small aircraft.

**What was**

40:00 **your response I guess when you found out that you were moving to operational duty?**

I said 'Oh well that's what I joined up for.' I said... 'ca sera' again, because the generation of my Father, thought it was a nice holiday, just

40:30 overseas for a while, how much they did in the end. And there were a number of good books written on this basis, 'The Damage of Broken Years', I've got the paperback at home. The larrikins were in there and a group of them sent a photograph to the Army authorities and said

41:00 'Come and get us.' A lot of them never came home you know they stayed in France for somewhere, but you had to. What can you do about it? But I know that never anything particularly nasty as far as the Army Service was concerned. Personal wise but still lots of things

41:30 were hidden and the casualties of course, couldn't do anything about that. But minuscule compared to Europe but still. But the impression of what I want to give you is that a lot of Australians never got to war, they had enlisted through no fault of their own, they never got near it and that was how it happened. I mean after the disaster in Singapore.

## Tape 6

00:32 **It's very interesting to hear you talk so open and honestly about the fact that you were one of the soldiers that were called up and then essentially never used, as if understand you correctly?**

As it was, it's just the state of the war.

- 01:00 Because in the period from Pearl Harbour and to the time when we were brought back in September October 43, the state of the war changed didn't it. Yet we were over there just in case, and again I reckon we could have given a good account of ourselves because of a combination of armoured brigade and infantry brigade and artillery. And I've got no reason to
- 01:30 feel that the decision was incorrect. We were well trained, well disciplined, but this happened to many others and they'd be in Darwin, but only in a particular period see, and they'd get the benefits of being in an operational area. And I go back to what I've said many times,
- 02:00 World War I they were there all the time, trenches and trenches, and they had no opportunity of getting away from it. No leave, and when you got shell shocked, particularly in the British Army you were a deserter and you were shot. Bill Hughes made sure that our people weren't shot. And the suicide and things that happened after the First World War and the Second, and
- 02:30 my friend's Father he died early. And his Mum didn't get a war widow's pension, they were treated roughly. And we had it far better than the Vietnam boys better again, they only had 12 months. And in 10 years we lost 500 people. 10 years, I'm not going on about the agent
- 03:00 orange or I'll say I've heard that one of the problems with a lot of the health of the men was the fact that they had a particular virile form of VD (Venereal Disease) over there. And this is possible, I say possibly the cause of some of the children's defects later on. And they used to put them in special camps because of the safety.
- 03:30 And this is sad, not that I point the finger anyway. But if chose to engage in that sort of things, its like Africa with Aids, you take precautions don't you. But anyhow that's because they got more benefits per capita then we've had. And they make sure they get it too.
- Well I hope you don't**
- 04:00 **mind me asking, but I'm interested in whether you personally or any of your mates felt some kind of shame because you didn't see action?**
- I haven't struck it at all. I don't know about shame I think frustration. What's it all about, you know,
- 04:30 a total waste of time and effort. No, just waiting around. But it's not a matter of shame it's a matter of where you were sent or if you were sent. And a lot of those that enlisted early they saw war and their share. They were taken at least, people went to England, Greece, Crete.
- 05:00 Poor devils in Malaysia and Singapore, and they had war, and some of them came back and went to New Guinea. Diver Derrick got killed trying to get a 2nd VC and, those sort. But yet if you look at Kokoda, they were all militia men, non trained. And they went up there, and faced overwhelming
- 05:30 odds and they were eventually joined by returned experienced infantries and they had a hell of a time too. And they were pushed back, they had no option. But they exhausted them, and they left food behind which was contaminated, and you can imagine how the Japanese finished up, sick as dogs. Then they contained them and pushed them back. But those militia boys, one of
- 06:00 our widows, her husband was one of those and they had to go. But some of them never even had rifles with them, that's the situation. But I'd say frustration, not shame, because you only have shame when you are to blame, excuse my punt. Mark's Brothers again.
- 06:30 **Yes perhaps it's not shame but now I'm getting a sense of helplessness or even the other feeling of guilt that you're not out there fighting the fight and others are suffering?**
- Yes, well that's how it happened but they turn about to the First [World] War, and I've said earlier, look at (UNLCEAR) and all those places,
- 07:00 endless slaughter for years wasn't it, it never stoped. No wonder the Russian got so upset about things. Have a look what China and Korea put up with from the Japanese. That's how it was and now were adopting the other attitude and getting out and minding everybody else's business. That's getting a bit, we're in the Middle East, we're in Timor,
- 07:30 we had been at Bougainville and now we're in the Solomon's. And I only hope we can bring peace and now Mr Howard wants to make an Australian head of this, I think he ought to be a bit more, you know, diplomatic. These are people that have been colonised and pushed around. And,
- 08:00 I think this is, what you said about you haven't accomplished what you were there for. And this is what I'm saying about the way our politicians go about. Look at the stuff up in Iraq. No petrol, no electricity, no water, no sewer. Why would the Iraqi's like the Yanks?
- 08:30 I mean they used the plan well, for things to be done, but those people there the ones that must feel frustration and annoyed. And who cops it the average American GI (Government Issue ) doesn't he. That's what concerns me, why I don't see the point.
- 09:00 **Well I'm wondering then given that, did it help to reconcile those feeling when you joined up**

### **with the air force?**

Oh it was a start because I'd lost my unit, lost my comrades, very tight nit community, which had existed for so long, in one form [of] militia or otherwise.

09:30 It was just a matter of trying to get near the action and a lot of them never got near it again. Bob Cutler, Keith Bernell, Nev Howard, there's 3 I can recall. And they get gold card like I did because I happened to get up there February 45. But,

10:00 as you get older you look back and you think what was it all about what did it achieve? That's what concerns you. Particularly the way capitalism has gone mad. You now have these bunches of capitalist meeting in private meetings, to see how much more they can, excuse my word, screw

10:30 the average person. They aren't interested in ethics or anything are they? What's this ethanol business. Can you believe it? And here we have Hawke saying "we appreciate the sacrifice that they made." What does the widow's kids get, look at the fellow that was killed in Afghanistan. You know what his wife's getting,

11:00 \$12,000 a year and \$90,000.00. What would that do? How will she manage, unless that's no more than war widow's pension, it's not enough to live on and \$90,000. And they were talking about the American people, how long are they going to take it. The object of

11:30 going to war it to bring peace to everybody, and that includes your enemy too doesn't it. Look at what they did to Japan and Germany and how they came back. Did you see the Berlin Wall show the other night? That was an example of how efficient the Yanks can be. Top marks for that, because it was history. I said to Win we've got to watch this, this is history, and we'd forgotten about it.

12:00 And the efficiency there, they had their losses and there planes and everything, but they kept on. And if you watch the show on terrorism on ABC this week it goes back to 1946 to that bombing by the terrorist, what's his name, eventually became Prime Minister, and won a Noble Peace Price,

12:30 that Jewish fellow. And of course they try and put him up with the African fellow, but I don't know that he, or his mob, caused as much terror as what the Israelites and the Palestine's. Cause you've got no other options have you, no that it achieves anything.

13:00 **Well even though you were frustrated and had a lot of mixed feeling, you nevertheless were in the Services and helped to win the war?**

We did our best, yeah we did our bit there's no doubt about it, except we killed the wrong people. After reading the intelligence reports, there so matter of

13:30 fact. But what can you do about it. I did it in good faith.

**I know it's quite a long time ago but did you have a different feeling of pride once you started wearing the Air Force uniform?**

No I wouldn't say that, no. It was just an alternative, and

14:00 as I said jokingly the other day, Or on occasions I didn't have time to join the navy because the war didn't last long enough. But I wanted to join the navy anyhow, cause I had a friend who was on the [HMAS] Canberra when it was, a street friend from Willoughby, John Oliver and his dad was on the [HMAS] Sydney when it sank the Emedon, lovely man, lovely large family

14:30 in our street. That's what I grew up with. And I thank the good Lord for that. But...I just wonder what's going to happen in the future that's what concerns me and you people too.

### **When you changed services**

15:00 **I'm wondering if any one gave you a bit of a stir for putting on the...?**

Oh, I mean I had to continue as I signed up for the war so I couldn't just walk out, unless I was medically unfit or had some very deep, personal family reasons, which I didn't have. Oh no I just felt it was a way of

15:30 trying to do what your suggesting, trying to get into it a do something. Whether you aircrew or ground crew as long as you're somewhere near the action. And that's what a lot of our fellows did, I had a nephew, sorry a cousin who died earlier, one of the Liston families, 3 boys died before they were 60, this is on the paternal side. My grandmother was a Liston and

16:00 his grandfather was a Liston too. But Paul was a fitted 2E [Mechanic Second Class], looking after Liberators and he collaborated with Professor Cotton on this G Force business, you know great speed and then he went to Darwin, and I saw him up there. But he wasn't a very efficient and they're the people doing something like that and putting up in that area. Or in the Island they all contributed,

16:30 you don't have to be a flyer, you can't fly unless you've got efficient people on the ground, all those people combined. And that's what it should be, do things together, co-operate, communicated. You don't

see much of it at times, do you? And that's sad.

17:00 **Well you went from being a foot soldier to being aircrew, we've heard other stories of airsickness and difficulties adjusting to flying, how did you react?**

Only in Tiger Moths was I sick. I think and I was sick once at Evans Head in a low level cross country navigation

17:30 exercise. Otherwise no problem. And before we came back from the west, one of our artificers who used to look after the guns, went through all the motions he, was a DS (deadshit) by the way, you know what DS means, and he was a stirrer. And he went through all the motions being sea sick, we hadn't left Fremantle harbour and he was sick.

18:00 But I mean I've been close to it when I went out fishing some time ago, I was certainly seasick. But no, the airsickness never worried me flying in those big planes which weren't pressurised either, they were as cold as charity. And we used to have to wear oxygen masks, once you got about 10,000 but, they were

18:30 very sparse, and you had to get in through the nose wheel, or crawl through and get out through the Bomb bay doors, that was the only as I mentioned earlier, when they crashed they collapsed in the Bomb bay doors because there was nothing to keep them together. It was just a rollerdoor, and there was nothing to keep them together no matter where they went down. We had a fellow Wayne, who

19:00 collapsed, who we had to take one in off the coast of Sumatra, or somewhere. He managed to get all his crew out. That was the exception rather than the rule. Because they just collapsed and that was it. But 18,000. They wouldn't have built that many planes since the war, would they. I think about 12,000 Langs [Liberators] but of course Langs didn't have to fly the long

19:30 distances. They only flew into Europe and back.

**Well you've just mentioned that the Liberators were a bit sparse?**

Oh sparse internally, not built for passengers. Although they tried to turn them in after the war. But they just had the basic that's all. Pressurisation wasn't in, we did have some

20:00 heating, but we didn't get that high very much, fortunately, because once you get over 10,000 feet as you know you need oxygen.

**How safe did you feel on the Liberator?**

Well as safe as you could be. The only time I felt unsafe was when I landed in the nose wheel, near the nose wheel. Here it is,

20:30 I never did it again, not that I stayed there much longer after that anyhow. They sent us home, but for some reason or other, I decided to do that. And it was quite an experience but only once. But I mean, I remember once when we were going over a target I forgot to do up my parachute, now it's a good idea to clip it on. And I read

21:00 recently about one fellow trying to get out of a plane then somebody found out it didn't have it on and he got bombed. I think he put in on upside down, but he escaped, the things that happened. But the casualties in Europe were dreadful. Shocking particularly the Yanks, daylight raids, they lost 200 odd planes over the Floweski [?] Oil Field, which is in Romania I think, but 200 planes,

21:30 low level stuff. And of course flying in daylight you were very vulnerable. But we never struck, the only time we struck fighters was when the 6 planes went out and we lost 2. We also had the firing from the Japs cruiser, I think. Because the Yanks had blasted them off their airfield and all before we got up there. But you still had to do patrol

22:00 and bomb particular airfields and then, for the invasion of Borneo. Which is a waste of life but war is generally. Just let them wither on the vines. No point in it.

**Well you've mentioned you do approximately 40 ops,**

22:30 **primarily supply runs?**

No not supply run, the only supply run we did was that one at Longbok, to Z Force men. Ours was mainly bombing and searching for aircraft, but no so much aircraft, but bombing and searching for boats that needed to be shot up. I never had the pleasure of being in it. My main job was bombing, that's what it was, a particular

23:00 target, was deemed necessary to bomb, that's what it was, yes. And that's about it. But we were 13 hours on the Longbok trip. But the Yanks did a long trip to Balikpapan and, the

23:30 Japanese were surprised because they didn't think they could fly that far. I don't think they got to Singapore but they were really surprised when they decided to do a long-range trip. I don't know whether it was from Fenton, Adelaide River or Darwin, which was much closer. They did that before we got there and it was quite a surprise to the Japanese apparently. Long haul, very long.



24:00 **How did you react to when you received orders of your target that you were bombing?**

We were just told, we were briefed and we had maps and, that was it. The night before we lost two of those planes we were out

24:30 all night over a ship called Kendari [?], doing a harassing raid dropping bombs, beer bottles and cans just to keep them away. And that was quite regular too. A waste of good beer bottles, isn't it. But that was one of the things we had to do and people on other planes did a lot of supplying and dropping

25:00 off to people in certain areas. But as far as that particular trip we did I still don't know why we were picked, can't work it out. But it's a bit late to ask now of course. Because we were only too pleased to be sent home, I think we'd done our share.

**And when you were**

25:30 **dropping bombs on targets, how did you make claims, success claims?**

Well we usually had a camera on the plane, and there were half a dozen planes and they all took photographs. And I've got a photo of one where I mobbed a particular strip and you can see the bomb going down and where they landed. That's the way, you had

26:00 to verify your targets and it was notorious on some occasions, in all air force the Dutch were supposed not to want to bomb particular areas because it was their territory. And they'd go out in the rain in the Mitchells and then they came back. And what they did with them is, this happened in Europe too, is they made sure that they couldn't get at the camera. And the camera had to record and the bombs

26:30 were dropped. But that was the only proof you had. And I've still got some of the photograph of that one particular trip, the last one I did some poor little village and there's smoke coming out. Who was the enemy. You never saw a sole. How many people have got there? One hundred million. And it's a difficult area to,

27:00 they don't have any income tax I believe, they only have GST (Goods and Services Tax). Imagine trying to get income tax out of all those people scattered all over those islands. Have you been up there at all? I've got no feeling to go up there, really to go up there. Went to Fiji once, once that was enough. I felt sorry for the natives. But

27:30 I only hope they do sort themselves out up there.

**Can you tell me, and it might be difficult and I understand. What kind of process do you have to go through to detach yourself from your target when your dropping bombs?**

I

28:00 thinks it's just you've got a job to do and you take it as that's what you're doing. You're not responsible for the, legality of it all, although as far as Mr [John] Howard [Australian Prime Minister] is concerned, everybody else is responsible except him. But like the Hamberg raid, 43,000 people. A lot of people isn't it. But you've got to, well your just bombing what was a

28:30 designated target. But I mean this is all wise after the event, reading these intelligence reports in which one place said 1,000 natives were killed. Because the Japanese didn't tell them, that's a lot of people. But what about the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 87 (1945),

29:00 how many did it save? They had a million ready for us in Japan apparently, but they never fired a shot. I thought they went to the, I mean you have all these instruments including helicopters and other gadgets that are wonderful, for peace, and what are they used for, war.

29:30 look at what the helicopters did in Vietnam, those poor devils in Vietnam, got ancient orange with machine guns. What does that achieve. Even some of our own people got affected by that. And once you start with herbicides, like what the Japanese did to the Chinese, by way of body experiments, where are we going? There's no

30:00 humanity left is there. No we just did it, that was it, no option. And if you didn't want to do that well you could have been a consciences objector. No once Japan came in that was the end for me. And it became a very personal war.

30:30 **And why do you say that?**

Well as I said there wasn't the colonial episode that we were looking after in the First [World] War and the Boer War, looking after the colony, on behalf of whom, England.

**How different do you think Australia would be if there had been a different result?**

31:00 Very interesting, I don't know. But you'd still have people who would go along with it if we had someone else in charge. There's a movie on at Cremorne, Monsieur Sydney (?) ... Monsieur Inglese or something,

which deals with that question in France, very well,

- 31:30 very beautifully done as to what happened to the Jewish children when their parents were taken away. And it's a beautiful, humanity, I think the way it's done. Not look for sympathy for the people involved but how the French population
- 32:00 reacted in that situation and I thought it was a lovely movie. But it's just looking at where children are involved whose parents have disappeared and this is based on many a true story I'd say. And where is the guilt involved in that situation.
- 32:30 So I don't know as I said war achieves nothing. And despite the old testament, you know, as I said earlier if there is a God and he created he must be a God of love not a God of fear. As you go through
- 33:00 some of the text or the prayers, or in the old testament they even use it in mass, fear the Lord, why should you fear the Lord, why should you fear anyone. But that's how it was taught and as far as the Church is concerned they shall not, that's all there
- 33:30 concerned about forbidding things. But unfortunately people now make up their own minds. But you can't make up your own mind when there's a war, unfortunately, and that's why I'm concerned for our own service personnel, men and women they're just doing what politicians tell them. And it concerns me. Then again you can't retreat into
- 34:00 isolationism like Americans did, till 1917 until the 7th of December 41, when World War II started on the American calendars. You know. And yet in meeting the average American much the same as us. And what Win said is there so courteous to us in the main.

34:30 Very courteous in themselves.

**Well if I can take you back to flying ops to the East Indies and then you got an order to drop supplies, to Z Unit?**

35:00 **What did you know about the special unit?**

Nothing at that stage, it was top secret, you heard about the blokes going to Singapore and all that sort of thing and one of them was McFail but it was all secret and we didn't find out until that letter I showed you, who they were and what had happened. And only a coincidence that the

35:30 stencilling on the torpedos, Laurie Breck found out. I think he would be very interesting, as I said to interview. And he lost his wife and lost his mate Hockey, but one of the things he said, 'What you did goes the chance of life.' And of course everyone involved, me from ground crew up,

36:00 the plane then the Catalina then the Liberator that helped get them out. It's all a chain of things that went right for once. And as far as I'm concerned it was the only decent thing I think I did which I can take some credit, saving lives instead of killing people. That's how I felt about it.

36:30 How would you feel? That's how I felt too. Our friend Gilles the dentist up the line, his brother was killed by the Japanese, he was the other, there was Gilles and Moss and he was killed by the Japanese and bombed. I've got the photos. But Gilles was shot down in a

37:00 Lancaster, his crew escaped and he escaped and got back but the Germans killed the other 4. The Germans put them on trial after war and they went to jail. But Jim was at the reunion we had some years ago. But he had to accept it like us all. Just like we had to accept the dead of our

37:30 son last year, you know what can you do about it, he fought the good fight.

**Well you do strike me as being a very compassionate person. I'm wondering unlike the bombing ops that you were on, where you could take a photo and ascertain success or failure. When you did the supply run to the special Z Force you couldn't do that?**

No we didn't do that.

38:00 **How do you know that that op was successful?**

Straight after the mission, because they got their radio and communicated with Darwin and told them. That's how they knew. And it took us 6 hours to get back. That's how we knew and when you read the intelligence report some times they good transmission and some times they

38:30 didn't. Now one of them had to pedal the radio for power, and Hockey got Dengue Fever and one of those sort of things, you know full of bugs. And they managed but that's why I feel that he'd be a good subject to interview. And I hear from him every Christmas, and we saw each other when they had the reunion in Sydney.

39:00 When was it 97, and they're not going to have another reunion for 10 years so I felt a bit sad when he told me that. But that's the one thing that I can claim some credit for with the team I was with and the person, the people I was with, everybody contributed. Not like the, egomaniacs that want to take

39:30 credit for everything, if not goes wrong, blame your subordinates.

**Well that's a very moving and quite powerful memory?**

Oh it is, and

40:00 I've got lots of stuff that I wrote to him and saw him and I've got a little attaché case outside which he gave me and due to that reunion and when I went to Manly Electric the other day a fellow saw it over there, I was getting a light, he said 'What are you all about?' And I told him, he said 'Oh I'm interested in B24's. He's a fellow of your age managing a Manly shop and he's interested.' And he

40:30 came up with a log book he found of AK Gil Garrett who did fly Hudsons. Well now what a coincidence, we went to a doctor with Win's arm and he saw the brief case and it appears that he's interested. He's an arm surgeon and where's he go to Longbok. This happens in life.

41:00 It happens and I often say thank the lord this happened for the good. Which is nice to say isn't it?

## Tape 7

00:31 **I was wondering Rob you've spoken about your flying in the Pacific, do you hear from a lot infantry men who were in the Islands in 1945 that they were futile campaigns. I just wonder what you thought, what were your feelings about it at the time were?**

Well we didn't know, the result except in the case of Longbok.

01:00 Ah you looked at it but you never got any praise or reprimand except when I dropped the bomb in (UNCLEAR) And sometimes they land in the wrong, right spot and sometimes they didn't. Because when you're bombing a strip it's just a straight bit. And the only way to bomb it really is to go diagonally

01:30 across and stick holes in it. But I agree with what they've said in the way they were treated by the high Iraqi. All that Blamey and MacArthur were after were victories. Which were always allied victories. And in fairness to the Yanks they had there planes helping but whether they helped or not or

02:00 whether they bombed the right bomb, people at times, I don't know. I think our fellows were far better troops in many respects, because they fought a 24 hour war, which the Yanks, particularly in Vietnam never did. But I think there was more discipline in our fellows. I talk about the Kokoda Trail

02:30 because I've read the book at least once. What they did there, and as I said earlier, when they got to go after they were pushing Japs (Japanese) back, they had to get in a hurry for, instead of patrolling and see what they were up against. Horrific casualties, and the same at Balikpapan, why do we have to lose 3 planes over the target. Lots of men were in the

03:00 infantry. When Sam McCan was there, and it didn't suit Blamey or Macarthur to take a risk do you. One of our members Tom Connelly, he lost his Dad there. And I often wonder about our brigade, the Active Brigade that went to Bougainville. I didn't get the impression, of the reunions we had, particular one officer who's since

03:30 dead, because he seemed loopy to me, round the bend, a bit odd. I don't know what the reason was. But futile is a fairly, it's a word that indicates waste of time, or they didn't see a result. Possibly this is what they felt, because on the

04:00 perimeter at Morotai where we were flying from there were still Japs and there were still casualties. And what was there reason for saying this do you recall, did they give any particular reason. Did they accomplish what they wanted to do?

**You know the Japanese were cut off anyway and they were risking their lives?**

That was my point, we didn't know.

04:30 Let them wither on the vines. Why bother? And the Yanks in fairness to them had bought that about by there heavy bombing and their fighters. But while we had to go to Borneo, and the day we dropped short of the strip in Morotai and were then sent back, as I said to you earlier that could have saved our lives. We could have been one of those 3 planes that had gone in,

05:00 I don't know. But you've got to realise what proportion of those that went up there fought, what proportion never fought. And they still get the same treatment because they were in the area. What I'm saying basically is why the differentiation, the ones that

05:30 put their lives on the line and the other ones that stayed in the same area but weren't at risk. If you want to be realistic. But that never happened.

**How differently would you have felt about the war, if you'd not got operational service?**

Well as I said I tried and enlisted and that was it. That's was my life really.

- 06:00 As I said earlier some of our fellows trained navigator, and one bomb aimer didn't want to fly. I've got my commission and the other fellow, he was a very dear friend he died some years ago. Real flirt and unfortunately, he became
- 06:30 a bum. He used to come to me and we were battling with a large family. And also my friend Russ Brooks looking for money. These people owned a pub at Whitman, you know Whitman in Queensland, its out in the back box. We went there on a trip once, on our way through there. He became a bum, and I met him at Martin Place just before he died, I'm crock Rod, I don't know what it was.
- 07:00 But he was one of the 4 of us that were sent to Fenton but he never got into a crew. I don't know what happened to the other two. They were both very good tennis players. Win knew them and their wife's too. But I'd have felt that I had enlisted as a militia called up. The only place you could have been sent to would have been New Guinea, like the Kokoda Trail.
- 07:30 That's as far as you'd gone. But when you join the air force you had to fly. Wherever they sent you, and it was, you enlisted for the duration of the war. You couldn't say 'Ta ta', unless you just liked to walk away like a lot of the diggers in France did. A lot of them never came home.

**Can you tell me when you heard that the war was over?**

When I was home.

- 08:00 Cammeray I'm sure. As far as I knew we were going to go back and have a go at Singapore. I wouldn't have liked that at all. That was wonderful. But then again a lot of people, innocent people suffered for that too didn't they. People in Berlin, not Berlin, Hamburg and other, Nagasaki,
- 08:30 Hiroshima. But the people responsible I think nothing happened to them did they? Nothing happened to them, the Emperor. The other of course went their own way. But nobody was bought back from the dead. I wish it had all changed personally.

**What were you thinking when you heard the war was ending? What were your plans you were making for yourself?**

- 09:00 Well we were buying a block of land at Castlecraig, 325 pounds. And Win helped to pay it off, working. The next plan was to build a house, which took us from 46 to 48. Although we didn't start building till the middle of 47, cause there was a shortage of supplies, at that which ruined everything. We finished the
- 09:30 house in 48 with the help of Win's cousin, and his Father, John Mays, one of the Mays from her grandfather, from Hamburg. And we moved in in 49, January, and that was our admission. We had no road, no drainage and no sewer. But that came along and we started the Progress Association. Because it
- 10:00 wasn't very nice to have pans and it wasn't very nice to have a septic tank, and it's no very nice to have no roads. That's how it was sold, ward of the state. And we got it recently, we had meeting and so forth and there used to be a fellow down the corner of the road, Harold Paddle and his lovely wife. And it was that bend round there, we used to get rain and it wouldn't get away. And the fellow, running the meeting said what's your name son, he said
- 10:30 'Paddle - webbed feet.' There the sort of people we were with and we had Italians opposite who ran the local fruit shop and Ron Piper who Win used to play tennis with. And Keith Rodsy who lived next door and he moved out when we moved out at the time. One of his sons committed suicide, on drugs, sad.
- 11:00 And I see him regularly at Progress and they live further along now than where we live. But they got out.

**What difficulties did you have coming home and settling in to civilian life?**

I went back to work in November, in the Protective Office, 45. And settled in and,

- 11:30 you may not believe this but a lot of people didn't want us back, they hoped we might have got killed in the war. And I didn't realise this until years later. But I settled in there and I had the security that my Mother wanted from the Depression years and you just had to battle on. And I didn't get
- 12:00 any ideas about doing law until 56, because I became in charge of records and securities and we used to get all these documents in for our patients, life policies and deed and all those, investment papers. I thought to myself, then I got permission even though I only got 7B's in the Intermediate to do law. And that took 6 years and, as I said earlier
- 12:30 I got stuck on the way, on one particular subject and I joined Rostrum and Toastmasters and that helped me confidence. Because they give you hell there, pull you to pieces, but all for your own benefit. Cause there was a lovely club in Pitt Street which is now gone, and one of the joys of Toastmaster and Rostrum was a fellow who stuttered, and everybody was

13:00 with him. And he managed. But I've been playing tennis with a fellow who stuttered and he sings about anything wrong. Now what is it. But that is one of the things I got out of Rostrum and Toastmasters. I don't go to either anymore, but it does give you a certain amount of confidence. And in the intervening period up to the

13:30 war, in our youngest as I said at Naremburn, we did have a debate. First time ever, we never had any debates at school. Interesting one, something to do with telephones, I think. But to be able to get on your feet and say something when you're asked is important. Communication.

**How was being in the**

14:00 **army or the air force, just being involved in the war changed you? How did it affect you?**

Oh, it's pretty hard to answer because the things I've liked to have done arising out of our friend that died and didn't do. But I had to get on with the job. We started a family

14:30 and building a house. And life had to go on, like it was for Dad. And he bought this place in Willoughby and two small twin single fronted places, very basic with mosques tiles of all things. And that's what I had to do it was all

15:00 road three years. And thanks to Win's uncle and his son John, who went to the Christian Brothers at Chatswood and then joined the Jesuits. In January 49 he left till then till we got into our house. It gives you faith doesn't it? And we've progressed from there, we've had our ups and downs, Win lost her mother when Anne arrived in June 50.

15:30 Gold injections for osteoarthritis, they killed her. But she adored her mother, and her mother was such an actor, bright and musical person, Sharon and everyone used to play at school affairs, play the piano.

**You had quite a few years in the service during the war. What was it that you maybe missed about being in the services once you**

16:00 **left after the war was finished?**

I don't know. It was the experience that you had to go through, through no option of your own and I felt we just had to put it behind

16:30 me. The only thing I did worthwhile, I didn't come to my notice until about 40 years later. Because I regarded those aeroplanes a death machines. And when I saw one at Colorado Springs, I had a look inside it but I couldn't get inside.

17:00 And there re-building one in Victoria. But I couldn't contribute anything or do, have any thing to do with it, I just thought no. What's the point? And if you go tripping in the countryside, have you ever seen the memorials. I don't mind the memorials, the names, in particular areas where they had all these casualties. Moreso in England. I hate that the guns and the things they do, no need for them.

17:30 But it's something that happened and I'm still seeing Peter Hayes Williams down at the city RSL, in York Street.

**Did you talk much about your experiences when you came home?**

Not a great deal. It's hard, when I think of my youth and I don't

18:00 blame Dad, not talking about it. You're got a young man whose Father had a lovely experience, flew in our aircraft, never told his son anything. And his son's been chasing us and coming to our reunions. Bob Stove's his name, lovely young man, I feel his just about another son. And his got to do all sorts of things, give a copy of his, to the archives of everything I've said. That's all very nice but whose going to read

18:30 it. Do it for yourself, and his come around to that. And he came to our B24 luncheon the other day, and his coming to the next one. He's a nice gentleman, but his Father went through a horrific experience and never told anybody anything. But of course he had the advantage of a logbook to work from too. Which most people haven't got, which I have, but its

19:00 something, you had to live through. A lot of it was boring, a lot of it was good comradeship. Some of, nasty things happened, but in the main, I met very nice people. Had a few, a few of whom I still have. And that's my experience as far as the army and the air force is concerned.

19:30 That's that, flying is a very dangerous thing, basically isn't it. But the road toll is worse than that. You've got to get up then you've got to get down haven't you. That's the problem with life see, happens every day.

**Were you able to let I go when you came home?**

Couldn't get rid of

20:00 it quick enough. No option. I did volunteer eventually, see if I hadn't been called up I'd have probably volunteered when the Japs come in. But I had no intentions, for the reasons I said before.

## **The Japanese were the enemy during the war?**

Oh yes but they were only secondary

20:30 as far the British Commonwealth were concerned weren't they, they had to protect the Empire.

### **You hear a lot of people with anger towards the Japanese, even still. I just wonder how your feelings towards them?**

Well it's like the Turks and Armenian, you can't blame the present generation. I think the militarism is gone but they can't even manage their economy. We do everything. You've got the

21:00 powerful in charge again, the rich powerful. I don't know whether the ordinary people are any better off. And particularly when you hear about the interest rates in Japan are zilch. And the interest rates in American are 1%, how the hell can you live on 1% income. I mean you're lucky to get 4.5 here at the moment and you might get a bit more out of shares, but, why

21:30 pick on the present generation. Same with the Turks. Cause Anzac Day started the Turks, as we call it, cause the Christians were coming aren't they? And they won't have it diffused because any other holocaust, with a capital haste was a holocaust for the Jews. Armenians lost 1 million I think, scattered all over Syria. I've got an article on it

22:00 somewhere at home.

### **You mentioned the Turks and Anzac Day. I just wonder as a returned Serviceman, what Anzac Day means to you?**

Useless slaughter on both sides. That's my opinion. It stopped the founding of a tradition. The Turks lost

22:30 76,000. I think the Australians lost about 8,000, New Zealand about 2,000. The colonial troops and the British lost much more, and what did it achieve? Not a thing for me, I go and Remembrance, my Dad did regularly. It's not what they write it up to be. What does it achieve?

23:00 Another one of Churchill's ideas wasn't it. The principal was good but didn't work.

### **You said you go in remembrance for Anzac Day. What is it that you remember?**

Oh well all those that went all our wars, including the Boer War. What'd they go there for? So that you know get there hand on the gold at Joeburg. Why did Breaker

23:30 Morant get shot. All these things, are forgotten and I just regard Anzac, particularly the way Bean wrote the war. We were the only ones there. I don't know if the Kiwi got much mention. And we've got this Anzac tradition and when I see that so called Anzac Bridge with the soldier on it

24:00 I think, that bridge over there had got nothing to do with Anzac. It the wrong place. And the Turks are making a lot of money out of pilgrimages. It's too late. Although Peter our son, who died, he was there. A lot of the younger people are going, they may get some meaning out of it, but I just felt it was hopeless.

24:30 One of our friends, his dad was killed on Anzac Day, a nice Anglican man, and, that was it. Lovely bloke, he has since died, but you wouldn't meet a nicer fellow. What good came out of the First [World] War, I've mentioned earlier. Like Marshall Fox said, this is the start, in 1919 of the 20 years amasesis, right on the spot wasn't

25:00 he. Because it was an unjust peace. And they've done this to Germany, the spites still holding. And they've done it to Japan. At least there allowed to get on their feet.

### **You've shown us today Rod that you are a very compassionate person. And that you do obviously**

25:30 **see wasted life in war, wonder what was it that made World War II for you a just war, was it something?**

I don't say it was a just war. No wars just as far as I don't think you can categorise any war as just. It's a necessary war to protect your sovereignty or your existence I think.

26:00 What other options is there at times. But, and despite the old Testament I don't think God, if there is a God, we don't know, would justify any war, despite what the Bible says. The Old Testament. It was a war to which us as owners of the country. And to just,

26:30 protect our own people. And I don't know where our own people will be by the time the next war comes around, if ever. I don't think there going to have a war, they've go the atomic bomb, each side. No ones game. But it's alright for the American's to have it, it's alright for the Israelites to have it, it's alright for Russia to have it, do you trust

27:00 any of them. I don't know.

**I just wonder given your feelings on war if a young man came to you and said that there was a war on and he wanted to go away, what would you say to him, what advice could you give him?**

- 27:30 I find that, there's two points to that. First of all if you enlist in our services and the reserves you're going to go to war anyhow if required. But if on the other hand and
- 28:00 war breaks out and you want to enlist, to which you feel you've got to go. It's entirely up to the person concerned. And I just felt that that was it, our territory is being invaded, while I tried to differentiate between going to somebody else's war and invading like we have in Iraq,
- 28:30 or what's happening to our country. And it did happen to our country. You've got to stand up for yourself. Because look at the people who have been overrun what's happened to them. What's Somalia, 2 million isn't Somalia or Rwanda. Just allowed to die. I think that there is that differentiation, but going overseas to solve other problems,
- 29:00 it is difficult. What do they call it neo-colonialism. but those people in the [armed] forces, I mentioned the submarine crews at Fremantle. The book I read in Perth, where Win's brother is, it was said there that the regulars didn't want to go out they were quite happy to stay
- 29:30 in the submarines but not to go out there and get shot at. But I think it's an issue that you've got make up you own mind. But once your own country's involved you've got a perfect right to resist an enemy. And this applies to the people of Iraq. And the people of Timor who are still battling on.
- 30:00 And we often go on about Whitlam allowing it to happen in 75, but did he have any option. Was anyone else prepared to do what we did last time? I'm not being, I'm not in favour of any politician, I tell you I distrust most of them. But he didn't have much option. Look at what's happened in West Irian too.
- 30:30 And all they've done is the Indonesians is copy the colonist. Grab for power, grab for trees and minerals. Then again if the invaded decided to fight they just kill them don't they. There is no justice in that. And the pastors have an order, on the border of Papua New Guinea and West Irian.
- 31:00 And some of our priest have been up there and what happens up there you never hear of. It's a hell of a place to live in, because the poor devils that comes across the border. And of course Wisteria is being plundered on its natural resources. This is happened in the Solomon's, come in and take the trees from the local villages. But, but if anyone else
- 31:30 was to say, I've got to and fight a war and get a tree, I'd say well you're off you head. That's how I'd feel about it. Were making ourselves, what do they call us, the sheriff of the South Pacific. Where are our resources, we can't even look out for our own people? What do you think of the women
- 32:00 that do this. Enlist.

**I just wonder Rod before we finish is there anything we haven't covered or?**

I don't think so. You've got enough details on Longbok haven't you.

- 32:30 I think I gave a letter to you. I mentioned that didn't it, the initial letter I sent off. I presume that will be included in what goes in.

**I think you told us a bit about that today too?**

Yes, and that's my feeling about it because, the achievement of winning is important in particular areas, but, I what I find after war is not the

- 33:00 end of everything, it's the start of something new for both side. Rehabilitation and getting of with life. And particular the invaded people. No I don't think there is much more. All I can say is let us have peace and health.

**Before we finish though**

- 33:30 **Rod, there is one thing we have skirted around and we would love to hear, is some of your songs?**

The dirty songs. Is it going to go on there?

**Something of history we'd never get to hear if it wasn't for you telling us that song?**

What was that one again. I learnt this in the Air Force, I'll see if I can remember it

- 34:00 Some men...marry for love, some men marry for riches, but you'd be a man who marries a girl for what she's got in her ..... bring your boys up well and beat them with the stick....
- 34:30 And before you know.....what he wants to do his likely too.....
- 35:00 Oh no I'll stop there. That was just the start it's a bit rude.

**That's okay if you can remember we can handle it?**

I can't remember it exactly, I waiting to be crewed up when they had a bunch of another team there and they were experts on this sort of things.

**How would these songs come about?**

35:30 Well they were just part of the course. I've told Win this before this fellow said have you got a bit of string on your dick, and he'd say what do you think it is a yoyo. I told Win this one and I told Trisha too. You like that one do you.

36:00 That's a nice and simple one but the other ones fairly dirty. Its very well done in that avoids the vital words that make them dirty.

36:30 No it doesn't gel. No.

**There aren't any particular songs that stuck out from the army days?**

No as I said we used to get round the keg and we had a Sergeant Major who was a real lurk man, he never did any work and, if ever he was listening he was up a

37:00 headquarters doing A work. And when we had to dig out the tent, in Geraldton, he disappeared and when he came back he took the best part of the tent so we moved out into the bush. Anyhow we eventually got rid of him and got him with two other Warrant Officers. But I don't think I'm being rude but he was commonly known as

37:30 ginger balls. And, but I mean these are the sort of, were talking about nicknames, but everybody called him that. But he'd never do any work at all but he'd been in the Army a long time. But poor old Jim had an accident after the war and he was rather seriously injured. And he had an accident in the Army and in them

38:00 days, it, from the Army from the accident or before the accident that was the most important thing in his life. And I've got some photos of him, taken with him in Western Australia, but we used to have entertainment parties. Michael Pate, Colin Croft and not in your era at all, we had to have

38:30 some parties, but now in the air force at Morotai, we didn't have any entertainment at all but we had the pictures. And we used to go and buy tins of small tugs, you know. And when the ruddy aeroplanes were going over they spoil the sound so we used to get upset about it. But we made up a

39:00 ditty about Jim Frances as he was know. Warrant Officer Jim Frances. It was rather rude and it was directed at him because the ordinary gunner and solider didn't like him.

**What was that ditty?**

Ah it's a bit rude.

**It may**

39:30 **never be known if we don't hear it now.**

Well let's put it this way, we'll cut out the but just call it GB's, .....oh what is it. Some of the fellows made it up and they said, hang on a minute.....

40:00 his very sick in bed and the boys....wished he had fallen the obvious and wished that he was dead. Then it went on oh GB's. But I remember that particularly because that was said and sung for his benefit

40:30 because he was just one of the lurkey people. And had injuries to here, and he was well hung and when we used to have a shower we'd all go, Jim you look like a baby's apple hanging out of the pram and he called us perverts. But

41:00 these were the things that relieved, silly things you had to put up with and there was no particular malice in it. I remember this Bruce Rickard, he was one of the nicest men, gentle, and he tried to do what he could for the troops and he came out one night on the

41:30 van hailer and said come and get some hot coffee, its nice and hot and its got milk in it. And a voice from the deep

**INTERVIEW ENDS**