Australians at War Film Archive

Gordon Campbell - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 22nd August 2003

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/755

Tape 1

00:30 **Okay Wallace, well maybe for starters if you could tell as far back as you can remember really, your early childhood?**

Yeah well I'm Wallace Campbell. If it had been the air force, I'd have to say 410036.

01:00 In early childhood when I was about 4½ I was the man of the family because of things that happened. What happened there – I've got to go back a bit further. Me grand – my father, when he was 13 he left school when his mother died and he went wheeling sawdust at a sawmill. It's strange to think today that a

01:30 fairly big sawmill would have kids wheeling wheelbarrows to take the sawdust out from under the saws. But that's what he did for a start when he was 13. When he was 24, 23 he was working serving in a shop at Warrnambool and he, well his mother was dead and his father was at Bastion [?] and he was living mainly with his

02:00 cousins in Grassmere. But he'd saved up enough money and he reckoned he was going to go to Scotch College and he went to Scotch College with what he'd saved and he'd study the subjects that'd qualify him to be a Presbyterian minister or to start the four years training as a Presbyterian minister. You have to have other qualifications before that. So in 1914 he went to Scotch College as a boarder.

02:30 And other things happened in 1914 and they wouldn't have him in there. Maybe they reckoned his heart wasn't good enough. He had been in the Warrnambool Defence Battery – they've got cannons they sit up they're great old rusty things now, but he was in the crew of those and so he thought, I suppose that influenced him to go to volunteer. So he volunteered and he was rejected.

03:00 So he kept on at school. To earn a bit more money he used to report on the court cases for the Argus and he used to sell insurance or put people's name in the seven. That's what he told me it was a big take that; go around the cemetery and look at people's names on the tombstones and at the end of 1916, his brother got married

03:30 and came down. The result of that is that he deferred from his schooling – he'd done very well academically – he deferred from his schooling and got married himself and he went back to work in partnership with his brother who was share farming a very big dairy farm in Grassmere and so that went on through the war. He become a cheese maker. He learnt

04:00 how to make cheese then and he learnt how to kill pigs and send them to the meat market. In those days the Melbourne – a lot of the Melbourne meat come from the country already dressed. They'd kill a pig or calves and put them in a bag, hessian bag, and they'd put them on a train. They had specially ventilated trucks. It wasn't refrigerated it was just the air could get to 'em and then overnight they'd go to Melbourne and then they took 'em to the dead meat market

04:30 and they'd auction them off and because of the auctioning going on and, they'd found, they always got better prices if he was there when they sold them. They sold his stuff for sixpence then so he got to know all the Melbourne pork business and, the war finished and then they had a talk, those two brothers, because the Campbells had taken up an original selection at Framlingham,

05:00 and my grandfather, this is an interesting thing, my grandfather when he was 16 years old with a couple of 16 year old mates, they built a house. It was just a four room, one of those old four room houses with sawn weatherboards and corrugated iron for the roof they got. And they still own that. But at that time, my grandfather had been

05:30 living and barking in it with a few sheep and it was all run down. It still has log fences all around it. You walk around against the log fences and the two brothers decided that they'd to take it over and they'd – it was 120 acres – they'd take it over and they'd do it up for a dairy farm. Get it going as a dairy farm in partnership. Bit funny today if you had 120 acres and a dairy farm. Anyway, they

06:00 Dad decided that Dad would go into the little old house. There's still the original house up there, Dad and Mum and the other brother would carry on with his share farming and with the money from that he'd pay off the mortgage – it was heavily mortgaged of course. That's how the grandfather had been living. So then, so that become the situation and they were there for four years – well they were married for four years before I was born.

06:30 They got married in 1916. I was born in 1920. And well we were there at Framlingham. Anyway shortly after I was there I suppose or perhaps when me brother Don was born in 1922, they decided there wasn't enough money there because he was putting all the money they got into fencing and all that sort of stuff and he wasn't getting much money back out of the place and he decided he'd go to Melbourne and with what he'd learnt about the

07:00 pork butchery business or the pork business in Melbourne he'd open a special pork shop. So he went down to Melbourne and he got that going and he went pretty good. He had, he went around all the biggest hotels in Melbourne who got their pork off him. But the trouble was that his wife got the Spanish flu and she didn't die though. She lived through it – that was my mother and

07:30 my brother, he was only a little thing about so many months old and he got intussusception they called it. It was part of the bowel sort of got inside itself so that was an operation at the children's hospital. And then dad started to get crook and he had a man working for him but he reckoned the till was always light when this fellow was working there.

08:00 And finally he got too crook to work himself and he decided he had to give it away and he'd go back to Warrnambool because that's only, there was no pensions in those days if you were crook. He'd go back there where all his cousins and uncles and that were and family support. So he went back to Warrnambool Hospital with my mother and two little brothers. We went back to the old house where someone

08:30 gave her a, one of the uncles gave her a house cow and that's when I become the man of the house and I sort of ever since and I think that must have been from then because I've always been looking after people ever since. And anyway, that was, that they found that the trouble with dad was that he had an ingrown wisdom tooth in the angle of his jaw. So it grew. Instead of coming out into his mouth it went up in the bone.

09:00 And that was what was causing him all the trouble. So they took that out and after a bit of recuperation he came home there and sort of his uncles and that around, they sort of, it was all a family helping situation and they fitted him up with a herd of cows on the basis that he'd have them for the first year and that'd break 'em into get used to being milked in the bails and that

09:30 and that was all the hard work the milking cows. So he had them for the first year but that gave him a bit of income. So that went on and, oh it becomes a rather long story in those days. It's the story of the Depression days. The Depression came on then and they got an immigrant from England to work with them. It was a man.

10:00 Anyway then another 20 acres adjoining our place came on the market and so Dad said, "Well, we've got to buy that. If we're going to run this place in partnership we need more land. We'll have to buy this 20 acres." So they went in to buy it and when they got in there the solicitors then, my mother got very upset because she found that though they were supposed to be a partnership that my uncle – because he'd paid all the,

10:30 paid the mortgages off and that the place was all in his name. And Mum said, "We're not going to stay here for the rest of our lives and then find our children won't get anything out of it." And she did a lot of talking like that around the house. And we had that English fellow, he used to live in the house with us. He had a room then. It was only four little rooms, and he talked about it outside. The next thing that happened was that the auctioneer, they discovered,

11:00 they said, "Now Mr. Campbell, is that true that you haven't got any equity in this place? You'll have to pay for your groceries when you order them," and the stock agent said, "We can't leave any money swinging on the whole nature of their operation because it was all in those days, you sort of bought things and then you paid for them at the end of the month.

11:30 or something so things had become very difficult and dad and Mum, I'll talk about this a few times. They collected up the money that they owed the English fellow that was working with them. They used to put it all in the book you see. And he'd get some when he went somewhere and he went out. He'd draw some money out and it was all in the book entries.

12:00 So they collected up the money that was owed him and they called him up and said, "Look, we can't afford you any more because of this situation. You'll have to go." But of course there was no – it was very difficult to go in those days. There was no work around and he pleaded with them, "Let me stay here. I don't want the money," he said. "Use the money to get back on your feet and just keep putting my wages as a book entry and I'll never

12:30 need that money that's owing to me." I don't know, I think it was about 200 dollars or something put into today's money. And so then because the stock agents had taken back some of the cows, some of the stock you see so dad and he went cutting wood to get money coming in. They went into the

Framlingham Forest which is now an Aborigine zone,

13:00 and cut wood for firewood for Warrnambool. And they'd have to, they'd cut it all day. They'd bring home what they cut, throw it all out into the yard and then Don and I, the two little fellas, we'd stack it in rows to dry out for a few weeks and then they'd cart it the 16 miles into Warrnambool behind the horses and then sell it, hawk it around

13:30 the houses. There wasn't a great deal of money in it and so that went on for a while and I suppose that English fella found it hard work cutting out there, cutting wood all day because next thing he said he wanted to get married. He had a girlfriend and she was the butcher's daughter and the butcher would give him work because being,

14:00 they were still killing pigs and she'd send him away to Melbourne you see as dad had been doing before and he'd learn how to be a butcher and the butcher would give him work in his butcher shop and the butcher told him he should get his money and he wanted to be paid back all his money. Well Dad didn't have it by then because what had happened when he said he didn't want the money, Dad thought he'd get a bit cunning and he went and he bought about 30 sow pigs,

14:30 fairly close to having little ones and he said, "Now as soon as the rain comes," he said, "they'll be worth three times as much as they are now to farmers for the milk" and he said, "for three weeks they can all live on the grass." We had a paddock fully grassed there so they can live on that for three weeks. So they brought 'em home.

15:00 And so the money was gone. So the next thing the Sheriff come in to sell up what they could out of our place you see to get these wages. There was an interesting experience there for a little fella. Mum said, "Well, I'm just got this little baby. I can't do without a cow. There's one cow there she doesn't belong to the place. When I come up here first so-and-so gave it to me for a house cow when you were in the hospital and she doesn't belong to the farm."

15:30 And so anyway Dad had to yield to her entreaties and what she reckoned was the right thing to do. And I had to take her all day over the road from our farm there was a lot of box saws at that time. I had to take her up and hide in these box saws all day while they auctioned that stuff so she wasn't there to be auctioned. And then when dark came I had to lead her home. So that was an experience lying up in the box silos with a couple

16:00 of bottles of tea and sandwiches done up. And peering out underneath the bottoms of these box saws. And well then she'd been auctioned up. Well that's when things got a bit hard. We had about eight cows left when the agent took back everything that was owing. And then when Dad and the fellow went off

16:30 cutting wood my brother and I they said, "Well you should be able to milk them before you went to school." So we had to milk the eight of them before we went to school. I'd be about six or seven and Don was only three or four. I used to milk five and he milked the other three. The only way we could do it was you put the alarm clock down and watch it and milk against the clock. If I just did it thinking I never got through 'em in time. I had to just go against that clock.

17:00 And then of course we'd be late for school and we'd get six cuts for being late for school and that was, got quite normal to get cuts and then, anyway something, anyway dad decided …well what happened I think he had a good mate there. Dad was, he'd been, at Scotch College he was the president of the

17:30 debating; the debating society or something they had in the college. Now when he come back to Fram [Framlingham] he started it off there amongst the young fellas there and one fella become quite a poet and he wasn't married. Anyway, he'd inherited about three or 400 dollars. Three or four – might have been three or four thousand dollars from an auntie and suddenly said, knowing the problems that dad had, he said,

18:00 "Here Gordon. Here's 50 or 100 dollars, 50 pounds to pay for all those feeds I had at your place and all the years we've been talking and that." And anyway then, with the 50 pounds or 100 dollars dad decided he'd go back to Melbourne and re-establish himself as a butcher, pork butcher. But of course the Depression was on you see. It was no good on the farm but it was no good being a butcher either.

18:30 So dad went around. I remember being with him when he gave his pride and joy. It was a Cashmore double-barrel 12-gauge gun that he used to shoot the rabbits around and hares and he took it up and gave it to one of the grocers to pay for some money. Instead of giving him cash he game him his gun. The fella was quite happy about that.

19:00 So he liked that. Anyway he got the groceries paid up and all those sorts of people. He never got the agents were still owed a little bit. Anyway, he decided we'd set off and we'd go to Melbourne and he had an old 1912 Talbot car. So he overhauled that and got it ready for a trip for the 165 miles from Warrnambool to Melbourne it was in those days.

19:30 And it was a little bit too good for it because you put a few drops of castor oil on the clutch. Now the clutch in that was sort of a concave thing. It was an old 1912 and it was like one tape but the thing fitted inside another one. One moved out and then it would come back and they fit together in a taper and they were lined with leather. Well when we first arrived we got there with a couple of Mum's pot plants she had in the back

20:00 and she had our clothing and blankets. There wasn't much clothing in the Depression days but still, we had what we had and the baby and we set off. And the first rise we come to the car wouldn't go up it. It just sat there and spun in the place. And we set off at daylight and by dark we'd gone 15 miles and mum also had six baked rabbits for our food supply

20:30 so that kept us going. We got into Terang, 15 miles from where we were, from Dad's at Framlingham. Pulled up the front of Goodall's garage and dad told him what happened. "Well quick," he said, "get in the, just throw your things in the Ute and we might catch the train. It's just come into the station now." So they threw the thing on the back of a Ute but it just had a tray body

21:00 cause I remember I sat on the back with Don with our cases and I thought we were going to get slid off as we go around the corners going to catch the train. We caught the train and 12 o'clock we knocked on the door of mum's sisters in Middle Park. They didn't know we were coming. Anyway, we had a sleep there on the floor and we stayed there for a few days. And then dad tried to get established as a pork butcher.

21:30 I think he found it fairly easy to lease places in those days because we thought he was going broke. He got a big butcher's shop in, now here's where we run into trouble, oh Fitzroy, it was um, oh just can't think of it, the cable tram used to go on the street, anyway that doesn't matter. He got that and we went into a house in Fitzroy and Don and I we went to school.

22:00 No it might have only been me. In George Street. Now that's something I think that must have been one of the toughest schools in Melbourne I reckon, George Street, Fitzroy. It ran near Smith Street. Now half the kids come from Collingwood and half of them come from Fitzroy and of course there was football on in those days as there always has been. And we used to wear ties at school in those days and a kid'd suddenly come up and grab you by the tie,

22:30 and with a gang with him: "Who do you barrack for?" and if you said the wrong one, Fitzroy or Collingwood, you'd get a punch of fives in the face so you had to learn to try and guess which ones they were. After a couple of days you got to know which was which. So that was that school. Then well the butcher shop didn't take off so we shifted to North Melbourne and I went to the Errol Street School in North Melbourne for a while.

23:00 Well for a few weeks. And that's an interesting story there because dad, the butcher shop wasn't taking off and he had an idea and he went and interviewed one of the rich fellas in Melbourne, Sir, Sir something, Miller. He was a knight. They owned the Australia Arcade and a few places like that around Melbourne. They'd been, they were descendants of Munny Miller.

23:30 They had come from Tasmania in 1850 and started insurance in Melbourne, Victorian Insurance Company he started and he was known as Munny Miller by the time we, a bit late. Anyway, dad went and saw him. You see he had this idea and it's been put into action since by other people – he said, "I know pigs from beginning to end and the pork business."

24:00 He said, "Pigs have – the difference in pork is how they're treated; how the pigs are treated." "Now," he said, "if you get a young pig who's never looked back. If they've never missed a feed from when they're born they'll be beautiful to eat." And he said, "They also, they get affected when they're shipped away to be slaughtered and that." And he said, "If we had our own place that raised the pigs, connected with a milk supply and then we had our own abattoirs there,

24:30 and our own shops – we could have our own shops to sell the pork and it would be to sell pork." And he talked to this man, this Miller agreed with him and he said, "We'll set that up," and he said, "and we could even have shops in England." And he said, "Well look if you can organise all that," and dad said, "Yeah yeah I know it all." And of course and dad having been at Scotch College had a big influence in this business dealing with those sorts of people. This fellow was a Sir,

25:00 anyway, Sir Miller. And so dad come home and told he was going to go back in three or four days and they were going to draw up the payment and the agreement between them. So he was looking very sweet. I remember we sat down and they said, "You kids will go to Scotch College now and all this." That was all good.

25:30 Well the next day we got the Sun. The front of the Sun was covered, 'Sir something, leading Melbourne businessman, killed hunting'. He'd come off his horse and the Mindat Hunt Club which was out Bundoora in those days and they owned it and ran it and over near, memory's crooked, over the way anyway from Bundoora over Thomastown way

26:00 and they jumped a double jump they call over two fences and in the jump, Sir Ewart Miller, that was his name. His branch had knocked his skull cap off, knocked his cap off which was supposed to protect his head. And the second fence his horse fell and he came off and his head landed on top of about the only stone that was,

26:30 well there were a lot of stones around but he could have missed it but he did hit it and did himself in straight off. So Dad still went in on the appointment day and found the manager from Miller Bros – that was how they used to work in those days – they were Miller Bros. And he said, "No we can't sign anything up. It's agreed with Ewart," he said, "but the other brothers have got to come out from England. They've got to pay death duties and don't know what. So," he said,

27:00 “it’ll be up to them and a few months before we can, they’ll make a decision.” And he said, anyway we were really down in our uppers in this” as they say. Don’t know how it came but they said, “Well you can go out to Mill Park and start the piggery off. Get organising the pigs and there’d be no loss if they don’t go ahead with it.” So Dad went out there and the basic wage

27:30 at that time was two pounds, eight for a six day week. It was all Saturday he worked. Eight shillings a day, six eight’s are 48 and that was a wage. And so when we’d got the news that we might be going to Middle Park you see we moved into South Preston but that’s another story then, and we were pretty hard up. The first week that dad was out there

28:00 we had no money, no food and we were used to be the thing that kids used to talk about at school. I remember I got a knife and I scraped out all the cracks in the dresser where the bread went. All the old dust of the bread and we tried that. That didn’t fill us very much . So then, I said, “We’ll do what these kids had said they do. We’ll go up to the cake shop and we’ll ask for any stale cakes.”

28:30 And so me and my two little brothers we went up and we lined up in the cake shop there in Plenty Road and said, “Please, please Mrs. we haven’t had anything to eat since the day before yesterday. Could you give us some stale cakes?” And that woman she got the cakes actually out of the display. They weren’t stale cakes and that was very good. They kept us going a couple of cakes, little cakes each. They were wonderful.

29:00 But mum that day had gone off on the tram and taken the baby. There was another baby by then, that’s right. She had taken him and gone in to see her sister in Middle Park and get some money off her because we had no food. And so that was that day. Then the night, the weekend came, Sunday and dad had Sunday off you see. So he turned up. He walked the five miles out from Middle Park out to South Preston and he had two three-bushel bags, a couple of bags they put potatoes in that sort of thing, size,

29:30 and one of them he’d filled up with very good wood because the wood s went with Mill Park. It got treated like a station. You got your wood and your milk and your meat. You meat you had to pay four cents for mutton. And he’d filled this bag up with very good wood, one bag. Another bag he had a quarter of a sheep in it. And he’d tied the two tops of the three bushel bags together

30:00 so he could hang them over his shoulder and he carried a gallon billy of milk and he walked the five miles with that for us and so we had a bit of food and then a few days later he arranged, yeah it might have been a week later, he arranged with a farmer there who took calves in to sell in Melbourne; he was battling. He had about 20 cows and that and they used to feed ‘em by cutting thistles on the road and

30:30 sharpen them up and feeding the cows with them and Dad arranged with him to shift us out. And he had a little cart with little wheels. They were only real small. They were the smallest wheels I’ve seen on a four-wheel cart. And he came in. He had a frame around it because he was taking cows into the market and then we got the frame of the bed and put the frame of the bed up against one side of it and the kitchen dresser on another side

31:00 and a wardrobe on another side and stuffed the chairs in between and put all the blankets and things on top and then we got on top of that and I was sure we were going to tip it over because we seemed to be so high on such a little base. So he took us out there and he took us up to the Red Leap Stables. Now at Mill Park there they’ve kept those stables as a feature of their, of the supermarket I think it is.

31:30 Anyway, Miller Bros. owned some very good race horses way back in the 1880s or something and one was called Red Leaf and this was the stables they’d built for him. It was a real show place, all brick. And besides was a big house that the trainer and his workers had lived in. The jockeys and that, you know. Anyway, we went into that for a couple of weeks. Because they were shifting the hunt,

32:00 the hounds they had kennels for the hounds in a certain part of that Miller Bros. place and they were going to shift ‘em to other stables so they could use the stables as part of the hunt club. And then they just weren’t ready to shift but we came out for a couple of weeks until they shifted. And that house was a big rambling single story brick house and the

32:30 kitchen was a great big living room really with a table in the middle. It had a full sized baker’s oven in it plus the ordinary big stoves and that and that was where the trainer and his jockeys mainly lived you see. So we moved out into that. I suppose it’s all demolished and gone now as a house and they were there for a fortnight. Then the hunt’s, the head of the hounds,

33:00 he shifted in there and we shifted back to his place which was down behind the Janefield Church which is some – well it’s still the Janefield Church I suppose. It’s an interesting place that Janefield. You look in real old ancient books people travelling up to the goldfields they sometimes went through Janefield and the fella who wrote the book, Howatt, I think his name was, he wrote it,

33:30 he was over here with a commission from some English papers to give them a monthly report on the goldfields and he wrote about it. About how they stayed the night at Janefield and certain people who lived in Janefield, the station and apparently there was a little village there called Janefield and by the time we got there it had been wiped out. Miller Bros. who were at Mill Park had bought half, one side of the road and Miss Reed had the other side of the road and it disappeared as a village.

34:00 Only a little church left there and they were behind the church and then the fella came, got out from England. Used to amuse me because this, another knight, he was a 'Sir' something or other and they used to spend the weekends and come out onto our place and they'd spend the weekends cutting briars with mattocks, walk around the place taking briars.

34:30 These are very rich people. It's exercise I suppose. Better than playing golf perhaps that was the idea. Anyway they decided they had to sell it. They put it on the market. This was for the death duties and that you see. It was five pounds ten an acre and that was called Mill Park suburb and five pound ten an acre is about 20,000 acres and it took about ten months before they'd sold it at five pound ten an acre.

35:00 And finally it was bought by a fella called Senator McLachlan and he was Postmaster General and he bought it and there was no doubt he just bought it to get down there and end from it all because he pulled down all the buildings on it and just run cattle on it and he pulled down the big house which was a pride to us. It had such beautiful brickwork and built by Munny Little when he had all the money, that two story place it had such beautiful

35:30 brickwork. He pulled all that down and he built a single story cement place for himself. He didn't pull down the Red Leaf Stables. That's about the only other place but everything else, all the other houses, there were six share farmers. That's the way they ran it. They milk the cows and sent the milk into Melbourne every day on a truck and the share farmers used to bring all the milk into a central depot and they'd go to Melbourne.

36:00 Anyway he pulled all them down. But we had to get off that place as soon as it was sold and in the meantime Dad'd borrow the manager who. He had by then our old Talbot cars which was giving trouble with the wheels. The spokes used to move, wooden spokes and so dad went round lookin' for something to fix that and he came across a

36:30 1907 Renault in Melbourne that he could get for ten pounds, 20 dollars. So he bought that. It was going all right and so dad used to; when they closed down the piggery, when the place was put on the market and the manager he kept dad on to do odd jobs and one which was picking up, pork butcher, he got him kill,

37:00 four or five sheep had to be killed twice a week for the station meat. Dad used to do kill that and then he used to, then he sold this light sort of a Ute thing. It had been a taxi in Melbourne first and then they had cut it down and turned it into a Ute. And dad used to do trips to Bacchus Marsh and the development and that for the property.

37:30 And on those trips the manager of Middle Park had said to Dad, "Well if you see opportunities of other jobs, you know, you don't have to come back here. You can go and follow them up a bit so long as the work gets done." So, and like there were a few times, dad didn't get back until it was dark and he didn't get back and there were five sheep to kill and I'd take a Hurricane lantern and go up and kill the sheep and dress them as a …

38:00 But what had happened then, I've got ahead of myself haven't I because I was working there then. I also went to the Bundoora School and that was really good. There was only 30 kids and a beautiful teacher. An ANZAC [Australia and New Zealand Army Corps] and never got married. Oh Saturday, he used to live with his brother in South Melbourne or Middle Park. Anyway, I think it was more South Melbourne; and he used to come out of a Saturday just to pot around the place, doing a bit of gardening and that.

38:30 He real…his heart and soul was in that school. Anyway, R.A. Cecil was his name. Anyway, he, I got my merit when I was 13. And at that time, because of the Depression you couldn't leave school until you were 15 unless you had a job to go to. You had to continue at school, so here's me continuing at this school. I got a notice from somebody to say that

39:00 I could go to the Thornbury High School. I had been accepted for that on my marks but to go to the Thornbury High School from Middle Park you had to go on a bus and a tram for about five miles and that was going to run into a bit of money and they couldn't afford it. So I didn't go. And after a few months in which I used to sit at the desk with the kids that were doin' their 8th grade that year and show 'em how to do the work. Then I'd

39:30 go down and supervise the grades 1 and grade 2 with their reading and spelling and that and then one of the jobs I was proud of myself is the teachers got me to go out and strain the fences. They had wires in the fences and they had these sort of like capstans on the ends of them and you just had to turn them up and put the bolt in a different place. So I went out and did that. And then anyway, what had happened at Middle Park; they'd decided to close down one of these share dairies.

40:00 That'd leave five. Number 6 was going to be closed down and they were going to give the cows to the other ones. And they just brought in the new legislation for Melbourne milk supply and any dairy supplying milk that was registered, re-registered had to have a concrete floor. Now the milk bar dairies are all brick floors and if a dairy was still,

40:30 was in production it kept going you see. But only the new ones, had to have a concrete/cement floors. And because they were going to close that dairy down and they saw that when they wanted to open it again they'd have to redo it, make it a concrete floor. So they said well, they'd give me, well anyway the upshot was they gave me four, yes four pounds a week, to milk about four, five cows there

41:00 and that kept the dairy registered. I was carting the milk over in a spring carton and put it with the other milk to go to Melbourne. So I'd, I got a job you see there. Anyway, there was a horse there too..

Tape 2

00:31 Yeah well that number 6 dairy, the people that were on it was a young married couple and they had a couple of babies. And of course they were told to get off. It was closed down but they were allowed to stay there for a while and we walked over to see them sometimes. My Mum did because there was this young married mother there. She was an English migrant girl too. She come out from England to be a housemaid at Toorak and signed up sort of thing.

01:00 But then she got out of that by marrying another Englishman and he had and they got in this farm, this dairy farm. It was a lot worse I think, to marry him than to be a housemaid in Toorak. Anyway, we walk over to see her and she had no food and the only food that she had was fried scones made out of hen's mesh, pollen.

01:30 So she fried up some of these scones for us. Well it was one food I found I couldn't get down. It just smelt too much like hen's smell, all that smell. But that's what I tell people. That was the worst food I had in the Depression days. It was – anyway. So that was that. So we – they had to move out and we had to move over into that house when they finished. But we won't go into that now.

02:00 So then dad had got hold of 30 acres of Rockbank, which is between Melbourne and Ballarat, 20 miles out of the GPO [General Post Office] in Melbourne. And it had good water on it and he was going to start his own pig farm there and we had to get shifted and we had a white nag of a horse and didn't have a saddle for it and I rode it from

02:30 Middle Park and rode it across to Rockbank and I'd ride across to north of Melbourne and went around lanes and Mahoneys Lane was one and you couldn't go through it and get through the vehicular traffic. This was only all box saws and now it's from the main road and north of Melbourne. Anyway, I rode that horse across and it took me all day.

03:00 Dad brought me out some tucker halfway through it. And that was a big thing. The upshot was that dad, well we had no money and the house wasn't quite – well on this place, had been not lived in for a while and the windows had been pinched off it and the doors pinched off it and that sort of thing and so it wasn't fit to move into. So we moved into a house out at South Morang for a while for a few weeks.

03:30 Anyway, dad went hunting around. He had to get an income and you know, you can't start up a pig farm even without money. And we didn't have any money. So he thought now, there was a very big pig farm that was there at Rockbank, another one, owned by Cockbills, the dead horse people who used to make blood and bone meal, in those days. Anyway, he had the idea, he said, "Now I can

04:00 improve this. They're doing things very rough. I could double their output of pigs by putting a few ideas." So he went along and tried to sell himself to them as an advisor, you know, a consultant and in that way he'd be allowed to do a bit on his own farm as well. But oh, no they wouldn't have it. They knew how hard up he was. The manager of that finished up.

04:30 He went there working for them for the basic wage. So he got all his expertise and went into one of their houses and then they gave me a job. They thought they were doing wonderful. They gave me a job at ten shillings a week and twenty. Twenty dollars a week and live at home. They had to feed me and everything. And what the work consisted of was working with them there. They had a man on the property who did general farm work.

05:00 We used to punch holes into big rocks and put half a stick of gelignite in and blow 'em up and then we had to cart 'em away and general fencing and one day a week we spent cutting chaff. One day we loaded hay onto a wagon and carted it in and another day we carted in chaff to go to all different properties. Anyway it was ten shillings a week and I thought that was pretty poor

05:30 when you didn't get your tucker. A lot of people worked for ten shillings a week back then but they were generally, they were fed. And I heard of this thrashing machine that was going around that had seventeen men working on it as a team and we got eight cents an hour, eight pence I mean, eight pence an hour but you worked from when the sun, before the sun come up until the sun went down so they were very long days.

06:00 And you could make three or four dollars a week out of this. So I decided to leave and said I was going to work as a man. So I rode my bike to the thrashing machine every morning. Anyway, when that cut out after about three months a chap asked me would I cut some box saws on his property. I looked at it and I thought there was three weeks work in that.

06:30 And I said if I was working three dollar a week in Cockbills, a thrasher was about two or three dollars a week, a pound a week. We got to double it. I charged him three pounds a week. So nine pounds to cut up these boxes. So I cut them all out and I was very pleased cause took me just the three weeks.

07:00 And then I went in to collect my nine pounds and he gave me a lecture. “Oh,” he said, “Oh I’m not paying you any more.” He said, “If it was worth three times more than what you’d told me, you’ve got to learn to ask for proper amounts.” “So,” he said, “to help you to learn it I’m not giving you any more. You should have been paid three times as much as that for what you did.” And there was me feeling very proud for having estimated the time right.

07:30 But the upshot of that was that a few days later the neighbour of that property who had a farm of a few hundred acres and grew about 300 acres of sheep hay and had some sheep, anyway he come and offered me a job to work for him full time. So I took that on and I was up on the roof of his house painting the spouting when I heard the war declared.

08:00 And Mr. Menzies was there and he said, “Now I don’t want people racing in to join up. Our job in this war is to supply the armies. Supply the armies. Keep producing stuff.” Anyway, he said, “Keep producing stuff,” so I kept on working around, working on different jobs around the country there.

08:30 And we also got our pig farm going too by then. And we went into Melbourne twice a week into Footscray and collected leaves and what they called ‘specks’, speck fruit that they threw out. It was really good for pigs that were on grain. We fed all ours on grain all the time then. And I was out working on a straw press.

09:00 We used to think we were pretty good on the straw press. We reckoned, oh I used to wish there was some competition for straw press teams because one day we worked all the day and the average worked out at three bales for a minute. You’d come out all day and you’re working in the sweat all the time. I used to tie the wires and carry the bales and stack them. Others did other jobs. That was my job I specialised in.

09:30 So that was six knots and wire every minute and then carry them and stack the bales. So anyway, we were doing that one day and we were up near Melton with the son of the fellow who owned the plant and myself and another fellow who was a really good footballer . We were going to go and have a try out with the Melton Football Club on the Saturday.

10:00 So when we’d had our lunch, we got racing around stab kicking. Stab kicking was the thing we used to specialise in those days.

What was stab kicking?

Stab kicking was when you kick the ball like a drop kick. Dropped it to the ground and stabbed it but it never went up more than the height of a man’s head. You just stabbed it across. It was called stab kicking. It used to be a feature of the game back in those days. You could pass it. Like today they punch it around to each other. There wasn’t that punching in those days. They’re doing the punch but it wasn’t so much.

10:30 But the same thing only you stab kicked the ball, kicked it across. And we run around and anyway, when we come to work after half an hour of this I did a little bit and then I found I just couldn’t stand up. I was weak as a kitten and so I went and lay down in the afternoon and the boss took me home to my people. The next day they got a doctor out to Rockbank and I had pneumonia and pleurisy.

11:00 Straight into hospital. So we’d had a kid sick before and had to get an ambulance and in those days an ambulance wouldn’t take you unless you paid ’em first. Five pounds from Rockbank to Melbourne. So we had to scout around and find five pounds before the ambulance came out. So they put me in the Old Royal Melbourne Hospital which has been pulled down now. I was pretty crook because they

11:30 they put a sort of a linen tent over my head and they sprayed into it. It was a terrible thing. It was cold as a frog that spray coming in expanding and then one day they moved me up by the door and I found out afterwards that was what they did when they thought you were going to be wheeled out as a cadaver during the night or something. So they wouldn’t upset the rest of the people they put you by the door. They put me by the door one night. Anyway, I lived through it.

12:00 There was an M&B tablet which was just new then and that was saving pneumonia cases. Otherwise, pneumonia was a pretty serious thing until they had that M&B tablet. And just at that time was when the Germans were advancing through France. They had little earphones that you could put on in the beds. So I’d listen to that all the way through and the evacuation of Dunkirk and the day I got out of that on the way

12:30 through Melbourne I called into a recruiting depot and asked them about joining the air force. Me brother and I and another fella we were always keen on aeroplanes. It’s all the Red Baron and all that First World War stuff, you know and we lived at Rockbank so the planes from Laverton were always flying around, all the planes that they had in the air force then. When I went in there they said,

13:00 “Oh no, well you’ve only got a Merit Certificate. Well all the job you can get in the air force is to be a fabric worker.” That’s a strange one isn’t it? A fabric worker or a cook. And they said, “But anyway, you can’t come in until you’ve been over pneumonia and pleurisy for 12 months.” So I went home and when I got over it I thought I’ll still continue working around doing a man’s job. I’ll leave it to the ladies to do the fabric work and the cooking.

13:30 And then what happened next, there was rumours in the papers you know they were going to introduce

conscription; conscription for home defence. And I thought now if they bring in conscription, I'd most likely finish up in the army and I don't want to be in the army. I wanted to be in the air force cause that's always been our area. So, I said, "The only thing to do, I'll go and volunteer for the air force and then I'll make sure I'm in the air force."

14:00 And that's why I joined the air force then at that particular time, because it was on the cards. And they did, they brought it in and manpower was conscripted if you didn't get something to say that you were in an exempt occupation. So I went into the air force and that was in May '41. I had to go into Russell Street and be examined.

14:30 So they gave us an examination on our intelligence. Now it seemed to me pretty simple, that intelligence testing. I'd like to see some of the kids do it today. Things like they'd have three mesh cogs and they'd say if this one moves this way which way does this one move? You know, it didn't seem like an intelligent thing to me at all and we're used to working on machinery. Anyway, I was accepted. So I was enrolled then and entered the reserve of the air force.

15:00 And I had to go and do correspondence training to learn the subjects I hadn't done for me Merit.

Is this because you were still in that recovery year?

No, it wasn't that. I was said to be recovered. It was simply because there was this delay in people coming in and they had them do this sort of preliminary study. If you lived in a town they had courses in the town for people going to the aircrew. And I was in the country

15:30 so I did it by correspondence. And I had a lady called Chrissie McLennan at the university who was my tutor. I had to send my correspondence. They had all these lessons – I had to send them back to her. Anyway, and the next – it was November before they called me up to come in with my toothbrush and I went back there. They examined me again. They swore me in both times, but they officially recorded me in

16:00 the air force it was the second time they officially recorded me as joining the air force. So then we got on a train. We went down to Somers. The train went very slowly. We reckoned we could get off and pick wildflowers beside it. It was going from Frankston out towards Somers. It's not there now of course, the line. It was a terrible slow train. And somewhere out in the bush there they pulled up and we all had to get out,

16:30 near Somers, no station. And we.. all of our bags. We had cases, you see with our towels in them. They dumped them all out in a heap and we had to go and sort them out and find them, and so the next weekend when I got home I got some paint and I painted all of my cases with all 1006 on the six sides of it so I can find them in the heap of cases like that. Anyway, we went to Somers and so

17:00 then they gave us a bag and said go and put some straw in the sleeping quarters.

So what about your brother Don? Had he joined up as well?

No, Don tried to join up a little later, we were keeping the pig farm going at the same time, so he was working with Dad, but then a little later he joined up, and he was rejected because, I think basically because he was 6 foot 4 and that makes it a bit awkward to get around in an aeroplane, but officially they rejected him because

17:30 they said, you can see by your hands, that you've suffered with chill blains, and that will be a difficulty when you are in the air force. I've never heard it happen to anybody else, but I think that's because he was too tall. So, he joined up but he wasn't in the aircrew. He trained for two years and become a radio maintenance mechanic and served up the North West of Australia, and that was Don.

18:00 And my third brother Lach, he joined the Air Training Corp when he was 16. He spent two years training to be a radio maintenance mechanic while he was in the Air Corp, and then, so when he turned 18, he was able join up officially join the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] as a radio maintenance man, and he was just up at Darwin heading to the Philippines when the Japanese surrendered, so, but then what did he do? He asked and said, "What will I do if they call for volunteers to go to Japan?"

18:30 And we said, "You might as well go because it'll be two years before they let you out, seeing you, you just haven't done any service yet." And so he went to Japan and he stayed there for three tours in Japan with the occupation forces, and stayed in the air force till he was 50 or something and they retired him, and he lives up in the Maryborough now. They're all still alive, all of my brothers and sisters. I had three brothers and one sister.

19:00 And the little fella, Don was 6 ft 4½, Lach the next one was 6 ft 2½, but he weighed about 20 stone when he was in boxing trim. He was a terrible big fella and Kay the third, fourth fella, he was rather a little fella, he was only 5ft 10½, and he was the policeman. Anyway, that's only a joke, and then our sister, she's the last one we had in the family and they're still all alive,

19:30 which is a good thing, and, anyway we were down at Somers, we got down there, where we'd studied, we'd march for a an hour a day and do a drill, and then we'd study and we'd do some PT [Physical Training], and then after tea we went in for ourselves we went in and studied, what we have been doing during the day, we all were very keen.

20:00 And I know I was. Most of us were but there were some fellows there who'd been well on the way to getting a degree and had joined the aircrew and they were send out there and were doing these primitive sort of simple studies, they knew they could do it on their ear and they didn't care what marks they got as long, as, "Oh we'll pass that easy," and the result was –

20:30 and they might have known something because those fellas when they come through the test at the end of the preliminary study, the ones who got over 90% in that examination, they made them all navigators. They reckoned they'd be the navigators. And I got over 90% so I was made a navigator even though I wanted to be a pilot. And the other fellows become pilots and anyway, that was just an incidental there.

21:00 **So you'd wanted to be a pilot from day one?**

Yeah I wanted to be a pilot. Well the books, you know, you read about those days, they were all pilots. You didn't have any heroes being navigators. The Red Baron was a pilot and our fellows were pilots who were heroes. And what we had to do there, they gave you a slip of paper and you had to write on it whether P, O or G for your selection,

21:30 whether you wanted to be a Pilot, an Observer or Gunner, in the order of preference and I put P, G and then O and then we had to line up, come up to the door in order and they called out the names and you entered one of those huts and you had to go in the door and walk the full length of the hut and there were three officers sitting behind a, behind a

22:00 trestle table. And you'd walk up, come to attention and salute and everything and they'd tell us what we had to do and then they looked up and they said, "Ah, Campbell, can we ask you Campbell, why do you put down that you'd rather be a gunner than be an observer?" The navigator was called an observer in those days. And I said, "Oh well I don't think I've got the training, education to be an observer." "Oh," they said, "We'll judge that.

22:30 We'll decide that. We'll give you some training to be an observer." Anyway, the upshot of it was that they said, "Well you'll be an observer." And then they told me, they said, "We want all the ones who are observers to get over 90% in the preliminary examination and we've just got enough and so," they said, "We want you in that." And so there I had to then salute, turn around and march out, that was when I was an observer.

23:00 **So what was going through your mind then? How did you feel about that?**

Oh I didn't feel too happy about it. I would rather be a pilot but you had to do whatever they told you. They'd drummed it into you by then that you accept everything. There were two fellas over there, they were twins. They came out and they were very upset. They'd put down they wanted to be gunners. They had the idea they could be in the big planes together, fly together and die together

23:30 and they said they had to be pilots. They were really upset about that. I see 'em now regularly too now. I don't know if they remember how upset they were at not being made gunners. They were both in Spitfires and Hurricanes at the end. Anyway, that's neither here nor there. So we went on there. Then I was to be an observer.

24:00 We were all very keen students. You know we'd come back after tea and we'd be studying. I was thinking about this in the last few days. I don't think we were keen to sort of make a mark and become a high officer or anything. We just came to do our bit for the team. We were in a team and we wanted to pull our weight in it, you know. And if you were an observer well you wanted to navigate, you wanted to navigate well and if you were a pilot, well I suppose you wanted to pilot well.

24:30 So anyway, a complication came in then and this is something that wouldn't be very well known. We were supposed to move out at a certain date. Observers were going to Mt Gambier or somewhere up in NSW to observers school or navigation school. Pilots would go to elementary flying training. The gunners would go mainly to a Morse school to learn to tap out Morse code.

25:00 And they'd all go and a new intake would come in you see. We would call – they were called courses. Ours was 22 Course. But a complication came in for the observers. This is important to tell you here. It's something else. We were at Somers and we'd march out every morning and we'd get out on the parade ground and we'd all line up and the officers in charge of the various sections

25:30 could call a roll and they'd go up and report, salute and say, "It's all present and correct, sir," or if someone was sick and something like that and then they'd give you any information. And this morning we were up there – and they put the flag up while you're there too; it's not a team , they put the flag up and the head fellow made an important announcement, the said, "At certain such and such an hour, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour."

26:00 And we started to cheer because that meant – what it meant until then we thought we were fighting the Japs [Japanese] on our own and now we knew we had the Americans with us. And we cheered. We definitely cheered. Because of that, because the Americans would be in it and as a result of that the Americans come out here in their big planes and they found that their navigation wasn't what it should be. Because in America for several planes,

26:30 they have beams, wireless beams all cutting all over the country between everywhere they wanted to go. They can get it on a beam and fly it along. If they were getting it off the beam to one way, it would

signal and if they were getting it off another way, it'd signal and so they could keep on these beams. Well while they were training there, in the air force they weren't supposed to use these beams but you know what fellas are, if they got the beams there to use, they relied on it. And they come out here and they found that they needed a bit more training.

27:00 So they let them take over our navigation training schools for a month to use our equipment and so we had to mark time for a month. We couldn't move on because the Americans were there. And so for a start we dug some big trenches up there at Somers and then we went down to Mt Gambier where I was going to navigational training school. We were still marking time.

27:30 And they called on anyone who could do a bit of carpentry to volunteer for that so I put my name down for that because I'd worked for a little while on the building the Darling Military Camp. They were building that up and they wanted – the local farmers could go and work on it nailing timber on the sides of the huts and that sort of thing and I'd done that. So anyway, one of the more complicated jobs was that – the officers had got themselves a billiard table there.

28:00 And they were only those old wooden army huts and you put it on the floor and it rattled and shook and was no good for playing billiards on. So what we had to do was cut a hole in the floor under each leg and put boxing up and put concrete in so the wheels sat in the concrete in the ground. So we did that, that was one thing. That was Mt Gambier.

28:30 Then one day, I've got something here too. One day, I was, we were out – anyway the Japs were coming down through Malaya all this time and they decided they couldn't leave their planes sitting around the paddock. They'd make a great target for the Japs.

This is Mt Gambier?

Mt Gambier, yeah. And they'd hide 'em underneath some real old pine trees along the fence across the road from the aerodrome. And we went over and we

29:00 cut all the bottom limbs off so the fin and rudders could go under without scraping on the limbs. And we were doing that one day and there was a terrible clatter and we said, "What is it?" and I know I reckoned it was a milk truck going down a bumpy, stony road with empty cans on the back of it. Anyway, finally it got louder and we went through the trees and looked the other way and there were Aero Cobras.

29:30 We reckoned from when we had to aeroplane recognition and they were Aero Cobras and they were. There was about eight of these Aero Cobras came screaming in. They landed on the Mt Gambier strip. I think there was only about two of them wrote themselves off by putting their nose in the rabbit boroughs. They had three wheels and the nose wheel and they got into rabbit boroughs. They couldn't handle that and they were there for

30:00 two or three weeks. They put up a tent sort of village for the Americans and one of the things that happened there was that, because the Americans usually have a lot of brown, black-skinned fellas working around with them and they do all the work. Even though they might be enlisted just the same as the others, they send them to do all the work. They didn't have any. The train came into Mt Gambier. There used to be a train that came into there, an hour gauge train ran from

30:30 near Bordertown, a place called Keith. It was the end of it's line. It ran down to Mt Gambier. It was an hour gauge like they have in Queensland. Anyway, it came in with a load of stuff for their PX. [Post Exchange – American Canteen Unit] Anyway, it's their canteen for the Americans. They call it a PX and someone had to go out and load it onto trucks to bring it in from the station

31:00 So a bunch of us were sent out to take the place of what they normally have black fellas doing, or Negroes, and a lot of the stuff had been knocked around a bit, loaded off ships and put on there. I know there was a big cardboard box of pipes, all briar pipes and this was broken in half and it was amazing that, about a week later the number of people that were smoking pipes that had been out there unloading the stuff. Anyway that was neither here nor there.

31:30 I didn't take up smoking. I couldn't afford the money. I wanted the money for other things. And those Aero Cobras went up to Darwin. They didn't do too good up there I don't think either, but anyway.

What were they doing in Mt Gambier?

It was just a place to put them I think, because there was an aerodrome you see. They weren't – I don't think they were protecting anything. Perhaps you could just say they were acclimatising them after

32:00 the stuff had been unloaded in Melbourne. Anyway, and then one morning I was there and I got the job of putting wings in the rec [recreation] room as a stage. And they wanted wings on it. They'd called it 'wings'. They'd built it out on each side so you couldn't see at the end of the stages you know. And so we were there building up these walls on each end of the stage. I went in there and it was about 9 o'clock I suppose when I got there to start work.

32:30 I come in and it was all blacked out just like this and I crept me way and I could feel I was getting through bodies but I got over to where I knew the switch was. I switched the light on and the floor of that rec room was just covered with fellas sleepin' and they started to yell about the light being on so I

switched it off again and went out and had a rest till dinnertime.

33:00 Well anyway, then I got talking to them and they were American servicemen. I couldn't say whether they were airmen or not. But anyway they'd got out of Java and they'd come down to Western Australia and then they reckon they'd come across in a cattle truck. They called it a cattle truck of course to the Americans. It might have been a fairly good train but it was a cattle truck to them; hadn't been able to sleep and this was the first sleep they'd got since

33:30 they left Java. And one fella I was talking to and he started to, he tipped everything out of his kitbag. They had bigger kitbags than ours, about that far across and he tipped it out and he said, "Here's this thing," he said. And he said, "Here's something," he said. "I thought it was going to be a souvenir but I think I've carried it long enough." And he said, "Well I got this for a souvenir in Java and he said, "I've carried it long enough," and he said, "Would you like to have it?" and I said, "Yeah, I'd have that." And so it's been one of my souvenirs since.

34:00 Yes, it's slowly starting to fall to bits but that's where that come from. And anyway, and our first trip there is of interest I suppose. They said we'd do a trip. We'd have two navigators and they were Avro – [Avro Ansons] Australia's Frontline Bombers some people used to call them then. I don't know how they'd be but anyway.

34:30 And we'd go over to Keith in West Aust – South Australia on the coast, west from Mt Gambier. Then we'd fly to Bordertown which was sort of north, north-east where the train line from Melbourne to Adelaide goes through. And then we'd come back to Mt Gambier. And there'd be two of us. And one of us – of course it was only to get us familiar with flying and that. First trip we'd done up.

35:00 One would navigate as far as Bordertown and the other fella was to navigate then and I was to navigate from Bordertown to Mt Gambier. Well we went out to the west and we went through a terrible cold front. They should'a really cancelled the thing I think because we were lucky to get through. We were flying over the tops of the trees. It was just sandy bumpy little hills with trees on.

35:30 And every now and then you'd suddenly see a hill'd appear out o' the rain and the fog and just in time to duck over it and very rough. And so we went on and we said, "Now we must watch out for this railway line that runs through Bordertown. We can't miss that." So we were watching. Never saw it and the time that you would come up according to our calculations, no. And we went on about six minutes after which we were criticised for later.

36:00 I think they were wrong in criticising us but still and then we saw a railway line a way off to the north and we flew along up to that. And we flew along until we come to the town and we flew around the town but every, you couldn't – every name on the place had been painted out. There was no names on the stations. They'd painted any name out on the name of a business or anything.

36:30 And we flew around for a bit and suddenly the pilot said, "I know what this place is. I've been up here on a holiday," he said. "This is called Pinnaroo." And it was on the railway line further north than the one we were looking for. And we didn't have a map with Pinnaroo on it. The maps they'd given us, they'd just given us a little square of three ply with the area we were over and it didn't go up that far. And so, I don't know, I took over then.

37:00 I was supposed to get us home so the first order I gave as a navigator I suppose was that. I said, "Well fly due south until we get back on our map." So we flew south and we shouldn't have missed it. Instead of coming out of Bordertown which we should have by due south, we come out at Nhill. And to that side there was a terrible strong south-westerly wind blowing and that had blown us over the railway line quickly when we were going across.

37:30 It got us over it before we were expecting to get over it. Anyway, then we flew. I gave him a course home from Nhill and the planes had a Wallace Upright on it. He wasn't part of our crew. He was there to keep the pilot out of trouble. And ever since we got, oh I think even before we got to Pinnaroo, he'd been trying to get himself a radio bearing like they used to have in those days, following which way to fly to get home. And he was on that.

38:00 And just as we got over, it was just on dark, we flew over Mt Gambier and he run up to the pilot and he said, "Here, I've got a bearing." It was QRF or some sort of fancy name, the bearing to fly to get to Mt Gambier. And the pilot looked at him and said, "Have a look out there," and we were over the aerodrome when he got it. And the history of that was, he said why he didn't get it,

38:30 he said there were planes out to the west here down south of Ballarat they were training on getting these bearings. They were practising and they were doing that too much and they didn't, well we really wanted it and they didn't let us, talk to us because they were on practice flights. So that was the first flight I did and they called me the Pinnaroo Flyer for a little while after that. I don't know why the called me the Pinnaroo Flyer because it was the other fella that got us there. I got us home.

39:00 Oh well, I must have stuck me nose into things too much. And so we, I think that's about all that's important that happened at Mt Gambier.

That was your first time you'd been up?

First time I flew, yes.

And what did you think about that? Obviously you were working but…?

Well we got home and things had gone well. I felt a bit cheesed off when they criticised. They said, "You shouldn't have gone five minutes after the ETA [Estimated Time of Arrival] When the ETA come up you should've

39:30 turned around and come home to Mt Gambier. But I said, "No we were five minutes before, we'd been watching for the railway line but we went over it," and you know five minutes before, it could easily have been five minutes after it if it was another time but anyway, that's neither here nor there. I was a bit cheesed off on that being criticised for having kept going looking for Mt Gambier, looking for the railway line. Because I knew we couldn't go over without seeing it just flying above the trees.

40:00 **How were you with airsickness and nerves and all that?**

No, I never got airsickness or sick. I was only airsick once and it was in England. And I was supervising the pilots that were training on electronic equipment in a little plane, an Airspeed Oxford. And I was just, they were up in the machine and I was just sitting back watching from a distance and I got airsick.

40:30 It was a terrible sensation to get airsick. That was the only time I ever got airsick. I was openly carried down to land. Yeah.

Can I ask you at Mt Gambier at that time, the Japanese were already involved in Pearl Harbour and all of that. What did you make of the war and obviously you joined and wanted to do your bit, but what was going through your head in terms of your potential involvement? Was there a feeling of danger, of excitement?

41:00 Oh well you didn't have much, really much of an idea. It's a bit hard for me to say what our involvement was. Well we knew how everyone was getting killed up in Malaya or being captured and that and we thought we were in that too. But there were other things happened there. There was an interesting thing, one thing I remember about that was that, because the news come back you see, the Japanese had got some of the Australians they'd captured and they'd give them a bayonet and they'd put the Japanese out and they made 'em bayonet fight while the experts watched them so they could work out a technique

41:30 how to counter the Australian bayonet fighting; what was their techniques? So the bayoneting was on and so they reckoned they better give us a bit of bayonet training. They gave us these long bayonets they had in those days, long proper bayonet. Not like they have today, like a six-inch nail on the end of the gun. So we had that and you had to hold it a certain way of course.

Tape 3

00:30 **Oh yes you did say a bit about the bayonets and how they were very long.**

Yeah well they gave us these bayonets and of course you ran and you'd stick the bayonets into bags full of sticks and things like that and put your foot on them to pull them out. They reckon you got to learn to do it that way. You might have a bayonet stuck into a bone or something and you've got to get it out before the next fella comes.

01:00 And then they gave us, they gave us the bayonets and they put us oh we'd be about 15, 20 metres apart, two of us. We had to get these bayonets and clamp the butt of it under this arm and you hold this arm out here and you had to aim it at the other fella's throat and he's doing the same thing and then you'd charge at each other yelling as savagely as you could. And I reckon that it's a wonder to me that someone didn't get stabbed in that because you had to go right up to the last minute

01:30 and then just miss his throat. When you got yourself all steamed up like that it was very hard to pull that bayonet away from this throat. But then I knew the, when I got into action like that I thought, "Golly, well the other fellow's got a bayonet coming too. I might want to have a round in the chamber when I was doin' this bayonet fighting. I'll pull the trigger just at the last minute." But anyway, that was that. And then they,

02:00 the Japs come down to Malaya. They thought that they might – they were paratroop landing. They might land in Mt Gambier or something. And they sent us out looking for ships to – but that was I think, these that were laying mines. They were there. And we'd go out and they'd put it in some of our exercises. We'd fly out over the sea there from Mt Gambier.

02:30 And we had nothing. We used to say, "What are you going to do. We're supposed to be looking for enemy ships and we got nothing to attack them with. We'd have to throw down our course and S-bed calculator," which was a little light aluminium thing. It was all we've got to attack them with. Anyway, we didn't realise then that if they get a report back there's no ships, enemy ships there, it was very important to them anyway. So we did that and then they thought they might come over and rob paratroopers so they gave us all rifles.

03:00 And we had to keep our rifles at all times. And we had these wooden chairs that had this little bit up at each end and when you were in the classroom you' hang the rifle up over that chair and then when you stood up over the chair and the rifle'd go on the floor. That was something to try and remember just like you've got to remember to switch off your lights on a foggy day when you're driving around here. But anyway, what they did, they gave us these rifles and they wouldn't give us any ammunition. They said,

03:30 "We'll keep the ammunition in a depot and if the alarm goes off, everybody's got to double around to this depot and they'll be taken out to where the defend air are roaming around in a truck and we'll give them, they'll give you out a few rounds of ammunition on the way." So we spent – some of us, I was one of them –

04:00 spent a day putting loose .303 ammunition into clips so to put them in rifles you got to have them in sevens I think. We had to put them all in and they put them back into boxes and they'd be issued out to us. And my place was out on the bomb dump and I thought, "Well that's a terrible place if I'm attacked to go and protect, the bomb dump." Anyway, I never had to protect it thank heavens. And there was a couple of things that happened there.

04:30 It was an interesting time. One of the things was learning was how to get on with these examiners. I was a country fella and I thought, they gave us a big book. It would be 250 pages about I suppose and it was on meteorology. A real complete book, a thorough book, one of the top books you could get in the world. And when one of those was given to us each and then some English officer he took us, taking, giving us notes.

05:00 And then we had the examination and because I was a bit keen I learnt that book out pretty well. And when I got me marks I got 85% or something like that I think for meteorology and I went up and saw him and said, what about all these marks. As far as I was concerned, I put it down exactly the same as in the book. Every question like that.

05:30 "Aw," he said, "but you didn't put it down like the notes I gave you. It might be like in the book but it's not like the notes that I gave you." See so there you are. "Nitwit, he doesn't even know what's in the book," I thought. He certainly knows a certain standard. He's an English officer so after that you made sure you put down what the teacher wanted you to put down, not what the answer was. But that stood me in good stead I think. It might have saved our life.

06:00 We were over in England later on. We had to fly and a terrible storm come up. We had to fly between Rathlin Island – it's through the north of Ireland and Scotland – and the Mull of Kintyre and this only left about two miles to go through and we were flying right down on the water because there was a stinker of a wind and a storm. And we were going along and suddenly I noticed that the temperature suddenly dropped about eight or ten degrees.

06:30 We had a thermometer in front of us as navigators. And suddenly it come back to me. I think it must have been from out of that book. If your temperature drops it shows you've gone through a cold front and you've passed through it and the temperature drops and therefore the wind will always change a certain degree and if you are in the northern hemisphere you should take ten degrees off what you find because the wind will have changed.

07:00 And we were flying through there and suddenly it come to me that that means the temperature's dropped. It was the first and only time I think I ever noticed that and we've gone through the front; should take ten degrees off. And I sort of wondered, "Oh I might as well," I thought. "I don't know what we're doing. We're flying into rocks as we are. It won't make any difference if we take ten degrees off." The books used to say that so I took the ten degrees off

07:30 and I think that saved our lives because it was shortly after that the captain, he said, "Cam," – he used to call me Cam. "Cam," he said, "there's a great wave's crashing into rocks just off our starboard. Is that all right?" And I said, "Oh that's good. That means we've got through out into open sea ahead of us." And if we hadn't have taken that ten degrees off I think we would have hit those rocks.

08:00 Anyway, it shows you what book learning can do.

So what other things did you learn as part of your navigation training?

Oh well you learnt how to plot things out on a bit of paper you know. You went there and you went there and you went there and you went there and where you would be in a certain time if you'd go so far in a certain length of time and you'd plot that out. We had to do it that way. It was called deduced

08:30 D.R. it's referred to as and that stands for Deduced Reckoning. Not a lot of the navigators knew that deduced reckoning was called DR and so that was the main thing for navigation at Mt Gambier. And then you do certain things; how far would you fly before you come back or go on if you suddenly found you're running out of petrol.

09:00 You know, radius of action – there were various names for them and if the ship left a certain place two hours before you start and was steaming a certain way, where would you go to intercept it, you know and all these sorts of things. But there were a lot of things like that. But that was mainly what it was and then there was meteorology as I said. And there was photography. We had to learn to take photos.

09:30 You'd photograph shipping and that. That's an observer's job you see and we had to learn Morse code,

signalling with an old lamp and dropping bombs – we didn't drop bombs there. Anyway, there was quite a lot. I've got me – somewhere here…

10:00 **Can I just ask you about being a photographer. That was part of your job as a navigator observer?**

Wasn't very complicated. You always had better photographers who took charge of the equipment and tell us where to have it set it and so forth.

Did that include a cine gun or cine camera that you had?

No, it wasn't a movie camera. It was just a fixed,

10:30 a big box and an aerial. It'd take good photographs from up high. It was just about that square and you just aimed and took the picture. You got to take the sights on the thing.

11:00 **What were you photographing exactly?**

Well it was shipping mainly in the wartime. If you went over to an enemy port and that and you'd take photos and show what ships were in there and so forth. Mainly that, oh well anything like that to do with the war. They used to photograph trenches and that. I was in coastal command at that time so it was mainly to do with shipping. I think that's the main things about Mt Gambier. Although there used to be a bus that used to bring out, I suppose they would have all been girls. I don't think they brought any boys out to a social evening once a week.

11:30 And they'd pull out and we used to play little games and all and have some supper and girls from Mt Gambier. You weren't allowed to go outside of the drill hall and all that sort of thing. So we sat there and play games and talk. That was another thing at Mt Gambier.

How did they get the girls?

I don't know how they got the girls. They were mainly from church groups I think.

12:00 I was a Presbyterian so I went to the Presbyterian church there and somebody asked me to go home from there and I went home to a house and I used to go there and study every weekend I had off. There was this house. The girls there they were in their thirties I think and their mother, Mrs. Watson. They had a station somewhere out in Victoria near Mt Gambier.

12:30 And one of the girls married an airman later on. I know that. But it was nice to get into a house and be able to sit there at a table and do your study and flowers around the room and everything, really nice y'know. The people weren't short of money really. That was Mt Gambier.

13:00 Then we said we'll have to go and learn to drop bombs and fire machine guns and we went to Sale to do that. We call it Fulham. It had been part of an old station that was called Fulham Station. Today they call it West Sale and it doesn't exist now. So we went there and we flew in the planes and they all got shot up.

13:30 Messerschmitts, the old Fairey Battles. They were just useless and they were pretty useless for what we used them because the pilot sat in them and you sort of got on your belly underneath the pilot and looked through glass to bomb aim. You also had an engine in front of you and the oil used to come back and cover the glass anyway.

14:00 **What sort of planes were they?**

That was a Fairey Battle. They were the ones that went out to bomb bridges and that when the Germans were advancing towards France you know and they'd send ten of them out and one of them would come back. That's always the way there were. They were useless to fight against planes. They were supposed to be but they discovered straight away they were no good. So they sent them out for us to bomb on them.

14:30 And then we had to do gunnery. Now the gunnery mainly consisted of – they used to have these turrets and you moved 'em around and what they'd have would be a light in the turret and around the walls of the big hangers, they had a line, a black line mark going in different angles and what you'd have to do, you'd have to sit there and keep the light on the thing, moving it around so you'd have to get control of it.

15:00 We did a lot of that. And we also then had to go to free gunnery. Anyway, it was a biplane, the last biplane they had.

Was that the Hawker?

Hawker…

Hawker Demon?

15:30 Demon, that was it. You know them all better than I do. Now Hawker Demon, nice looking plane and you still got in the back. The pilot got in the open cockpit in the front. You sat in the back. You had to

put a strap around your waist and you clipped it on the bottom of the thing in case when he turned over you didn't get tipped out. And you had a machine gun up there that you moved around.

16:00 They were called, they were gas uprights. They were the ones they had in the First World War. And you moved that around and you had to hold the handle and put your chin on it and aim it. Anyway, we had to fly along and shoot at a target on the ground. They had about ten foot, ten metre square and all raked sand. They used to keep it raked. And we flew over that, oh fairly low,

16:30 and you had to shoot 100 rounds into it. Well, and you were supposed to allow for the speed of the plane and that. But I was always a bit of a cheat because I said, "Well you've got to allow about ten foot," I suppose it was, "for the movement of the plane as you went along." And I picked out a bush that was ten foot away from the target and I aimed the sights on that all the time.

17:00 And so it was I found I got about 92% hits and no-one ever got this sort of thing you know. But that's how it was. I wasn't shooting at the target I was shooting at this bush that was the right distance away from it. Oh well.

Why were you being trained in gunnery if you were a navigator?

Oh well, all the bombers would be because you sort of got to take your place in the turret and when we got in Wellingtons

17:30 I had to take the front turret if we got into a fight. The navigator had to take the front turret and there was a gunner took the back turret and the other people had other jobs to do. While I was up right ahead they were still working but I was the front turret man. And so then we finished up there. They gave us our wings.

18:00 We all had to line up and they gave us these flying Os for an observer. Later in the war they cut them out and they called us navigators and the orders came out that you had to change your O and put an N on but we didn't change them because we'd been given O and that showed we were an old timer and none of us did, hardly any of us did. So they gave us our Os and we got, went past through Melbourne and I'd have a day or two at home I suppose,

18:30 Then we went on up to Nhill and they had Avro Ansons there, back to the Avro Ansons and we were learning to navigate by stars. You had to learn, well you had to learn a selection of stars around the sky where they, with which they could get one near you and then you took, measured how high it was;

19:00 the altitude of it and you had to have the time down right to a second. Every day we used to have to keep a log of how many seconds our clock lost and that because you see every second means two miles or something and you had to have the time right. And at a certain time you got to a certain altitude and they had books of tables. You didn't work it out like Captain Cook. They sat down and worked it all out but

19:30 they put it all in tables and you'd find the table a certain date, a certain angle and it'd tell you and you got a certain altitude. It told you where to mark it on your map so you drew a line on the map and you were somewhere on that line. That's all it told you. And then you'd get another star, that's why you had to have a selection of stars. You'd get another one, there was an angle, take a writing of that and you'd have another line drawn.

20:00 And where those lines crossed you'd say, "Well you were on one line two minutes ago and you were on another line two minutes later," and you had to sort of then shift the lines and you'd work out where you were. And you'd get it down to about five miles I suppose when you were in the air. They used 'em a lot flying across the Atlantic, the planes that were flying across to England but …

Is that what you call deduction…?

Astronavigation.

20:30 **Astronavigation, not deducting navigation?**

No. Astronavigation so it was only for emergencies and then Coastal Command, well we were usually flying down near the water and clouds all around you so we couldn't use it much there so I never used it. A couple of times I might have used it in practice but never much.

21:00 One day we got an order come out that Campbell and different ones had to report down to the station's headquarters. So, down we went and thought, "What's going on here?" We went in there and they sat us down in rows and these doctors came down with little hammers and they hit us in the kneecaps and all these little things that they do and so finally, after a while we discovered that that was because we'd been nominated to get commissions and we had to be checked

21:30 for our medical situation and so I think we all passed. And then this was just before we finished up at Nhill and they gave each of us a strip of, very thin ribbon; a pilot officer's ribbon. It was very thin and said, "Now, when you report to your next station," that was at the embarkation depot at Ascot Vale, the old showground in Melbourne,

22:00 "When you report there you'll have that put around your arm and they'll give you a bit of paper that told you how far to put it up your arm and that to show you were a pilot officer." So we did it. We had a

week's leave I think. Then I went to Ascot Vale and I walked up to the gate. There was this fellow on the gate, a guard and I said to him, "Can you tell me where do we report for the officer's mess?" and he slapped to attention and saluted and said,

22:30 "Such and such, Sir!" he said. I felt that he was insulting me. I felt my reaction was to give him a clout because he was being insulting. And suddenly I realised I got to put up with this for the rest of my service life, this "Sir" business. And so we went into there.

So being commissioned, that must have been a bit of a thrill for you, was it? What did you think about that?

23:00 Oh well it was just progressing along and we had another job to do but we, I suppose we were a bit proud to be commissioned, yeah. But it meant a lot when we come to go on boats and that and you'd get a bed and the other fellows wouldn't.

Did you have to take on additional responsibilities?

Yeah you do have to. Being commissioned means that if they want someone to put in charge they put you in charge.

23:30 and if they wanted someone to blame if something went wrong, they'd blame you and then you get better conditions and that and you get called 'Sir' if someone wanted to be called 'Sir'. So being commissioned, it really meant a lot when you come to go overseas

24:00 So down at, while I was in at the Showgrounds they gave us a proper uniform, an officer's uniform. The other one had just been an airman's uniform. We got another uniform made of barathea cloth instead of just tweed cloth and you had the bands and that on the arms for us and we had to get the full kit.

24:30 Now blankets, overcoat, uniform, two singlets, two underpants, socks, shoes and everything and you had to pay for it. You got the bill for it. Later in the war they didn't make 'em pay. We had to pay for everything. We even had to pay for a holster for our revolver. A full kit. That was given to us. We collected it and had it.

25:00 A big heavy overcoat. They were really heavy those air force overcoats and then fellas would give lectures occasionally. A fella who got out of Malaya was telling about how the Japs had fought there and the best thing to have wasn't a .303 rifle, that was a shotgun fired in the jungle area and one funny thing happened there.

25:30 Those little kiosks that they sort of demonstrate things and they put fibrous plaster up around the walls and then you open the wall then you can look in and see what they're trying to sell and demonstrate. And they put fibrous plaster up in those places and it didn't keep the cold out very well, this one layer of fibrous plaster and the hut that I was in, there was about six beds slept in and six weren't. And they all had four blankets on each.

26:00 So I got into them and I put two extra blankets underneath me on those wire stretchers and a couple of extra over me and then my brother Don had joined up and he went into there filling time and they said, "Send him around. You can go and make the officers' beds in the officers' rooms and he went in there and he's making the bed and he sees 410036. And just after he thought, "This fella knows how to look after himself," and it was my bed he was making. Anyway…

26:30 So then one day they said to us, you can – we're going to get on a train. You have your final leave. I used to go home from there for the weekend. You'd go out to the Albion gates. They used to be gates but there's an overpass now. You'd hitch hike there and people would pick you up.

27:00 That was getting out in the suburban train.

Where were you now?

I was going out to Rockbank to see some people there. And then I started to see a girl up there, one of the girls I'd known for years. And used to go and sit at her place and then her father generally ran me back. So then we had our final leave and when we were on

27:30 Number 1 platform in Spencer Street, that girl and her mother and father went down to see us off. And that's a memory I have of Number 1 platform in Spencer Street and all those people crying there because they're all seeing their airmen off, a trainload of airmen and they were all thinking it was the last – well it was the last time we saw each other and people were very miserable. And so we got in that train and headed off to Sydney.

28:00 And there was – this comes in again. I don't know that it made much difference but we were commissioned officers so we should have got special treatment but there was eight of us to a carriage. These was these corridor carriages which you went into each one. We sat four and four and what we did was the kitbags, we got all the kitbags and we put them between the seats because after a while we wanted

28:30 to stretch out. Now we filled – almost filled up between the seats with the kitbags so you could sort of lie across there and I got up in the end of the luggage rack. I slept in the luggage rack. Another fella

slept on the other side. Then we got to Albury and we had to all get out of course and get into another train. Then we got into Sydney and we got out. They lined us up on the platform. The fella said, “You’re not going to be here long.” Well the officer, I should call him, not a fella.

29:00 He said, “You’re not going to be here long.” He said, “You’re going out to Bradfield Park to have a meal and then we’ll give you some American money and then you’ll get on the boat.” So that’s what we did. They took us out in buses to this air force place, I think at Bradfield Park and we had a feed; eat in the mess there and then they gave us American money and drove us down to the wharf and we went onto the boat.

29:30 That night. So we thought when we were sent to Sydney we were going to get a few days in Sydney and have a look at Sydney but we didn’t get that look.

So what was the ship that you were put on?

It was called The Noordam. It was a Dutch liner, one around the Islands. It had been carrying passengers and freight and it had on

30:00 about ten young Dutch married women and most of them had babies with them I think and they’d escaped out of the Guinea isle, and Java isle and somehow they’d got down to here and they’d been given a passage across to America working their way home to somewhere they wanted to go where they had relatives or something. And they were on the boat and me being, this is where the commissioning

30:30 come in fairly handy because we were in passengers’ quarters only there was two of us to a room where there had been one before. We had this passenger section. There was a lot of airmen going over to start training in Canada and they were all in the holes sleeping in the – they had steel and canvas bunks made and five deck they were.

31:00 And they were down there. There was a sign they weren’t allowed to come up into the passengers’ quarters. No way were they allowed to go through that gate. And we were up there with ’em. And it rather amused me to see those Dutch, young Dutch women. Each one of them had about six fellas following them around all the time wanting to talk to them.

31:30 And but I got onto another thing. There was an agent general for Victoria in London. It was a fella called Sir Louis Busser. He and his wife, they’d come home to some sort of talk to the government and they were on the way back. And they were there and they were great Chinese chequers players. So another fella and I, a mate of mine, the four of us played Chinese chequers from here to America.

32:00 We were sometimes thrown on deck games and that sort of thing. Well in that ship it was unescorted. I did hear rumours it was the first one to take anyone across the Pacific unescorted to go to training in Canada. That might be only a rumour, it was the rumour we heard. The only thing we saw on the way across the Pacific was a couple of little armed atolls.

32:30 They were just little – they weren’t islands. They were just like little – they were islands but they were only very small, just little atolls. And that was all we saw until we saw an island just getting near San Francisco and a plane come flying around looking at us. Just before that, the morning before that – some of us were picked out, us officers,

33:00 and we had to go up with binoculars and watch for submarines and torpedoes in the half hour before dark. Oh I don’t think it was half an hour. I think it would only have been a quarter of an hour – before dark and after dark. So you went up there and you were watching out to see if anything was coming through the sea at us. And this morning, just before the sun was up, suddenly the ship started to do all sorts of

33:30 turning and twisting and some of the fellas that were up still in their beds they got thrown out of their beds and what it was that, to the west of us was a Liberty ship and the ship become aware that there was something over there and they couldn’t see what it was and they couldn’t see the outline of it. Of course it could see our outline against the light of the morning coming and so they

34:00 went into all kinds of evasive action in case it was a submarine or something that’d shell ’em but then as the sun got a little bit higher they saw it was only a Liberty ship so they settled down again. And they could see us against the light but we couldn’t see them. So we got to San Francisco and went underneath that Golden Gate Bridge and pulled in there somewhere. We got off with our kit. And we were standing around

34:30 on the platform and perhaps Australians could do with a bit more bossing around at times like that because in about a quarter of an hour they said, “Righto, we’ll get on a ferry and go across to Oaklands on the other side of San Francisco harbour,” and I looked around; there was only half the fellas left. So I was one fella and I said, “Quick, go up and tell ’em to come back. We’re going across,

35:00 in a quarter of an hour we’ll be settin’ across the harbour.” So I set off up and a few other fellas and I get up in the corner of the road and I see Australians disappear around the far corner. I think there was a couple that were left behind but anyway, I caught up with most of them. Then we went across to Oaklands and got on a train; a special train. Then it took us up to Vancouver in Canada and it went up what they call the Shasta Route.

35:30 It’s a route that runs, a scenic route that runs through the, well through the big mountains. And it was autumn and all the trees had all the autumn colours on. It was really beautiful. We got up there and we got to Vancouver. I bought myself a new watch there because the ones you could buy in Australia – we had to buy our own watches in Australia and the only one I could get

36:00 was sort of an oblong one. It wasn’t really good for navigating and I bought a big one there in Vancouver. I don’t know where it disappeared. I didn’t have it when I came home from the war though. And when we got on the train there in Vancouver to go over into Canada. And that night as the train pulled out – it was one of those Pullman carriages where you sleep. You turn the seats into beds and there’s one up above and curtains you pull down.

36:30 And so we got into that. It was a special train for us. We when we went to sleep that night, it was raining. And all night the train was puff, puff, puff, puff and it was still puffing the next morning, climbing up hills. And everything outside the window was white. We were in the snow. We never seen snow and at midday it pulled up at the top of the Rockies [Rocky Mountains]. It’s called Fields.

37:00 We had to get out for 20 minutes and we started throwing snowballs at each other and all sorts of things. Then we went on and went across down into Calgary. Calgary was the place. It was all snow, all white, all over the country and I went out with another chap, me mate I think. A chap called Gordon Cashmore. He died ten years ago

37:30 because he was ten years older than me during the war so he died nine years ago down in Hobart. Anyway, we went out there and nearly froze to death. We had our overcoat on and everything but oh, the cold just got into you and we had, we just managed to make it back to the train to get out of it. And then we discovered the thing to do if you were out in those towns and it was cold was to go into a supermarket. So everybody would duck into a supermarket to warm up. So anyway,

38:00 we got on the train and they took us across to a place called Brandon, which was a Canadian – they called it a manning depot. It was something like what Ascot Vale had been here you see, where people got there until they sent them out somewhere else. This Canadian depot, the officers in charge well there were perhaps about half a dozen or ten. And they were living quite like royalty. They were living in a big hotel in Brandon and

38:30 they weren’t going to, well there was 44 of us sent over and we were all trained navigators. They had no idea we were told that we were going over there to make it crews. If they had 40 of these number of navigators extra they would be able to make up these 40 crews only because they found they were short of navigators. They had the pilots and they had the other ones. But by the time we arrived in Canada they found they already had them trained.

39:00 They’d just lost track of them. They didn’t have computers to keep tracks of things in those days. And so they had to leave us then to the whole camp for us to fit in. So we were at this manning depot and the officers were living in the pub and they weren’t going to let us just go and live in a pub so they, or a big flash hotel, American hotel, so they sent us out to be billeted at a permanent Canadian artillery school which was there at Brandon.

39:30 And we were billeted in it. It was very interesting because we had to go and attend dining in dinners twice a week where you had to come in and you’d march in and you’d pass the line a certain way and people had to get up. The Vice-President had to get up and say, “Gentlemen, the Queen,” or, “the King,” as it was then. And you’d all had to have your little drink and that. It was a good thing. I never struck it anywhere else.

40:00 And one thing there, they had a dinner gong. Shining brass thing and it had a label on it. It was the last shell fired by the Canadians in the ’14–18 War. And then the thing came that my mate Gordon, he came back and he said, “I was down there,” he said, “in the room,” he said, “and the signal came in they wanted

40:30 14 chaps to go to Dorval. And we didn’t know what Dorval was. And he said, I said, “Well that’ll be just fine. There was about 14 of us 40 who were from the course before and just been waiting around and they’d been put in to go over there too. And he said, “Send those fellas off on the course to Dorval first and that’s leave us all mates.” So they went off to Dorval and only to find out later that Dorval was the

41:00 choice posting of the lot because that was the one flying planes across to England; back and forth across to there, the Ferry Command. And anyway after they’d left and gone, of course they had some celebrations before they left and the big brass dinner gong was missing! They’d pinched the dinner gong, the last shell fired in the ’14–18 War. And I heard later on from the …

41:30 around the grapevine that they’d pitched it out somewhere on the way in some isolated place in Kandu and they sobered up the next day, said, “We got to get rid of this,” and threw it out of the train but I guess they’d get it back unless they threw it in the river because it had it written on it what it was. They couldn’t get it back in time.

Tape 4

00:30 This place was about half a mile I suppose it might have been a quarter of a mile from where our office was and where we slept in the Canadian artillery school. A couple of days we were there without artillery while they were out in the snowstorm and they were firing over open sites and things but fellas were trying to take pictures and it's terrible hard to take a picture of

01:00 a 24 Panda firing. They wanted to get the flash coming out. Every time it went off they shook and shattered and they clicked the camera when they shouldn't have. Anyway and we had to walk from where we were and they said, "What we have to do is to go and do a bit of PT." So every morning we went and we did half an hour of playing PT with the. Playing basketball and

01:30 of course we didn't know anything about it but we knew a bit more after a few months, weeks and we had to march up for this and now the first thing that we found is that you can't march Australian marching on ice. March along swinging your arms straight from the shoulder to the wrist and swinging them. You do that and you end up flopping on the ground you had to march this way to keep your balance, a different marching.

02:00 Another thing we were marching along one day and with just an ordinary cap on, an army cap and a fella riding by on a bike he said, "That fellas ear's frozen," and I looked at the others and they looked around. It was my ear that was frozen and I've got big ears that stick out of course. In Canada they have a different

02:30 scheme. The ambulance station is a sort of a first port of call for any illnesses and they go to the ambulance station instead of, you know, you go down and report sick and they give you aspro or something. Ordinary people and they said, "Go up to the ambulance station and tell them. They'll fix you up," and so I went up there by myself

03:00 and the fella was there, "Oh yes just sit down there in the warm room and it'll soon thaw out," and that's what I had to do. It stung a bit as it was thawing out. But the result was and my mate said to me, "Well we've got to get some Canadian style hats," which is fur hats. So we went hunting round, found a manufacturer so we went to their factory

03:30 and we each got one the Canadian Oxford hats. Beaver I think it was well we got one each and you could pull them down over here. So that was that and freezing my ears. We just hung around there, we went in to Winnipeg which was about 40 minutes train ride from Brandon where we were and

04:00 at the station the women used to man, you know, they'd give information, they'd give you a cup of tea and that in most places and so Gordon got talking to them and next thing he's got a woman invited him to go home and spend the night with them. So we went home with them and so every time we went to Winnipeg we spent the night with this family called

04:30 the Camels. They were only working people too. They weren't in the bracket of the swish people, just comfortable people. It really got me down there that say you went to the corner shop to buy some milk and you had to go and put your heavy overcoat on and ear muffs and everything, shoes on. It was a bit of a bind we weren't used to it as Australians. Just duck out and get, no ducking out there you'd freeze.

05:00 Well then we had to move on oh we got American leave and we were allowed to go down to the United States as long as we didn't spend much money no more than about 10 dollars and these people we stayed with, the Camels, they were connected with the Christian scientists I think with their church and they knew people down in Minneapolis.

05:30 They knew them through the church and they arranged for us to go and stay with them. So down we went and it was an interesting thing that the train was coming along and it had to go into another town or somewhere. Anyway the train went in and it was going to be for a certain length of time. So we went up the street and we got our favourite meal which was raisin pie and ice-cream that was our favourite meal and

06:00 raisin pie and ice-cream and the woman behind she says, "Don't they teach you?" No, no first of all she was thinking we were Americans and the Australia on our shoulders meant that we'd served in Australia there ewer a few getting around with Guadalcanal on their shoulders and she reckoned that just meant that we were and our uniforms were blue and we were firemen, arrogant firemen who'd been in Australia and when we convinced her we were

06:30 Australians she said, "Don't they teach you good English in Australia I have trouble understanding you?" oh well a few words and sentences they had trouble understanding us. They didn't have footpaths or anything they had sidewalks and this sort of business and no torches they were flashlights and then we came out of that and then we went on to Minneapolis. I had to find my way out to these people's places and

07:00 it's a fairly big town Minneapolis and I was getting along trying to find it, walking along looking at the streets. Their numbered like Mildura, there's avenues and streets, 1st Street, 2nd Street, till you get up to about 56th Street or something and a police car pulled up and he said, "What are you looking for?" and I told him and he said, "Hop in we'll take you." So they drove me up in that in the police car. I think before I might have got in

07:30 on a tram. Now the trams, I was going to say like the trams used to be in Ballarat but you wouldn't

know that. But the centre part of the tram was glassed in and on each end there was an open part with the curtains on on each end. Well I got on and there was a Negro sitting on the end and I sat down with him to have to him and they wouldn't talk to me and then finally a lady said,

08:00 "You shouldn't be sitting here, you know. This is for Negroes." I wasn't supposed to be there white people were supposed to keep in their own part even though Minneapolis was not supposed... Well it's all coloured now isn't it. They were supposed to have escaped from the slavery up to those countries. So that was an experience and Mrs. Canal there they had one of the sons going to the university in Minneapolis and they said,

08:30 "Well you'll have to go out and show the university." So I went out to them and they lived in sorority houses or fraternity houses, sorority houses that was for girls. They got together and this went on and on, they had a certain old house and it would be owned by sort of a club of fellas and they'd pay a cook and the cleaners

09:00 and that and they just all lived in that house together and the girls had the same sort of a thing. So he took me out to that and I had tea with them and then they said, "We'll take you for a drive round and show the bits of the university," and they took me, it might have been before tea, took me and showed me all the armour that the American footballers wear. The armour looked like as if they were going to go into battle and they got it

09:30 out of the cupboard and showed me what they put on and they had funny helmets too. Well then after tea they took me round to show me the bowling allies and that's their pride of the university. There was this great bowling alley and there was so many lanes and we went up. Then they went around to a drop in place and just soft drinks and that and these

10:00 fellas were typical university fellas I suppose because suddenly one fella would get the idea and he'd stand up and he'd say, "Now I want to make an announcement," he said. "We're fortunate today to have Errol Flynn with us." And he says, "Stand up, Errol, and bow to people." And I'm supposed to be Errol Flynn so I stood up and bowed and they all clapped their hands. I did look a bit like him in those days too. But thing was that Errol Flynn

10:30 was number one news because he was in a court case for having intercourse with a lot of under aged girls in a yacht or something see and so he was popular and this going around they said we're going to go out and they said, "How are we going to get around now we've got to get girls to go with us. We'll ring up the sorority house?" and they said, "Well we've got to have Peg cause she's got the car," and so there was 4 fellas and

11:00 4 girls in this single-seater car and so I think 6 got in the front and then 2 left to get in the back. So I had to get in the back with one of the girls. But the boot opened up, it wasn't one opened to sit in it. It just opened up above your head and you crouched forward. So I was in that that's the way we travelled round and I think that's the main thing that happened that

11:30 night. It just went, they had their joke calling me Errol Flynn. Mrs. Canal took me into a radio show quiz quest and they come down and they asked me, they said, "What is AWL?" [Absent Without Leave] I think it was. Anyway it was different to ours, we'd say AWOL and they said AWL, and so I told them what it sort of might mean and they said, "Oh

12:00 that's good, that's good, you know where you are or something," and another thing that happened there in Minneapolis was this Canal fella worked in Eaton's Store, a big supermarket and he took me in the back and showed a bear that had been brought in, a big brown bear, not a grizzly but someone, the farmers would find them hibernating and would kill them

12:30 and they'd get a fair bit of money and he said people like to eat bear meat just simply because they're ancestors. When they come to Canada bear was something you had and they like to have a bit themselves and I looked at the flesh and the smell stayed on my fingers just like you'd been skinning a fox, terrible smell. But anyway I saw that bear hanging up at the back of the place chopped up to be sold and so we got back from there

13:00 then we went on.

So I'm wondering if we should wind up Canada and get back to your next posting?

Yeah well they posted us from there and they said to go across to Prince Edward Island. Now that's where Anne of Green Gables is located in Prince Edward Island and there was this training school there and they wanted to give

13:30 us a refresher in navigation at sea. So we were just travelling by ourselves then we went several days travelling from Winnipeg across and so we had a few days up our sleeves so we went down to Niagara Falls and we went out to the snow. We could just see the edge of the Falls and then we were frozen so we ducked into a café that we was standing in front of and ordered a cup of coffee

14:00 or something and there was 3 other fellas there that was about in late 30s I suppose and one of them came up and he said, "Ah flying boys," and, "Yeah," and he said, "I was a flying boy, 1918," and of course he wasn't much older. Well he was. He was, you know, 1918 1938 it's only 25 years or so and he

started talking about

14:30 flying around and what you had to do in planes and he was completely foreign to it. We knew it, it was just as different as us as what it would be talking to the jet officers today. So anyway we went on from there, we went up to Montreal we stayed with some people in Montreal. Finally we got to Prince Edward Island and the train to Prince Edward Island used to go on a ferry and the whole carriages ran

15:00 on rails on the ferry and then it went across on an icebreaker to get it across to Prince Edward Island. It was winter time. So we had to go across. Prince Edward Island was mainly fox farms, growing foxes to get the skins off and we were supposed to be revising our navigating over the sea. But it was just like over the land because the Bay of Thunder I think where it is where Mount St. Lawrence

15:30 it's further across than what you can see and it was all frozen solid. So it was no different navigating to over that and navigating over the land. Anyway we were there we passed out of there and then we went down to Nova Scotia to operational training unit on Hudson aircraft and they were hunting for submarines. The submarines were over there, you know, signalling when ships that tell the wolf packs where they were and we had to fly out

16:00 in a Hudson and one trip they attacked a submarine that was close to Nova Scotia but that was a good flying, a good plane.

What was the plane called?

Hudson's and they were good planes that they had them in the beginning of the war because the Hudson's flew out from England to Singapore to fight the Japanese planes in Singapore. They weren't a

16:30 fighter but they had to do that and we had some Hudson's too and up in the island they had Hudson's as well. We were using that time, the only planes we had in..

They had a twin engine?

Yeah twin engine planes with single wing. So we went there and we flew around. I had a good time there because again I went to church there and went home with a Mrs. Church

17:00 and went home and had dinner with them then went out to the cemetery and put some flowers on the family graves and next thing I could be there any time I liked, I'd go on around to see their daughter. She showed me round a lot. There was a lovely thing in that part of the country is the apple trees. It's a great apple growing place and they were all out in flower. I can remember yarning to her lying under the

17:30 the apple trees yeah and she showed me round the farm and the cattle and grubs in the back like witchetty grubs.

Was that a romance?

No it wasn't well no it was as romantic as my romances were. The trouble with me was that I'd grown up as a little boy on a farm.

18:00 Connect with animals that were mating all the time and if the animals get romantic the things happen and the next thing they've got young ones. So I felt that to get romantic was well on the way to heaven, a baby and I didn't want that because of course there were no pills in those days. I never saw a condom either in those days. But I suppose they were there but I never saw them. I went to…

18:30 So anyway I used to lie under the apple tree and talk to this girl called Beth and then we got final leave we were going over to England and a weeks leave in New York and I said, "I'm not going I'm tired. I just want to stay here and lie around and stay in the air force place," and go out to… And I went out with…

19:00 that was the name of the people, and they were produce merchants and I went out every day with a Negro driver with a truck load of super phosphate up into mountains to deliver it to the various farms and I found it very interesting and it was very refreshing and well restful. But on the way down there, here's a tale comes up, and there was one chap they was only supposed to take I think $50

19:30 with them for to the trip into America. You see Canadians would hold onto their money and instead having declared what they had when they went in and he had about $1000 and most of them did and on the way down on the train in those four men carriages where you sleep, someone pinched all his money. He'd lost $1000 he couldn't do anything about it because he didn't have it when he left and so when he got to New York

20:00 with no money his mates passed out around and they made it up for him. So he had a good time and he had to pay them back. He got over to England but he was a fella he couldn't control his money and next thing they formed a company to get his pay on pay day and then issued it out to him in drabs I think to get it back and Jack was his name and that was

20:30 something that happened there when they went down. Anyway then they put us on a big French ship in Nova Scotia anyway in the port there and it was something equivalent to the Queen Mary only French. It wasn't quite as big but it was the best the French had and there was 9000 trained airmen on board going across the Atlantic

21:00 and she went across unescorted with speed and that and I was given a job. I was OC [Officer Commanding] of one of the forward latrines. That meant I had to be responsible for it being clean for this captain to inspect and everybody said it was a terrible rough trip and in that forward latrine there you'd get down and the ship would drop down like this and

21:30 you'd put your hands up to stop the roof hitting you and it never did and they it'd drop down then come up and you nearly got your legs pushed out from under you. Everybody was amazingly seasick and this forward latrine. They had a thing like a cattle trough. That was like the toilets, a long trough and

22:00 it amazed me. I'd go in and I'd say to the sergeant, "I want four fellas to help me clean the 'trines," and the fellas would come straight off the bed. The speed at which they fronted up sort of surprised me and we'd go in and they wouldn't be in there for more than a couple of minutes and they'd be spewing everywhere like everybody else because of the smell and the mess and

22:30 I never got sea sick. So I had a rather big broom and I used to sweep it all up myself cause they'd be all sick. So that was that. We got across to England. We landed in Liverpool then my mate put him and myself down as baggage officers to come afterwards and supervise the unloading of the baggage of the ship. The other fellas all got on the special train and went off to Brighton

23:00 and we had to come the next day. That was an experience there was these Norwegians and they were the ones going, "Ja, ja, ja, ja," to each other and it was all getting around the getting round the ship. So it was beautiful in England at the time it was in May and there was all the flowers were out and everything was green grass and we got to Brighton, which is where they put the Australians, it was a holding place

23:30 and occasionally the Germans used to come over and bomb it and one day we were there in the mess and there was a great bang went off and it amazed me most of the fellas in the room fell down on the ground and started crawling around and these had been connected with the war more than we had and it was a dog who had blown himself up on a mine

24:00 in the beach because the hotel room was in the best position in Brighton and where the Prince of Wales used to stay there before the war. And so after while they sent us off for familiarisation, sent us out with the army and I went off with the army that was down in Kent just used to cross from where the Germans were and we went around

24:30 and I drove a war tank with them and I drove on their tanks and went around watched how they were fighting in the street and went and inspected a class B drill on land mines and we went home and we were having afternoon tea and there was a great thump and we all ran out and there was this great cloud of smoke going up out of the drill and the instructor had blown the whole class up.

25:00 I thought he was pretty careless and we were then on these land mines and that was that, enjoyed that week.

Were people injured? Did anyone die? Is that actually what happened, the instructor blew up the class?

Blew up the class yeah all these other people got killed in training, you know, and he blew them up because he was just careless somewhere. Suppose to be safe to handle but the way he was handling

25:30 you know, just tossing them around like he had loaves or bread or something and then they just sent me off to an aircrew officer school they called it. It was actually training people to escape out of Europe if you were shot down, you know, how they used to escape and they'd train people how to manoeuvre through.

26:00 In small arms training we fired revolvers, we threw Mills bombs and we stuck a few bombs, sticky bombs onto things and then we went out on manoeuvres where we would have to march across country, sneak across country while half of us were watching for us coming and the other half would creep though and so that was the aircrew officer school.

Tell me more about the escape training?

26:30 **Can you describe that?**

Well basically what is was we were in 2 lots in the afternoon. Well there was one they'd go out you would were divided off for a start into 8 people. You'd go out onto the track and they'd drop you off here and there and you had to get home without being seen apparently you're supposed to sneak your way home without being seen if possible

27:00 and that was interesting. Although I was a navigator and there was other navigators with me too but they made me the navigator for that group and it worked out all right because I saw on the map I think there was a lane that was all scrub that right the way where we were going right over the hill and we went up that lane.

What we you instructed to do if you were captured?

Well you had to do what you felt like doing I suppose.

27:30 If you were captured you only give your name, your rank and your number and that was the instructions, not always but you know, there was one of the 8 fellas coming back and one fella pulled up in a car and said, “What are you doing?” and, you know, he saw them. He was an officer too, an army officer, “What are you fellas up to here?” and suddenly they arrested him. They grabbed him and they came home in his car.

28:00 The training was we went out in the afternoon and about 200 fellas spread themselves out over about a mile and a half and you’re supposed to keep yourself hidden and other fellas tried to work across country and go through where you were and that was in the day time.

Were you operating any aircraft during that training?

28:30 No no it was simple and we were about a fit as we’d ever been at that time because we did a lot of marching and also drilling and we had one of the driller who drills some of the swishy sort of army sort of a guard and I was made the marker and you

29:00 had to march out and, you know, you’d come to attention and you’d have to drop yourself off the ground and land and turning and then at night time we had to spread ourselves out again and drew another lot. We were the ones that went through the lot at night-time and we took that long getting through it was a fair way. You see they were firing

29:30 blank rifles off all the time and I thought we were about half a mile from them. Well we were half a mile from them and I thought we were only a few hundred metres and we got down and we crawled and we were still crawling when daylight came and the others were all packed up and gone. So then we had to set off and march after them and we marched after them and we found them stopped having sausages and mash

30:00 that they’d sent out to them in a truck and we had a bit. Then we had to march I think it was 18 miles forced march after that and back and then they gave us the day off, we had the rest of the day off. Generally it worked towards escaping.

30:30 While we there, the bunch had been there before ours, one of chaps had got sick and we sent him to the Exeter Hospital and he got friendly with one of the nurses there and got engaged and he was getting married and my mate, particular mate was going to be his best man and it was to be the day that we finished the course and on the next day, the Saturday.

31:00 On the Friday a signal comes through for my mate to go back and fly his plane. They’d taken his plane he was flying out to the Middle East. He had to report back and they said, “Well the only thing to do you’ll have to take my place.” We couldn’t get in touch with the bridal party, they were out in the country. So I had to get cleared and go get on the train and they went to meet Gordon on the plane it was me that walked off

31:30 to be the best man. It was the farms out in Devon that was and I made one blue there. They reckon the bride and groom couldn’t see the bride on the day of the wedding and before the church in the morning he wanted something in his kitbag and it was up where the brides house was. So I went up to get it

32:00 I got it out and I locked the key in his kitbag. So then I had to go back and I had to get a razor blade and slowly cut all the thread and the seam and then sew it up again so he had his kitbag to go on his honeymoon. Anyway that wedding went all right and I called on them later, they lived

32:30 over in Perth. It was a funny thing because I rang up and then I went out with Cedric and his wife and she was an ordinary girl and they got married and when I went to see her she was an old white haired woman. I think she must have been 20 years older than Cedric was when they got married.

From there were you ready for ops by that stage?

Oh yes any time they sent us off but it was specific training for your job was

33:00 and you’d be called up and trained for it you see.

And were you by that stage set with a particular crew?

Yeah there’s a story in that too. When I went over to that OTU [Operational Training Unit] in Nova Scotia in the Hudson’s and we finished. We had to do so many trips you see to do the course, training course and we finished and there was still some to go and they said,

33:30 “Another crew another fella got pneumonia, the navigator,” so they said, “You fly this last trip, go with them and navigate on this last trip.” So off I went and then we got to England we found that Canadians went to one depot and Australians went to Brighton, English went to another depot and they gave everybody a crew number and if they wanted to get the crew back they just looked up their list and they sent out

34:00 all of these men to report and they gave me the crew number on the last crew I’d flown with. It was the one I did one trip with which was very upsetting to the rest of my crew and to me too. They wouldn’t

change it they said, “Oh no that’s the way we always do it, the last crew you flew with.”

Why was that upsetting for you?

Well we sort of got to know each other. We’d rely on each other I suppose you could say.

34:30 So then they had to go to Northern Ireland to crew up again as a navigator and coastal commander and got over there and you’d sort of all get in this great hanger and they say he’s growing up you see there’s the pilots, messing round with each other and find out who’s who and find who you want to fly with. They’d just leave it like that it was a messy sort of a thing really. It was all right if you knew each other a bit

35:00 but if you came in on the train the day before it wouldn’t mean much. You’d look at a fella and someone says, “Would you fly with me?” and you’d say yes you wouldn’t say no. I was crewed up with a fella called Bud Base and he was an American in the RCAF [Royal Canadian Air Force] and they made films about that. From Minneapolis he was and he joined the Canadian air force before the America came into the war and America at that time had their

35:30 United States army air force and they sent out letters to all these fellas that were in the RCAF, the Canadian air force that if they wanted to change over they could apply and go back to the American air force because they were Americans and he got a letter of this and just after we’d been at that place and we were flying on Wellingtons there which were a good old plane but they made a lot of noise when they’re travelling on the ground. They rattle and shake

36:00 and he said, “I’m going down to see about joining the Americans” and away he went and a couple of days later he came back and he had all these fancy uniforms, puce uniforms and yellow uniforms and green uniforms, all these uniforms and he’d joined the Americans and he said, “They said to me you’re a twin engine boy are you?” because we was flying Wellingtons you see, two engines.

36:30 “Oh we need some twin engine boys for Lightnings,” and they were really swishy-looking planes and so he became a lightening pilot. When we got into action some people that I’d stayed with in Minneapolis sent me over a cutting out of the paper where this Budd Base had killed himself in a Lightning. He’d done a tour in Europe, gone home

37:00 to teach others and flown right into the ground. So then he didn’t stay so then I got a Canadian who turned up late to join me and so we were flew together till the end of the war.

Who was he, what was his name?

He was Jerry Gruson, finished up a group captain. He could have stayed in the air force.

37:30 There was a funny story there. He joined the Canadian air force before the Empire Training Scheme came in. so he was just an ordinary air force bloke and when we finished and he got home to Canada and they said there will be an important notice on the notice board for everybody and he went down and

38:00 the notice board was there and his name wasn’t in it for some reason. He wanted to find out why he wasn’t on this list and they said, “But you’re in the permanent Canadian air force.” They said, “You joined up before the Empire Air Training Scheme and therefore you can’t get out of the air force. You’ve got to stay in the air force unless you want to. If you put in a special application to retire from the air force.”

38:30 You can get out these days quite easy but it’s going to take a special application and so he said, “I thought to myself,” – he wrote to me all this a few years later – “and I thought, ‘God, I’ve got no job to go to and may as well stay in it.’” But then he found when he was going to stay there that instead of staying as a flight lieutenant as he was, being a permanent he’d have to go back being a sergeant.

39:00 But as his commission to being a permanent air force was that they couldn’t leave everybody officers and so he had to go back to the sergeants mess and he said that was quite interesting to go back into the sergeants mess and they put him in the stores branch and then after a while he got to various places and he got married to a girl and

39:30 they had a couple of children too. I don’t think they had them at the time but he was posted out to a place called Gander which is way up the top of Labrador somewhere almost in Greenland and his wife couldn’t come. It was no place for wives there.

So you had a very strong bond, you and Jeremy?

Oh yes and anyway they did up an old

40:00 hunters cabin to Jerry and his wife to live in, the other fellas and then after he’d been doing this for about 10 years. He applied to get his commission back and to go back to flying and they said to him, “No you can’t go back to flying, we’re training all the young fellas now for flying but we’ll give you your commission back and we’ve got a special job for you.

40:30 So seeing you are on a stores branch, we want you to go over to England and organise a stores depot for the Canadians in England because the Canadians had gone over in the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty

Organisation] sort of business, the Canadian squadron and we want stores to be built up and you can go and built it up." And he said, "I went over and they took me up to Nottingham and they said, 'There's your basin,'" he said, "and there were all huts and that." He said, "I did it the easiest way."

41:00 I said, "You skipped the bulldozers." I said, "You put up a standard Canadian base so it's all brick and that," and so he did that. Then he was there for a while and then he went home to Canada and they put him in charge of writing a manual of stores procedure or something and next thing he was the Canadian representative where they all

41:30 control against the atomic bomb, you know, the Canadian..

Did you have much contact with him after the war?

No I think it was 30 years after the war that I found him because I was up in the church up in Maclean up in northern NSW [New South Wales] and there was a fella there who had been in the air force and I said, "I've written Jerry several times and I never get any answer."

Tape 5

00:30 **Now Wal we want to talk about training now and the lead up to D-Day. Now I know you were doing some training which involved firing torpedoes on some German cargo ships or something?**

Oh we were trained for that. At Limavady was where we were crewed up for that and we were just talking about that before.

01:00 We started off doing practice torpedo drops. The idea was that in the Mediterranean the Germans were supplying Rommel across the Mediterranean you see and they'd go out and it was night-time when you'd go across. So they had a scheme worked out which about 6 Wellingtons would go out together and a certain thing and they'd locate where the ships were

01:30 and that was easy to do. It was the electronic stuff, radar and when they got themselves in a certain position flying as a group, one would fly a certain way for so long and the others would fly a certain way and then one would come along dropping lights flares and it was supposed to be worked out that when he flew along and dropped the line of flares,

02:00 all the other Wellingtons would be coming in at the right place to torpedo the ships that should be in sight and that's what we were training to do. We over there was only training of dropping the torpedoes and handling torpedoes and that. That was in Northern Ireland and we trained in that for just about three quarters of what training had to be done. Then the signal would come through as it did on so many occasions:

02:30 'No more crews and torpedo dropping. Rommel's had it and we were no longer interested in that. We've got enough, we've got enough.' So we finished up just dropping depth charges for submarines. Now in that place it was the first trip we did as a crew there. We crewed up and I'd been (UNCLEAR) for the captain and they had to learn how to fly Wellingtons and convert it as they call it and made familiar with flying Wellingtons and then we all got in.

03:00 Before we went out we got into what they call the dummy plane in the hanger and we practiced there. We'd get out of the plane as if we crashed into the sea. Where we had to get out and everything and the captain had to sing out, "Ditching, ditching, prepare for ditching," and then I had to get all my maps and put them in the bag and see the food was all collected we had the food

03:30 and then everyone had a place to get out or to sit when we hit the water first. So we did that for an hour in the morning then we got out in the plane and flew out to sea to practice torpedo runs on a corvette or something that was out off Northern Ireland and to get out to there you had to climb out to a 1000 feet till you had some elevation

04:00 and then let down and so they were letting down to the sea to practice torpedo runs or drop torpedoes and in Wellingtons you had to be down 60 feet off the water otherwise the torpedoes would dive into the water. So you had to get them right and if you got too low they would skim along the water. You had to be at the right height and they had cameras to record all this. So we come out and let down. Now I was having to stand up. As the navigator I had to keep a record of

04:30 what we were doing. So I wrote in a log book what time we took off and so forth and then there was nothing else for me to write and we were practicing torpedo drops. So I took up and looked out the astrodome. That's what they call the thing up the roof that they look through and they take star shots and that and I'm watching there and the planes coming down and down and down and I'm looking at the water and the one thing I'm always doing as a navigator not trained pilot, trying to estimate how high I was

05:00 and then I start to see the drops bouncing down the tops of the waves and I thought it was a bit low and

about time he levelled out and just as I was thinking this all of a sudden over the headphones he yelled out, “Dinghy, dinghy ditching!” He was supposed to say, “Prepare for ditching,” but he was just about to hit the water so he just left out the ‘Prepare’, “Ditching.” And my place was straight below where I was standing with my back against it’s called the main spar

05:30 it’s the wings and it’s a good place for a crash. So and I just flopped down there and one of the things I had to do for preparing for ditching was to open the astrodome so we could get out. They say when you hit the water it sometimes distorts the shell of the plane a bit and it won’t come open afterwards you’ve got to open it first and I looked up and I thought oh still haven’t got that open. I’m not standing up now we’re about to

06:00 hit the water and the first I’ll do I must get that astrodome open and we hit the water. The water comes swirling through the plane and what it did, all the bomb aimers glass in the front, about that wide I suppose and that long, it all broke and water comes straight through and it was up to about here and I was sitting on the well the plane was up to there as it comes through around me and so I stood up

06:30 and there’s this astrodome sealed up of four knurled knobs they call it and you just turn them and fall and it dropped off. So I did the fall and by then the water was getting up to about here and then I pulled the astrodome down and see if it would come and it’d come down but it wouldn’t clear itself properly because there’s a curve in the top.

07:00 It’s supposed to come right out but it wouldn’t and then I worked out that in the thing, the dummy thing, the practice thing there was something missing and we were in the plane and they had what they call a compass steadying brackets and hinged on each side was two arms or double arms that come out and they made a frame around your body and they come together and there was a sleeve slid between them

07:30 and held them together and with that up, this thing couldn’t come down. It wouldn’t get down far enough to come out. So started then to take it off, but then one of the other crew had come up and he helped me saying all I needed was brute power and I could see it wasn’t brute power and so I gave a great yell at him and he stood back. “Stand back.” I said, “and let me do it,” and he did. Good job if he hadn’t have because we mightn’t have got out. Anyway he stood back and

08:00 I took those things off and dropped then the thing came out all right. So then I start passing out because I was under the practice I passed out all the food supplies and the maps and everything for the fellas inside the plane and then the captain said, “Forget about that Campbell. Get out.” The water was coming up now, it was up to about here. And anyway I passed it round and then I got out and then he said, “Where’s Charlie?”

08:30 And I didn’t know who Charlie was because it was the first time we’d flown together as a crew and he was the second pilot. “Where’s Charlie?” So I remember putting my head back in the plane to see if I could see Charlie and all this water was only about that far from the top by then and bouncing and bubbling and it was the parachute bags that had air in it so they were floating. No sign of Charlie and just then someone said, “Here he is.” And the second pilot,

09:00 when we’d hit the water, he’d been standing up. And what had made us hit the water was that he’d gone back to practice, and they’d told these fellas to practice every trip, they had in these short trips turning some taps off and turning other tanks on and so that if you’re way out there in the Atlantic, 8 hours out there you know what to do, to turn over to another tank and what he’d done he’d gone back and they hadn’t told him it was one of those tanks only drained

09:30 to the big tank and he turned the big tank off and he turned the other one on and it just flooded the big tank and that’s what happened. And he was just on his way back and hit the water and he was standing just behind his seat and he was thrown down into the node of the plane and he was a swimmer. That was his hobby and that might have saved his life because said he just kept pushing his way towards the light.

10:00 He was completely covered in water when he got down there and he pushed his way down and he went out through the broken bottom and then he come up in front of the wing and his popped up there and that’s when they yelled out there he is and he was spluttering there. So the captain and another fella ran over there and pulled him out of the water. I got in the dinghy because that was my job. The first navigator get in the dinghy, get the little pump going in case of there’s a bullet hole through it.

10:30 There was a pump that you’d pump air into it. You get in it and pump it up first of all. So I got in the dinghy, got the pump going, didn’t need it and before I got out we had to pull a toggle you call a little stick on the end of a string, a little grip and I couldn’t see it and in our practicing it was easy to find. It was the red toggle, couldn’t find it and that happened and when

11:00 I dropped the compass setting back down one went in front of it. So I was looking for that before we got for a while and anyway I thought I’ll get out because he said if you can’t find that toggle, it’s an inertia switch that when you hit the water in the crash it moves and it’ll switch the thing on itself and release the compressed air into the dinghy and the dinghy will

11:30 blow itself up and it’ll burst itself out of its container and that’s what had happened. But that’s where the thing was. So I got out and I got in this round rubber floating thing and another fella got in with me

and the other two fell out of the water and as the plane sank I never thought about this but as the plane sank it sort of flew

12:00 into the water. It didn't go straight down it went along making use of its wings and that. So it went forward and by then the water was covering the whole thing. The captain and the fella they got out of the water and the other fella was standing on the wing just coming to get in the dinghy with us and the dinghy's attached to the plane with a bit of string or cord. It's supposed to be I think a 7-pound breaking strain or something.

12:30 So when the plane sinks it won't pull into the water. But as it sank and started to tow it the string broke so the plane went just on and we were left sitting there and the plane going away from us and these 3 fellas out on the wing. By then the water was up and they were floating in their Mae Wests with their floats around their body. And if that happened you had a quoit, like those play quoits.

13:00 They had those quoits and each one had one of those, and roll up cord around it so that if someone was away they could throw it to him. Well I got that out and I threw it but something went wrong and it tangled up. So they were standing on the wing and the water up to there and they were slowly going further and further away and then I see the tail plane come drifting past just as the plane sank. I reached out and grabbed it and that

13:30 tugged us along up and they got in. So that was the 5 of us in it and so then the plane was gone and we were sitting there in the dinghy and I remember I started to float I thought this is a bit of fun. I had a joke with them and I started to rock the dinghy and the captain got quite crook, "Cut it out, Campbell. This is serious" but we were between the shore this boat that was out further

14:00 and then we were watching and slowly we saw that there was a boat out just coming in a straight line. So that meant that it turned towards us and it slowly come over and then they yelled out, "Can you paddle out to us because it's a bit shallow where you are?" and they had things that you put in your hand to paddle with. I got one, the captain got the other one, but I was far too strong for him and all we did was spin round in a circle

14:30 and anyway the boat was coming in very slowly and it would come in close enough and it was a pilots boat that had the pilots on that were going into Londonderry and they lived out on the boat there and we had to climb up a sort of a pig net up the side of the boat to get into it and then they took us down into a room, you know, a decent sized little ship or boat and I had the most loveliest cup of

15:00 tea I've ever had in my life. I think it was half rum really they gave us all a big mug of tea and then they brought up dry clothes and I remember one fella, you know, the crew got around and I had a white combination overalls with a big cross anyway an Irish flag, a big red cross on it.

How concerned for your life were you back there?

Oh we didn't think about life at all because

15:30 we were so close, you know. I remember when the plane was sinking and then I was in there and I thought well this is the way it's going to finish. I never expected to drown like a rat but we got out of it. I remember thinking that but we just kept getting out all the time and we got into those dry, nice dry clothes and everything and then we were sitting down there

16:00 we were talking to the crew and they said, "Oh and tonight we go into Londonderry and you'll be able to go to…" And the captain said, "You'll probably be able to go to a dance in Londonderry." And suddenly there's a little corporal at the door. I think he's saluting. I don't know. I think he was saluting. You'd think he mightn't have known not to salute in a room, but anyway. He said, "You can come aboard now sir if you are ready?" and I said, "Who are you?" "Oh," he said, "We were on the sea rescue boat. We've come out to get you."

16:30 We were about to get off this nice big boat, warm room and get in this little boat and every time it went through a wave and water would come splashing over us and he charted us into a place where they were based on the north of Ireland and then he brings out a bottle of plonk and says, "Righto," and we said, "Oh well we don't drink." None of us drank. "Oh," he said, "We can have it between ourselves. We're allowed to open a bottle

17:00 every time we have a rescue." So the 3 of them had it instead of us having it and then we had to wait till the truck came to pick us up and he came and picked us up and took us into Londonderry on a bumpy old road in the back of one of those 3 tonne trucks and we got there and we had to report then to the doctor and he says, "How are you? You all look all right," and we said, "Oh yes, we're good." We were great we were still alive, you know, everything was wonderful we were still

17:30 alive and he said, he gave us a pill and said, "Take this and go to bed." And we said, "What about Charlie? He's got his leg half cut off." And we were all right but Charlie's got a big cut in his leg. He was the fella who went through the gap. He had a big cut across his knee on one of his legs. So he had to get a dressing and then the captain says, "Now I've got a date at the dance tonight with one of the WAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Air Force]," he said, "I'm not going to bed."

18:00 And he was crook for a few days after. I went to bed and he went out for a dance. So that was one day out from there.

Was that the crew you were with for the rest of the war? Was that the 48 squadron or not yet?

No not yet that wasn't and in those planes we had a ASV operator that's an Air to Surface Vessel, that's a radar thing.

18:30 We didn't one of those later on it was only when we out finding submarines and then another time we set off, that was the first trip we had together. The plane was gone of course. They sent a diver down to have a look at it and that's what they found was wrong with it. The taps were turned off that could have got the petrol through. It was only in about 60 foot of water they said. They never got it up again they left it there. They were pretty old those planes.

19:00 They'd been Bomber Command before and we set off another time to go right away out into the Atlantic it'd be about 5 hours flying out and 5 hours back and we were flying along and the temperature was there and I noticed it and I said to the captain, "Do you know what to do when the engine ices up," I said, "because this is

19:30 the danger temperature we're getting at." He said, "Yeah, we know that." And next thing we were flying at about 800 feet and there was a submarine just below the cloud in the bottom of the cloud and suddenly the engines lost their power and down and down and down we come and he's yelling send out an SOS [a radio distress call] and all that. So we sent out SOSs and our position and so forth and we got almost into the water

20:00 and the engine started again. They picked up power again anyway. The thing was that when you got down there see the air was so much warmer against the water so what the pilot would immediately do was he'd get a bit of altitude and continue till the engines go out at about 50 feet. As soon as he got up to a couple of hundred feet the engine stopped powering again. So that's the way we proceeded. I had to give him a course to the nearest

20:30 aerodrome which was up in the Hebrides and anyway then we had the SOS go out because we were going like that all the time and there was a bit of a storm over Scotland and so we arrived at this aerodrome, come into land and they had a different type of aircraft . They weren't so used to Wellingtons because the Wellingtons, when you come to land

21:00 and throttle them back sometimes the exhaust would catch on fire and a little flame would come shooting out. So they knew we were coming and there was an SOS and when this flame would come shooting out they thought we were on fire. We weren't, we landed then the next thing is there's a little fella there and he wanted to know why didn't we cancel our SOS and he'd had to fly out from Scotland through all this storm because he had to find us in the ocean.

21:30 So and then the storm was so bad that we weren't allowed to fly for a week and we had to stay there in this place and that was an experience but anyway. We had a lot of experiences and when they left there was someone else there, there was another crew that was there and then they left. They pinched the CO's [Commanding Officer's] dog, Alsatian dog it was, his pet dog.

22:00 He was only a big pup and he played with everyone and when that crew left the dog was gone. So then they got back with the dog they had to take it back, fly back to take the dog back. So that was another go there and I told you about battling through in the storm and I go that 10 degrees correction.

So are you pretty much preparing to join a squadron and get into the thick of it?

22:30 Yeah well we were preparing to go out to the Middle East you see to join a squadron there. On this torpedo work but they decided they didn't need any more. So Christmas time come and so they sent us on leave and they said they'll tell us where to report from leave. I went over to stay with people near where that big plane crashed in Scotland.

23:00 **Lockerbie?**

Lockerbie and I was there and I was only there for 2 days. They gave me a present, the people, and then the signal came to report back to Limavady because there was a court martial on. There was a fella up for turning off the petrol taps so I had to go to Turnberry where they have the golf, Scottish golf and it was a base for the naval flyers then.

23:30 I had to report in there and then they put me up for the night then one of them flew me out in a Swordfish, those big biplanes that used to drop the torpedoes. They got the HMS Tirpitz and that with it, the torpedoes at it. and god knows there was no doubt about what happened so the court martial said we've give counsel a red endorsement in his log book

24:00 which is supposed to a bad thing to have and then I had to catch up with the others and we went to a place and we pulled in there. There was a bunch of us that had been in service training and they said we were there to fly

24:30 Whitleys aircraft. Now Whitleys were just absolute bombers at the start of the war. They carried a big load were very slow and that and we had to fly them and when the army gliders had their glider pilots. They were a different lot

25:00 they were the army glider pilot regiment and they go into action with the gliders and then the gliders become fighting men, ordinary infantry and they keep ordinary infantry until they want them again for gliders. In this case they'd gone into Sicily and they hadn't flown again. It might have been a year before or something and they had to come in there and refresh their landing in gliders and we had to tow them off and you tow them off and you come round at about

25:30 800 feet in the air and they release themselves in the right place and then they'd go down at about an angle like that almost straight down till they just got on the ground and then they'd flatten themselves out on the ground and we had nothing to do with the navigators except the pilots. So we'd take a few trips in the glider and anyway then.

How many gliders would one plane?

26:00 Well you could pull 2 but we only pulled one. Anyway then a CO arrived after about a week we'd been doing this and then he turned up and we all had to get in for an address. Now this was for a camp that was built out of a sort of cardboard and it was very flimsy air force camp. It was in the very early days of the war and the CO's talk and they'd call us in for a conference and there were

26:30 sheets of this cardboard hanging off the roof and everything and he said, "Now" he said, "You fellas, you don't look to me." He said, "You're supposed to be here for a rest." He said, "You don't look as though you need a rest to me." He would have said that to anybody but anyway, and he said, "I can assure you you'll get a good rest while you're here." And he said, "Can I see Flying Officer Campbell?" And I had to identify myself because I was the senior

27:00 navigator. They go by the date of which you're appointed officer, that's the order. "Flying Officer Campbell, you'll be in charge of navigation. So all you've got to do is to see if we've got any maps we might need, order them and that sort of thing," and that was that. And then the next day he tells us he was quite correct we didn't need a rest. It was supposed to be for people that finished the tour with Bomber Command

27:30 and they'd made a mistake. We hadn't done any tours so we had to pack up and they sent us right out to the very south west of Wales, just to fill in time. A place called Talbenny where the land planes used to take off to fly to Gibraltar. So we went there and nothing much happened there we were a bit hungry at times in that place but then what had happened was that

28:00 we'd been on coastal command and a lot of the coastal commanders had been transferred over for dropping paratroops and the invasion of Normandy and the whole squadrons had been transferred, 48 for instance was one and 275 and we'd been just training in coastal command so we went to fill in where needed. So the time come and we went on the train and we went to a place

28:30 called Broadwell. Did one trip around in a DC3 and they found they didn't really need any more men so we went to 48 squadron which was nearby about 50 miles away and we were left in there for the invasion. There was the same crew we'd had in there except for the ASV operators.

Same crew as when you'd been flying the Wellingtons?

Yeah.

29:00 Well of course the pilot had to be checked out. They used to call out converter to the plane. So then we did a heck of a lot of flying, low flying because we had to drop paratroops so low so we did a lot of low flying and navigating low and over the sea. We'd practise coming in from the sea then to land and that and we did a fair bit of that.

29:30 **How difficult was that for you in terms of navigation? What challenges?**

Wasn't hard at all, it wasn't navigating by DR that had used reckoning so much, it was mainly just map reading, looking out and seeing because you're flying so low and then they decided that we had to be taught to read a special bit of electronic equipment they had for the invasion. It was called

30:00 Rebecca and the thing was they had a signal coming out from the ground and every plane had a unit on it that could guide ourselves into this particular unit and it meant a bit of training for that. I got it a bit wrong it wasn't for the Rebecca we were trained on that. We had Rebecca but we were trained to use what the Bomber Commander had been using

30:30 for a while and that was the G system and that was electronically – you had this cathode ray screen, on it you had various figures and so arranged and it worked on the principle that a signal was sent out from somewhere and this electronic link

31:00 would time from when it got that signal and when it received another signal from another place and the time interval would be shown up on the screen and you could plot that on a special chart you had and it showed you had to be on a certain line and it wasn't a straight line. It was a circular line, almost circular and then you're on that line and then you're another one another line. So where they crossed

31:30 and it was terribly accurate when you're in England fairly close to where those signals were coming from and I had to go and learn it so I could teach the other navigators how to use it. So I went off on that for a fortnight I think and I was dux of that course. But anyway then I came back and by the time I

got back they decided oh no we've got enough instructors instructing the Bomber Commanders. They can do the instructing so I didn't have to do that

32:00 there. Perhaps it's a pity I didn't because they didn't do a very good job instructing. But the others would go and they had that big drop that they have on newsreels all the paratroopers coming down. That was during that time, about a week before the invasion. It wasn't the invasion of course because that was at night-time and they all filmed this great, all the air. What big show they could put on.

How privy where you to the plans at that point?

32:30 We didn't even know. A couple of times we were told that we were to be trained by a certain time and when that time would pass we'd say, "Oh, the invasions off for another year, you know." And then the time did come about a week before D-day they closed the area and no one was allowed to go out.

33:00 Anyone could go in if they were coming in but you had to say there till they let you out a week later because they didn't want anyone to go out and say the invasion was on for final preparation and they took us at this time. Each crew or several crews I suppose but each crew were taken and we spent a few hours with the fellas we were going to drop our particular

33:30 group and they went and showed us what they had to do and they used to prepare for those things pretty thoroughly and where this army was they actually took photos of all where they were going to fight over and they created. There was bulldozers and that and they the made hammocks and the trees and put trees in and that so it was all exactly the same as it had been when they got there. And so they went and showed us that. All I remember about it was they said there seemed to be a heck of a lot of doubling running at the

34:00 double here, there and everywhere and they took us in trucks then to a place called Briars Norton and showed us where we were dropping the paratroopers and they had it all arranged these model makers and every little bush and that there and they had a wire and it was the height equivalent to the height we'd be coming in at and it had a little eyepiece that moved along

34:30 and the little light which was equivalent to the moon so the pilots would keep checking that and see how familiar they could get with it and that was on June 4th and then we come back. Next thing then we heard that it's not on it's going to be on the next day. You see it was put off because there was a storm on the beaches.

35:00 So on June 5th they took the pilots back. It's about a 50 mile drive I suppose to get to this place and we didn't go the second day and then we came on to D-day. Something happened then, you know, that I think was a fault that a signal came in,

35:30 I think it was the day before and it said from the most superior officers that as long as one of the wing commanders was here. There was 2 squadrons on our post, 2 squadrons. Each one had a wing commander in charge of it but as long as one of the wing commanders was there at all times the other one could go out on operations and they were overjoyed at that. They were coming to the mess and they were clapping their hands and that and

36:00 then they tossed to see who was the one who would go over to the invasion and then the fella who won he said, "Oh well now I've got to get a crew. Oh the so and so flight lieutenant, he's not crewed up." And somebody might have drifted in, you know, and he just went around scrambling to get together a crew like that and then he was the fellas which was leading us and we'd been doing all this training for months and it just went for nothing because he

36:30 lead us there and when the day came he said, "You all follow me. Just close up and follow me," and that's what we'd been trained not to do and told not to do because if one goes wrong everyone goes wrong if you're following each other. And that was a big fiasco in the invasion. Now there's of course others but we were the last squadron. There was about 5 or 6 squadrons ahead of us so where they went wrong I don't know.

37:00 Anyway so D-day came and we had to go down to the aerodrome and all the planes had been painted with all these stripes on them and we went down through the village all the people were out waving their handkerchiefs. They knew we were going to the invasion and they were all crying and waving their handkerchiefs and we went down to our planes and then after us going to the trucks with the paratroopers in and

37:30 they were all dressed up. How they were going to land there was all bushes sticking out of them everywhere, camouflaged. Then they had a cup of cocoa or something before they got in the plane. When they come to get in the plane they had to get their parachutes off. Now these were Canadians we dropped a Canadian battalion and they boasted that they went down with more equipment with them than any other paratroopers

38:00 this was the big problem for paratroopers was to keep their equipment with them when they landed. And they had a full pack on the front and a pack on the back and to get the parachute harness which was not designed to go round 2 packs on a man, they had to lie on the ground they had to breathe out as much as they could. Two of us got hold of a strap and two of us on the other round buckle end and they had to breathe out we had to sort of push them together and

38:30 hoped they snapped together. We had to do that with each one of the four and that was the way they were. Then they had to sit like that, squeezed up for an hour till they got to where they jumped out. So we got them all in their parachute harness then they couldn't get in the plane. They were too heavily round in the smocks as they call them these sort of dress like things. There was 2 or 3 rows of ammunition,

39:00 .303's all sewn into it and that was an ordeal. So anyway but the result of that was that they couldn't get up to the steps on the plane they couldn't walk up the steps. So they got in the plane by 2 of us pulling the top and 2 of us pushing behind them and then when they got in there they had to put this kitbag what they put in their leg and it had a sort of

39:30 quick release on it and they put that on after they got in the plane and then when they jumped out they had to have that in their leg. They shuffled out, went out the door as soon as they get air, you know, open up the parachute. Because of having that extra kitbag on them they'd go down quicker and that's what they want to get down quicker then they won't be shot at and as soon as they got out they pulled this quick release it'd drop down so it was about 6 foot below them. To settled them down quick till it hit the ground and then there was a 6 foot

40:00 for them to pull up and so we got them all in and then a call went round, captains go down to the winko and so Jerry headed off and I had nothing to do so I headed off too to see what was going on and that fella saying, "Now," he said, "It's not a bad night, fairly clear." He said, "Forget everything you've been learning to do, training to do, just

40:30 close up a bit and we'll follow each other." And then he was the one in the front. He had this scrap sort of a crew and we would follow each other and he was wrong there because we shouldn't have done that and thinking about it afterwards he should have taken another crew. If he was going to go over he should have maybe just taken over a trained crew instead grabbing odd bods around the place who hadn't done any training.

41:00 And another thing was that I happened to be in the last plane of the group. It was the last plane of the scheme or whatever you call it and I was the dux G-man and I used the G all over and they reckoned I was the only one that did they told me. I was the only fella that used the G all over. So they were just going without their G. So just as it got dark we took off, in threes I think we took off, and of course everybody in south of England knew the invasion was on because if you get 2 or 3 thousand Indians all roaring and revving it up. It must have been a heck of a noise for people for that but they knew it was on.

41:30 **What was the mood like before taking off?**

The mood? Oh we were just keyed up to do our…

Tape 6

00:30 **Let's talk about those moments before takeoff on D-day.**

Yeah well we went back to the plane and we got all the crew on board and the plane and the planes were sort of positioned where you could swing around on the aerodrome. In groups of 3 beside each other we took off down a bitumen runway it was made wide enough and then we had

01:00 to fly north oh for about 3 minutes. That was the first thing to do and we were supposed to follow each other as the captain had said according to the training each navigator leader of the bigger of the 3 planes he never gave himself because according to the captain he said, "Follow me," you know. "Close up a bit and just follow me." So going north they went for 2 minutes longer than they should have. It was only about 3 minutes to fly north.

01:30 It went for about 2 minutes longer than they should have before they turned east. They had to fly east for about the same, 4 or 5 minutes and then they went 2 minutes longer on that which makes a big difference when they're only little gaps between 2 or 3 minutes and then they turned and headed off down to get to the coast of England heading towards France and when we crossed into the channel and we were going across we were

02:00 flying on parallel track to what we should have been going across but we were 10 miles to the east and keeping a parallel track to 10 miles to the east and all these extra 2 minutes we got about 8 or 9 minutes later, behind and so we're going across there. I couldn't look out because the navigator had black outs up to all the windows and I

02:30 was using this electronic equipment you see and writing on the charts and that. So I didn't see a thing although the papers said about that story. So we were going across there and I tell the captain I said, "The way we're going on this track we're going to go right over the harbour flying at about 600 feet," which wouldn't have been accurate at all and so he

03:00 suddenly said, "Cam, can you take me straight to TRV ?" That's the turning rendezvous, where we're

supposed to turn to go in. I said, “Yes,” and he said, “Well take me.” He said, “I wouldn’t be sure that the planes we’re following are following any others.” You see that was one way out so we turned off and we speeded the engines up as fast as we put on the speed. We went straight into the TRV and that

03:30 gee it was wonderful there because we were flying fairly parallel to the coast as we were coming in and we come to somewhere and suddenly ‘buzz’ the captain the second pilot they said, “Oh there. There’s where we’re going,” and, you know, the plane swung around, “There’s where we go in,” and it was all 2 and 3 storey hotels along that coast. It had been a holiday place. And I had to yell to them, “No, it’s not the place. You’re

04:00 wrong. We’ve got to go another couple of miles yet.” And anyway they turned back and did what I told them but they were grumbling to each other all of the time and said, “That’s where we should have gone, isn’t it Charlie?” And then as I see these marks coming up on that ASV, not ASV, the G screen. And I said, “Prepare to turn,” and they turned and they turned and yelled, “Oh, this is it all right,” and we dropped the paratroopers. Now

04:30 we had to cross the coast and it was only a matter of one or two minutes after crossing the coast that we had to drop the paratroopers and the idea was that the wireless operator went back to the door where the paratroopers were jumping out and he counted them out so that the captain would know how they were going because the dropping zones were just a limited size,

05:00 just big enough to fit the men in. So there was only one to go and they were getting out of it and there might be land mines and that but they let him go because it was all going back to one man see. So the captain wanted to know if there was still half a dozen to go he’d go round and drop them again and Earl, he was a Canadian too, and he was counting them out the door, and he got about half way through and then suddenly he started mumbling and mumbling and

05:30 not saying anything appropriate except swearing to himself and the captain said over the intercom. We were all connected to each other with plugs that we plugged in beside our position he said, “Earl,” he said, “What’s going on?” and Earl didn’t say much. He just suddenly went dead because he pulled his plug out to go and see if there’s a fella up on the plane. You see it’s all black out there, all dark and so then the captain couldn’t get any answer when he called Earl and

06:00 so he said, “Cam, go back and see what’s going on and come back at once and tell me.” So I jumped up, grabbed a flashlight, American torch and opened the door and went through and in the middle of the plane there was a fella lying on the floor and his head was rolling back and forwards as the plane rocked because we were in very rough conditions because there was planes chopping across us all the time and it was very dangerous

06:30 position too and saw he was there and so I went back and told the captain, plugged in my mike [microphone] and told the captain and he said, “Get us out of this shit we’re in” Because we were going into another line of planes and we’re not hitting anything but luckily we’d been tossed here, there and everywhere and I said, “Well what have you been doing?” and he said, “I’ve been climbing straight ahead,” and so

07:00 I said, “Look, keep on climbing to 9000 feet.” And so I had a quick look at the map and then I thought we would be about 3 or 4 miles over from where we should be and so give him a 15 degrees back, we’d work our way back to it before long. So I told him that and then he said, “Would you go back, Cam, and see if you can give any help to that unconscious fella see if you can

07:30 help for a little while?” So I went back and I took me bottle back, and in my water bottle I had black tea that’s what I thought would be better than water. Anyway I went back and I splashed some of that on his face and he started spluttering and I said, “Where are you hurt?” “Oh, I’m all right. I’m not hit at all,” he said. And then he said, “Take me back and drop me.”

08:00 Well that was impossible to do because first thing when I went back when he was unconscious, you know, loosen the clothing around the chest was the idea. So I snapped his harness and released him and anyway he wanted to be taken back and we said no we can’t do it because we couldn’t get his harness together again. Anyway so he came back and we went back to England. We didn’t lose a plane in that do,

08:30 the DC3s, but I know at least one was shot up that badly and just managed to get back to England so I don’t know where they were shot at.

Was there much flak encountered there?

I never noticed much of it then but you could hear all the rifles going off, you know, you were only flying about 400 feet above where they were fighting. There was flak when we went to Le Havre there when I told you and the captain turned off. As we turned off there was

09:00 guns firing at us and the shells were bursting round. We could hear them not too close to us but we could hear this firing and I’d been firing at someone else cause one other planes that went over Le Havre, had a Jap killed him. A bullet hit him in the femur and went into his stomach and he died. So he was brought back we brought our fella back and there was another fella that refused to jump out. He must have been the big fella because we couldn’t push him out and that was the

09:30 normal thing that they were supposed to do to someone whose nerve went. You just had to help him out and you helped him out the door and there was no trouble but he was taken back. There were 3 fellas that went back that didn't jump – that's the British; it was the 6th Division. We got back over England and there was a wonderful sight there because we come back over it and

10:00 because there were so many aerodromes so close together and there'd be so many planes they said to leave your lights on, you know, and as we came over the Upper Thames Valley there was 600 or more planes all the lights going round and round and all the aerodromes lit up on the ground. It was a really good sight and we got in and they debriefed us and none of these things had happened you know.

10:30 We were sitting round waiting for this intelligence officer to take down particulars of what we'd done and I found myself sitting across from the fella who'd been a navigator of the planes that we'd been following the ones just ahead of us and I said, "How late were you?" you know. I said, "We were 7 minutes late dropping." And he said, "We dropped dead on time," and I knew he couldn't have dropped dead on time.

11:00 We cut the corner and went faster and I never said anything more to him about that. But that's what you're up against when you're organising something like that.

Did you find out from other sources what had happened to them and how late they were?

No I never found out but there was I think 380 of the paratroopers were never seen again. We dropped them in the wrong places, you see, and a lot of them were in the trenches where the Germans had flooded the water back into

11:30 and with all that weight on them ammunition and that if they couldn't get up on the floor they wouldn't get up in a bog. They were never seen again that was the official view they just lost them and our fellas were in the right place because I know because I took a G fix and G was very accurate. But if you could

12:00 fly over something and you took a fix you could record what the reading was when you were there. Well you can go back there any time on those figures and you'd be in exactly the same spot. So I took one so if we had to resupply them or something in a cloud of fog or something we could do it and so I had that taken back.

12:30 We were back in England. It took us longer to get debriefed by those intelligence officers than it took us to get home but anyway went down and they gave us an egg for our breakfast I suppose you'd call it. It was still just getting daylight and that was the one oversight too. The Lancaster's had gone down bombing there and they were coming over as we were walking home just after dawn.

13:00 They were all coming over our place heading back to where they were up in the north east of England and there were hundreds of them you see and I was thinking about it 100 aircrafts, you put a line of 6 across and then another line of 6 and they just seem to go for ever and ever all those Lancaster's flying over fairly low. And then we went to bed we got up at noon to have our dinner then we went down to the

13:30 relations room. The officers could go in and look at the maps and all the information. That was another advantage of being an officer and I was in there having a look. I didn't know much at that time but I suppose here and they and they had all the large scale maps on the wall and everything marked on it but they didn't really know much and all I was doing and a fella, a squadron leader came in and he said, "Hey Campbell," he said, "so and so,

14:00 the navigator from this particular crew, said to go to hospital just before we close the aerodrome down." And so he said, "Even the navigator. And we'd like to volunteer you to go over. If you'd like to volunteer, you can go." So that saw me going over the second time. That time we were just dropping off supplies, two paratroopers that had dropped in the morning.

Same planes? DC3s?

Yeah same, DC3s.

14:30 But they'd fit it in the steel rollers. It was a scheme they had there and so they had all the supplies and things like laundry baskets they used to put on things about a metre square and a metre and a half long and make of wicker work and they had on top of another one and the parachutes were passed on one end and they put them on the rollers and the idea was you could start them rolling. You could undo them and push them and they'd all

15:00 go out in one shot out the door and come down pretty well nigh in place. But the only trouble with that was then there was the second rollers. You had two lines and the second rollers was, so when one lot went out, someone had to drop a sort of turntable over to turn the other lot out the door. So that's what we had. But the point was when you had these baskets there they kept them, they were held with chains for a start. They were chains then when you got

15:30 near where you were going to drop them they undid the chains and you held them by sticking a stick between the rollers, and if anything happened they got going when the people weren't there to turn the turntable and one lot would go right down into the tail and that was good night to the plane. It a tonne of stuff in the tail of it. So

16:00 I don't think it was worthwhile really but they thought it was a great idea. Over in Burma we didn't use those we just manhandled them and you could put more weight on it than the weight of those rails and everything. But anyway we went over and that was the night things sparked up because they'd planned all this months and months and months before and just where someone was and you'd be there and you'd be there and we'll leave that gap through there for

16:30 the supply for the army to go through with the paratroops. But during the day when the fighting got going for some reason the navy they had to move into this bit that they were supposed to leave clear for us to fly in. So we come along flying at about 400, 500 feet, unchained the panniers because we only had about 2 minutes to

17:00 push them out and all of a sudden we were over the top of the British navy. Not the big battleships but the little ones they've got just a good a guns and if you fly over the British navy well they shoot you down straight off no questions asked and our coastal command knew that. If you're getting round you never know where you're going to attack a ship or it'll shoot you down. So they started shooting away. What they did, the captain I was

17:30 again couldn't see because I was in the navigating part and they'd send up one lot of ships. They'd send up flares and then all the others would just see the planes and the flares and ho into them with .5 machine guns and this lot would send off a flare and this lot would have a go. So they shot down I think 5 of us that night going over.

18:00 Next morning we had the joy of sitting listening to Richard Dimbelby on the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] saying how the Germans with their typical thoroughness they got all the DC3s that they'd overrun and got in Holland and overrun the country. They quickly painted white stripes on them, only Germans could get that done in such a short time and they would come over and try to make a sneak attack on the British navy and there they go there's another go into the sea they're copping it hot going on all this and this was us they were shooting down

18:30 and anyway we got 12 bullet holes through our plane that night and we were very fortunate because people had been fighting planes with twin tanks and in action they reckon that you should always take them down evenly and we were flying around and we got a .5 bullet through one of the tanks that we'd just emptied and we just switched them over to the other one. If it had of been the other one that had gone

19:00 too we would not have got back either.

How aware of that danger were you when you were out there?

Oh we were in danger. You could hear this clunk, clunk, clunk of these .5 bullets coming through the skin of the plane. One fella was sitting on this steel chair and one of the bullets came up sideways and it split the aluminium leg of his chair right up to within a couple of inches of his tail.

19:30 But we had at that time they gave us suits of armour. The Americans had got them out for their fortresses and they were fighting and they reckoned they needed this armour because the Germans were firing shrapnel bullets and things at them you see. They gave them to us and you had an apron that you put on the front. You had a jacket

20:00 or something that was held by two, each front and back and an apron on it. Oh well if you're sitting down with the apron on the front of you it's not much good. So I used to put my apron underneath me and I reckoned that was where the bullets were coming from and a helmet too you had on. But it was sort of all bits of cloth and things like razor blades sewn together inside the cloth.

20:30 It might have been a bit stronger than razor blades. So we got back to England and they had a big army hospital right near that aerodrome down Anthony where we were and the idea was we'd bring home these casualties straight to the hospital. The only thing was they said we weren't to fly the plane with them because we'd drop the 6th Airborne Division

21:00 and they had the 1st Airborne Division and an airborne division is no good unless you've got the plane to drop it and so they said we had to keep the planes available for dropping the other division in case they wanted it somewhere as they went across France and so not many casualties went back by the air to that place at that time and oh some of them had exciting experiences, you know. There was one fella who was called Hetly Houre

21:30 was the name of the pilot. He was from the Channel Islands, where they speak French of course, so it was Le Houre. And they take gliders and they went in just before dark that second night and they had to tow these gliders in and they got over about where they were going to drop them or somewhere or other. It might have been the British navy might have fixed them up because both these engines got on fire. So they kept on towing the glider

22:00 till they got the glider into where the glider wanted to go and the glider cast off to land. So then he yelled out to his crew to bail out because the engines had been burning for some time on this DC3 and when they ran through the plane they found that the wireless operator was lying on the floor. He must have been hit or something. They got back to the door and then they decided it was too low for them to jump out

22:30 to hit the ground. So the second pilot rang back up and told the captain he was still at the controls to get a bit more height. They couldn't bale out so he managed to take the plane up a bit and then they baled out, oh 2 of them, let's see, only 4 people, that's all. Yeah, two.

23:00 And the two that were at the back of the door they baled out. They landed in the river UNCLEAR and the one fella got out and he said, "Where's the other fella?" and the Frenchman standing there said, "He drowned," and I think he was one of the fellas on the floor. He had been wounded before and the other 2 were in the plane and so then they ran back to get out and they couldn't get out because the plane was slipping down sideways and the

23:30 air was coming in the door and stopping them from getting out. So then the pilot turned and ran to get back to the controls again. They were pretty close to the ground. The second pilot who was a Canadian, he stood by the door hanging on to a frame there till the pilot got a bit, pulled it out anyway. Just as it was hitting the ground the pilot got and he just levelled it onto the ground. Both engines broke off and went rolling away because the ground so much

24:00 they hit the ground pretty hard. They got both out, they ran a bit away from the plane, burning plane, and then they stood, turned round and had a look at it and then they had a one the Tommy soldiers yelled out in their Tommy language to get the hell over out into the trenches. There were snipers all round the place. They ran on and then got in the trenches this fellow and then the second pilot he must have sprained his ankle.

24:30 The first pilot went back to the beach and worked his way back to England, Houre. The second pilot spent the night in a barn with a wounded arm. They brought him back next day in a landing barge and then they wouldn't let him off the landing barge until they'd dressed his wounds, had a record of it and then they found it wasn't a sprained ankle it was broken bones in his leg. You've got 2 bones in your legs down there and one of them was broken. So

25:00 they put his leg in plaster with a steel hoop underneath it. He could walk around fairly well and he was given 3 months leave or perhaps it was the first fella I think, D-day he was back in England on leave. But that's what happened to them and we were just there with nothing to do. They said the planes must be kept at ready , always available. So there was one hour flight for each plane

25:30 in a month and we had about 30 planes so that meant one hours flight a day. So they made one fly up to London every day, take fellas up on leave and bring another lot back. cause we had 3 crews for each aircraft at that time and they wanted to keep them in fighting trim too as well as keep the planes good and they gave a lot of leave too

26:00 and I had 3 leaves and then 2 months up to the Isle of Skye where the Campbells had come from and they come back once. They got a signal I'd just arrived and there was a signal to come back at once to the base and I went back and the CO – what had happened was that Jerry the pilot he'd been in the mess and he said a signal came through and they want a crew to go out to India because they'd been an invasion into

26:30 Normandy. They wanted a crew to go out to the India to the squadrons there that are doing the same thing that had been doing months before in Normandy and he said, "I put me name down and if you don't put your name down straight away you wouldn't be in it" and he said, "You wouldn't mind going there would you?" and I said, "Oh it's on the way home I suppose." I would rather have stopped in England anyway so then they put us into a Sunderland and flew us out to India in 3 days. Was an air vice-marshal and a squadron

27:00 leader in the plane with us. They weren't flying but they were passengers too. Flew us out to India and then when we got to India we found out that we were still in an occupied country because Indians weren't supporting the war and even when Boze, I think he name was, he was the quisling that the Japanese promoted as the leader of the Indians. He got killed in an aircraft crash in Japan.

27:30 There was a parliament meeting in India they stood for 2 minutes silence. And they were making things as difficult as they could for the war effort and it took us about I suppose 3 weeks or more before they could get us onto a train after flying us out from England in 2½ days.

Where did you fly into?

India, Karachi, and that's where we met the…

28:00 Terrible country just to live in. The kids would follow you down the street. You were one of their new chums, another new chum you see, and they'd follow you down and wanting baksheesh. "Clean your shoes, clean your shoes," they'd say and they're running around and half of them have got camel dung on their hands and throwing it over your boots while the others are singing out we'll clean them for you and after a couple of days I don't know how we found it out but we found out that if you sing out,

28:30 "Bargo," they seem to take notice of that. I could never get anyone to explain to me what it meant but it just means clear off apparently or a bit more. But to clear off you say that. It shows you know a bit about the country but when you arrive there with brand new pith helmets on and that they really try and pick up a few annas you know.

So what was the plan for you guys in India? Was it to help with the invasion of Burma?

29:00 Oh I think also they wanted paratroop droppers. We had the experience of dropping paratroops and they formed a paratroop mob in India mainly from the Nepalese, the Ghurkhas and that was where we were going up to north west of India where they were training them. So after a few weeks we got up there. We got on the train and we were travelling European

29:30 style on the train. That meant we had a little bit all to ourselves. Doors to the outside no doors to communicate in the train, our own toilet and I don't think there was beds. But anyway we were in there and you'd come along and pull into a station where there was supposed to be food and there'd be a fella with a white uniform on would open the door, "Come out, sarge [sergeant]. This way sarge, please,"

30:00 and take you into the dining room and there they'd be all there dressed in white. The table white, tablecloth and the table and silverware and everything. They'd serve you up a meal and I think there was 3 groups like that on our train. The other women and children was one I noticed and so we went on across India and then at about one o'clock in the morning we got to the place that our ticket said, a place called Basal.

30:30 So we got off and we got our luggage off and there was nothing there but a moonlight and dust and a tin fence on the side of the station. Anyway there were a few fellas sleeping in the dust there and we managed to get from them. Oh it was a long way to get out to Basal aerodrome and there was no way of getting out there. There was nobody we could hire. It was too far to walk, they reckon. Of course we couldn't set off walking there were our cases out there

31:00 and there were drunks. So we settled down and I decided well we had a big grey coat and the grey coat was to keep you warm when you were in the trenches and the mud. So I just put mine on and I lay down in the dust beside the fence and some of the others said, they chided me a bit , they said, "Oh you're lowering the dignity of an air force officer sleeping in the dust beside these untouchables." But anyway that's what I did. Next day a truck come out

31:30 someone took us into the aerodrome and what we had to do there was drop a few paratroops and to fit into that squadron and it had just come out for a rest. It had been over in Burma then they come and they said, "We're going to go over to Burma," and I was quite pleased that our crew wasn't flying. We were only going as passengers and

32:00 I spread our bedroll out in the aeroplane and just went to sleep. We got over to a place called Agartala and there was problems there because the squadron that had moved out and we came in the CO had got himself a pit Himalayan bear they left it on the place and he could just pull back and these staples into the tree to tie him up

32:30 and he'd just pull the staple out and then he'd walk around the place and oh he's all right he won't hurt you all he wants to do is lick the sweat off you and you had this great Himalayan bear licking. I thought I'm not having that if I can help it and I always managed to keep myself in the distance when he was walking around and that was that. Another thing was we were there and there was 3 big pigs, nice pigs, bacon pigs they were nicely conformed pigs. They weren't scrub pigs and they were out in

33:00 the rubbish tip and the other squadron had left them. So then Christmas time came and I overheard them saying in the mess that they'd chop the 3 pigs with a Sten gun in the meat house and they were going to be the Christmas dinner for the other ranks and the same day a little later a couple of fellas came up from the aerodrome. They drove them up in jeep and they said, they came around to the mess and they had a drink and

33:30 they said, "We was going to collect our pigs for Christmas," and the fellas that was talking to them said, "I don't know where they are." He said, "I haven't seen them for a while." Oh he mightn't have said, "I don't know where they are," but they hadn't seen them for a while and they said, "Well where will we find them?" and he said, "Oh down at the rubbish tip, I suppose. That's where they've usually been the last few days." And they went looking round for about an hour and they drove away without their pigs. They didn't look in the meat shed

34:00 where the pigs were hanging up.

Who had done that? Who had slaughtered the pigs?

Oh just some of the officers in the squadron. Well anyway I had nothing to do with it I just overheard it but so we had geese for our Christmas dinner. They got I don't know where they got them but they got about a dozen geese and one of these geese had a

34:30 right sort of brain because he laid an egg and sat on it and then someone said, "Oh we can't kill a mother like that. We'll have to keep it." So they kept it as a pet and they other and that was Agartala and from then we immediately started flying supplies into the 14th Army.

Where were they based?

They were in Burma. They were just pushing it because when the Japanese came in

35:00 they'd retreated all the way to India with the Japanese behind them. The Japanese were a lot more powerful than they were and so they managed to retreat all the way but they didn't break down and get

captured and that. They managed to have a retreat they ordered a retreat and they got into India and then immediately the poor coots reckoned, “When we get to India we’ll be right,” and immediately they said, “Righto, turn round now and stop these Japs. They’re not coming any more.”

35:30 And anyway, and General Slim had been flown out from where do you think? Iraq he was in charge of the British defence of Iraq before General Bill Slim and they ordered him to go over to Burma and take charge of defence against the Japanese. So he was in charge of that and they may have retreated back into India they told him to get organised and it was your job to go back and that’s what he just started that

36:00 he just started pushing out of India into down through all the mountains into Burma. It was all mountainous country and they were totally dependent on air supply and they’d give you a position to drop a few tonnes of supplies and you’d find a mark out on the ground letters of white calico and you’d fly around and drop the supplies up some gully or somewhere

36:30 it had to be. But then you went back and dropped another lot and another lot. You generally got 3 lots in the day if you took off in the dark so that you got to drop them in the first line and so we kept supplying them as they pushed their way against the Japs right across Burma round Mandalay and on down to Rangoon. One of the things that happened there was Slim started that off and then he promised that the Americans he’d had

37:00 these 20 or so decoders that the Americans would supply him with and then just after he got started what happened they said, “Oh the supplies, the Americans are all gone and all the stuff they were loaded with to take out today they’re sitting on the runway.” What had happened they got an order from America to go over and help the Chinese. They were to lift the Chinese forces out of Burma. There were some Chinese in there fighting,

37:30 carry them into China and we never saw them again. So we had to carry on and he was counting on having these planes you see so it made things a bit tough. So he was about 3 days late getting to Rangoon. If he had of been 3 days earlier things would have been a lot easier because he was 3 days late and the monsoon come in and there was rain everywhere and there was this water and it would have made it hard but they came in off the sea at the same

38:00 time and the Burmese, the Japs chucked it in. It’s an interesting point because the prisoner of war camp was in the jail there and there was an Australian who was in charge of it he was a wing commander who’d been shot down and in the morning it was during the night he suddenly become aware that everything’s so very quiet

38:30 and he got up and he went around where there used to be Japanese sentries standing and there was no one there. So he sung out across to the Indians in another part of the jail and they said there was no one there either. So they climbed over the fence and got together and they went down and had a look and found that all the Japs were gone and there was a note pinned inside the door, farewell, you know, soldiers

39:00 we hope to meet you on a new battlefield somewhere and they just went off and they’d been expecting to be executed when the Japs had had it but that’s what happened they just went and left them. Actually those Japs they weren’t an ordinary Japanese army unit. They’d enrolled every Japanese businessman that that was around in Burma and they’d been there for 12 months or more and a few were there. They’d enrol them all

39:30 into the Japanese army and they were the ones they put in to guard the jails. So they weren’t ordinary soldiers otherwise they might have been all shot. They picked out the ones who were in good walking condition they thought they marched them off, gave them all brand new Japanese uniforms so that when our fellas went looking for Japs they were all prisoners of war in the same uniform. They told the others to stay

40:00 in, you know, they weren’t up to march and left them in the jail. So that’s not my war that was something that was going on but anyway.

Tape 7

00:30 Well they told us we had to go get the yellow fever injections and those sort of things then we had to go down into Wales where the flying boats took off to go to Gibraltar because the Germans used to attack planes flying over the Biscay coast I think and I’ve got some photos somewhere of us standing around

01:00 waiting to go while one fella looks like he had a very heavy night. I think Jerry the captain and then we went out and they gave us a feed, got in the Sunderland it was a very big plane and we took off there just after dark and it was about eight or nine o’clock in the morning we landed in Gibraltar and the water was very blue

01:30 and I’ve got a note of it somewhere in books and I saw the white weight behind the boat, you know, the boats that picked us up off the Sunderland. They took us into a place there, we got onto an old bus that

took us into a jetty then onto an bus and took us up a little bit to the back of that rock and then let us out and then we had to get into a place to a meal and

02:00 they had a sort of a corridor in there about 10 foot wide. A lot of wooden wash dams along the wall and that's where we had to wash up and a lot of very solid built women all dressed in black. I think they come from Spain and they were putting water in the bowls for us to wash our faces and that. Then we had a feed

02:30 then we took off from there and we could just see a bit of Africa from there and then we went into a sort of a murky sort of a sky and all we saw all day until we landed must have been dinner time at a place called Gerber. It was Gerber Island it was south of Malta not on any map or anything and they had 2 marquees there beside 3 palm trees and

03:00 we went in and they gave us a feed in one of the marquees and they prepared the meal in the other one then we got in and took off and that night about midnight we landed in an old river right in the middle of Cairo. I don't know how they kept the boats out the way for these planes landing. Anyway we landed right in the middle of Cairo took us ashore, took us up to a pub

03:30 and we went up a couple of floors and they said, "No we're only going to be there for a couple of hours." So they weren't going to give us any beds and we could sleep in the club chairs that were in there. I remember I stretched out and slept on the carpet that's all I wanted to do was stretch out and we looked out of the window there and saw these Egyptians wandering along and noted that they always kept in the very middle of the street. They were in these

04:00 great long night dress sort of things and then just before dark or daylight they came and collected us and took us out to the flying boat and we took off. Water splashing round I don't think that cheered anyone up anyway then we headed off to the east and we went over some sort of barren

04:30 undulating land and in the hollows I noticed that to get a bit of soil they'd built a little stone walls and sort of collect the soil that was washing off. They'd been doing this for perhaps for thousands of years. Anyway the next thing we were flying along and there was a sort of

05:00 white city on top of a hill all white and I look and I said, "I suppose that's Jerusalem," I said to myself, "and that's Jerusalem." And, "We must be over…?" What's the place that fell down? Anyway, "Must be over another place," and looked down and because the sun was just coming up and it was all dark in the gully and there we were we were over…

Jericho?

05:30 Jericho, yeah. And so that was Jerusalem. It was shining white, very white up on the hill and so kept on going and we headed out into desert country then and some places you could see in the sand the outline of where they'd been canals at some time, you know, just tops of the canals, stone.

06:00 Other places we passed Arab sort of camps. Well they had these sort of flat spread out tents and kids and goats would go running around and we'd come flying over. We weren't flying very high and they'd sprint around the place and kids would wave to us and the goats would gallop around and then next thing we got to a place called Lake Habbaniyah. Now that's due west of Baghdad I think and that had been

06:30 a very big British air force base before the British left. They'd really built it up as the main base and it was very dusty and the plane landed in this lake and a little sort of pinnace took us in to the what had been we were told was the Baghdad yachting club building and in there we could have

07:00 a bath and we had a meal then we got back on the plane and set off to fly onto anyway down a way a bit. I should have had me maps with me anyway and this was really murky and dusty. We got to this place and we pulled and we had a couple of hours to stop and I went for a wander around the place and that's where I saw how they

07:30 baked their bread. They had a round brick place and the fire burning in the bottom which was mainly burning from camel dung and stuff and they put the dough out flat and they'd just bang it on inside to this bricks and I've seen pictures of them doing it over there in Iraq now and when it dropped off which was cooked and they pulled it out the bottom through the cinders and then put it in the tray till they had a lot.

08:00 That was an interesting thing for me there. Then they decided to go on and so we got back on the plane, we flew again and about 9 o'clock we arrived in Karachi. It's not that interesting but that's what the trip was. Seeing Jerusalem was interesting but we weren't around anywhere there.

When you arrived in Karachi you went straight into training for this new surprise operation?

08:30 No we went in Karachi and we just had to fill in time till they could get us up. See the squadron was up in the north west India by Rawalpindi which is way up, thousands of miles I think and so we had to wait till they could get us on a train for it. Of course even though they didn't want the war to prosper, but it's pretty hard to get in on a train now when you see how they pack them full of people and they're all in the roof and everywhere and then

09:00 we could only travel in these special European class places with a room all to ourselves and so time came and we went up. And I told you about Basal and then when we pulled in and they said, “Oh anyone who had any experience in Indian would never have got off at that station” even though your tickets said Basal you would have gone on to Rawalpindi where you could have got accommodation and that after a few days you could have rang up and a truck would have come in and

09:30 got you. That’s the way they do things in India. So and then we flew down we were down in India.

So you were training in DC3s?

DC3s, yeah.

Why where you training in those planes?

That was the one we were using in cause it was an ideal plane for dropping paratroop supplies because you had to be very manoeuvrable. The bigger planes couldn’t get in the narrow gullies and that they’d turn around in them if that plane could.

10:00 Yeah that was a good plane for that and is still recognised today it is still the best planes for that sort of a thing although they built some planes towards the end of the war, the Americans that could carry a bigger load and still only had 2 engines but they weren’t as manoeuvrable, you know, to turn round they need twice as far to turn as what we did.

So tell me about the terrain of the country?

10:30 See behind well in the back there behind Vietnam and that there’s these great hills about 6000 feet I think. There are a very high range of hills all down there behind Siam as we called in those days and then when you get to the west of that there’s about 200 miles of

11:00 fairly reasonable land inland from the sea and Rangoon’s on the sea or near the sea, inland a bit and then you come to another ridge or another 100 miles across very broken land and it goes up to 1200 feet but that’s only a bit of peak, I think that peak’s Mount Victoria, and then you get above that and you’re in India

11:30 and you’re on the silt that’s on the… It’s about 6 foot above sea level and that’s where they get flooded out so badly and so they had to come out through these hills on… India, Burma and then push their way down into the centre of it which wasn’t so hilly and

12:00 be supplied from the sea because the Japs were there and I don’t think anything interesting happened there much

Did you have any close calls? Any problems?

Oh well towards the end when the monsoon come in I was very lucky because we got there and started flying when it was the dry season and

12:30 it was beautiful flying weather. You only had about a 4 mile an hour wind and you’d never see a cloud in the sky. So it was a 4 mile an hour wind and you’d have a look at your map and put it on the map where you want to go and that’s what you’d set on your compass. There was no need to work things out at all but then later on the wet season come in and the fact that we’d flown so much over that one bit of it that we sort of knew it like our yard.

13:00 You’d be flying in a cloud and you’d just see a little gap through the cloud and you’d know just where it was because you knew the country. So I was lucky in that regard but when the rain come in and Slim was about 60 miles short of Rangoon and all watercourses filled up with water and they wanted supplies still to get in and they decided to make a great dump of supplies. It was a place called Pegu

13:30 and to get to that we had to come through all this monsoon rain and to get there we went down and back, climbing and following the railway line because there was big mountains on each side and that was dicey going down that railway line because we were going down and the other ones were coming up and you’d just suddenly see someone coming at you and you don’t know how they missed you. There weren’t any rules as to who went up and went down but they needed it.

14:00 I never heard of any collision on that but I thought it was pretty dicey. See with an aeroplane they’re built the wrong way because the pilot sits on that side and you’re supposed to pass on the other side. So he’s flies on this side so he can look out and that’s the wrong side. He should be on the other side. So anyway he got through all right.

14:30 **Were you ever raided or attacked during that time?**

No well they shut down a few of our planes. What the Japs used to do cause by that time we had command of the air. We had spitfires and hurricanes and mosquitoes and we had control of the air but they started raiding in. They’d fly in at night in Siam or Thailand

15:00 and they’d then refuel their planes, these were fighter planes, refuel them and then when we come over in the day they’d suddenly put in an appearance and shoot down a few planes and then get back to Thailand as quick as they could. Well they got shot down that time we took control of the air and when

they started doing that, they got about 6 I think, of our Dakotas when we were dropping paratroops and they were

15:30 going round and round throwing out supplies and so then they put it was machine guns in the sides of the Dakotas. Those ones that we'd had on the old, you know – anyway they were gas operated Vickers gas operated first world war guns and they said they'd put in a bore bullet and then they'd put in a tracer bullet and then they'd have a

16:00 incendiary bullet and the idea was you fired well ahead of the Japanese so they know you had a gun. That was to let them know you weren't useless as they'd been before. So for a little while they had us flying in convoys with a screen of spitfires around us but that wasted a lot of time because you could only fly at the speed of the slowest

16:30 plane. Instead of getting 3 trips a day you'd get one and they only kept that up for a couple of days and then one trip there was very dicey. The monsoon came in but before the monsoon came in we were in these ordinary little Australian cottage tent they called cottage tents. Just a single stick through the middle and hanging over each side, they were only low. That's what the squadron

17:00 was in. Now Jerry my captain and 2 other Australians that we had next door to us we tied the sides of these tents up. This is the way we could live there we did have to do everything according to the book. We tied the sides together and got some longer sticks to put under them and it was very comfortable to have a double size tent without ducking your head around and you could walk around. So we had that and then they said, "Now in a week's time

17:30 the wet season's going to come on." And we said, "Well we won't be able to fly in storms and wind and that. That'll be no good then." And how we knew about this, the wing commander – he was a Melbourne man by the way – he'd been on a short-term commission to the RAF [Royal Air Force] so he wore the RAF uniform but he was actually a fella from Melbourne, and he called us in and he said,

18:00 "Look," he said, "we're in strife." He said, "The wet season's coming in. We've got the steel mesh strips all ready for the wet season for the planes, and," he said, "we've got the concrete down for the mess and for and the ablutions and," he said, "we've got local people building huts over them. But," he said, "we've got to have big pits dug for the cesspits dug for the water

18:30 from the mess. We also have to dig pits for the latrines. And," he said, "the only ones that we can get to do it…" You're not allowed to bring any Indians into Burma. You weren't allowed to bring them in. And he said, "Everyone else who is on the squadrons is all working overtime trying to keep the planes flying and the only ones that have days off are you fellas, the flying fellas. And," he said, "it'd be a change

19:00 if you go digging pits in the ground." So we volunteered to do that. It was only sand digging and so he wanted about 16 to volunteer to go so we volunteered to go and I was one of them. We down in the trucks, there was a fella there that had been with the 6th Division in the Middle East. He'd come home fighting

19:30 the Japs but instead of that he re-enlisted in the air force. So he was driving the truck and he drove us down and we started digging this pit and the boys started digging. We had to work out who would cook the dinner. They'd given us iron things that you put over the fire to sit these trays on and give us a lot of tinned food and that and I was the only one that had the cheek to say well I'll do it for you and so I was the

20:00 cook and I cooked and it worked out well and while we were there we noticed that just next door to where we were going be the paddock was all covered with these cans, it was bundles and these fellas that had been in the Middle East like George Furrier the guy that was driving the truck he said, "They're little marquees they are." And then we were talking about what we were going to do in the wet. He said, "We want one of those marquees."

20:30 And so they went into the mess and they spent more time in the mess there, hands on the bar than I did and the mess was only a tent too in that place and they said to the CO at the time he said, "Oh I don't mind what you do as long as you make your life better in this place." And they said to him, "What we need is those little marquees. Can't we…?" And, "No we're not allowed to have them," he said

21:00 One of the squadrons got to keep on of these little old ordinary tents and we've already got them so we've got to stick with them and the others are all going to have marquees and they then said, "Do you mind though if we manage to get hold of one of those?" and they said, "Oh no as long as you can get one for yourself." So we went out the next 2 days and the next day after we'd been there digging we had to fly and the next day we went out. George and Frank White

21:30 they were both Queenslanders, Jerry and I and we had a bit of a talk they said, "No," they said, "Cam, it's not stealing. That's acquiring things for the squadron. That's the way, in the Middle East, how the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] survives, by acquiring things." They said it wouldn't be stealing so Jerry and I got busy with a shovel and dug a great big deep pit in the sand to bury the rewards of their efforts and they went out

22:00 in the – they got a great interest in bird life and they went walking round amongst all these tents spread around the country and then fortune favours the brave and so they grabbed a couple of them and

dragged them behind a few bushes and then next thing the truck come driving along and the bushes sort of hidden Frank out throwing the three bundled into the back and they drove up with them and we buried them. So then when the monsoon was coming

22:30 then we made a base for them a good solid base and ready for them and then they reckoned we had to – they came that they told them it's going to be raining tomorrow, everybody's got to shift down near the other thing. So the airmen that weren't flying they went round and collected everybody's cases and clothes and everything out of their tents,

23:00 put them in a truck and took them down and dumped them out in – by tomorrow, you have got to be, build tents here. and so we went down and said, "Well we'll have to get that tent out and put them up," and so we put them up. I think why no one said anything to us about putting them up they thought they were for the commanding officer. They were just outside we picked a great spot just outside the door of the mess and because we were the only officers working there when they were running lights for the mess around off a power generator, "Oh yes," they said, "They'll have one more globe."

23:30 And so they were running the wire over and putting a light over the table and so we were really beautifully set up there and I could hear the people later on as they walked past us they'd say, "Bloody Burmese brothel, that's what it is." But they didn't know what a Burmese brothel was. They hadn't been in Burma very long and I'd never… I don't know either myself, the Burmese brothel. And but it used worry me a bit when someone come up and wanted to see the CO

24:00 and he'd come to our tent, "Oh yeah, I'll take you to the CO." And we'd take him to a little bedraggled little tent and that was the CO. We had the electric light and everything. Oh well but that was life and well then that was the monsoon coming and it came in and these fellas had had just roughly put their tents up and one was a bit out of our area.

24:30 We were quite dry from the rain and that cause we had this heavy canvas place, and during the night the rain started to come down and there was one particular tent that was a bit way from us and the wind was blowing. The tent started to blow away and 2 fellas come flying out of the tent, 2 officers that had been in it and one

25:00 holding the tent down so it wouldn't blow away and the other fella gets a shovel from somewhere and starts digging a ditch to let the water go because the water filled up underneath his thing. See a lot of their thoughts was oh this was all sand we don't need to dig drainage. But when the monsoon comes down you need it and so that's a measure I've got. This fella getting out there, the English fella he was a member of the Lordly family

25:30 as I found out later when he was killed and he's out there stark naked, rubber wellie [wellington] boots on –- what we call gum boots –- and he had these on and a tin hat on his head and the rest of him stark naked and there was a fella that had on these old bill moustaches, a black moustache that stuck out everywhere and there he had another great hair sticking out of his middle and he's out there digging in the water

26:00 and I really laugh when I think about that. Anyway he finally got his ditch dug then from underneath the water started flowing away and then on the water came 2 open cases from under his tent with all their clothes in open floating on the water. The water was going so he dived in to grab his case and the Wellington boots tripped him over and he landed in a great splash on top of his case full of things.

26:30 Yeah and he was later on he went missing in Flora in the monsoon into Burma and he was killed and that's when they were selling up his things. They used to sell up the things, you know, and send the money home to their people and the CO in introducing said he was a member such and such a family in England and it was a Lord family but we didn't know that while he was flying with us.

27:00 **So what was it like still doing your supply operations during the monsoon? Did you keep doing that?**

Oh well see the planes I think it was about four and a half thousand pounds is what the Dakota's are supposed to carry according to the makers or even less, less I think in the commercial use. But we used to fly them with 7000 pounds on them

27:30 but they used to land them at 7000 and they used to reckon you had to lighten it down to 6000 before you landed. So we'd take 7000 over and then we always had to throw a 1000 out before we landed, parachute it out somewhere or other and that was that. We used to parachute stuff out, you'd stack they were in little panniers they call them.

28:00 They'd be about a metre long and about half a metre square and they had the parachute fastener on one end and they'd be packed with whatever they'd taken and we'd stack 5 of these up in the door of the plane one of top of the other. Then when the pilot rang the bell for them to go out whoever was there with his foot usually you pushed them out and they all tumbled out together. That was the way we did it we didn't have rollers but I believe the Australians in New Guinea they used to have them on a

28:30 plank on like a door and they lifted them out but we just pushed them out their foot it was quite good as long as your foot didn't get caught in anything.

How did the parachutes open once they were out?

They had a rope on it or a strap on it to a wire on the top of the plane. It used to be opened automatically you see. When it got to the end it was just supposed to be past the tail plane

29:00 and there was a story there because one of our troops they pushed them out and suddenly there was a great shudder in the plane and I stuck me head out and I said what was going on and I saw the tail plane was just about cut off. What had happened the parachute had opened above the tail plane and the weight of the pannier was below it and the ropes between them they'd cut

29:30 through the aluminium until it got to the main sort of a spar in the tail plane a round thing that was near the back and it had cut right through to that and I told the captain. I said they'd just about cut that off. "Oh well, Cam," he said. "It's going all right. We'll keep on going," and finished off on a load and we went back, so that was that. But that could have been a dicey deal.

30:00 **So take offs and landings during that kind of weather especially with a big load. I mean you had 7000 pounds on and you were taking off. Was there ever any problems?**

No the aerodromes were big enough to handle the plane. But they had one problem was when they took off with a double load. Now what they'd do it worked very well too except for this one thing is that the planes would come in and you'd just park them as near as you could

30:30 to where you got a cup of tea and that before you took off again and you weren't given anything really you just got your cup of tea and then as soon as the plane was parked they'd be these Indian army trucks there. Each one of them was 3 tonnes and there was stuff on it to be loaded. They'd just pick out the next plane that came in just like picking up a taxi in a taxi rank and they'd load that on and they were sort of Indian sea boys

31:00 some of them without much intelligence I suppose because they were Indian sea boys. I wouldn't say they were that bad I shouldn't have said that about them but there was nothing bad about them they were just not intelligence but they didn't speak English that just may have made them seem unintelligent and they'd back into the door of the plane and they'd put that load, 3 tons, 3 tons into the

31:30 plane Then they had a slip, bit of paper, 'a flimsy' they'd called it, about that size, and it'd have written on it what the position was where it had to be dropped and it who it had to be dropped for and the letters that they'd have on the ground to indicate that they were there to receive it was the right and they put that in and just leave that somewhere in the aeroplane. Usually they left it inside the door stuck

32:00 on the inside of the plane. Sometimes cause I suppose they wanted to go up and have a look at the cockpit they'd go up and put it on the pilots seat. Well you'd come and get in and oh here we are and oh yeah we've got to take this to so and so and that was that and that was the only directions you had and this time we got in the plane, took off and Jerry said, "I'm going back, Cam." He said, "Land this plane. There's something wrong. It flies like a dodo." And

32:30 it would hardly lift off the ground. If we come around and land it and there found another flimsy. They put 2 loads in the one plane so we had 15,000, 1500 or thousand anyway twice the load and so then they said, "Oh it might have strained the plane landing with all that overload on it." So they took things to pieces and checked it and nothing no strain or anything. So we were quite happy to carry the big loads after that.

33:00 When you land with twice as much.

You left that load on?

Oh no we'd take half of it off before we took off next time and then another exciting trip was that they landed at Rangoon well they said to Jerry came in one day he across one day a big tent thing and he said, "Righto Cam, get your toothbrush."

33:30 He said, "We're going to go and turn down the way a bit." And anyway so he told me that he'd been asked to be a paratroop dropping expert to agree to drop paratroops that invaded Rangoon and he took it over and say whether it was okay or not and he said, "I wouldn't go without you." He said, "You've got to know distances, how big it is and that." And he said

34:00 "I have to take you to tell me how many there are. I couldn't read that off the map." But anyway so then they had to send us 2 little planes. We could only put one in each one so 2 little planes came and flew us down to an island off the coast there and they were planning in Rangoon it was a planning place and these 2 little planes come and they landed and

34:30 we got out and they turned around and took us, left us in middle of a big open scrubby paddock really. It was scrub running round there a bit and we're standing there and he said, "Oh someone will come for you." And next thing out of the scrub came along these local people and they seemed all to have pants on. Anyway when they came over to us we found they weren't pants they were tattooed down to their knee in dark

35:00 blue tattoo and they were little dopey things and that but where they thought were blue pants on was tattoo and they came over and they walked around us and they couldn't speak English and we couldn't speak their language and we were just looking at each other and when they got too close we loosened the flaps on our revolvers and they had terrible looking knives they had twisty edged things.

35:30 Anyway then the truck came and picked us up before we got into holts and they took us over to the beach and I had a bit of a couple of checks through gates with guards on them and then finally they took us to an officer came out and he said, we were talking about where we can drop these paratroops and he said,

36:00 "At the moment they're not ready for you would you just wait here in the shade of this." It was a marquee again and he said and inside they've got drinks and that just like here and he said, "You can make yourself at home." So we sat there it was a bit hard to get in the shade because the sun was straight up above you against the side of the marquee. There was a nice breeze coming off the sea and we sat there for about 2 hours and then they come and they said,

36:30 "We're all going home now," and what had happened the ones that's General Slim's mob had decided that they couldn't do it without us dropping them their supplies they didn't want us to go and drop paratroops because they wanted us to keep the supplies up to the men that were already on half rations because of lack of supplies and the Americans were going to come and drop the paratroops. So we didn't get into the conference but then we had to

37:00 get home from there because the little L6, the little plane had gone had already gone. We hitchhiked a ride back to town where all the officers were at that were at that 'do'. Not all of them I suppose, some of them lived swish, but fairly high officers were there, and it made us a bit sick. We went in to the mess and we had a tea and that there where we were going to spend the night but the way the squadron leaders and wing commanders the way they were running around

37:30 like and waited on the group captains and their vice marshals, you know, racing around like little boys and Australians, I don't think you'd catch Australians but that was the English way to try to get on. I remember we went out and walked along the beach and the waves were coming in and as the waves went out they left all these little shiny things in the water. That was interesting. The next day we had to hitchhike to get back and the

38:00 group captain we got a ride back he hitched ,flew us back. So that was an interesting do and then another do was then you see they drop the paratroopers down at the mouth of the river that runs up to Rangoon then they dropped them. They landed off boats and that and we had to go the next day and supply this army that had landed from boats.

38:30 They couldn't come very close to the beach there because it's too shallow for a ship to get in. So they had to come a fair way in small landing boats and so we had to fly down with supplies for them and the monsoon was on so we had to get it off to sea and Jerry he was leading another 2 planes. There was 3 of us we were going and we got out and we had to go through this great storm and

39:00 it was a big storm and when we got into a lot of wind and that and stuff from being coastal command we used to go down and fly close to the water because that cuts out the breeze so much. It's just sort of friction and we were flying along there and I measured 19 degrees drift. Now that shows there must be a terrible strong wind if you get 19 degrees drift and

39:30 the plane on this side just up above me and he kept in touch with us and he kept trying to scare us look out and it's jumping round in the storm and you see him and his propeller spinning just above the engine and he kept himself there and he kept himself. The plane on this side lost touch with it and he said that he was flying a group captain down to have a look at things and group captain ordered him to turn back or we were all going to get sunk.

40:00 Anyway we went down there and we had a place to drop the supplies. When we got to where the place was there was no army there or anything marked on the ground and so then we turned around and we followed the river up to Rangoon and there was army fellas all the way out, and even in the streets of Rangoon they were all out waving to us. I said to Jerry, "We should just drop it here in Rangoon

40:30 seeing they went so far to bring it." So anyway he said, "No, we'll drop it where they told us to drop it." So we went back and dropped it out there just the odd soldier but there was nothing round and it think it was a good idea because his idea was best because the ones that were waving to us were in the Burmese army and Indian army, you know. You see they surrendered and they were all in uniform and they sort of didn't reckon that they were part of the Allies because

41:00 they'd surrendered. But there was one thing like that there was a bit like that the Indians that were captured in Singapore. A lot of Indian troops were captured there and the Japanese asked them to join the Indian National Army. They had this fighting for Indians to be free and quite a few of them did and then they were up in Burma

41:30 and when they were coming down through Burma, General Slim, they had to cross this great Irrawaddy River which is a very wide river and they had these folding boats they'd flown down in the aeroplanes and when that division started to cross the river they got into great difficulties because on the other side of the river on the Japs side the Japs had pulled their men back to fight on a more dangerous place

and left the Indian National Army to protect the river

42:00 and when our fellas were going over and they started to…

Tape 8

00:30 And a DC3 designed for 2 pilots and the 2nd pilot has to control flaps, air intakes on the engines, the wheel he used to put down too and so I suppose a pilot was really working hard to do it with one fella.

01:00 So you need 2 pilots and in England they had 2 pilots on DC3s but when you get out to Burma and India they said we could do it with one and the result was that they…

DC3, two pilots?

Oh DC3 pilots. In England they had the 2 pilots, had a second pilot but then they reckon out in Burma I don't know why they only had one. They went back to one they said the navigator can do the jobs that

01:30 the 2nd pilot would do and that meant that if the pilot wasn't able to land the plane or fly it for any reason well you'd have to fly it but in the Bomber Command of course they only had one pilot and they were shot at and everything and there was only the one pilot to fly them and so that's what they did. They said the second, the navigator sits up beside the pilot in that one seat and

02:00 do the jobs that the second pilot would do and then you'd go to sleep occasionally while the other fella was cruising back and forwards, you know, and it would be a sunny day, it was the dry season and suddenly you'd be sitting there and your eyes would almost be shut and what he'd do he'd just give a little movement on his steering column and then you'd give a little movement back to tell him that you'd taken over and you were watching.

02:30 So that's what that was and several times they asked when you wanted to land it. I said, "Well I reckon if I'm going to land at Alkayak. I've seen it done enough sitting beside you, and if we're going to wreck the wheels or something I might as well have an excuse for doing it." Cause it'd be his fault – if anything happened it'd be on his shoulders. So that's why they had sometimes I'd fly the plane.

03:00 **But you never did land it?**

No never did land it, no. I said, "I can land it." He said, "All right, I've seen you time and again and helped you with the various things but if anything goes wrong you've got to take the blame. So I'll wait until…" He was quite happy for it to be like that.

So can you tell us a bit about the sorts of supplies and sort of activities that you were doing

03:30 **in the Dakotas in Burma?**

The types of supplies? Yeah well we had those panniers but we did know whatever they ordered they'd ring up by the radio in different divisions, not divisions but these little groups of men. They'd ordered from them and they'd deliver to them anything up to a ton and a half right at them. At one place we dropped ammunition to a 25 pound of guns and the

04:00 Japanese were trying to get across the Irrawaddy because we got behind them you see and they were trying to come over to escape and they were firing at them these 25 pounder guns and we had a position to drop our supplies, our ammunition. It was about 50 yards away from them. Anyway we started to drop and they were firing away like one thing and when we came over the officer stood up and he waved us to come over and

04:30 pointed it right where he was. We did we dropped them down quickly behind them and they were ripping them open and firing them before we finished dropping them to them. So that was one of the things we were doing. One time we load of 6000 pounds I think it was of axle grease you know if that's a good thing for the army division you see. No and the last trip we did

05:00 we landed a full load of lion beer –- it's a brand of beer they have there –- for the canteen in Rangoon. They'd just kept in Rangoon and we took them in a full load of lion beer that was our last supply trip and when we got back we went into the mess to have a cup of chai. We used to have these American food packs made up and we used to get one of them

05:30 and eat and when we came in they gave a bit of a cheer. We looked at them and they said, "Grueson's crew has been declared they've finished your operational tour, no more flying." So that was then and we were just taking a load of beer to the troops and I felt a bit wonky after that, you know.

06:00 We were a pretty good crew, we'd flown together for out there in India and Burma for about 8 months and it was dangerous things to do and you'd find fellas who'd come to grief because they didn't have any experience they hadn't flown to the drivers and that and we were quite happy to keep going and do it and suddenly they said, "Righto, no more flying for you as a crew," and it seemed to knock the stuffing out of you a bit –

06:30 you're not wanted. And it was also knocked the stuffing out of you cause you'd think, "Well I'm a survivor." You never expected to see the end of the war and there you were you were a survivor and another thing about it was up until then we were always a crew. We'd go everywhere together, worked together and now we had to go to our nationalities. Australians had to go to Australian places

07:00 everybody was an individual and I had to cleared you had to get cleared from all the sections and after a few weeks I hitchhiked a ride on a Dakota to Calcutta, which was – Dum Dum was the aerodrome at Calcutta – and went in the mess, had a meal, asked if there was anybody flying on to Delhi.

07:30 Yeah one fella said he'd take me so I got another ride with him on up to Allahabad and he put me on Allahabad where I caught the train to go to Bhopal, which is where the Australians were getting together to come home on the boat – that's Australian airmen.

So had the war finished by this stage?

Ah no the war was still going on and that's one thing oh I shouldn't be sorry I might have got a bullet in the last bit but I wasn't there right to the finish because

08:00 we'd captured Rangoon. We were going to invade Malaya on the 9th September which wasn't much later and of course the Japanese surrendered before that so we didn't invade Malaya. But I wasn't there when the Japs surrendered. I heard the message come through on our radio. We were sitting there listening to the radio it was playing jazz music

08:30 and that sort of a thing and suddenly this voice broke in and said, "This is the Japanese Imperial Army. We want to meet your officers and we'll be on a certain frequency at a certain time to discuss our future." And they put that over about twice and then we didn't hear them discussing things because they were meant to turn down their frequency. But then

09:00 before we'd got home we were waiting for a boat to come home the Japanese surrendered and threw that all out because all the boats were needed for Singapore. They were the priority, prisoners of war and so we just had to sit around and sit around for a while and before we left the Australians who were on the squadron who we left behind still flying they were all drawn and they

09:30 caught us up and were able to tell us what happened and they said, "Oh, you should have seen it, Cam. No wonder they lost the war." They said, "The plane come in and the poor pilot he did a terrible landing he'd be always ashamed for the rest of his life." And but anyway and they got out of the planes and they had some sort of light green uniform and they all got out and they all stood to attention. They'd dressed up and everything

10:00 and then they said the bigwigs got out and they were all standing there and one fella saluting and all. Then they took him away in a jeep and then these other fellas are standing there and they broke off and they said, "We all know…" The other airmen all wandered over and they got close to the aeroplane and they said there was a military policeman there watching the plane and he said this pilot, he started to wander

10:30 over towards us and this military policeman sang out, "Tiro, tiro," which is the Urdu language in the Indian army saying, "Wait, wait." "Tiro, tiro," he was yelling, and he put his hands up and he said that the Japanese pilot turned and looked at him and said, "You're every inch an officer." And he said, "If you're talking to me, my good man, could you please use English?"

11:00 So anyway they surrendered and the war was over.

So where were you?

I was in Bhopal. That was where they had that big cyanide business that killed so many people later. Yep, then we got in the train one day and they took us down close to Calcutta to an old army camp there. I think it was an army camp

11:30 and oh we got a interesting thing there that I got a sore developed inside finger, that finger in there and mosquito bite and it sort of wept all the time and I'd go to the doctor there in that army camp and everyday and he'd tried all the ointment and all we can do is try and go through them again. He said, "The only thing that'll fix this is to get on the boat to go home," and then

12:00 I knew we were going home. And up behind where we were camped there was a little what they call a bazaar and 2 or 3 Indians there and they'd spread stuff out to sell on a bit of cloth and it think it was mainly stuff that they'd pinched somewhere else. Because it was mainly European stuff and I was wandering round looking at it and I've seen a triangular tin and I thought that's the old ointment we had when I was a boy

12:30 and I looked and it was. It was the same name and the same smell and everything and I thought well I'll get that and I'll rub it on over this weeping wound because tomorrow we won't be seeing a doctor to get it dressed and I bought, Zambuck was the name of it. I bought this tin and then that night I smuggled it over the weeping wound and that and keep a bandaged around it and we went next day and we went down to the wharf in

13:00 Calcutta and while we were waiting behind the ship I thought I better have a look how this is going I

might want some more and I took the bandage off. It had stopped weeping it was nice and pink healing skin and the doctor had said, “You’ve got to get to the boat till anyone will fix it.” So I don’t think it was the boat it was the Zambuck yeah. So then we got on the boat and the boat sailed out of that was one of the foreign legion boats they told us and they had

13:30 all it was pretty basic, and we sailed out of there and it was a bit hard to take was to see, you know, we’d gone through all those years wanting more guns wanting more armour and everything and to see that boat speeding along and seeing them unscrewing the cannons off the back and tossing them over the side into the sea and all that. Bringing up the armament from down some stairs and tossing it into the sea it made it seem like they weren’t doing the right thing

14:00 we might need it soon and we got in… Ceylon. What’s the big port in Ceylon? Anyway we went there and 10 more hours on the boat but we had to get some fresh supplies there and the fellas were carrying big boxes on the head. They brought in supplies in this big about 4 foot square a metre

14:30 and a half square I suppose great big boxes and this fella was walking along with the box on his head and then our camera fella that was the other left cameraman he made him go off and walk in again because it was an empty box and he took a picture. Anyway we left there and we headed to Australia and every night there was a southern star, a southern cross getting further and further and the funny thing was you could see the southern cross in Burma even though

15:00 you were about 15 degrees north of the equator because the southern cross you see it doesn’t sit right on the south pole it’s up a bit and when you was standing up you had to be above the horizon and they tell me the boat broke down for a day but I’d forgotten all about that. It was a beautiful trip because of the Indian ocean and I was lucky I drew a

15:30 bunk in the cabin. There were 4 in the one cabin, double-decker bunks and I slept one night there and it was no good and all the other fellas come up. The ones that were in the hull come up on the deck. Things weren’t so disciplined earlier so I come up and I slept with them on the deck, come out of the cabin. It was handy to have it in case it rained it never rained. Anyhow that was coming home.

16:00 **So did you meet up with people on that ship that you hadn’t seen for a while yeah on the trip back?**

Yeah met those 2 twins that had been upset because they made them pilots and yeah they were on the boat. They were about the only 2 that were on it that I’d known before. Hadn’t seen them since Somers they’d been in India flying spitfires and they got an association going for the people

16:30 who trained at Somers at that particular time and they’re still in it. One of them is a secretary so they’re still going strong. They were very upset about them not allowed to be gunners to fly on the same plane. No there was no that I really knew well there was some. All the Australians were on it that were airmen in India. They brought them all home so they were the ones that had been on the squadron been on 62 Squadron in India.

17:00 **What was it like your final parting from your crew? What did you do?**

Well as it said it was that we were feeling like, you know, a sense of loss. I mean we were such a good crew and we’d flown so much together and we weren’t trying to get out of things and that and Geoff’s just about to feed it although he didn’t know they were going to surrender

17:30 we thought we had to invade Japan and anyway and we come home and we landed at Adelaide that boat. It landed, put some off in Perth then landed across the Australian Bight we landed to get out of a they paid money out of our pay book and I remember I got a $20 out.

18:00 I got some money and they gave me $20. I’d never seen not twenty dollars, twenty pounds, never seen such a thing before in me life. It was interesting to see it and given in and we landed at Adelaide. Then we got on a train coming across to Melbourne on the plane. The boat was going on to Sydney. Now people were waiting at Melbourne Cricket Ground for us and I was a bit proud of that because

18:30 we got off the train in Spencer St, lined up on the platform, number 1 platform, then they marched us through the building somewhere to where they load the mail bags into trucks. They used to be motor trucks before the war anyway and then marched us into there and they had a lot of army trucks backed in and we got on them. Then they laced up all the sides around them so they took us through Melbourne and we couldn’t see it and we were so pleased at being home in Melbourne and we couldn’t see it.

19:00 They took us out to the Melbourne Cricket Ground and our people were waiting out there.

Who was there waiting for you?

Oh me Mum and me Dad and sister. That’d be all the others were over there in the services yeah. They were there.

So had you been writing regularly to them? Had you been writing to them?

Oh yeah I did a lot of writing and when we went into

19:30 Somers camp I think the second or third day we were there a fella come through the huts where we

were studying after tea and he had these couple of mail bags full of letters. He dumped them on the table and he said, “These are girls who want someone to write to them. Don’t let any of them down.” Someone had put in the Weekly Times and request wanting a pen friend in the air force

20:00 and the result was that his request got 2 bags full of letters back and don’t let them down. So and he said, “You might have to write to 2 of them.” I wrote I think to 3 of them and I met one of them when I got back and the other one I met a few years later up in Nhill yeah.

20:30 Those were the days.

And what would they what would they write to you. What would they write in their letters to you?

What would they write? Oh what had been happening how the cow put a bucket putting a bucket for something the one at Nhill I remember once writing and one was a nurse up in Sydney and she’d be writing about what they did how they went out. The sisters, her and 2 sisters were all training as nurses together

21:00 and that was what they’d been writing and what had been going on. Very tame compared to the TV [Television] programs today. People were different in those days apparently. Dad had got very crook, he got rheumatoid arthritis and had to practically give the pigs up.

21:30 So then I set to work to re-establish our piggery and built a piggery there and then I decided I’d build a rock bank which was always a very dry place and I decided I was going to get a place with a better rainfall. So I went for a visit up to Gippsland and got up to the top of the mountains there where Bulga Park is

22:00 and my Mum had a lady she used to write to there and I finished up buying a place there. So from having no rainfall I got to a place that had 84 inches a year and that was the trouble was you didn’t get enough sun. It was always cloudy and raining so this place had been a bit of a guesthouse. Actually

22:30 built as a boarding house for people working on the sawmills. Built very flashly as they thought and I thought it’d be all right to have a boarding house there again. But I found out in time that it wasn’t big enough for Australia as it was after the war. We used to have about 12 people could stay and it wasn’t enough to get a cook and everything to look after them.

23:00 My idea was to do that it wasn’t to have Mum cooking. Mum finished up cooking for them in the finish and it was a dairy farm too and that wasn’t, it had been a pre-war dairy farm but after the war they had to be bigger and better. So I went out of that and the place also had a lot of timber on it a lot of this big mountain ash timber that had been killed in the fire most of it. Anyway my brothers went working on the

23:30 timber round there and they said, “Well let’s cut this timber up and sell it to the paper mill.” So we started on that then we got a truck to cart it down to the paper mill and from that was a big it was the first Ford truck that they had in Victoria, the Comma and ideal for that work and then we started to contract carting other people’s timber down and then the price

24:00 got that cheap it wasn’t worthwhile cutting and I spent 12 months carting paper over where they were making from Maryvale to Sydney to Botany. That was an interesting experience. The roads were not so good those days. You got pushed out with tractors and that.

So what happened to your dairy farm?

Well when I went full time working on the timber

24:30 and it had only been small only had about 30 cows and I just let the calves go on because one thing had happened was we were mentioning before about standard of milking sheds and it had a rather primitive milking shed. It had to be build new sheds and rather than build them I milked the calves go on them and then I finally finished up here I went and got those cows that were

25:00 running around on the hills there, sold them and that was how we got the money for the house.

You went and herded up your cows and sold them?

She did I don’t know how she did it. I said, “You can’t herd them because by then the internal fences had all collapsed.” It was only the boundary fence and that was very heavy country and she said, “I’ll go and get those cows.” And I said I’d have to be home to get them because I talked to them and

25:30 lead them into where we can trap them. It was no good chasing them with dogs but then she rings me up and tells me I sold all the cows and what she did she got a carrier to go up with her, 2 men and all his dogs and she wouldn’t let him send his dogs around and, “No, you’re not to get the dogs out there. There’s no hope.” And so then she went out and called the cows and that and they all come up and went into the yard and she shut the gate and

26:00 loaded them up. Then he tried to buy them on the way down. I was a big chance taking them in flocks, you know, I’ll give you 300 pounds or something for the lot of them if you can forget about them and she

wouldn't have that and she got about 600, got more anyway. She stood down against that old Beasley.

So things were really different after the war?

Oh different altogether. Well you couldn't buy concrete cause you wanted to get going with the pigs again

26:30 and you couldn't buy cement and you had to, well you asked for it. You put in a, anyway a list of what you wanted it for and they had to list how much you wanted and what you were going to do with it and all this. It was the same thing for windows or roofing iron anyway it was so short and you'd see during the war they cut men shirts up so they hardly fitted inside your trousers.

27:00 Mr. Denman was the Minister for Production. He got the blame for doing that. I don't know what they did to the women's clothes. Some of them they still cut them short and you see their middle all the time yeah and that was.. It was a good experience as long as you get out of it all right.

27:30 You wouldn't sign up just for the experience.

So did you miss flying?

No I haven't, well every time we went up you thought you might come down in a crash. It was always risky you were always taking your life in your hands all the time and when I came back. Well I missed it when I had to travel two or three hundred miles across country and it took

28:00 half a day. In an aeroplane we'd be there in half an hour, you know. I missed it then but it was years later we went to Fiji in a jumbo jet which was quite a difference to the ones we flew in but I didn't fly it or navigate it I left it to them. Yeah.

So what sort of business did you end up settling in to?

Well that was

28:30 timber and carrying. Then when we got back from there well this was on me brother built himself a little sawmill down in Gippsland and it was a really good sawmill too and 2 men could work it all right and so he wanted me to come back and work with him and I did and we worked at that and then they had a mini credit squeeze about '52, I think. There was no money to be put out

29:00 and so that killed all the saw milling at that time because a lot of the mills around were sawing timber but they wouldn't give them any more or advance of any money to buy thousands or anything. So people weren't buying it and then the sawmills would stack up and stacked up for months was that all we needed after a while. But they didn't, they didn't release any money

29:30 and then they started to sell all that timber as bankrupt stock because the people went broke and at the end of that time it was only the really big sawmills that were in business. But anyway what happened was I got married in '55 I think it was and we had our honeymoon in Tasmania. We come back and we just

30:00 got back not for long and then the telegram come to say that Vi's mother was seriously ill up in Swan Hill. So we got on the train and went up there. We had an amount of timber cut in the old mills. We started to cut it but we just said, you know, the more we cut the more we're out of pocket because the time you take the depreciation on the truck in carting it down and that you're not making anything and I said to

30:30 Donald, "Well you can…" – me brother we were working together – "You can sell what we've got cut and keep it." And he'd been thinking of joining the PMG [Post Master General's Department] and he'd go join the PMG or do whatever you like I don't know when I'll get back from up there. So I went up to Mallee, Vi's mother died ultimately. They thought she was going to live and be okay but finally she died and

31:00 I was up there and one day her father came in and he said, "You're sitting round, you know, with nothing to do but a dead end." He said, "One of the fellas on the PMG has left and gone to work on the railways because on the railways he wants to get that free travel once a year at the railways." And he said, "That'd be just as good for you." He said, "I don't think they do much work." He said, "Go down and see them." So I went down and saw the line foreman there and he said, "Oh yeah, you're a returned soldier.

31:30 Yeah, oh well." He said, "I think you'll be starting on Monday." He said, "I've got to confirm it with the engineer person." And so I started on the Monday and it was a little line party. We went around taking kinks out of the lines and things like that. Putting new poles and that and when it came we'd been there 12 months and I went in and I said, "I've got my resignation. I'm going back to Gippsland." He said, "Oh well, you're doing it wrong." He said,

32:00 "You've been away 12 months. You don't know what things will be like back there. Go back to your farm," he said, "get a transfer back to the PMG at Gippsland and then when you get there and see you can work out what's the best thing to do." And so I said, "I'll do that then," and I got a transfer back there. The upshot was that I found that things weren't too good up there. The house wasn't too good

and anyway

32:30 I kept on doing the money for the lines work and while we had our lunch and we were driving in and out slowly in the old punch buggy I used to study the books up a bit what we were working on telephones. I got interested in that because O'Malley, he would go out and there would be a fault in the telephone and you'd have to ring up the technician in Swan Hill and describe what was going wrong and he'd tell you how to fix it and

33:00 so that got me interested in what was needed to fix for that and I studied these books up and then they used to have open exams in those days. They don't now. And if you could sit for an examination on the qualifications you know those qualified and so I sat one and I passed one as a technician. I was a linesman before you see there was no exam for that and so they told me I'll go and work in a telephone exchange

33:30 somewhere because I'm a technician now and then all the time I'm thinking I'm going to go back to the farm in time, you know, and then another year later I became a senior technician, passed a few more exams and then I was one of the brainy technicians and then they sent a screen round they wanted people to come to Ballarat to teach at the school here, training school and

34:00 I wrote in an application and I didn't post it and anyway then about a couple of weeks later he comes around, "Anybody who thinks they can be an instructor of technician apply to go because we've got all these new fellas coming in and we've got no men." So then I sent in the one I'd written before and got word back from the engineer to be in Ballarat next

34:30 Monday. This was about Thursday but that's how we come to Ballarat and Vi had to get the cows and sell them because I wasn't there. Couldn't go without a car you couldn't get from here back to Ballarat. The trains didn't fit in or anything back down to Yarram. So I was 20 years as a technician there and then

35:00 they converted these old buildings that had been the migrant hostel and they turned one into a billiard room and they put a door through a wall and the floor was about 8 inches high and the door was only the normal door height and I was standing talking as I was supervising at lunch time, standing talking to the fellas playing billiards and I stepped off without looking and I was underneath the door and I drove me head up into the top

35:30 and I stood up and it gave trouble after a couple of years and so anyway from that they said, "Oh you'd better finish up," and so I was superannuated out there in '78. Had a long holiday since then. It gave me a lot of trouble afterwards the neck used to be sore for most of the day and then gradually it would get better and better.

36:00 I'd find you'd be sitting in here feeling like this and then next thing I'd discover I was out in the garden buggering around the garden. It had become pretty good. It was one of the thinking about things it was the most moving sort of a parade I was ever in and I used to think about it for years and I was thinking

36:30 I can't write about that because it's too moving and then one day it was actually on Armistice Day 1990 and I sat and thought about it and the words seem to float together and so I had this poem:

Normandy Eve 1/6/44

37:00 \n[Verse follows]\n War men passed down the way to die,\n

A Cotswold lane was houses\n And all their drillers wives tried not to cry\n So still white-faced as we went by\n Five times five the crews went down to die\n Two striped Dakotas standing by\n

37:30 In Bedford trucks we stood heads high\n

Their canopies blocked out our sky\n Six times six by six trucks went by\n With men who'd jump and do and die\n The sun was low down in the sky\n Before it rose in death they'd lie\n In leaf and twig and camouflaged dye\n The Atlantic war they went to try\n

38:00 Those locals stood tears in their eye\n

White hankies waved as we went by\n And now must I just sit and sign\n And think of men on the way to die\n The women's tears as he went by\n To glory bright past crying eye\n

That's a poem I wrote on Armistice

38:30 Day. I thought I summed it up pretty good because that was the way the people were standing there and so still and looking as if we were dead men going past and, you know, and they're waving their hankies and wiping their eyes and that was that one.

Is there anything else you'd like to say before we finished up?

39:00 I've got another poem in there.

\n[Verse follows]\n Looking back at our course 22 RAAF\n It's now the time to think of those safe home at base\n Our streams been long we've lost them all the way\n And now their face

39:30 here has no place\n

There’s a bigger brighter mess today\n We gather there in Russell Street beside the land\n November 5 in ’41 and then went off by train\n To face the strain of walking miles to tents as Somers men\n On boards and then we laid our straw\n We made then hours this mixed up crew\n Together we tried on our kit\n

40:00 In towels to showers of early hours\n

When the WAAFs moved in they banned that pit\n The bullring crunch to marching feet\n We were wheeled and turned through corporal wood\n Her lectures did swat by night\n Hard marks were earned a lot was learned\n As Copper Adam taught theory of flight\n In morning muster of the flag they made it known\n

40:30 The Japs had bombed Pearl Harbor\n

And how we cheered and now not alone\n Not on our own to fight and die\n A hopeless few was what we feared\n Then one by one marched up and saluted and were told\n That G or P or O was what we’d be\n We as aircrew bowled in heat or cold\n We’d fly by and die with mates\n To keep ours free\n

41:00 We trained and sailed and sailed and trained\n

And waited months away\n Then climbed to sterling flanks old Wellies flew\n And day by day we marked our way\n With the shot down mates and flattened landscapes too\n In spits or hurries flew against packs up by the sun\n Or coastal men with subs we had to sink\n We flew down guns to get those Huns\n So far out there was nothing but the drink\n

41:30 We fought the Japs in pacific skies beside the Yanks\n

Typhoons dived bombed the rocket sites in France\n We blew up tanks hit armoured ranks\n Our photos told before they made events\n In dacks with paras or supply to army drops\n Or lifting wounded men from battle roar\n So many jobs so many mobs\n

42:00 Were ours to fly and die with in that war\n

Some half were left.\n