

Australians at War Film Archive

Robert Pollack (Tiny) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/908>

Tape 1

00:36 **As we were saying before, we will run through things fairly briskly and come back to each of them in detail, so whereabouts were you born?**

I was born in Gatton in Queensland in Nurse Pollack's Nursing Home. Nurse Pollack was my aunty who was a World War I sister as a matter of fact.

And were you born into a big family?

01:00 No, I had two brothers. I am the eldest, the second brother died when he was twenty-one and the other brother is still living and he lives on the farm where I was brought up. He owns about three or four farms now but that's where he still lives. A place called Windwill.

And what were your parents doing?

My parents were on the land eventually, they moved out on the land for as long as I can remember. They were in the city

01:30 and the Depression came and they moved out to the farm which my grandfather owned so it's been in the Pollack's name for years and years.

I think you mentioned before that your father was in the First World War?

Yes.

Whereabouts did he serve?

He was in the Middle East, Egypt and Baghdad I think he was. He never talked about it much, got wounded

02:00 and that was it.

Where did you go to school?

I went to school at Ma Ma Creek which is a little suburb, well not a suburb a little district next to Windwill. There was no school in Windwill so I went to Ma Ma Creek School, quite a well-known school up there.

What sort of size was that?

Oh, there was about forty or so people I suppose, or students

02:30 in those days. About six to a class, as the generations grew up we started at five or six and went up to fourteen. I left at fourteen unfortunately.

Could you tell us about that, what brought that on?

The Depression brought that on. Father wasn't too well of course. I just had to work. I had to go out and work on the farm with him, milk cows and

03:00 farm and grow different vegetables, lucerne and everything that and it was jolly hard work. They were bad days in my opinion.

So, you were mostly doing that until you were called up?

Yeah, right till I was called up. Possibly I could have got out of being called up because we were on a farm. But of course when I got called up it was '42. I think it was,

03:30 and the Japs were fast approaching and so every youth was called up. I had just turned eighteen and I got called up.

So, you must have been about fifteen or sixteen when the war was declared?

Yes, I was fifteen, sixteen when the war started.

Do you remember that date, do you remember hearing about it?

Yes, I still remember Menzies talking. We had a radio in those days and they were precious things, not too many people had radios in those days and it was battery

04:00 operated, there was no electricity in the place in those days and you had to keep the batteries charged up. You had to go and get somebody with a battery charger to charge it up by a thirty two volt machine and that was it.

So, on that day were you all crowded around the radio?

Not really. I think Dad was a bit worried because he had been in a World War

04:30 and he said, "You'll be in it before long." He must have realised that it was going to last a long while because I was only fifteen or sixteen then.

Do you also remember when Japan entered the war?

Yes, I remember when Japan entered the war quite well. That was frightening, that was more frightening than the first time because my father sort of understood war and he expected the Japs to be good and come down this way I guess.

05:00 And of course I lost a cousin on the [HMAS] Sydney, he was on the Sydney and of course Sydney has never been found. It was a disaster to the district, because he was on the farm operating butcher shops and things with his family when he was called up and he went into the air force. He was in the air force on the Sydney, looking after the air craft on the Sydney.

05:30 And he only spoke to his mother from Kalgoorlie or Perth or somewhere a couple of days before he disappeared, he must have been flying into Perth on an aeroplane and then went back to the ship I guess.

And your community really felt that loss?

Oh yes. The community really felt that loss. It was the first casualty around the district in those days and the family certainly felt it. We were a pretty close family, my aunty and uncle on that side of the road

06:00 and we were on the other side of the road.

In those early days did you have a preference for what service you wanted to be in?

Always the air force but the army got me first.

At that stage could you have tried to enlist in the air force?

No, not at that stage, no I didn't. Well, I had listed before the army got me, I was in the air force reserve but the army called me up before the air force called me up

06:30 and it took me well, almost eighteen months to get out of the army into the air force.

And so whereabouts did you train with the army?

I trained at Kelvin Grove in Brisbane, a little unit at Kelvin Grove.

And so, were you directly streamed into the military police, I mean how did that come about?

07:00 They just put me there. I got called up and they called it the first lines of communication and that was more or less the military police. They just put me there, I had no say about it.

Did you know much about the military police at that stage?

No, nothing except the stories that my Dad had told me from World War I.

What sort of stories would they be?

Oh, they weren't very good, they were always bad about the military police.

07:30 Particularly in Egypt, he told me a story about walking down the street with his sister, who was a nursing sister and she was an officer of course and Dad was only a private and the military police said he wasn't allowed and almost arrested him, was Dad's story.

So, he wasn't even allowed to walk down the street?

No, with a lieutenant. My aunty was a lieutenant then, sister.

08:00 in World War I.

Did you have specialised training for the MPs [military police]?

Oh, I guess we did, yes. We got all sorts of lectures on law and what we could do and what we couldn't do, yes we did. Fairly thorough training as a matter of fact. Then we were sent into the police headquarters in Brisbane and had further training there and I think the main depot was Roma Street.

08:30 **So, was that training was with civilian police?**

Yes, training with the civilian police. We learned traffic from the civilian police, we directed the traffic on different corners in Brisbane, teaching us how to direct traffic.

Could you give us an idea of what sort of duties and activities you had as an MP?

All sorts of duties.

09:00 Escorting people around and raiding different homes because the people were AWL [absent without leave] and things like that and we got, oh, checked all the railway stations, we would be there four hours at a time in different shifts. I was going to say we were everywhere, and we got called out for the riot in Brisbane and I could say one of the worst jobs, we were,

09:30 well I might as well say it, we got duty in front of the two Brisbane brothels, which were there and we had to keep the peace there. Never got a freebee at any time though.

That is worth clearing up because that is fairly well understood isn't it, everyone thought they got freebees.

Yes. We didn't get any freebees from it and I can always remember boys of about sixteen and eighteen

10:00 lining up and getting in the queue and I shouldn't say this, it is a bit naughty, but they would sell their spots to the Yanks because there was great queues. And when they got front they would sell the place for dollars to the Yanks or cigarettes or something, it was quite amusing to be honest.

It must have been such an experience too?

Oh yes, an experience for a boy of eighteen and didn't understand too many things in those days.

10:30 **And what sort of control did you have over the Americans, what sort of jurisdiction did you have because they had their own MPs?**

They had their own MPs. Didn't really impress me very much, they treated the black army boys very, very badly and I thought, I got quite hurt about it sometimes. They would arrest the black boys if they were walking down with white girls and all that

11:00 because Americans in those days were black and white and very against one another in those days. Calmed down a bit now I think.

Did you have any clashes with those American MPs?

No, we got on pretty well with them I must admit. They always had better things than we had like Coca-Cola which was hardly ever known in Australia. They used to give us Coca-Cola and cigarettes although I didn't smoke, hardly ever

11:30 smoked in my life really.

That's pretty impressive to come out of the army without smoking.

Yeah, well I learned to smoke I suppose in the army but I was never happy with smoking. I doubt whether I was a smoker when I left the army, the air force taught me to smoke a little bit for some reason.

I believe you had something to do with Italian POWs [prisoners of war] as well?

Yes, we escorted, well first of all we arrested them sometimes up around Sarina

12:00 and places in northern Queensland and when they got enough they would load them on a train. And we used to escort them in the train and the train had barred windows from South Brisbane because the railway started from South Brisbane in those days, the normal New South Wales railway. And we used to take them to Cowra, it used to be about a four-day trip.

12:30 We escorted them down to Cowra and then come back. It was my first visit to the big town of Sydney. I've got the date there somewhere, I can't remember it off hand. And of course I was quite thrilled to see Sydney being a country boy from Brisbane and the tallest building in those days was the AWA [Amalgamated Wireless Australasia] radio tower. Look at Sydney now.

All these things I would love to talk about in more detail in the next tapes. During this period

13:00 **were you trying to get out of the army, were you trying to get back into the air force?**

Yes, I did, I tried to get back. It took me eighteen months.

Can you tell us about that, what happened once you entered the air force?

Well, once I got into the air force I went to Kingaroy and did ITS [initial training school] at Kingaroy on 43 course which practically, well, they were surplus air crew practically then and it was very sad, they only picked the highest passed

13:30 students to carry on pilots, navigators and radio operators. And being me with not so much education and I suppose I struggled and I was nowhere near the top of the class of course and it hurt. That's what I say, you must have education. I've always regretted it all my life. I suppose I should have went back to school when the war finished but I was too busy enjoying myself I guess.

14:00 **So, what area did you get into in the air force?**

Well, I started air crew and I was categorised as a pilot eventually but never did pilot training. So I re mustered then. I tried to get into a motor boat crew and they wouldn't have me. They eventually they made me a mechanic and I went on from a mechanic then to what they called a 'twoeey' and then I became a flight engineer in the air force, still

14:30 air crew in the air force. In later years I stayed in the air force for many years, nineteen years I think.

So, at this stage what year is this, when you are training in the air force?

It would be 1943. I've got all the dates there. About '43.

Were you starting to get a sense that the war was coming to an end?

Yeah, the war was

15:00 starting to look more pleasant, if that is the word, we were on the winning side slightly I guess, that was the reason.

So, what postings did you have with the air force?

I came down to Melbourne, I had some training in Sydney, at Darlinghurst Girls School it used to be.

15:30 The air force had taken it over and I did basic training there and then came down to Melbourne here at Ascot Vale and did training at Ascot Vale. And when I finished training, where did I go, oh I went to a place called Maryborough in Queensland as a mechanic and worked on Wacketts and Ansons and aircraft like that. From there I went to

16:00 Amberley recovery depot or something they called it, and I think I did another course then. Then I did a, eventually a flight engineers course and never got overseas, the war had just about finished by the time I finished training. I did an awful lot of training so I didn't really get overseas during the war time,

16:30 much to my disappointment really. I suppose I was lucky, a lot of people thought I was lucky but it was disappointing. I am no hero, so to speak.

I don't know, you survived the Battle of Brisbane.

That was while I was in the army, yes.

So, where were you when the war was declared over?

Amberley I think,

17:00 if I remember rightly. Amberley in Queensland, yes.

Were they big celebrations there?

Oh yes, terrific celebrations and of course we all went to Brisbane to join in the big celebrations and there was not much alcohol around in those days, because they had sessions and all the rest of us so none of us could really get drunk or anything like that. Couldn't get beer, it was all rationed and things like that.

17:30 There was dancing in the street and the girls were all kissing us I suppose, not that we were heroes, kissing all the army and the Yanks [Americans] were there. There were many Yanks in Brisbane in those days too. They come down on recreation leave actually because they had all moved north eventually and they'd still come to Brisbane.

18:00 **At that point were you clear about what you wanted to do, did you want to stay in the air force or were you hoping to do other things?**

Well, I had always had the intentions of wondering what to do and I thought, "Well, I have a job," which I didn't have when the army called up, except working on the farm. And I thought, "I will stay in the air force for a while." And I got such good treatment in the air force and every time I went to get out they gave me a better job.

18:30 And I stayed in the air force for nineteen and half or twenty years and saw a lot of service after the war in the air force. I went to the Malayan Emergency and I was involved in the first dispute with Indonesia

and I went to American for a couple of years with the American Air Force which was a wonderful experience.

19:00 **What were you doing there?**

I went over to train on the Hercules and I brought the first Hercules, well when I say I, the crew brought the first Hercules home, I crewed the first Hercules home.

What are they like to fly in?

Wonderful I have got about five or six thousand hours in Hercs, that's why I'm a bit deaf.

What experience did you have in Malaya, what were you doing there?

I was there with the Lincoln No. 1 Squadron

19:30 and we bombed the jungle here there and everywhere. I think we only killed a few elephants, that's about all, we didn't kill many of the terrorists because the communists were trying to take over Malaya in those days of course.

They were pretty hard to find weren't they?

They were in the jungle, we used to get called out to bomb a certain part of the jungle and who knew what we hit, it was just a mass of trees.

20:00 We were told we killed a couple of elephants with bombs, that's about all.

And similarly what were you doing in Indonesia?

We had nothing to do with Indonesia, we just flew around the boundaries there and sort of annoyed them a little bit I suppose more than anything else but they banned us flying over Indonesia in the Hercules. We had to go around the Cocos Islands trip, miles and miles around, when we were supplying Butterworth and places like that. We had to go right around

20:30 Cocos and around the islands and it took a lot more effort to do and hours and hours of extra flying.

In Indonesia, was it just a presence or were you doing reconnaissance as well?

No, I didn't do any of that, I was in transport.

And so when you finally left the air force?

Yes, I left the air force eventually.

How come?

21:00 A better pay was offering with Qantas or TAA [Trans Australia Airlines] or Ansett, and I joined Ansett, ANA in those days and I flew with Ansett as a flight engineer for twenty odd years, twenty years and five months or something. And I had to retire on my sixtieth birthday.

You had to?

Had to in those days. You couldn't fly, crew a commercial aeroplane with passengers after sixty in those days. You can now,

21:30 you can go as long as you are medically fit under these new rules and regulations but on the sixtieth birthday. And what we used to do was try and be the furthest away on our birthday and they'd have to send somebody up to bring an aeroplane home and we'd come home as a passenger. Naughty, I know. Reg [Ansett] is not around.

Where were you, where did you go for your sixtieth birthday?

Sixtieth birthday I went Canberra, Sydney,

22:00 Cairns, back to Sydney and had an overnight in Sydney and of course I had my wife with me and we stayed at the penthouse they gave us. I have forgotten the name of the hotel, Hyatt Hotel, and they gave us the penthouse this huge three or four rooms. We had never stayed in such luxury in our life. Because it was my last trip, this is what the hotels did.

22:30 And the day I retired I flew from Sydney to Melbourne and they picked us up in a Rolls Royce and took us out from the hotel to the aeroplane in a Rolls Royce, everything, luxury. And wheeled me out in a wheel chair when we got to Melbourne in front of all the passengers which was rather disturbing. The other crew members who

23:00 hadn't retired would line out and would organise a wheel chair and sit you in a wheel chair and put your bag in your lap and wheel you out in front of all the passengers. It was a wonder they didn't get worried.

Sounds very ceremonious.

Well, it was the considered thing to do, Qantas and TAA did it. It was TAA in those days, they did it.

Did you actually fly domestic or?

I was always domestic.

23:30 **Well, it is definitely a long career and have you been involved in associations after the war?**

Yep, I am a member here of course in St. George's Road and I have been secretary of the air force association, that's the whole air force association of Victoria. That was a six day a week job and not paid naturally and it

24:00 got very hard. So, I had a lot to do and I'm still in the air force association and I am still a director of the air force association at this moment.

That is a long association, isn't it?

Oh yes. I don't know how long I've been in the association, ever since I left the air force actually. I was in the air force association before I left the air force but I have been pretty active here in Melbourne since I've been in Melbourne town.

OK then, if we could go right back to the beginning, I was wondering about your father and his experiences in the First World War, how do you think it affected him?

24:30 He always had certain nerves, although he was a wonderful father, to me and to his three sons. He was wounded in the left arm if I remember rightly, it wasn't the best, but he soldiered on, so to speak on the farm, drove horses and

25:00 things like that in those days until we got a tractor eventually, towards the end of the war, just before I left to join up we got a tractor which helped quite considerably but normally it was horses before that. I used to hate driving horses.

Did your dad get any help from repat [repatriation programs] or anything for his wound?

No, he never got any repat, no.

Did he have any old war mates from around the area?

Oh yes, he had a mate,

25:30 he was about six or seven farms who I understand, and they seldom talked but I heard them talk one day that he was sheltering behind a rock and his mate said, "Huey, you had better get further behind," or something and Dad pulled away and that's when he got shot, otherwise he would have got shot and this was a bloke by the name of George Cole.

26:00 He was in the same unit as Dad the 2/14th Light Horse. Otherwise I would never had heard the stories, only when they had a few whiskies or something at a function and they used to get talking but not much, they never talked much about the war even then.

So, your dad's mate called him away just before a bullet came over?

Yes, the bullet caught Dad in the arm from what I can understand.

26:30 **Did your dad have anything to do with Anzac Day?**

Oh yes, he was very active, the same as I am active here in the return soldiers league [RSL: Returned and Services League] and he went to Brisbane occasionally. Brisbane was a long way away in those days although it was only eighty mile away but it meant a train or something to Brisbane. He did march a couple of times in Brisbane. Of course he always marched in Gatton or Ma Ma Creek, Ma Ma Creek used to have a ceremony, still does I understand. I have been invited to attend

27:00 myself but I have never quite made it as yet. I intend doing it before I pass on.

In growing up, what sort of idea did you have about war?

Oh, that's a hard question, not much I don't think, no I didn't have much say, only what the papers, we used to get the papers and read the papers and I didn't think much about war in those days. Until it happened.

27:30 **Was it taught much at school, the First World War?**

No, we weren't taught that much at school. My school teacher, well Bill Stokes I can call him now, Mr. Stokes he used to be, he was an ex army bloke himself and he used to give us a lecture on Anzac Day and things like that on the day before Anzac Day. And I knew more about war from Bill Stokes that from Dad and George Cole.

28:00 **What sorts of things would Mr. Stokes say, what would he tell you about Anzac Day?**

Well, he never talked about the hard times. How we should remember and how the people paid the supreme sacrifice and all this, being a school teacher, but he never spoke about the real hard times,

even Bill Stokes. And I believe he did have a hard time too.

What do you know about his experiences, he had a hard time?

That's about all, Bill, yeah, that come from Dad.

28:30 He wasn't in the same unit as Dad but that come from my father.

And how about your aunty, did she tell you stories?

Very little.

She must have seen quite a lot too?

Yes, she seen a lot too, wounds and things like that.

So, she had a nursing home near by?

She came and started the Gatton Hospital or it was called the nursing home in those days but it was the Gatton Hospital, she started that when she came home from the war I guess. That's why I was born there

29:00 at her hospital of course.

So, a nursing home in those days was more like a...?

A general hospital, more like a general hospital. It was just a name, a nursing home.

Did you have much to do with your aunt?

Yes, aunty and her husband treated us very, very well. They eventually left the nursing home and had a shop in Grantham and she treated all the school children wonderful.

29:30 They were never rich but they would give you anything at all that you wanted, very much so and Uncle Jack. Uncle Jack was a Scotsman and another World War I veteran also.

He had served with?

I don't know what unit he served with but he even served in World War II. He became an officer

30:00 in World War II. I think he was a lieutenant, I'm not sure.

How would you say the Depression affected your family?

The Depression was hard years. I suppose Aunty Elsie helped us a lot by owning a shop and giving us certain things, food, but it was hard years, the Depression. A lot of people don't realise. Of course I was only young and I can hardly realise what we went through but when you think back now

30:30 it was a jolly hard time, the Depression years. That's what caused people to leave school and some left school early just to work, just to live, that's all, very hard times.

Do you remember what you ate as a child?

Oh yes, we were always well fed by Mum, because we were on a farm we had all the vegetables under the sun.

31:00 The butcher was next door, who happened to be my uncle, Uncle Eddie and so we ate fairly well through Mum's cooking and Mum was a terrific cake maker. She took a lot of prizes in a couple of local shows so her cakes were always welcome.

Your family had quite a presence in your town, didn't it?

Yes. Oh, we were well know,

31:30 the Pollacks were well known around Gatton and Grantham, yes, and my brother more so now and his family. He has got about four farms now or something, quite a huge establishment now. Different to when I was on the farm, we only had about a hundred acres and we worked with horses and that. He hasn't got an animal on the place, everything is mechanical. Grows acres and acres of

32:00 lucerne and cabbage and potatoes and he ploughs them in very often, because the price is too low. He told me the other day he ploughed a lot of potatoes in because he would go broke picking them. It's sad isn't it?

That's terrible.

Onions, another thing he grows. He often ploughs the onions in.

Were you pretty busy with chores even when you were at school on a farm?

Yes, we were, every morning I would milk ten or fifteen cows before I went to school

- 32:30 and every afternoon I would have to milk fifteen, twenty cows. Dad didn't believe in milking machines, had too much vacuum, would upset the cows or something, of course they were old style of milking machines in those days. So yes, I milked the cows before I went to school,
- 33:00 rushed to school, rushed home to milk more cows and they were hard years. And I eventually became a bit of an expert on cows around the place through just local knowledge and learning myself I suppose. I used to get called out by neighbours when their cows got sick and go and see what's wrong with them and used to inject them, red water [disease of cattle] they used to call it.
- 33:30 A terrible disease around the place caused by ticks, I think if I remember rightly, and they used to just die these cows and I would have to go up and see what's wrong. And I was considered a bit of an expert, a local veterinary surgeon but I had never had any training or anything. Many a time I would be called out to help cows give birth and all the rest of it.
- 34:00 **How old were you?**
- Oh, fifteen, sixteen and when I left school I started working, still milking cows and doctoring them and giving them medicines and every thing like this because there was nobody to look after them around the place. Everybody had to look after our own in those days.
- 34:30 **Did you hope to be a vet?**
- I didn't really, no, but I was just interested and you would hate to see a cow die and I just got interested and sort of got a bit of name, you know, "Oh Rob Pollack will fix them." Rob Pollack didn't fix many of them, most of them died. I used to be able to help them give birth and all the rest of it.
- So, you said you were sad to leave school,**
- 35:00 **did you enjoy being at school?**
- Oh yes, I enjoyed school. I loved school.
- What did you hope to be?**
- A lawyer, I don't know why. I had always been interested in medicine so I might have changed my mind. I knew that I would never be able to go to university because my father in those days couldn't afford it, to send me. Even to high school was ten miles away and that would have been a hell of an effort,
- 35:30 well it was a big effort to get there in those days. You would either have to ride a horse or a pushbike or something like that.
- It would be mostly horses in those days wouldn't it?**
- Yes, mostly horses. I used to ride to school. I bought my first push bike by trapping rabbits, hares they were because we grew a lot of lucerne and you'd get little baby hares and we would feed them. I used to have up to twenty. I used to feed them every morning with milk with a teaspoon, and rear the poor little things, and sell them
- 36:00 to the greyhound people. I never thought that they were just let loose to blood the greyhounds in. I think how cruel I was rearing these hares just to be chewed up by greyhounds. It is still done illegally now, I think for the racing side of it. Poor little hares.
- 36:30 **And you bought a pushbike?**
- I bought a pushbike with the profit I made selling the hares and that was the pride of my life, that push bike, riding it to school and not many of the other students had push bikes of course. They all had to come in the horses and things and they learned to ride on my push bike most of them. Those were the days. That was about when I was twelve or thirteen in those days.
- Well, just after you left school were you paying attention to what was happening overseas in Europe?**
- Yes,
- 37:00 always read the paper, we always got the paper. It was thrown out by, well he was a cousin run the mail run, first of all in a horse and sulky and then a motor car and he would go up the road and throw the papers out and the letters. Mail service, it was called. He used to do quite a passage, right up to a place called Flagstone Creek and roads were bad then, you'd get bogged
- 37:30 because there was no bitumen roads half the time, I'm talking years ago. It eventually became bitumen roads so it was much easier for him. And he went into the air force pre war, so that's what encouraged me a little bit towards the air force I think.
- Did you have a particular interest in planes?**
- Oh yes, I always had an interest in aeroplanes. I tried to build one when I was about fourteen and wrecked. It was a pedal one, if I remember rightly.

38:00 I run it off a cliff. It's a wonder I didn't kill myself.

What did you make it out of?

Oh, timber and brown paper and I used to get Mum to make yeast or something and yeast the brown paper over the wings. It would never fly of course. When I look back now it was so stupid but there you are.

What did your parents think of you trying

38:30 **to jump off a cliff?**

They didn't like it. "Be, careful, be careful," because we used to take it up the hill behind us in quite a cliff and we'd run it off that, myself and my cousin, Ned, whose died. We used to run this thing off and crash it down. How we didn't hurt ourselves I'll never know.

Tape 2

00:32 **You were just saying off camera about the event of seeing planes flying overhead, could you tell us about that again?**

When an aeroplane flew over head the teacher used to let us out of school, to see this aeroplane fly overhead. See Grantham is on the main due course for Toowoomba to Brisbane. So they started up eventually a

01:00 airmail or an air run between Brisbane and Toowoomba. But when Amy Johnson [English aviatrix] was coming over, we were coming home from school and she flew over. Everybody just stood in their tracks and watched this aeroplane, it was a marvel in those days there wasn't many aeroplanes.

Was she in the news a lot before she came over?

Oh yes, everybody was waiting and watching. I don't think we had a radio in those days. You know radios were scarce

01:30 in those days. We never got a radio until I was about fifteen years of age. We couldn't afford one in the first place, as I said, they were hard years.

You were talking before about following the news, would that be something that you talked with your family about when you read the newspapers?

Oh yes, we used to discuss, Dad was always a big reader, he was chairman of the local library. We had a library at Ma Ma Creek and he was the chairman of the library committee for years and years.

02:00 They had fantastic books there I used to get after I left school. I was always a reader and still am.

And what did your father think of the actions in Europe, did he talk about the possibility of war and so on?

02:30 Yes, we often talked about that, particularly when Hitler was starting to make himself known and Dad always said it will be on again, on again, on again, and he always said it will start in the Middle East. And it certainly did more or less start in the Middle East. Everything happens in the Middle East, even today. It's strange but there you are.

And your brothers were older than you?

No, I am the oldest.

Do you think it was expected that you would take part if something came up?

Yes, I was itching for my eighteenth birthday

03:00 to come, sad to say. I wanted to be in that, like all people in those days there was no problems with recruits or anything, there was a few conscientious objectors but not many. Everybody was fairly patriotic in those days different to what it is even today, most people wanted to go into the services. Boys that is.

03:30 **Did your father get involved?**

Yes, my father was a in the Volunteer Defence Corps, 'Dad's Army' they eventually became known. I think he was a sergeant in the VDC as they called it, Volunteer Defence Corps.

At what stage did he become involved in that?

Oh, as soon as they formed it, just after the Japs came into the war I think it was. They formed these units, there were different units formed around the place.

04:00 This was the Grantham unit. Of course they helped you know carry on information about the scorched earth policy of those days. If the Japs, who were expected to come, they had to burn everything on the farm and march on and things like this. We were just below the Brisbane Line. Things were hard and people were worried, there was no doubt about that.

04:30 **How was that information disseminated?**

I always remember, I think two or three army chaps came around each and every farm in the district, and I was only fifteen or sixteen years of age, and told Mum and Dad what they had to do if the Japs came. They had to burn the house down and burn the hay sheds down which we had, burn this down and burn all the crops and make

05:00 it scorched earth policy. People say this never happened but I distinctly remember these people coming around and saying this had to happen. We were just below what they used to call the Brisbane Line.

What was your parent's response to that?

They were very upset about this if it had to go, but luckily it never happened, the Japs never got there.

I suppose I'm wondering if people really considered that they could have done that, do you think your community would have?

05:30 I think in those days they would have done it without question, I think because most people were fairly worried at this stage when the Japs were advancing into Moresby and places like that.

What did you know about the Japanese at that point?

We were always told that they couldn't see and that they weren't good troops and never buy Japanese cups and saucers that used to be on the market.

06:00 Made in Japan, you never bought it, you made sure you never bought it because it was rubbish, but they soon proved that it wasn't rubbish didn't they? Even the aeroplanes weren't supposed to fly. And they weren't even supposed to be able to fly them but they flew them well didn't they? So, everybody was led astray there, without question.

And I suppose I was wondering what you thought would happen if they invaded, what sort of occupying force they would be,

06:30 **did you have any understanding of what sort of people they were?**

Not really, I don't think we had any understanding of what would have happened. I learned all about that when I eventually come into the army, what might have happened. They lectured us on, mainly how we would retreat if it happened. I was right in Brisbane of course, what to do, and how to do it, but they interred a lot of people you see, they interred all the Italians and some of the Germans.

07:00 There was a German settlement, so to speak, just over the hill from us. Cafey and a few of those people were interred. I didn't have anything to do with that but I had a lot to do with the Italians, sending all the Italians down. I went up to Sarina, that's outside of Rockhampton and arrested people and escorted them right down to Cowra.

Were they any German or Italian or European families when you were growing up nearby?

No,

07:30 not near by, we had a German family next door to us but they were truly Aussies, all born in Australia of course. Most of them served in the army, well they all did, four boys served in the Australian Army.

Was there any sort of suspicion towards them at all?

Oh, a little bit, yes. I must admit a little bit, yet they were very, very good Australians. Germans made marvellous citizens of course.

08:00 These things happened and that was it but the Italians, they weren't trusted at all, the Italians, because they caused a lot of trouble before that, there was always murders and knifings in the cane fields up that part and so they arrested all the Italians. And the next thing they did, they closed four radio stations too.

08:30 I understand they were owned by the Jehovah Witnesses and there was 2HD Newcastle [radio station], 4GY Gympie and 4OT Atherton, and some other one. I think there was four closed all owned by the Jehovah Witnesses, they were supposed to be sending out information about shipping to the Jap subs off the coast. I don't know whether it was the Jehovah Witness side of it or just because

09:00 there were some people employed there I guess.

When did this occur?

Oh, I was in the army then so it must have been 1942 or '43. I should have looked up these dates.

Oh, that's not too important. I was wondering also about your involvement in the air force

reserve, you said you were part of them before the army?

Yes, we used to do twenty one lessons. They'd send out their correspondence and you had to do these lessons because you were in the aircrew, you were going to be in aircrew.

Whereabouts would you do that?

Well, at home and I used to try and get my schoolteacher, Mr. Stokes to try because it was above me some it because I'd left school at fourteen and he helped me with the algebra and all this sort of thing that I'd never really

09:30 had at school unfortunately. Luckily, he helped me with that.

So, was your involvement all by correspondence?

10:00 Yes, before I joined, before the army got me. When I was still in the army I did the correspondence course as well as in the army, still aiming to be in the air force, never thinking that I would get there, but I got there eventually.

Did you think you would be able to go away and join the air force proper?

Yes. That was my idea, definitely.

10:30 **Did your father have any influence on you in terms of which service?**

No, I remember we didn't have a car in those days there is still a photograph somewhere of me going to war in a horse and sulky. I went to war, we didn't have a car, we couldn't afford a car.

Do you remember getting your call up, how did that come?

In the mail. Well, got a call up to do a medical first,

11:00 and I had to go into Gatton which was about eight miles, rode a horse into Gatton, about eight miles. My pushbike had a puncture so I rode the horse in and did the medical in Gatton. Must have passed and then about a month after my call-up for the army came. You were requested to report to Grantham railway station at such and such a time and catch a train to

11:30 Toowoomba. There we got sworn in, in Toowoomba, and then caught a train from Toowoomba, back through Grantham and back to Brisbane. The army is so silly, they could have sent me straight to Brisbane instead of to Gatton or Grantham, up to Toowoomba, sign in, back, money was no object really, that's how an army operates, I guess.

When you got that letter, how did you feel?

12:00 Oh, certain disappointment I suppose, because the farm had just started to operate, we had got a tractor and things were starting to happen and after that the farm went ahead in leaps and bounds. No, I was a bit disappointed but I was keen to get into the services. I wasn't so keen to get in the army. I thought I would get one from the air force but it never happened. Then of course I went to Brisbane and they just said, "You are in the MPs."

12:30 That was it.

You must have been pretty fit then too?

Oh, I was a fit young fellow. I used to play rugby league in those days, there was no Australian rules [football] in Queensland. Rugby league, I was in the Gatton team. I used to ride a horse to training and used to ride a horse to the matches and eventually a push bike which was more exercise. I played in Toowoomba once and they took us all up in the train to Toowoomba.

13:00 I played in Toowoomba, rugby league. No Australian rules up in that part of the world. I still love Australian rules now but I still like rugby union or rugby league.

They must have taken one look at you and thought, "He's big and tough"?

Yes, that's right, I have always been a fairly healthy big fella. I was about the second biggest on the course in the air force.

13:30 When we went into ITS I was the second biggest, I wasn't the biggest.

And so, can you tell us more about the training for the MPs what did that consist of?

Oh, mainly law and how to arrest a bloke and how to grab a bloke and how to wrestle him down and all that sort of training.

How did you find that?

Oh, it was no effort to me.

14:00 I'd been trained in rugby league and it was no effort what ever. I could wrestle a bloke to the ground

and slam a bloke up against the wall and things like that. No effort.

And how about the law contingent did you enjoy that?

I enjoyed that very much because I was always interested in law, as I said, when I was at school I was always interested in law. I enjoyed that very, very much, the lessons, the people who taught us law, do this and can't do that, I thought it was marvellous.

14:30 **What were the blokes like you were training with?**

They were all great guys most of them, well I thought they were great guys.

What sort of experience had your training officers had?

What sort of experience?

Well, had they been First World War fellows or MPs?

Oh, they were you know, I suppose they were in the army before the war started, pre '39 or something like that, most of them were and there were a few World War I people training us also.

15:00 It was only twenty years or so between the wars and they were still quite active, some of them. They taught us to drive, I couldn't drive until I got there. I could drive a tractor, oh I think I could drive a car, that's right.

How did you find the transition?

Pretty hard from a boy out on the farm to there, but I enjoyed it.

15:30 I got friends and things like that and it's amazing how the army brings you together and the air force but the army particularly brings you together.

How did you find that social change to living with a lot of other blokes your own age?

Oh, we welcomed it I think, that's the only words to say. We welcomed it and I was only

16:00 an innocent little country boy in those days and we were innocent in those days at eighteen not like the youth of today. I have grand kids telling me things that I had never heard of when I was six years of age. No, we were, I suppose we were brought up differently, I suppose. Black was black and black was black. They were hard years,

16:30 the Depression years, a lot of people don't realise that and for a boy growing up it was jolly hard. Money was scarce, you couldn't do this and you couldn't do that.

And how did you find the pay side of the army?

I thought it was great. It was about the biggest pay that I ever had because you know Dad only gave me a bit of an allowance on the farm, I was never on a salary or anything. When I went into the army and getting paid

17:00 every fortnight I thought this was great. I started saving money.

Did you allocate some home as well?

Yes, I did.

And were you in Brisbane itself?

Yes, I was in Brisbane, Kelvin Grove was in Brisbane. Right in the centre of Brisbane.

Had you been to Brisbane before then?

Three times, they used to run bay trips, what they used to call bay trips, you would catch a train the morning and

17:30 go to Brisbane and they would take you out on a little boat or a ship round Morton Bay. And you would come back by the train and get home about midnight or something like that, mainly organised by the various schools around the place to show the kids like us what town was like. To see the first tram and see this and see a big town like Brisbane.

18:00 You would think you would get lost in the place, but I never got lost.

Was it like in those days, was it Calvin or Kelvin Grove?

Kelvin Grove.

What was Brisbane like in those days?

It was pretty busy because the Yanks had invaded the place by then and there were troops and every second person was in uniform of course.

18:30 A lot of the civilians had left the town, evacuated because the war was coming and everybody, well not everybody but the biggest majority were in uniform when you walked down the street. Army, air force, Yanks, navy and that's what caused all the problems of course and Americans and they were all dressed better than we were I must admit. They had lovely clothes and we had pretty rough army uniforms

19:00 but we were lucky because we were the guards to General MacArthur also so we had a special, an extra special uniform made of better material to stand and guard General MacArthur, where was he, in the TNG buildings in Edward Street, that's right. We used to get detailed to guard General MacArthur, stand outside with a revolver. I never knew how to shoot it, I suppose.

19:30 But it stopped people going in, checked all the people going in. I didn't have to frisk them like they do now, they could have carried in a bomb in those days but no thoughts of that, we just checked your piece of paper, "Yes, you are allowed in."

How did that uniform differ, what did you have that was different?

It was better quality, that was all, far better quality.

What distinguishing features did the military police uniform have?

20:00 Just ordinary, used to wear big arm band and you would pin it on when you were on duty, that's all. I still have got it at home, I should have brought it down.

Was that the white one with MP on it?

Yes.

I suppose more about the training, did you have any weapons training?

Yeah we did rifle training and all the rest of it and everybody had to carry a rifle in those days. If I went home on leave

20:30 I would take the rifle and about six or seven bullets to go home. Fancy doing that now, you would get arrested, on the train, take it home, and you would have a .303 rifle. Now you can't even carry anything that looks like a rifle around. How the country changes.

You must have been pretty experienced with guns though growing up on a farm?

Yeah, although we never had a gun on the farm.

21:00 Dad never believed in a gun.

Oh, how come?

Oh, I don't know, war time I suppose. I often wanted a gun to shoot a cow or something and I had to borrow one from the next door neighbour. It was terrible thing to do, to shoot an animal, it used to upset me greatly to have to put a bullet in the head. We used to shoot them through the eye I think, to make sure, it was sad and very hard, cut their throats mainly.

21:30 If you had to put a cow down or an animal down, cut their throat. It hurt and I was never, it upset me, it was hard to do.

So, you didn't shoot rabbits as a kid either?

No, I never shot rabbits. We used to catch the jolly little things, if we could. There were no rabbits, they were hares, see they used to have a boundary fence still there,

22:00 along the boundary somewhere around Goondiwindi to stop the rabbits going into Queensland. You couldn't own a rabbit in Queensland in those days. We used to catch the hares and the greyhound trainers used to want them to blood their greyhound dogs.

And what sort of experience did you have training with the civilian police, what did that involve?

Oh, it was just as I said before, traffic directing

22:30 and some of their laws and what they did. We'd go out on a patrol with them, how they arrested people and that sort of training.

What sort of tips did they pass on?

Oh, I don't know about that one.

Did they have any special tricks?

No, not really. It's amazing, we think of policeman now but they are just human beings really

23:00 and when you are in with them they are just another friend or a human being. I never thought I would make a military policeman but eventually you are a military policeman and you think nothing of it, walking up and saying, "Have you got a leave pass?" If you didn't have a leave pass in those days,

"Come with me," you see and you would arrest them.

How did you find that?

Eventually it was as easy as anything. We used to raid the trains, we used to catch the train at

23:30 South Brisbane and check every soldier on the train because they were going AWL [absent without leave] to come down to Sydney and Melbourne. We checked and if they didn't have a leave pass we would arrest them and take them back to Brisbane, put them in the clink. Thought nothing of it, but it was very hard when I look back. No wonder they were frightened of military police, and we got a couple of brawls on the train, wanted to escape

24:00 and things like that but the worst, what really made me get out of the military police, they sent me out to Grovely which was a prison for people who went AWL. And I went out there on a week's duty or something and there in prison was a bloke that went to school with me but he was much older than I was

24:30 and he'd been to the Middle East and everywhere and went AWL and he was in prison there for no reason at all, just because of AWL. That hurt me because he had been overseas to, I don't know where he had served, probably Middle East somewhere and he'd come home and there he was in prison because he had gone missing for a couple of days, didn't go back to his unit. Probably scared or didn't want to or something. And that hurt me when I had to go out and guard him.

25:00 I used to take him cigarettes, which they weren't allowed so he got looked after. He just died, he used to remember me, taking him cigarettes, I was only a boy then and he was, you know, well into his thirties and I used to call him just about 'mister' in those days. That hurt me, it really hurt me and then I thought this is where I really have to get out of this place. So, I went back in the air force

25:30 to see, "When are you going to call me up?" And they said, "Oh yeah, pretty soon," "Oh well, it'll be right." You had to join air crew, you couldn't get out of the army if you were joining anything but air crew. Well, I had already joined air crew so I was pretty right.

What about the other blokes who you were serving with as an MP, what did they think of the job?

Oh, some of them thoroughly enjoyed it I think and some of them didn't like it. You just get used to something

26:00 and that's it. Some of the bullyboys enjoyed it I think. I never enjoyed it in my life but some did.

What sort of skills did you have to develop to be good at that job?

Mainly talk and ask questions and if you wanted to go around to a house somewhere in the middle of the night and knock on the door and so and so would come to the door, and you've got your son here or something.

26:30 You would have to battle your way in by talk and that was a big thing, to do it calmly and talk and don't get excited and things like that. That's what they taught us well and truly that. If you went to a house normally there would be two or three of us and you'd go to the front door and one bloke would slip around the back and one bloke around the side in case they tried to escape. It's terrible, just to arrest somebody who's probably had enough of the war

27:00 and went AWL and want to get them back in the army. That never impressed me either, but still I had to do because I was paid to do it.

Would you do the old good cop, bad cop, would you do the partnership deal, someone be nice, someone be a bit heavy?

I suppose so,

27:30 we always tried to be good you know. That was taught never to mistreat anybody I must admit, that was well and truly driven into us and indeed one bloke did mistreat a family and he was court marshalled over it, I always remember that.

What did he do?

I don't quite know. I wasn't with him then but he did something when he went to a home when he went at night time and they must have reported him and he got a court martial. I always remember that one.

28:00 **I'm intrigued about what happened in the battle of Brisbane, can you tell us what led up to that and your involvement in it?**

What led up to it? Well, the Australians were not allowed into the American PX [American canteen] that's what started it, and the PX had everything, cigarettes, Coca-Cola, which was unheard of practically in Australia, everything and good quality

28:30 stuff. And yet the Americans were allowed into the Australian canteen which was a few doors up the

road, in Edwards Street I think it was. And the American canteen was in Edward Street at the corner of Creek Street, the old Eagers Brothers showrooms it was, for motorcars. So, they were allowed in there and you could get anything, cigars, and yet the Americans were allowed in our canteen.

29:00 The troops got very angry because there was always a certain amount of feeling between the Australian troops and the Americans because the Americans had better clothes and pinched the girls, so to speak, well they did and that upset the Australian troops. So they must have organised it and they decided to put on this big riot. Thousands and thousands of troops came in from the various units around the place and were going to storm

29:30 the American PX. By this time the MPs got involved and they sent us down and stood us in front, all around the American PX and we were getting pelted with eggs, bananas. There was a fruit shop practically opposite and they used everything out of that fruit shop, all the fruit, pineapples, everything tossed at us and of course the American MPs were besides us also and that upset them further.

30:00 The American lieutenants started shooting a bit and that scared the hell out of all of us although we were armed too, I suppose. He shot one bloke, I saw one bloke get shot, he was pretty close to me and that's the bloke so called died but nobody quite knows. It says in the paper that one died, but I'm sure that more than one died.

Where did he shoot him, what part of the body?

Oh, around here if I remember, the bullet went in

30:30 because he rushed the bloke and the Yank just shot him and that caused a bigger stir of course. Then they started batons and they were ripping palings off fences and coming in and wading and it was absolutely scary.

Were the Australians armed?

We had revolvers and a baton. I've still got my baton at home

Sure, but

31:00 **the people rioting, did they have any weapons?**

They were coming in by trains and they didn't have rifles or anything but they certainly had batons and things like this. And it was a terrible sight to see this, just to see a mass of people up the street all attacking you and innocent me standing in front of the canteen, well not only me but a few of us around

31:30 and of course they started attacking the MPs too who were never popular. And eventually we overpowered them and quietened them down somehow, I don't know how it ever happened and they eventually went, and of course the next night they were going to attack again but the army absolutely closed every camp around the place the next night so nobody, it was very quiet the next night, no troops in town either Americans or

32:00 Australians. It was hushed in Brisbane the night after, I remember that.

So, when you were standing in front of the PX and they were trying to get past, who was in charge of you?

Well, we had our own officer and I think I might have been a corporal, I was in charge of anybody under me too. We had an officer there I think and Americans had a couple of officers in charge of their MPs.

32:30 **What was the order? What were you told to do?**

Well, just block people getting into the canteen. That's about the only order we had and we linked arms of course. We were pretty fairly fit people and we just blocked everybody getting in but when the bullets started flying, it was mainly by the Americans. I don't think the Australian MPs used any bullets or anything like that,

33:00 I think it was mainly the American service police.

Did you wear helmets or anything like that?

No, we didn't have helmets, they were unheard of in those days but I always remember these bananas, apples, and eggs and everything. I was in a hell of mess when I went home that night and still scared. I was absolutely scared.

33:30 I might as well admit it, I was scared, of course I was only eighteen or nineteen I suppose.

A pineapple would hurt too.

A pineapple would hurt. I remember that, a pineapple went through the window right behind me. That's how I know it was a pineapple.

Did you get physically hit by the people?

Oh yes, and of course the Yanks were very fond of using their huge batons. Our baton was only about

eighteen inches long,

34:00 the Americans had a long one, you have seen it on the movies, it almost goes down there and wham, and they had no hesitation in using them. Boy oh boy, they used them too but against all our own troops. It was hard because we were Australians, and yet there's Australians trying to get and rightly so because they should have let them in, the Yanks were going into our canteens why shouldn't they. But of course we would have brought everything from the American PX because

34:30 they had everything where our canteen only had milk shakes and various things like that, the Americans could buy anything.

From where you were, could you see the Australians fighting the Americans, the troops themselves?

Oh yes, the Americans started disappearing pretty fast, because there was more Australian troops, they would have murdered them you see. There's a story too and I wasn't involved in this one,

35:00 a troop train going north and a troop train coming south with all the Americans for the holidays and they pulled up on a side line and there was a huge battle between these American troops and the Aussie troops. Mainly the Americans saying, "Oh, we'll be down amongst your women," which started the riot. That was in the papers somewhere and I wished I had a cutting of that.

35:30 Two troops trains meeting and a big brawl starting, they were the war days, it's sad but probably exciting and everybody's trained, you must admit. Everybody who was there were pretty fit people, both Americans and the Aussies, they were pretty fit after all the training so a good fight didn't mean anything.

36:00 **So, what sort of time frame are we looking at, when you were linking arms protecting the PX, how long did that last?**

Oh, we must have been there from eight o'clock to just about midnight, I can't remember the exact time and it just sort of fizzled out, why I don't know. It just got quieter and quieter and everybody sort of settled down a bit and went home but there was a Battle of Brisbane, yeah. I will always remember that. People can't

36:30 quite comprehend what happened that night but somebody who was there, I would like to speak to somebody who was there now and think what they thought of it.

And what were your thoughts on the way that it was reported?

Oh, very poorly, in the paper it said that one was killed and I'm sure that more than one was killed. They never mentioned how many Americans were killed because they were there too and they started fighting and I'm sure there was some Americans killed. It lists

37:00 the people there, the bloke that was killed, his name and how many others were hurt. It says that a couple of service police were hurt, MPs were hurt. I wasn't hurt but I know one bloke who got pretty bashed up.

Was there anything else about it that you thought was covered up or not reported honestly?

If you were there it wasn't reported honestly, it wasn't really covered up

37:30 and not much in the paper for what really happened but it was reported.

And so at midnight when that PX situation had dispersed, where did you go then, were you still on patrol all night?

No. They gradually withdrew us to go home and get cleaned up, remained on stand by in case it started up again. They were expecting the next night, as I said, and that didn't happen luckily. Would have been worse the next night because

38:00 they would have been well and truly organised I'm sure. I must admit that I was dead scared, not fighting a war but fighting a war amongst friends it was.

Tape 3

00:31 **It's interesting what you said then, that you felt that, poor old Americans. It's not really a sentiment that I think I have heard expressed about the battle of Brisbane, did you feel like they came out suffering more?**

No, I don't think so. I think they were battled and bruised too, like a lot of the Aussies were.

But they were outnumbered?

They were outnumbered I would say, yes.

01:00 Our canteen was then, well they eventually opened the PX for Australian troops. They sort of cleared a lot of things out before they allowed it to be open, otherwise Australians would have just bought and bought and bought there. But our canteen was a very good canteen, just up the road, Edward.

01:30 Had all the, you know, melting melts [chocolate] I don't think you could get a beer there. I wasn't a drinker in those days.

It was a difficult position you were in, because on the one hand you've got sympathy for the Australian cause and you don't seem to be agreeing with the way the Americans were using their batons, did you find that was a conflict within yourself?

Yes I did, the Americans SPs [service police] or the MPs always worried me, they called them SPs a lot of the time Americans, always worried me

02:00 how they treated their own, particularly black fellows, that really disturbed me that, because they were dead against the black and the white. Well, they weren't mixing in those days, there was no blacks in their units and they had their own black fellow units and they treated them bloody roughly, that's all I can say, bloody roughly.

In the battle of Brisbane did you see any black American troops, were they present?

02:30 No, I can't recall. I don't think I saw any black Americans. I just can't recall that but I don't think so, I think they were all white Americans.

Did you feel like the two country's military police worked together well in the battle of Brisbane?

Yeah, I think they worked together pretty well that night, yes. We both had the same idea. It was to stop the place being wrecked.

03:00 If they got in they would have wrecked the place of course but we did stop them.

I'm interested in what else you could see, what else was happening from where you were standing. Were you aware of any other activity near by?

Just could see a mass of people, fights going on back in the crowd and the trams had stopped by this time and there was a story that they had lifted a tram off the line, which I have no doubt happened, I didn't see that. But they didn't run trams for

03:30 quite some time afterwards because it was just an ungodly mess and everything wrecked around the place, windows broken and things like that. Big showroom windows they were, it used to be Eagers and they used to sell Holdens or Chevs [Chevrolet car] in those days before the Americans took it over for the PX.

04:00 **So, quite a lot of physical damage as well?**

Oh, a lot of physical damage and lots of bruises. I must admit I had a few bruises and bumps around my body but nothing serious of course.

Had they been throwing bottles or things at you as well?

No, I didn't see many bottles come, there was one or two bottles come but it was mainly fruit and things like that. Bottles in those days were probably a bit scarce, that was the only reason I suppose.

04:30 But the fruit, they must have raided every fruit shop in the place I think. They did, I read in the paper somewhere after that, they raided every fruit shop.

So, the next day you were expecting more activity. When were you up and what were you doing the next day?

Well, we were just in barracks all dressed and rearing to go and it never happened. It was about the quietest night in history I understand. I don't think I even got called out to go to town that night.

05:00 **So you didn't go into the town itself?**

No, not that night. We were all in the barracks waiting to go. Just the normal patrols went into the railway station and brothels and things like that.

It's almost worse sometimes expecting.

Yes, the next day it would have been on, the next night for sure, but they just you know closed the camp.

What did you notice had changed after that battle?

05:30 I think they became more friendly to be perfectly honest. The Yanks and Aussies became more friendly, strange as it may seem, that's the way that I worked it out. And of course the Aussies were allowed to go to the PX then. That was the story, they could go in and buy, well, we couldn't buy a carton in those days, a packet of Chesterfields or whatever they were selling in those days.

06:00 **In terms of the organisation of the military police, were there any changes noticeable or any extra training, did you get riot training from then on?**

No, I don't think so, no. We all got lined up and thanked for what we were doing. I always remember that, I think it was a major gave us a good talk, how good we behaved ourselves. Because you had to keep calm yourself, because if you started battled yourself it would have been on again.

06:30 Our blokes, the military police on both sides just kept quiet and Yanks got a bit excited, firing bullets and things but I don't think the Aussies fired any. I'm sure we didn't. All we had was a revolver of course. Americans had guns everywhere and long batons.

That must be hard to resist.

Oh, it's hard to resist, if somebody comes at you, you want to knock him.

07:00 I mean a fight's a fight whether you are on this side or that side. If somebody belts you in the tummy or something you feel like warding for him and giving him a couple of weak wacks, but lucky most of us we didn't. We probably gave them a big shove or a couple of jabs but tried not to fight or show fight and tried to remain calm was the main policy.

07:30 **How did you feel about your performance the next day?**

Oh, it gave you, well, we did a good job, so to speak, and we stopped what people were wanting to do and I wouldn't say it was well pleased by the other troops that were fighting us. We thought we did a good job and that's about all I can say. It was a terrible battle especially in the middle

08:00 of a town. It was supposed to be a peaceful town, Brisbane.

Were there any noticeable differences in the attitude towards you from the Australian troops after that day?

No, I don't think there was any difference really, no none at all. An MP was an MP and an MP was a person if he got the chance would bash you. That's what I always thought anyway.

08:30 No, they weren't popular MPs.

Could you run us through a normal or usual day if there was such a thing as an MP in that period?

Well, normally we would be in bed until we decided to get up because it was all night, practically all night work. So, they used to let us rest until about one or two o'clock in the afternoon and then we would start to get ready and then

09:00 probably a lecture on how to behave ourselves and things like that. And then you would be detailed for the different spots you would go to. We used to have so many on Roma Street railway station and somebody on Central railway station and somebody on South Brisbane. And as I said, the two brothels there was always somebody there and the Grand Central Hotel was closed to all troops.

09:30 So we used to have a man on the front door which was in Queen Street I think it was and a bloke on the back door to stop them because it was on a block, stop them in the back door. That was a pretty hard job, everybody wanted to go into the Grand Central Hotel. I have never found out why it was closed to troops. It was closed to

10:00 all troops, Americans and Aussies but I have never found out why and that was the main hotel in Brisbane. There was Lennon's where MacArthur used stay but the Grand Hotel was a huge hotel. So, that's that and there was always a stand by crew, you would have a standby section at Kelvin Grove itself called out if there was a big brawl started.

10:30 In the van and rush off to where ever you got a call from and they were getting attack. We often got attacked, there was often a brawl at a railway station and you would just have to call up reinforcements or a brawl somewhere else, particularly the brothel areas, there were always brawls there. You would try and sort them out and it would get out of hand and you would call in half a dozen more to come and help you and they would rush in with sirens going. Yes, we had a siren on our

11:00 van, rush in from Kelvin Grove. Eventually they took over a spot near Edward Street. So, they were right in town they didn't have to come from the suburb of Kelvin Grove. So, you would go in and all sit round or the spares would sit around in, I think it was Edward Street where they had a big building there, a resting place. Sometimes you would relieve, you would be on

11:30 Central railway station and you'd do from nine to eleven and they would send another mob down from eleven to twelve or something like that, you'd get relieved. It was much easier to do because to stand around somewhere for hours and hours takes some doing to be honest.

In those situations with the brawls, how would you call them up, did you have radios?

No, radio wasn't the thing, you would rush to a telephone, call them on the telephone.

12:00 No, we didn't have radios or anything. I think we eventually got a radio in one of the vans but radios

were not like today, no hand phones or anything. You would have to rush to a phone box, "Come on, come on, we're in trouble" and your mates always backed you up, they were as quick as they could to get there. They knew you were getting a bashing, you know.

12:30 **How long would it take to get from Kelvin Grove?**

We used to take about twenty minutes and used to drive through lights and everything of course, traffic lights but when they took the Edward Street one, it was about ten minutes they could get anywhere and it was much better, much safer too. You felt safer when you had back up behind you. I was always a bit scared being an MP, to be honest. Scared is not the quite the word, but I was always tense because your own men were going to hit you or fight you and that's hard.

13:00 And of course I knew some of them, local fellas that come up to you, "G'day." Probably went to school with you or in the district or played football against or something. You'd always meet somebody around that knew you well and truly. "What are you doing in that job?" they used to say. A big arm band on you.

What would you say?

13:30 Just because I've got to, that's all, I had no choice, no choice at all. It really disturbed me out of the army to be perfectly honest. I would have had to give it away eventually, particularly when they started detailing us to look after prison camps you know. That was a frightful job that.

You mentioned each of those places you might be on a typical night, how many would you be with, what sort of group would you be in?

Sometimes four, sometimes two,

14:00 different spots, you know, bad spots, you might have six in some places, but normally two or four of you around the place just to be safe. But normally two of you if it was a pretty quiet spot, you'd be at the railway station which was fairly quiet except sometimes people would try and get on without a ticket and start fighting with the porters at the railway station,

14:30 you would have to go and sort it out, but normally there was only two on each railway station.

Which was your least favourite duty?

I think the brothel area, the worst, you were always in squabbles down there.

What about?

Well, blokes wanting to jump queues and a brawl would start, all things like that because, you know, there were only half a dozen girls and about

15:00 forty and fifty troops lined up. A sad sight to see, well it was to me anyway. I got to know one of the girls pretty well later on. Her daytime job she worked, I knew where she worked, I used to visit her quite regularly, daytime that was. She was a lovely girl, big brown eyes she had, beautiful eyes. I could have fallen in love with her, only I knew.

15:30 **And so where did she work during the day?**

She worked in the kiosk in the Brisbane gardens to be honest. I don't think she will ever see this. When we were on patrols see we had walking patrols also, walking around and I used to always walk down and see this girl in the gardens. She had beautiful brown eyes, big brown eyes.

How did you feel about the work she was doing?

16:00 Disgusted me to be perfectly honest and it still does. I can't understand why.

Would you talk with her about it?

No, I never spoke to her about it, no, I must admit I never spoke to her about it.

But it didn't get in the way of you being friends?

No, didn't get in the way of being friends with her even, just disgusted me a bit.

16:30 **When you were patrolling the brothels whereabouts would you be, inside?**

Outside. There in Albert Street and Creek Street I think it was, yes. There were only two officially and there was another one over in South Brisbane unofficial.

And would you have the power or would you just make sure some people just didn't go in because they looked like trouble or would you just wait for something bad to happen?

17:00 No, you would just wait for something to happen, a squabble to start, or something like that. As I said, kids used to line up and hold their space. When they got there they would sell it to mainly Americans for lots of dollars.

Did that ever cause a fight, did anyone just want to push the kids away?

- Oh, not really I don't think. We were there to stop that I suppose, that was the main thing.
- 17:30 There was often a brawl down there though. We always considered it a hard night down there.
- Were the girls ever mistreated?**
- I suppose they were, there were times we'd have to go in and stop a brawl inside but not very much.
- What would that be about?**
- Oh, price I suppose mainly, they would argue about the price or weren't satisfied. There's a girl here while I'm talking about this. She's heard all this I suppose before?
- 18:00 **I think she's pretty open-minded. And who was running the brothel was there a madam?**
- There'd be a madam, yeah. I never met the madams but there'd be a madam or somebody there.
- So, you didn't work with them, you didn't have anything to do with them?**
- No, I remember one Christmas she gave us all a bottle of beer and where she got it from I will never know because beer was rationed in those days.
- 18:30 **I mean you were pretty important to her too for her business?**
- Well, yes I suppose we were. I wasn't the only one, there were different blokes on every night and I only copped the duty once a week or so probably.
- Any of the other MPs use the brothels?**
- No, I don't think so. I wouldn't say they didn't but I doubt it. They were a bit disgusted most of them when you see that sort of thing. It is different now with massage parlours and that
- 19:00 but when you see lined up like that to just get in, it disgusted me, it really did, it really did.
- You mentioned that you'd see people in the streets who you knew from rugby or something, would you see friends in the lines?**
- No, I don't think I ever saw a bloke I knew in the line. That's a good question. I don't think I ever saw one of my friends in the line, ever. That's pretty right and they were from Gatton and Grantham areas.
- 19:30 That's a good question. No, I don't think so.
- And for how long during the night would you have to be on that duty?**
- Well, they normally closed about one or two o'clock in the morning, but you would do about four hours on and then you would be relieved by another crowd and they would do the next four hours or until they shut or something like that. They were open during the day but they were never guarded
- 20:00 during the day. I suppose there wasn't too many girls there, or something, I don't know about that but they were open during the day some of the time.
- And when it did close would you have to make sure people left?**
- No, they just closed and a girl would shut the door and say, "Good evening, we've finished now," or something and you would think, "Thank God for that," and go home.
- I get the impression that not many people talk about brothels or prostitution back then but**
- 20:30 **what was the general feeling about those brothels operating in Brisbane?**
- Oh, I don't know, they just operated and nobody sort of worried about them. They were down in a back street of Edward Street I think they were and Creek Street. Just out of the main shopping areas and no one seemed to worry much about them. Most people knew they were there and that was about it.
- 21:00 There was one over in South Brisbane. That was a hard one over there, the blacks used to get over there, black Negroes mainly. That was a bit of, a lot of problems over there but I never did duty over there.
- So, you would patrol, or not yourself but the MPs would patrol over there even though it wasn't an official brothel?**
- Yes, and there were probably others that we didn't know of, secret ones
- 21:30 around the place but these were the two main ones.
- Were the black Americans forbidden to go to the two official ones?**
- They wouldn't be there, the Yanks would have made darn sure, the other white Yanks would have hoisted them out. That's what I say, over in South Brisbane I understand they did but I was never on duty at South Brisbane.

So, would the American MPs or the SPs be at the brothels with you?

Yes,

22:00 sometimes with us. Very often as a matter of fact.

So, generally on your duties would you be working with the Americans then in other places?

Yes. They used to always have a nice truck to go and sit in. You'd go and rest your weary legs, sit in an American truck for a while, talking to them. And I was always interested in talking with the Americans. They were pretty good blokes, they were just people like us really, honestly.

22:30 They had different ideas.

You've mentioned a couple, what other differences were there between the Australian MPs and the Americans?

I couldn't say there was much difference between all of us but they just treated the blacks worse than I considered they should. And of course even in American in those days the blacks rode in the back of the trams, even when I went to America

23:00 they had to stay in the back of the tram and the whites got in the front of the tram. They weren't allowed into a white toilet and they weren't allowed into white swimming pools. And that was when I went to America in the air force to pick up the Hercules. I went to Georgia and that's a real southern town, Atlanta. I was in Atlanta, Georgia and they treated them rotten then but not so now. I went

23:30 to America two years ago and what a change. They are all smartly dressed the black fellows. And they are overcoming the white people as a matter of fact in my opinion, they are very smartly dressed. What a change has come about all of a sudden. I didn't get to Georgia but I was in Washington and New York and places and that used to be bad too.

The American SPs that you met, would you be swapping stories of your hometowns?

24:00 Yes, we talked about how they went to school and what they did, they were always a bit boastful, well we thought they were boastful. I suppose they did have it but we never had that, a big car or something. When I first went to American and see everybody with cars and big cars, it quite surprised me. I have forgotten the date I first went to America.

And those Americans that you were working with, what was their attitude towards the war and their part in it, were they pretty gun-ho?

24:30 A lot of them were just wanting it to finish, to get home, to be honest. Because they, rough treatment some of the Americans. Americans didn't worry about casualties too much, they just bundled the whole troops in to take an island or something as you've heard and read and there would be thousands of casualties where the Australians always held back a bit. They were always interested in

25:00 you know, not too many casualties. Well, that's the way I found it also, but the Americans couldn't care less as long as they won. That was my opinion. I shouldn't say that I suppose, I hope nobody ever looks at this.

I suppose I was just wondering about those guys that you met, whether they thought, "We're here to win the war," or what they thought their role was in the Pacific. I suppose it's a pretty broad question.

25:30 They were there to defeat the Japs I think, yes. They understood that and everybody understood that in those days, defeat the Japs. And the Japs were close, let's face it they were less than an hours flying away from us and the boats were up and down outside our shores here. I always wondered why somebody didn't land them here somewhere and they would have landed in Melbourne or somewhere like that

26:00 and not come from the south but I suppose they get long lines of communication, it's hard. But still I have often thought they might have jumped on some of the islands around the place but they never did. I think it was lines of communication, it was too long to supply the troops on these islands.

Were you still an avid reader, were you reading the papers and so on?

Oh yes, definitely, every day. I tried to read them every day.

26:30 **And so you were following the war as it progressed?**

Oh yes, I followed the war over there but it's just another war, that's the only way to look at it. If you get too upset about it, it worries you doesn't it? What's the use of getting upset. It has got to happen in a way and they might as well fix it while they can.

27:00 **I was interested also, you mentioned something about closing down the radio stations. I wasn't sure what the connection between Jehovah Witnesses?**

Well, they owned the stations, I'm not saying they sent out the messages but they must have had people

employed in the radio station. And whether they knew or didn't know they would send out the messages to subs. Well that's the story that went around and they closed off all radio stations.

Were they considered a suspicious group of people then?

27:30 I guess they were slightly because of this, yes. I have never known them too well, I suppose they might have been.

Can you tell me about those days when you would go into the radio stations?

Well, we were just, at the time we did 4GY Gympie that's the only one I was involved in, we just went around with the ordinary police and shut the station down.

28:00 It reopened under new management a few days later. I think 4OT Atherton, they all closed on the same day, 4OT Atherton was eventually taken over by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and still is I think, 4OT Atherton. 2HD Newcastle is back I'm not sure about that. I can't remember the other station. There were four stations that closed down. It might have been 4RO, I'm not sure.

The one that you shut down, what was the people's reaction?

28:30 Well, no problem, they just, "I'm sorry it's closed down." I don't think anyone was arrested or anything, they just said you're not to broadcast. And I was just a boy outside, I didn't know the whole story or the reason why or anything else. I read it in a paper or something they were sending out messages to the Jap subs or something off the coast about shipping movements.

29:00 **So, you had to find that in the newspaper you weren't necessarily told that?**

We were told that they were sending out messages, yes we were told but that's all. We weren't told really, I didn't even know who owned them in those days, it's just I read that in the paper or eventually found out who owned them. I don't think they were the main ones, the Jehovah's Witnesses, just people that they employed probably. Some times probably the staff mightn't even know

29:30 what they were saying, they were given something to read by somebody and they read it and because you know what codes are like, use a certain word and it means a certain spot and all this sort of thing. I'm not really versed on the radio stations. I learned later on they were owned by the Jehovah Witnesses.

Could you get Tokyo Rose as far down as Brisbane do you know?

30:00 Oh yes, we used to listen to Tokyo Rose.

What did you think of that?

Oh, she used to be a joke. I've heard tapes of the one in Germany, Lord Haw Haw [German radio propagandist]. They are bits of jokes aren't they really?

What sorts of things was she saying?

Oh, just well Tokyo Rose used to be, "Oh, the Americans are in Australia and they are taking all your women," and all the rest of it.

30:30 I have a tape somewhere that somebody gave me. Take this and do this and all that sort of thing. Nobody took much notice of it I don't think anyway. More entertaining than anything else.

Can you also tell us about your involvement in taking the Italians from up north, how far away was that?

31:00 Sarina is almost up the other side of Rockhampton half way up the Queensland coast where I went to pick up these Italians. They arrested a lot further up in Cairns and Atherton and places like that but I was only involved in a place called Sarina. Four I think we took them from there and escorted them down to Brisbane. They were in an internment camp there for a while and then

31:30 when they got a train load they loaded them all in the train and took them to Cowra. They had all bars on the windows, and they had three of us for every carriage if I remember rightly. It was jolly long hours because you had to stay awake at one end of the carriage and the other one at the other end of the carriage and the third bloke would have a bit of a rest and relieve one another.

32:00 It was a long jolly trip. Four days it took us if I remember rightly, from South Brisbane, which was the main railway station in those days.

And when you got to Sarina would you just go onto the farm?

Yeah we just went on to the farm, normally accompanied by a Queensland policeman of course. Just, "You're Italian," and some of them weren't true Australian citizens, they were

32:30 just working there from Italy and they took them left their wives there. A bit sad the one that I had. Left the wife and kids crying when Dad and his brother were staying the night we did on the farm. And it was sad to see a family left crying but that was war.

33:00 **Did you have an interpreter or did they speak English?**

Yes, sometimes they had interpreter, but when we went we didn't have an interpreter. I only did one lot at a place called Sarina.

Did the men understand what was happening?

Oh yes, I think they understood what was happening and half expected it half of them I think, they weren't Australian citizens. And they hadn't become Australian citizens and things like that.

33:30 Oh, who is to say, I think it was unnecessary but that's only my opinion.

How were they as prisoners?

Great I thought, they were calm and they never gave us any trouble. I think there were three or four train loads, I only did one train load. They were quite calm, they were all a bit sad and dejected I think, but there was no trouble with them. And I remembered getting into Cowra, I've got all the times

34:00 in a notebook at home, three thirty am, I just looked it up, that's how I know. Three thirty am, we got to Cowra and unloaded them and sent them into an internment camp. And that's early in the morning and we left at seven o'clock that night to catch a train back to Sydney to go back home. They treated us rough, we didn't have much sleep anywhere. Supposed to sleep on the train I suppose.

What could you sleep on, on a train?

34:30 Nothing. You just sat up and tried to sleep, that's all. They were troop trains, there were ordinary sit up seats and some people used to get up on the racks and sleep up there, sleep on the floor and everywhere and that was girls and all. Sometimes you would get on a troop train to come from Brisbane to Melbourne and the WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] would be there or three or four army girls. And

35:00 they were the same, they all got in their overalls and slept on the floor and there was no jolly toilets on some of the trains either. Hard days.

Four days of that's a bit rough, isn't it?

Yes.

How were you fed, how did you feed all the Italians as well?

In those days they had stops all the way up, different stops where the train would come in for breakfast,

35:30 this was whether you had Italians or anybody, you would have breakfast there and somewhere else you would pull in and that's lunch and they had army set ups at the different stations. Cootamundra was one I remember, can't remember them all, Albury was one. We had to change trains if you were coming right to Melbourne. There was a bit sort of not a canteen but a mess hall you would go along and

36:00 you all had your cups and dixies [cooking pot] and they would slam some stew or something in it, it wasn't very tasty.

Your role as a guard would you have to wait and supervise Italians?

Oh yes, when we were guarding, but the troops trains I've ridden on afterwards going somewhere I'm talking about now but guards, no, they used to bring the food on board the carriage and give it to you and it was quite

36:30 an interesting trip to be honest. I thought it would be a lot of trouble but they were peaceful and quiet and they were normal Australians half of them I thought, they had been here long enough. I spoken to one that I didn't know on the train and he told me, he has just died recently, he got arrested but not up there, he was at Broken Hill, I think, and he was arrested and put in an internment camp and

37:00 met his wife was another Italian and she was still living.

In the camp?

In the camp or next door. I think they were next door, the women were separate and they started passing notes in Italian. A lovely family they are.

That is a great story. Silver lining.

Yeah. I didn't know him then of course but he was telling me that he was arrested at Broken Hill and

37:30 put in an internment camp.

What were your impressions of the camp at Cowra that they were going into?

I hardly saw it, we got there at three in the morning and I think we went. It was pretty all right, that's where the Japs were too over the road somewhere. They broke out. All the camps were pretty well set up, probably better than where they were living for some of them, but generally they were pretty good I

think.

38:00 I didn't see much of the camp I must admit, I was so jolly tired I lay down somewhere, I don't know where they slept us, probably gave us a bit of a sleep and the next time we were catching a train back to Sydney. It would be hell to pay now, people wouldn't do these sorts of things. Mysteries, when you think back, gee it was rough. I thought

38:30 I knew everything. I went through a lot at home and coming here you think, gee, I did that.

We're near the end of the tape. Was that the first time you'd been to Sydney?

Yes, first time I'd ever been to Sydney. As I said, when I went into the army I'd only been to Brisbane three times and that was eighty miles away. It was a hard effort to get to Brisbane. You had to go to the local railway station which was about ten mile from where we lived,

39:00 catch a train. The old train used to take two or three hours, only about eighty miles away, two or three hours by the time we got there. Only on day trips I'd ever been to Brisbane when I went into the army. Then they gave us an exam, we had to learn about Brisbane, all the different streets. I remember that part of our training. We had to sat for an exam on all the streets eventually.

39:30 I used to know Brisbane backwards. I suppose I don't know it again now. I haven't been there for quite some years.

I imagine it's changed a bit too.

Yeah, it's changed.

Tape 4

00:42 **I wanted to go back to your German neighbours, I know you said that they were Australian born and bred and so on. I wondered whether the outbreak of war caused a bit of social stigma for them?**

Yes, I suppose it did

01:00 in a way. We, Dad was a returned soldier of course, we found no problem with them. As I said, they had four sons and everyone eventually joined the army, all army, no air force types. The girl, Gracie was too young to go anywhere. I suppose it did cause a bit of problems but they were wonderful neighbours. I always find German people very

01:30 good. I speak regularly to German people now, I am an amateur radioman. I speak very regularly to a couple of people in Germany, they have invited me over to stay. I have never got there, one day.

Do you recall any neighbours who were perhaps a little less than compassionate or understanding, giving them a hard time?

No, I can't and over the hill at a place called

02:00 Caffey there was a sort of German settlement there but I don't think any of them over there caused any problems. My brother actually married a German girl, well, she's an Australian but German born. So, no I don't think it caused any problems. It was mainly the Italians caused a lot of problems. Germans to me were pretty good settlers. Once they settled in to a place they were very loyal to where they settled. In other words they treated

02:30 Australia as their home, particularly next door because the four sons went in the army. Two got called up like I got called up, the other two volunteered to go in the AIF [Australian Imperial Forces] very early and one got very badly wounded that's right.

I bet they got some nicknames when they enlisted?

We all had nicknames, you know mine.

You'd mentioned that to Ianto [interviewer] I think before did you?

03:00 I think I did. Well I wasn't in the army named because we were all big fellows, as soon as I went to the air force they called me Tiny, that was my nickname but in the army I never had one. I was just Rob all the time in the army. We were all big fellows but as soon as I went into the air force that changed.

I was listening to you talk earlier about your days on the land you sound like you had a huge family?

A huge family?

Well,

03:30 **an ex-World War I aunt and an uncle that was in the postal service?**

She wasn't on the land, she either ran the nursing home where I was born, that's Auntie Elsie and Uncle Jack and they eventually became the local shop keeper in Grantham. They operated the store in Grantham for many years. And she was always giving things away she was a very patriotic woman. I always remember her coming up to see me off on the train

04:00 when I was in the air force, even in the army. She tried to help me understand where I was going I think, she said I was in for a hard time and all the else. Auntie Elsie gave me quite a lecture, "Behave yourself," and all the rest of it, "You'll be right." That was Auntie Elsie

Do you think some of that was also the Australian tradition of being stern when really they're very worried about you?

Yes, I think it was in those days.

04:30 We were very family authority orientated really. Our family was very close to all the other family. And they lived in all parts from Brisbane to Toowoomba and we were still pretty close, Dad's brother, he only had one brother that's right, and four sisters I think. And they were always visiting one another. Not that we visited much because

05:00 most of them were more well off than we were. Most of them had a motorcar by this time, truly old Tin Lizzies and things like that but we never had a motorcar until just at the end of the war, although I could drive a motorcar from when I was about fourteen because the next-door neighbour had a motorcar. We used to drive around the paddocks carting and unloading stuff, so I certainly could drive. I can't ever remember not being able to drive a motorcar.

05:30 A tractor I started about six with the next-door neighbour. Our tractor, we first got a tractor on our farm just as I was leaving home.

How many children were in your family?

I'm the eldest and a brother who died on his twenty-first birthday and another brother who is now farming on the same farm that my grandfather had.

06:00 Although he is a modern farmer now as you could imagine, all the machinery and goodness knows what else.

May I ask how your brother died?

He got hurt a bit at school and it affected his kidneys.

You mean he was in a fight or something?

No, he fell over or tripped or something, that's the story I've been told, he had a kidney problem and he died on his twenty-first birthday.

That's incredibly unlucky isn't it?

Yes,

06:30 because I always got asked that when I had various medicals in the army and the air force and particularly when I was in Ansett, you used to have two medicals per year. They always wanted to know how my brother died because they were always interested in what might be in your family you see. However, I passed every medical until I was sixty years of age.

Do you think that was the real story of your brother's death?

07:00 No, I don't. Mum never said much. We were innocent in those days. I know he was very sick, I was in the air force then.

I'm really sorry to hear that and I guess in those days you don't ask, I'm being a bit impudent now asking I suppose.

No, you didn't ask. I remember an aunty, her next door neighbour got cancer and it was considered

07:30 a no talk disease in those days, it was your own fault getting it. Now look, it is talked about every day. Fortunately, it has brought it out.

Imagine feeling guilty for having cancer?

Yeah they used to, years ago, in my opinion they did. I think my Uncle Ken died of cancer. It was hushed up and

08:00 quiet for some reason.

Do you think that had something to do with religion?

I don't think so. No, we have never been a religious family at all, as a matter of fact, I am very

unreligious myself. Curse of the world, religion.

Do you think not being religious made life easier or more difficult

08:30 **in the army?**

It made life easier I would say, yes.

And just to completely change the subject, I wanted for the purpose of the archive if you would describe your uniform because it was a little bit different to the normal AIF wasn't it?

While I was in the MPs we were given a better quality uniform, mainly because we were guarding General MacArthur

09:00 who had his headquarters in the TNG buildings in Edward Street as I said before. Instead of a rough trousers, they were more smooth like these trousers I have on, khaki of course. And the coat was better fitting, they took more attention because we were guarding MacArthur. We were a bit,

09:30 we made other troops a little jealous I think, too. If we appeared down the street in our uniform they were a bit against it, oh you know, "Look at those dressed people." Low and behold the average man even in those days in the army was disappointed with their dress. That caused a lot of problems with the Australian Army and the Americans because the Americans were always considered well dressed. Once again, you being a girl, it attracted the girls

10:00 and that used to upset the Aussies. I wasn't too much interested in girls in those days.

I believe many of the women were very much discouraged from letting the troops down by going out with the Americans, considered letting the team down. I wanted to ask about General MacArthur and guarding him, did you ever manage a word between the two of you?

Oh yes, he was very polite and that's about all, "Good morning,"

10:30 and, "Nice day," or something like that is about the only thing he said to us. And we used to guard him at, he used to stay at the Lennon's Hotel in Brisbane and very often we would be on guard there, we would be there in other words. Guarding him but we never had to examine anybody so well like they do now and putting gadgets all over you, if they had a certain pass

11:00 we let them in.

Was that a bit of a badge of honour, being MacArthur's guard?

No, I don't think so. No, he was just another man. I don't think there was any honour about it.

Really, I thought he had quite a cache about him when he was here in Australia?

Well, he did. We were always there but we were just another, it wasn't just me it was about twenty others that would get the job also. We weren't picked for any reason, we just happened to be in that unit that guarded him.

11:30 I don't think we were special, we were never examined whether we were going to shoot the man or anything. Which we would be these days.

No communist background checks or anything?

No.

But I meant did you think it was a bit special being MacArthur's guard?

No, not really. It was jolly hard. I used to hate it to be perfectly honest, you used to stand at the door of this building, TNG building for about six hours.

12:00 A shift, it was, stand there and check everyone walking in. No, it wasn't an easy job. And you hardly spoke to anybody because I'm only a corporal or something and all the senior officers were going in and out and you were constantly saluting people, "G'day sir, yes sir, can I see your pass?" And that's all that ever happened. We never got inside.

12:30 Well, we got inside the place but not where he sat down or anything.

Did you ever find anyone who had the incorrect paper work with them and needed checking?

Oh, a couple of times, no we can't accept that pass and he'd have to go. Sometimes it was a fairly senior officer and he had to go and get the right pass. We had a chart with all the different passes on it, if I remember correctly.

13:00 I think I might even have that at home in my archives somewhere, a chart with what sort of pass they had to have.

Can you remember the different kinds of passes that people had?

No, I can't remember that. I'm sure I've got a cardboard with them all on somewhere.

Did they have photographs on them that you had to check?

No, they didn't. Not like today, no,

13:30 didn't have photographs.

Well, now they have zappers and finger print detectors.

That's right.

What about journalist did they ever bribe you to get in to talk with MacArthur?

No, they knew they couldn't and that was it. I never had any problem with them. We were photographed many times standing at the door which we never say the photographs but different people photographing his entrance.

14:00 **So there was a little bit of glamour in being an MP?**

Oh, I suppose so, but not much. I didn't like it to be perfectly honest. I treated it as a job and tried to do my best at the job.

So, you know how you said you really wanted to be in the air force but the army jumped in first, was getting into the 1st Communication Unit or the MPs considered a good thing to get into or were you a bit disappointed?

No, it was

14:30 considered a bad thing to get into to be perfectly honest. Nobody liked an MP, even my Dad. He liked me I suppose but he often told me a couple of little stories about MPs as I said, Dad was in problem walking down with his sister because his sister was a lieutenant being a nurse and Dad was only a private in those times. And he got chipped walking down the streets in Cairo with his sister during the war time.

15:00 **It's funny that class business or rank business?**

Oh, it's rank business. That's what it was about in those days and particularly with the Poms [Englishmen], very rank conscious.

Oh yes, keep those working class away. Did you ever have to arrest anybody because they were walking with the wrong rank?

Oh no, I have arrested quite a few people for not having a leave pass and things like that

15:30 and we got a bloke who wasn't in the army. We've never heard from him, he was all dressed up in the army and he wasn't in the army. Whether he was a spy of another nation or something, you never knew. It was all hushed up.

So, he was impersonating an officer?

No, he wasn't, he was just an ordinary ranker I think he was but he was never truly an Australian. We never heard any more about it.

How did you detect that?

16:00 Asking him for his pass and something, two of us always on duty and something must have attracted us, "Hey this is wrong" or something and we took him to the headquarters or wherever it was and said, "We aren't happy with this bloke." And that's all we heard, but we heard that he wasn't truly an Australian.

It might have changed the course of the nation.

Oh, I don't know. See it was all secrets in those days.

16:30 You didn't talk. Remember all the signs they had, not to speak, not to tell people and not to say who you were particularly in the air force.

Where were those signs positioned?

Oh, they were around trams and toilets and everywhere, were those signs, all sorts of signs and remember your words, don't speak about troop movements and don't speak about

17:00 ship movements particularly, they were everywhere, signs in toilets, trams.

I remember the loose lips sink ships jingo?

Yes, loose lips, a saying about it, 'loose lips cause casualties' or something. I can't remember them all now. That's years ago, it's sixty years ago.

17:30 **I also wanted to ask, with those signs that you saw round the place did they have paintings or**

cartoon drawings?

Yes, definitely.

Now, Australians having the kind of sense of humour that they do you must have heard some funny excuses when you were arresting fellows?

Yes, I can't remember a lot of them, you know I heard a lot of funny excuses, even today, even in Ansett I used to hear funny excuses

18:00 why somebody didn't turn up for work. And I had to work instead of him and it was normally the same people too I might add, in the army, civilian and everywhere else.

And what kind of people were they?

Oh, just ordinary people that wanted every sick day they could possibly get. I retired with nearly eighteen months sick leave from Ansett Airlines. We could save it because we were air crew, in case we did get sick

18:30 you could be off for a while with a heart attack. And so we saved every sick day we could. I never took a sick day all the years I was in Ansett and I was in Ansett for twenty years and I never had a sick day. The same old three or four people who I know pretty well even today, because they wanted to go to the cricket or the football or Mum's shopping or something, "Oh, I'm sick" and you would have to go out and take his place.

So, you can't recall anyone giving you a tall story to pull your leg when you were arresting them?

No,

19:00 I heard some terrible stories and you absolutely felt sad for them you know. "My wife's just had a baby," and all this sort of thing and whether they did or didn't to me it gave me a certain feeling, "Gee, am I right in doing this?"

Were you ever tempted to turn a blind eye?

No, I don't think so. I don't think I have ever turned a blind eye. Never have and never will I hope.

19:30 **Even when they had a terrible legitimate story?**

No, let somebody else sort it out. No, I have never turned a blind eye to anybody and I still try not to do it now. Everybody is equal.

Did you ever have to take your baton to fellows in riots and so on?

Oh yes, I have pulled a baton out. I have never hit anybody that I can recall but I certainly had a baton in my hand, even in

20:00 Ansett. I shouldn't bring Ansett into it now but an air hostess came running up and so and so is playing up, mainly cricketers and you'd go down.

It wasn't Shane Warne [Australian cricketer] was it?

No.

I was wondering also, if you could tell me a little, you said you had to learn Brisbane backwards,

20:30 **the area and so on, what was happening in terms of street lighting and brown outs in the evening?**

Yes, well all the car lights had a slotted head light which you have probably seen photos of. Brown outs were all the lights were dull and wouldn't show up and some of them just had a little spot shining on the street, that was a brown out. It made it very awkward to walk around Brisbane at night, you had to be a bit careful

21:00 because of black outs and things, it wasn't completely blacked out, brown outs. To drive a car was pretty hard at night time, you only had a slot of light. Even a motorbike, while I was an MP I learned to ride motor bikes too. There is a photo there somewhere and they had slots in their headlights too so you had to be very careful

21:30 if you got up any speed, jolly careful you had to be.

Would that cause a number of accidents?

Yes I think it did, but people were slower drivers in those days and they didn't cause a lot of accidents. Of course a lot of them were on charcoal burners behind the car, pulling it on a trailer, a charcoal burner, which wouldn't give you much speed any how. No, it caused some but not a great deal.

22:00 There wasn't so many cars in those days.

There must have been a funny smell coming off those charcoal burners?

Yes, there was, a terrible smell.

So, with the brown outs and the potential for an air raid, even though I don't know if Brisbane ever had one, what sort of atmosphere was it at night in Brisbane?

Oh, things went on just the same but quieter I suppose except when people started rioting

22:30 here and there, that woke the whole town up and woke it up for weeks afterwards because they were always expecting something else to happen. It caused a bit of quietness but there were still lots of big dances around and trocaderos and theatres, they were still operating. Picture shows were still operating, big crowds there.

Did you get your fair share of nights off and opportunities?

23:00 Oh yes, they tried to give us two nights off a week to be honest.

In some ways being an MP gave you some freedom and a sense of authority that other privates wouldn't have had?

Yes, I suppose a certain amount. I shouldn't say it but if you wanted to go home on a train, put the MP band on and nobody worried you. You didn't have to pay,

23:30 the inspector come along, "Oh, you're right."

Well, you would wouldn't you, if you had the opportunity?

Yes.

And there must have been other opportunities?

No, there wasn't too many other opportunities, trains and trams, well trams were only a penny in those days. A penny, just think of it, a penny to catch a tram anywhere in Brisbane. Melbourne here too, when I came to Melbourne it was only a penny on the tram.

24:00 **What about the black market, did you ever get sent in to sort out business there?**

No, but it operated and we all knew where it operated. Probably participated in a little bit also.

Did it have its little headquarters here and there?

Here and there, shops, I could name two or three shops here in Melbourne when I was in the air force where if you wanted to drink you could go and get one on the black market.

Well, do tell, where were they operating?

24:30 No, I can't do people in now. I got to know one bloke very well.

Could you talk around it, this is for the record, if you don't tell, no one will tell.

No, there was one in a big café in Melbourne where you could always get a drink. After the war I was very friendly with him and his family. He was always glad to tell me what he did,

25:00 Greek by the way and he made a lot of money on the black market. I can remember in the air force going around, not that I drank much, trying to get a bottle of beer for a celebration or something. Well, I'm still not a drinker but I knew some of the black markets and being in the army or the air force you soon got to know where they were, Joe Blow told you, if you want that, or you want cigarettes there and that.

25:30 **Well, all's fair in love and war, that's what they say. The Americans would have been making a motzer on the black market over here. I'm sure they didn't worry too much about it?**

Oh yes, I suppose but they were always buying stuff off us so you could blame a lot of our soldiers and airmen for black market to the Americans, you know, a bottle of whisky particularly when I started flying in air force, if you could get a bottle of whisky,

26:00 a big price when you went to an American base, a huge price.

Did they have any code names for things that were contraband, like I once heard the Americans call alcohol 'steam', did you hear it called anything?

No, not that I know of.

So was beer, beer or grog?

Beer, beer and grog, grog. No nicknames or anything.

And this business of the Brisbane Line which is a highly controversial issue.

26:30 It was on, a lot of people still don't say. I'm involved in the Battle for Australia committee here at the moment which we are trying to start up. And the Brisbane Line certainly existed I can always remember as a youth and I wasn't in army or the air force, these people coming around explaining how we had to burn the house and burn the hay shed and do this. So there was a Brisbane Line definitely.

Did your mum and dad try and instigate some of drill procedure if they had to

27:00 **do the worst and burn their farm down?**

No, I don't think they ever practiced that but it was always in the back of their heads I think and we never thought of it. The Japs got mighty close at one stage.

It was a shocking thing and in Brisbane itself did you ever pick up on any tension between Queensland and the southern states?

Yes,

27:30 that's always on, still on.

How would you describe that?

Gentle friendliness half the time but yes there was a certain amount of, what's the word, oh you know he's a Victorian, I'm a Queenslander. We all had names, didn't we, the footballers have it, the crows [Adelaide people-'crow eaters']. I have a list of all the names, the banana benders, that's the Queenslanders which I am a banana bender [person from Queensland].

28:00 What's New South Wales? I forget.

I don't know what the New South Wales guys are but I guess the Adelaide boys were crow eaters.

Yeah. I've got all the names at home.

Never mind, it might come to you a bit later on. I also wanted to talk a bit more about for example the expression 'boob' or the prison used for locking up Australian servicemen.

28:30 **Can you describe them for me, where they like a civilian prison?**

Normally a big compound with barbed wire all around it up to ten or fifteen feet coiled on the top, just like an ordinary prison. And of course when they interned the Japanese it was the same at Cowra, same sort of prison and they were guarded and you had to unlock the gate to get in the gates, they were all locked to get in.

29:00 **Were Australians treated like a civilian prisoner in that were they given cells?**

The bad boys were given cells, yes. If a prisoner played up you put him in the cell. It disturbed me. I think I put one in one night. I used to hate guarding and that's the only words I can use, hate guarding our Australian prisoners.

29:30 **Would they sort of plead for a big of mercy from you? I don't know if you could give them any but did they argue for clemency or give them a break?**

No, they knew what they were there for but you know they were always short of cigarettes and things and I being a naughty boy I often took them in, sometimes. Not charged them, just helped them. I was sorry for them, because some of them had been overseas and

30:00 fought different big battles and come home just because they were sick of war or something, their wives were sick or Mum was sick or something and just fed up and they just went AWL. Of course it was our job to even go around and arrest them and put them in a cell and it always quietly disturbed me. Particularly, as I say, I had to do it to a schoolmate of mine, who was top, when I started

30:30 school he was about leaving I think. That upset me when I had to do that to him.

Did you have a chance to chat with him?

Oh yes, I had a chat with him.

What sort of a conversation would you have?

Oh, just every day sort of conversation in there. What did we get the name of, it was screws [military police] I think. We were the screws, there were certain bad screws and certain good screws, if you got a bad name it was pretty rough. I suppose I had a fair sort of a name amongst them, I don't know.

31:00 I suppose I was bad to some of them.

I don't know, I get the feeling you're a bit of a softie really.

I am a bit of a softie, yeah. I always have been.

So, what sort of conditions did they have in the lock up?

More or less in camp, they had tents in the compounds sometimes. They just lived in the tent and they had a palliasse, slept on the ground like most of us did anyhow whether we were in prison or not. Had a palliasse, slept on the ground,

31:30 lived a normal life. Food was pretty crook but it was the same as what we were eating so it wasn't that bad.

And medical conditions?

There was always a doctor around. That was a big problem, many of them went sick when they shouldn't have been sick just to have a break. Medical conditions were all right, they looked after that and everything was clean because that was part of their job,

32:00 make them clean up and work through the day. Everything was spotless normally.

They are still soldiers when they are inside the 'boob', do they have to continue training or would they be given exercises?

They would take them out and give them PT [physical training], what they used to call physical exercise and stand out the front, do this and do that. And I had that job everyday and I didn't like that either, but I was pretty used to physical training because I played football and things

32:30 when I was a kid so that didn't worry me.

What about lawyers do you know if they were represented by lawyers when they went for court martial?

No, they were normally represented by what I see, a senior officer or something like that. Some of the senior officers had lawyer practice of course but no, I have even represented one and I was only a flight sergeant and he wanted me to represent him, which I got him out of.

33:00 **Oh yeah, I haven't, nobody has been able to give me a description of a court marshal.**

Court marshal, well, you get marched in, hat off, marched in with a guard on each side and it's just like an ordinary court. All the officers sitting along there, all the people who are on the court marshal, normally fairly senior officers. They read out the charge just the same as they do in a civilian court.

33:30 **Would the defendant get an opportunity to plead their case?**

Yes, he can speak why and he generally has a couple of friends, he can take three or four friends in, friends of the criminal or friends of the court martial man.

Character witness?

Yeah, as a witness. I've been not once but many times at that, not even in the army but even in the air force. A court marshal and I had to be

34:00 there as a witness or a friend.

And would there be any civilian judges there?

Not normally, no.

Any sort of a jury?

No, there is no jury, well the senior officers were the jury. They would discuss yes or no and that was it.

And would they ever take into account personal issues for example, you know a death in the family or illness?

Oh yes, I think that was

34:30 fairly well taken into it.

Okay, so, compassionate.

Yes, that was always used. Mainly the soldiers used that in a court marshal for being absent or something like that.

Did you witness any court marshals that put an end to the careers of the men on trial?

I think nearly every court marshal puts an end to the career if you want to stay in the army or the air force, yes it puts an end

35:00 to the career.

Even if you are found innocent?

In a way I think so, yes. They never seem to get on too much. Some of them but no, I think whether you

are innocent or guilty, if you've been court marshalled you don't go marching ahead too easily.

What happens to you then?

Well you're in prison, in one of these compounds that we were just talking about. Twenty-eight days

35:30 or three months. And there were different prisons, one was hard labour or the other ones were just a prison. The hard labour one was outside Sydney and is still there I think. Up early in the morning and do this and drill and carry bricks around and things like that, it was very hard,

36:00 the one in Sydney and still is today I understand, you often read it in the paper.

And if you are found innocent in a court marshal what would happen to you then?

You just go back to normal duties, so called, you were normally, what I saw, posted from that station and I'm talking about air force now and well, even army you would be shifted from that unit to another unit.

36:30 You seldom stayed at that same unit whether you won or lost. They just moved you on.

Would scandal play a part in your future then?

I suppose so, but not that much so.

The men seemed fairly well buttoned up in terms of gossip.

Yes.

But I bet it would catch up with you at some stage?

Oh, it would catch up at some stage, but not a great deal, not the scandal that goes on today. At any court marshal you don't get that much scandal.

37:00 **Rob, I don't for a moment think you were a part of this, because you have mentioned it before but we have heard other fellows talk about getting badly treated inside 'boob' when they were sent in for simple AWL issues and so on.**

Yeah, I've seen it.

So you saw incidents?

Yes, some screws treated prisoners very bad, screws they used to call it. I used to detest the job and when I got sent out to a place called

37:30 Grovely that really made me all the more urge to get into the air force. Yes, I've seen some screws treat prisoners very badly, I must admit that.

I mean there are bullies in every facet of life but was it possible for a fellow to become an MP if he was that way inclined or?

I think so, as I say, I just joined the army or the army joined me and then I was an MP.

38:00 **Just luck of the draw?**

Yes, luck of the draw.

Did you ever try and have words with any of these fellows who were particularly unpleasant or oafish, bullyish?

Oh yes, I think so. I was always a peacemaker, I tried to be, I must admit that and I still am.

So did you take any of the guys on and say, "Ease up"?

Oh yes. I certainly have.

And how did they take to that?

Not good sometimes. I was always a fairly well built fellow,

38:30 I had my own way most times. I've given few a stern lecture.

Wow, really?

Yes, I certainly have, to smarten up and some of them have smartened up and others have got worse.

So as a corporal would you be entitled to put another MP on report?

Oh yes, you would be if you didn't like it. I think sometimes you wouldn't go out with another one,

39:00 you'd see the bloke that's doing the roster and say, "I don't want to go with Joe Blow or Tom thank you." And sometimes if it's a sergeant, "Why?" "Oh I don't want to talk about it," or something. You seldom doxed another one in, just made sure you wasn't out with him because you didn't like him.

And did you in your experience have any knowledge of soldiers taking the law into their own hands with regard to violent MPs?

Against MPs, oh yes, we had that.

39:30 Just because you're an MP they want to attack you.

So do you know of any fellows who were dispatched as a consequence of their violence?

Oh, I don't think so, that I know of. They were probably put in the 'boob' yes, the prison for seven days or something because they'd flattened an MP. I know a bloke

40:00 that did flatten an MP. He deserved it, the MP, we thought. The poor guy that flattened him got seven days in the clink.

He probably earned himself a badge of honour elsewhere.

Yes.

Tape 5

00:32 **So, let's talk about when you managed to get out of the army and into the air force, how did you go about that, that is not an easy thing as far as I know?**

I had had an application in to get out of the army and one day I was on duty, walking around the street on patrol and I thought, "I'll go and see the air force." And I went into to see the air force and they said, "Oh yes, we were interested.

01:00 You will soon be getting out." And that really cheered me up that day. And of course that's how it happened really, I was already in the air force but I was already in the air force but I was in the army. So that's how I got back in the air force, I went in but I think I was going to be called up anyhow. And on my discharge from the army is, "Discharge from the army to enlist in the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force]," that's on the discharge.

So, they already had records from when

01:30 **you had applied all those years earlier?**

Yes.

Take me through the transfer process then, including what did you do with your MP's uniform?

We had to hand most things in but they let me kept it until I went into the air force. When I went into the air force I was suppose to hand in so many shirts and so many pants. I think they let us keep the underwear and things like that.

02:00 Socks, something like that, but we had to hand all our uniform in, belts and buckles. Supposed to hand the MP badge in. I didn't, I've still got it. Getting a bit moth eaten now, no it's not, getting a bit tattered.

Was it a cloth badge?

Yes.

Did you get to keep your rank?

I was a corporal in the army.

Did that immediately transfer over to the air force?

Oh no,

02:30 I went back to the lowest rank, AC2 [aircraftsman 2nd class] then I became a LAC [leading aircraftsman] and then over the years become a warrant officer.

So that was a bit of a pay drop then too?

Yes, it was a little bit of a pay drop, course we were only on six and six a day I think, even a corporal. I have forgotten now and of course when we went in AC2, we were only six and six a day too then, I think.

03:00 **And when you went for your transfer, this is earlyish 1943 and you said before that you knew the war was starting to taper down, why would they let you swap over for example?**

Well, they were short of air crew for a long while and just about when I was swapping over they were getting surplus air crew, a lot of them were coming home from Europe and all

03:30 places like that. Things got very hard in the ITS, as I said before, if you were brilliant you got through but if you were down low you had to re muster from aircrew and things like that.

Was the Empire Air Training Scheme still operating then?

Yes, I was in the Empire Air Training Scheme.

And what sort of expectations did you have when you finally got into the air force?

I wanted to be a pilot. I would have taken anything, but I just wanted to be

04:00 involved in the aeroplanes. It didn't happen. I have since learned how to fly but that's besides the point.

You said before that being an MP didn't do any harm in getting female attention, did it improve or did it diminish when you became a member of the air force?

No, about the same, the same sort of girl. I kept going with the one for a while, never married her but I was going to once I suppose, if things had been different we would have.

04:30 I don't think it altered very much and we were called the glamour boys, the air force, with the white thing in our caps. I don't know if you have heard the rumour, a lot of the ground staff spread it around that those with the white things in their hat had VD [venereal disease] and the girls weren't to go near them and that used to upset us. That's years ago now. I don't know if anybody has told you that story or not.

05:00 **No but I have heard some funny rumours like that and given the lack of general awareness at that time it must have been effective?**

Oh yes.

Did you ever experience that first hand?

No, I can't say that I did.

Girls looking at you askance [with disapproval or distrust] when you asked them out. Well, the initial training, I think you said earlier you were doing things like Morse and maths and so on, take me through a little

05:30 **bit of the procedure that they put you through, were you in classrooms?**

Yes, all classrooms, we would have about an hour lesson. You would do a lesson in Morse and do a lesson in mathematics, do a lesson in armament, do a lesson in aircraft identification, what else, that's about the lot for a full day you know. Medical you'd do, but not every, different, every second

06:00 week or something, they would change the schooling around. I learned Morse code of course and I was always slow at Morse code, still am and I'm an amateur radio operator. I sent ten words a minute and when they come at me with twenty or something, "QRP, QRP," slow down, I can't read it. You have to be musical to read Morse code and I'm flat out,

06:30 I passed my exams for amateur radio at ten words a minute but it is a battle even today.

Where did they send you for the ITS?

Kingaroy.

Gosh, wheat silos and peanut farms and so on?

Yep.

What did you see in Kingaroy, what was there in Kingaroy?

07:00 There was quite a lot of huts and units and things for us. We lived in huts there, not tents which we did in the army most of the time. So, no they were all in huts and there was an officers' mess and a sergeants' mess and an airmen's mess, quite a big unit at ITS and a big parade ground.

And hot?

Hot sometimes, I was there in cold weather and it was freezing. Kingaroy is a very cold place in winter.

07:30 It was cold very cold.

And that is quite a way further north than Brisbane?

So, catch a slow old train to Brisbane, probably have to change at Gympie, I think it was, and then go out on the country train to Kingaroy.

Did you see anything there that suggested there was still anti-Japanese fortifications and the like?

08:00 Oh yes, years after that we used to have to roll our barrels and logs of wood onto the aerodrome every

evening in case the Japs decided to land. The year after I left Kingaroy I was at Maryborough in Queensland and we used to roll out barrels and logs on the runways every evening to stop the Japs landing. I don't know what it ever did.

Did you ever see any enemy aircraft around?

No, I've never seen any.

08:30 **And what about brown outs and blackouts there, was it all blacked out at night?**

Yes, it was brownout not blackout.

I wonder what the purpose of a brownout was then because you could still see?

It stopped the glare because you, brownout. they tried to stop it going into the skies. Now, if you were flying from Melbourne to Sydney you can see, you can pick the towns and that. If there is a brownout that is hard to see.

09:00 **Did you have much interaction with the locals in Kingaroy?**

Kingaroy? Oh yes, they treated us fairly well. I think there was a dance once a week and the local girls and what knot used to come in to the dance. I was never a dancer but I knew one pretty well because her sister was in AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service] and I knew her sister well and she told me to look this girl up when I went to Kingaroy which I did

09:30 and she was a lovely little girl. So, you always get rumours, met somebody, "Look my sister up" or look someone else up.

Did families ever take you in for meals while you were up there?

No, not at Kingaroy, no. When I came to Melbourne they did. We went for meals and weekends and goodness knows what else.

And were the girls any different in Kingaroy from what you met in Brisbane?

Oh, I don't think so,

10:00 bits of country girls in Kingaroy more so than town girls but no different. They were all very pleasant.

So, how were you shaping up then as a young member of the air force, were you feeling pretty chipper about the fact that you had gotten in?

Yes, I certainly was and I was very disappointed when I was told that I couldn't go on with aircrew courses, very disappointed.

10:30 So, I had to make up my mind and I think I could have got out of the war services at about that time because the war was well and truly on and half over but I decided to stay on. I went then on a mechanics course in Darlinghurst in Sydney and after that I passed certain exams there and after that we came down to Ascot Vale here

11:00 in Melbourne town.

Now, if I could be a little bit cheeky and inquire as to whether you were a bit of an innocent when you came off the farm to go into the army?

I was.

Was that apparent to you, that you were becoming a man of the world?

I suppose so, you could say that, I started to see part of the world I guess. You just grow with it, you don't notice it I don't think.

11:30 **Did your aunt's advice for example stay with you or did you come to realise that you knew what the world was about and she was a bit behind the times?**

Oh, I don't think so, I just lived my life I think both when I was a school boy. I walked out of a church one Sunday which upset Mum because this priest said I couldn't play sport on a Sunday and I was going to a cricket match and so

12:00 I left jolly church early and went to the cricket match. I used to be a bit of a cricketer of course and played cricket so no, I have always been that way, a bit of a rebel, still am. Florence, that's my wife, still reckons I am a rebel because I'm not too afraid to talk up at any meeting. I probably shouldn't bring politics, I'm a member of the Liberal Party and I go to the big conferences here and they hear from me if I've got something to say, I say it, whether it's to the prime minister,

12:30 and he's there sometimes or anybody else, blow them. They are only men and boys like me, no different to you and I. And some of them listen and some of them don't.

It's interesting to hear that because the army or any of the services would like people to think

that it does make a difference but really if you've got the gumption you can speak out against anything.

Yes, that's the same. The army teaches you a bit to be a man I think and even today

13:00 and the air force is the same. I think, if you've been in a service, you have always been in a service, you always got that certain discipline behind you. You don't try to, well, some do I suppose but the average sailor, soldier or airman have all got a certain amount of discipline in them. They play up truly, they get up to pranks and things like that but half of them are innocent pranks, sometimes they turn the wrong way of course but no, I think they urge you to be

13:30 be a bit prankish. If that's the right word.

Did you ever encounter a situation in your time in the services that you felt the need to speak out against?

Oh yes, I have spoken out and had a couple of arguments and almost been put on a charge for speaking back to an officer but it's never necessary too much but something's upset me once, only once and I

14:00 flew off the handle a bit and he was going to charge me but it never happened. We are the best of friends now, I still know the bloke.

Would you like to enlighten me as to the circumstances of that event?

Oh, it was when I was a flight sergeant, one of my men backed a battery cart into the side of an aeroplane and did some damage and the officer saw it and come out, "Charge the man, charge the man." And I said, "I'm not charging him," and, "You'll do as your told,"

14:30 and all this sort of thing, and I said, "No I won't, I'm not even charging him," because it was pure accident. That's what happened, and harsher words and he called me aside and started giving me a dress and I said, "I'm not taking." Anyway it's a big story, "I'm not taking notice of you." And, "Well, I'll charge you too." "Well, go ahead."

Well, that's just made me think of something too, ducking back to your MP days again, would you have ended up in situations where you found

15:00 **officers say in comprising circumstances from time to time?**

Yes, I suppose so. I've been involved. It wasn't me but I was involved in a party who arrested a fairly senior officer, that's about all.

Well, I'm sure we can be a bit more candid than that?

I've forgotten what he did no but I remember that, going around and arresting this officer.

Well look, leaving out names and pack drills,

15:30 **what was the situation for example?**

I think he stole a car that evening, that was all about it and somebody reported it and I was only one of the crowd that went around to arrest him, cause see in the air force or the army or anywhere you have to be of equal rank to arrest another man or supposedly. That's immediately why when you join the MPs you become a corporal so you're senior to a lot of people

16:00 but if it was a sergeant you had to be careful you had to get a sergeant to represent a sergeant. I have taken a sergeant in when I was a corporal but you had to be a bit careful because ranks are ranks and that's it.

Oh, that's interesting, that's great. I had no idea. So, let's talk about getting to Sydney then, you said you had this experience of seeing the tallest building in Sydney at the time?

It was marvellous to get to Sydney because I had only been to

16:30 Brisbane about two or three times and Brisbane to Sydney, what a town, what a place, and to see a tall building. And the AWA tower was the tallest building in those days and went across the ferry to Manly and went through the nets where they had the nets guarding the harbour and thought this was marvellous. Of course a man playing the violin on the trip over

17:00 to Manly and I thought, "This is life, this is how they live in Sydney."

It still is one of the best tourist trips you can do in Sydney, I think.

Probably yes, I have gone over a few times now, many times.

What did it look like going out through the heads where the nets were, could you see them?

Yes, you could see them. The ferry had to go through a certain gap in those nets. Yes, you could see them both sides.

17:30 **Were the ferries guarded or armed?**

No. Some of them still run the same ferries just about. I can't think of the names but they look the same, a couple of them.

Was this long after the [HMAS] Kuttabul incident do you know?

Oh, I don't know, it probably was.

For example had that happened you would have known about it, I'm sure.

Yes.

Yes, I'm sure setting out on the harbour had a slightly different?

18:00 Yes, this was after the harbour was attacked, we were going. The harbour had been attacked by the Jap subs. No, I thoroughly enjoyed the trips to Manly. I went two or three times but the first one was, I found the date and now, I can't remember, it was the 28th of something that I had this ferry trip to Manly. I still enjoy ferry trips to Manly.

Sorry, I'm just looking at my dates and I realised that I have jumped a bit,

18:30 **now you went to Sydney twice though because you went on leave and there was also the engineers trade course that you mentioned?**

Yeah, I was in the air force when I came down to Sydney. I was in Sydney about two months or something going to tech [technical] school there.

What were you learning there?

Engineering.

And more specifically, being a girl, engineering to me means steel bridges?

Oh, we were learning all about spanner sizes and no metric in those

19:00 days, SAA [Standards Association of Australia] and British threads and drawing diagrams and reading diagrams and making little bricks and things and working with metal, chiselling metal out. And all sorts of things like that. It's a tech training school that we went to.

19:30 **Were you much up with the latest technology that was being developed at the time?**

Then? No, well, I had been on a farm and most farm boys could certainly pull an engine to pieces and put it back quite easily or fix a car or anything like that in those days.

What about though in the air force there was a lot of new technology being introduced?

Well, you sort of trained and you came down to Ascot Vale and they had all sorts of different engines and aeroplanes on the arena

20:00 and you would have to go out and sit in and run the engine and pull an engine to pieces and put it back in the aeroplane and run it. I wished they had that gathering of aeroplanes that were there now of all the old types.

What were there then at Ascot Vale?

Oh, there was Tiger Moths, Breguet Golds, Ansons, and Buffalo Brewsters [carrier-based fighter] and worth a fortune now, people are collecting old air force planes.

20:30 We would have to run them up. So they taught you, it was a wonderful school and wonderful training. Then of course you went out to an air force base and worked on aeroplanes.

When did you get your hands on a plane for the first time and get to know it well?

When did I get my hands on an aeroplane the first time, truly flying one after Ascot Vale was in Maryborough and I was,

21:00 they had Wacketts trainers and Ansons and I got put on the Ansons they were the big bombers which I was very pleased about and of course we used to have plenty of rides. The pilots, some of them I knew, who had passed through ITS and were lucky enough to get through used to take me up and let me fly the things. I sort of learned to fly on the big Ansons at Kingaroy

21:30 and it was quite a good time at Kingaroy. Every afternoon, see the aeroplanes would go away for about three hours and there'd be nothing to do so I used to go with them and when they come home I used to service them. And I used to, being in the plane I used to know what was wrong with them, such as missing or spark plugs or so on. So I had lots of flights in Ansons and I really learned to fly.

You would have been quite big for you know for the seat

22:00 **in a cockpit of any of those planes?**

No, well probably not as big as I am now. I have put on a bit of weight.

I mean tall, lengthwise.

Well, tall, six foot was the limit and I had a son who wanted to get into the air force in air crew and they wouldn't let him. He was about six-foot-three or something so he couldn't become in the air force but he joined the air force and went through and did a doctor's degree

22:30 in computers or science or something. He has left the air force now and has got his own business here in Melbourne.

When you were up in the planes, could you hear what was right and wrong with the engines?

Oh yes, a lot of the time you could, particularly in Ansons and piston engine air craft which I became a flight engineer eventually on in the air force, flying Lincolns and you could hear

23:00 one engine playing up, it might be right out, that's playing up and you would look at your gauges and eventually it'd just stop or it fell to pieces or something. No, you could pick it up because it would get out of beat. You would get used to that the song that was across, we used to call it a song, across the whole engines and if one went out of beat, "Hello, we are hitting trouble here," and bang, the next minute.

23:30 **Any hairy incidents in that time?**

Oh, I had a few yes, scary incidents.

Such as?

Just an engine failure at the wrong time on take off one day. I even had that with Ansett.

Your stomach would drop wouldn't it?

It gives you a fright, but you are over it in a minute and once it is over it's over. There's nothing you can do about it. I had a fire in an aeroplane and that's the most frightening thing, fire. It won't go out when you want it.

24:00 You've got fire extinguishers to press and carry on but it won't go out when you want it to go out and how much lower is it going to burn. That was only once.

What were they using for the electrical fires on planes then?

Electrical fires?

Well, they would be electrical fires wouldn't they?

Well mainly or it might be petrol fire out in the engine, in those type of aeroplanes I'm talking about, not the jets but they catch fire and you've got a fire extinguisher and you press the trigger. And you have pipes all around the engine and

24:30 spread the fire detergent around the engine. It puts them out most times. Well, sometimes it doesn't, the one we had kept burning for a while, it must go out, never mind.

There would be quite a risk of suffering inhalation of bad gas or bad air if a plane caught fire?

Oh yes, inside, if you had a cabin fire, oh yes.

What precautions did they have for dealing with that?

25:00 Oxy mask mainly, put your oxy mask on. Even as you know if you have flown in an aeroplane they drill you on an oxy [oxygen] mask even now. You put your oxy mask on and breath, well it's pure oxygen.

Were there any other incidents like that you know, crash landings?

No, I've had a forced landing, once in the air force. The engine just stopped and looked around and there was a paddock but I wasn't flying it

25:30 and I had a forced landing since I have learned to fly. I was flying in the Toowoomba Aero Club, I was flying an aeroplane out from Toowoomba to Doolbi, or somewhere, taking it out for a farmer I was. It wasn't my aeroplane, I was just doing a job for him, flying it out to him and the darn thing stopped. That was the biggest fright, no paddocks much but I managed to get it into a wheat paddock.

26:00 **Did you have contact with base when that happens?**

No, there weren't radios in those days, not like now. I still fly even now, a Cessna and you talk to the tower, talk all around the world actually, but you didn't have radio in those days.

Did you have hopes to be sent overseas at that point?

Well, I got sent overseas to Moresby in the air force for twenty-four hours

26:30 and then I came back to Townsville. Had I stayed for another twenty-four hours I would have got two

more medals. I ain't got them. Yes, only once I went over but I wasn't stationed overseas during the war.

Tell me how that came about for example?

Well, we were just delivering an aeroplane over there. We took one aeroplane over and brought one pretty battered home to Townsville. That's the only time during the war I went overseas.

And that would have been late in the piece was it?

Oh yes, the war was practically over in those days. I always wanted to go overseas but never got there.

27:00 **Well, that would have been quite interesting flying into Moresby?**

Yes, it was quite. Moresby was Moresby in those days, there was aeroplanes everywhere. And Townsville, I went from Amberley up to Townsville, I think it was, and they even had aeroplanes parked. I don't know if you have been to Townsville, there is a cemetery there at the end of the street and there was aeroplanes parked amongst the graves, scattered around.

27:30 I never saw so many aeroplanes in all my life and different types because the Americans were there. The American aeroplanes and Australian, there were aeroplanes everywhere in Townsville. I didn't think there were so many in the world.

It is a little hard to believe how many were manufactured in those few years, how many got up in the sky and how many shot down.

28:00 Hundreds wasn't it. Squadrons of twenty or thirty in one squadron, in one fly past or something and it's just the same now in the air force although a squadron is smaller now. I stayed in the air force after the war and I was on a Hercules until I went to Ansett.

Given that you just made that one trip to Moresby you must have seen it with very fresh eyes?

Oh yes, it opened my eyes to see Moresby and it was the first time,

28:30 I wandered around and I saw the women there with no tops, all the boobs. They all had different names, stretches, and longs and wells. I have forgotten all the names, I shouldn't tell you that.

Were any called ack-acks [anti-aircraft artillery]?

I suppose there was, I can't remember all the names now but first time, I was only nineteen or twenty or so but you've only got to spend an hour and anybody could,

29:00 you take no notice of it. It's just the same as if we all stripped naked here, within a day, nobody would take any notice of anybody.

Except the fashion industry would be shot to pieces wouldn't they?

Yeah. Except when I went to Moresby and all these girls, young girls, old girls and another thing I saw in Moresby that day too, she had a baby on one nipple and a pig on the other, it was quite common in those days up there.

Pigs were important.

Yeah, feeding a

29:30 pig on one breast and a baby on the other. I thought, "Gee whiz, what about that."

Well, pigs don't answer back either.

No, it was a real eye opener, things like this were an eye opener in those days for an innocent country boy.

What about the fact that that was pretty much the first war real zone you encountered I guess, I mean Moresby had been hit a number of times?

Well yes, there was no sign of any, well, there was sign of bomb damage of course

30:00 and still is a few years ago when I went up there but there were no bombs dropped while I was there.

What about wrecks in the harbour and the like?

Oh yes, I saw that, particularly when I went to Darwin. Darwin used to be littered with wrecks.

When did you go to Darwin?

Oh, gee.

?h sorry, I don't mean exactly the date but was that while you were in the air force?

Oh yes, I had just on two years, just after the war

30:30 I went to Darwin, about a month after the war finished and all the places were still there. Troops were

being shifted out and I was sent there to look after Darwin aerodrome for a while. I was there for two years and I thoroughly enjoyed it as a matter of fact.

That must have been in very bad shape?

It was in bad shape when I saw it, all the buildings, the banks blown down,

31:00 the post office was still a wreck and everything wrecked. It looked terrible to be honest. And the hangers at the aerodrome were still, you could see where they were bombed. Half of them were [Unclear], a big airmen's mess, one end was all blown off, that hadn't been repaired in those days. No, it was quite a mess to see and to see the broken aeroplanes lying around, it was enormous.

31:30 **Did you hear about the bombing of Darwin?**

Oh yes, I heard about the bombing of Darwin, yes.

And when you got there did it meet your expectations of things you'd heard?

I didn't think there'd be so much damage would be done to be honest, what we saw when we went to Darwin. The war had finished when I went to Darwin.

Okay, I might ask you a few more questions about that a bit later. Let's jump back

32:00 **to the time you spent in Amberley when you said that you were part of the recovery depot. What did that involve?**

Well, if an aeroplane crashed around the area or forced landed out in the districts around the place, all around Queensland. We would go out and either destroy it all together or fix it up and try and bring it home, either on a train or if it was capable of flying, flying it out.

32:30 And we went around to all the wrecks. Some of the wrecks I went to, some of the North Queensland wrecks we pulled out bones from the aeroplanes, a couple of them, that crew had been killed and they just discovered the aeroplane years afterwards. The war was still on of course, and we would go up and try and get this aeroplane out. I was only there about six months I think

33:00 on recovery and they sent me somewhere else. We went out to one wreck and pulled two crew out and even years later when I went to Darwin they found a wreck and we went out, there was two crew and we bagged their bones and brought them back into the camp and they gave them an official burial somewhere.

Does one take that personally when they do that, do you think about the human?

33:30 Oh yes, it's pretty hard. Yes, it gives you thoughts, it could have been me. It always was, "Geez, that could have been me," and it could have been, you never know.

No, it was all very random wasn't it?

Hmm.

Tell me then what you would need to do for a recovery, what kind of equipment and machinery would be used?

34:00 Oh, normally you could borrow a crane around the place to lift an engine out or something like that. We would take a lot of the tools and spare parts out. We would generally know whether we could fix it or we couldn't or whether we were going to strip it all of the valuable parts or things like that, we would generally know what we were going for. Sometimes just at the end of the war I was bringing different aeroplanes home from the islands and they'd

34:30 have engine failures. We would go and put two new engines in, in an aeroplane that we had at Mackay we put two new engines in and brought it to Amberley and there I was sitting in the mess having breakfast and looked out and there they were wrecking the darn thing with two new engines, but that was the end of the war, aeroplanes were everywhere. I even bought one, I bought a Tiger Moth.

35:00 **They were cloth covered weren't they, Tiger Moths?**

A little bi-plane they were. They were selling them for fifty or eighty dollars. I know another bloke I could tell a story, he lives around the corner, after the war he bought some Ansons. You ought to interview him. He bought some Ansons down at Hobart somewhere and flew them home, but called in via

35:30 Flinders Island or somewhere and loaded them up with crabs and brought them home. Sold the crabs and the aeroplanes cost nothing.

Well, I guess you had the space back on the farm to buy a Tiger Moth?

It was only fifty pounds in those days.

Did you sort of develop a personal love for one aircraft over another?

- Oh yes, it can happen. I always liked,
- 36:00 well I enjoyed the Ansett times, the Boeing 727, three engines, you didn't have to worry about too many engine problems, if one went you still had two more. Yes, you get a liking to a certain aeroplane.
- And what about when you were working on them during the Second World War, did you think that one was better than another?**
- Yes, definitely with different types,
- 36:30 this one is a wreck, it wasn't a wreck but it should be in the wreckers yard, this one's good, different types of aeroplanes, yes.
- What was your favourite model?**
- I think a B25, the bomber, I always thought they were a marvellous aeroplane, two engines, plenty of power and good engines. Liberators weren't bad, four engines, I worked on a lot of Liberators. I became a flight engineer on a Liberator.
- 37:00 **What about in terms of aesthetics, the way they looked, was there one you thought was a stand out success?**
- Not really. I think you looked at an aeroplane and it was an aeroplane. They've all got wings and got a tail. They're well built and they look nice but you didn't really choose with an aeroplane.
- Did you ever fancy designing your own, I know you tried to build one when you were a kid?**
- Yes I used to often do that, I started one,
- 37:30 this is well after the war, I started building one, a lot of these amateur built ones. I was running out of money and time because they build them for about five years. As a matter of fact I've been a judge at Mangalore at every air show lately. Sports air craft have about a hundred and twenty aeroplanes there over Easter, all amateur built.
- 38:00 Some of them are so perfectly built and I've been the judge up there for the last four or five years or more. I didn't do it this year.
- Well boats, so sailors and seamen have told me, have a particular kind of personality to them, do planes?**
- Yes, they do. Some people, the ones they built, they're all different sorts and types, they swear by them some of them.
- What would an Avro Anson have in terms of a personality then?**
- 38:30 It was a viceless aeroplane. Some aeroplanes have different vices, they'll trap you if you let them trap you. An Anson is a smooth aeroplane, you could do lots of things in an Anson and nothing would happen, you'd get away with it but some aeroplanes you don't.
- And what about a Mitchell?**
- A Mitchell was very good, very easy to fly. I've flown one but not personally, just because a bloke let me fly it. It was a very easy aeroplane to fly
- 39:00 and plenty of power, open the throttle and the power was there.
- Were there any that were badly blessed?**
- Oh yes, underpowered aeroplanes trapped a lot of people.
- What was a bad air given aeroplane?**
- The old Oxford trainer. I've had a ride in one but I've never flown one. They were considered plenty of vices, under powered and what not. All aeroplanes have a history,
- 39:30 I could go on and on with different aeroplanes.

Tape 6

- 00:34 **I was wondering what your feeling was, what your emotions were when you had heard that the war had ended?**
- Well, fairly joyful I think. We were given the day off, yes, I was at Amberley in Queensland outside of Ipswich and so immediately most of us caught the train to Brisbane,
- 01:00 you know there was a big party going on at Brisbane, the streets were lined with people and we went

down to celebrate there, danced around the streets and carried on. I think most of us were pretty joyful, I think number one we escaped, we were there to be shot at, killed if necessary, but we were lucky we escaped. Some people didn't of course. I think we were joyful really.

Was there a small amount of regret

01:30 **that you hadn't gone and seen action?**

Yes, I think there was for a few of us because we joined up to do that, yes, I think there was, sad that we didn't get there. I mean to say, when I was boy and went into the air force all I wanted to do was to learn to fly and get in those Spitfires and fly over England. I never had a chance, it didn't happen. I think it was joyful.

02:00 **You described Darwin before to Stella [interviewer] and I was just wondering about what occupied your time in Darwin, what you were doing there?**

I was servicing aeroplanes, all the aeroplanes that were going through really, that's what I was doing. And we were on what we called Air Sea Rescue. We were on standby twenty-four hours a day to man an aeroplane and go out and search for any aeroplane that was lost flying from England.

02:30 Of course there was a lot flying from England bringing aeroplanes home and across the Timor Sea they would drop into the sea. A couple of good friends of mine dropped into the sea somewhere flying an aeroplane home. So, we were on standby to go out, we had a DC3 first and we had life rafts. We used to drop them out the back door if we spotted them in the water. I went and searched different islands and eventually we had a Lincoln

03:00 and did the same thing as that. And a Catalina [flying boat] we had too to search for people who got lost anywhere in that area. All air forces had a boundary, Singapore had to look after so much and Australia had to look after so much around their country and that's what I was in Darwin for. And I serviced the aeroplanes and when I serviced them went out as part of the crew staring at the water mainly.

03:30 And we did a lot of searching in the scrub for aeroplanes that had force landed.

How likely would it be to find someone, or how often would you find them?

Not very often. I did many trips and I think we only found one and he was on the coast. He got as far as the coast and landed on the sandbar, or the beach. A bit of a mess but he is still living as far as I know.

04:00 **What was the population of Darwin like then, had many people come back?**

There wasn't too many there, no. They were mainly half government employees and there was a lot of nursing sisters there of course and nurses which attracted the air force blokes. No, there wasn't a great deal, but Darwin was just starting to grow just as I left. I was there twice, 1950 was when it was starting to grow

04:30 and I was there a bit before that but 1950 I think it was, 1951, it was starting to grow then.

And by that do you mean repaired as well or had that started earlier?

Oh, it started earlier I think, people were coming back. Once in Darwin you never left it, they say. I rather enjoyed Darwin. If you liked Darwin you liked Darwin, if you didn't you went mad. That's what they say.

Did you see much of that, people going mad?

05:00 Yes, there were a few. A few airmen went a bit crazy and got sent home as a matter of fact, but I found it a busy place. I ended up in the Darwin aero club. I used to fly, I started the Darwin aero club, when I say I, a group of us started it and bought a couple of Tiger Moths and we were using those around and having a lot of fun, and flying over to the islands and goodness knows what else.

05:30 I just had a good time in Darwin. Two of us had a little boat too, so it made life very pleasant.

Were you able to go home very often?

No, once you got to Darwin you were there for fifteen months I think, and then you could have leave if you wanted to go home for a fortnight or something like that

06:00 and come back. I did it once, I went home once to see Mum, I think Mum was sick and so I took leave and went home and came back to Darwin and stayed another fifteen months. I was single in those days, wasn't married and I didn't have any ties.

Throughout your army service as well had you had much contact with your family?

Oh yes, I always had contact with the family and even until both Mum and Dad died

06:30 I used to see them quite regularly, cause we used to fly up to Queensland with Ansett and we'd have overnight in Brisbane for various reasons. And I always caught the train out to see Mum and Dad until they both departed this world, they departed fairly early, both, reasonably young to what people are

today.

Well, I'm not sure if I asked you but when you were an MP did you go home at all?

07:00 Oh yes, not very much. Leave was pretty hard to get in those days, the war was on, the army wanted everybody, but no I got home occasionally but not that often. Very often when I wanted to go home there was something and you just couldn't go. Still it was eighty miles away which was a long distance in those days and a rough old road, all you could do was catch a train.

07:30 **How do you think you were different, did your parents make any note of how you'd come back a different man?**

No, I don't think so, they never mentioned it, cause I had never really seen action. I think it was the boys who saw a lot of action came back differently. And all I saw was brawls and what not, friendly troops, so-called.

You still got a bit of an education in the ways of world?

Oh yes,

08:00 it certainly taught me a lot.

What do you think it taught you?

How to behave properly I think. I was a bit, I did a few things when I was at home when I was fifteen and sixteen that I shouldn't have done, like tore into the local policeman for various reasons. It was always in good fun but he didn't think it was good fun at the time.

08:30 Leaving few fire works off in the street, we used to go into a place called Gattton and leave the fireworks off at one end and he would come rushing up there to try and get us and we would be down the other end. I shouldn't say that but yeah, but that's about as bad as we got. We never blew up mail boxes or anything like that, which they do even here in Glenhuntly Road, they used to. They haven't been managing to get any fireworks these days. When we first come to Glenhuntly Road,

09:00 they had put a big cracker in the mailbox and blow it to smithereens. I never did that and I have never wrecked a telephone box which is regularly done in Glenhuntly Road these days. We never did things like that, I don't think many people did it but now it's common fact. I never sprayed paint on a wall or a fence or things like this what's going on now. We were better behaved, in a word, we got up to tricks but we were better behaved.

09:30 **In terms of dates, so you were in Darwin in 1950 the second time, were you paying attention to what was potentially happening in Korea?**

No, I came home from Darwin just before Korea started if I remember rightly and I didn't go to Korea I went to Singapore where the same thing was on, the

10:00 Malayan Emergency was on in those days. This is after the war finished of course.

What was your understanding of those two conflicts at that time?

I think it was all about communists, the communists were going to march into Australia and they would probably have got here had we not stopped them. They are still around.

Did you as part of the air force get any education about communism, or was that just something that you gleaned from society?

Oh no, we were just told they were communist

10:30 and we learnt and lectured about the systems and things like that, yes. They were a bit worried about the communist factor, particularly when we were in Singapore, we got lectures every now and again to be careful. How to go carefully if we went into town. As a matter of fact, we didn't wear uniform, we had to go into town in civilian clothing.

So, what did they tell you about the situation before you went over?

11:00 Oh, they warned us to be careful I think mainly, don't upset the people, they are all Chinese or Malayans, don't upset them, there are likely to be riots which there was riots. And we often got called out to go in and guard some building against the rioting, mainly students, they were. That's what we were there for I guess and we used to bomb the jungle.

11:30 About the only thing we ever did was kill an elephant as far as I know.

So, when did you go over to Singapore?

Oh, I've got it here somewhere.

That's all right, so you came back from Darwin?

I came back from Darwin to Amberley and did a sort of a course and learned all about Lincolns,

12:00 how to service them, how to be a crew member of a Lincoln. And then they sent me to Singapore in 1 Squadron. So I went up there and I did two tours because I was silly and I enjoyed Singapore, once again I did two tours of Singapore.

Well, what was your first impressions of Singapore?

It was a dirty, evil, smelling place, not like it is now. I have been back to Singapore a few times now.

12:30 You can't even drop a stick. There was sewerage running down open drains and things like that. It was terribly dirty and evil smelling place. It started picking up on my second tour, they were starting to clean it up a bit but now look at it.

And what sort of set up did the air force have when you got there?

We took over some RAF [Royal Air Force] barracks which were very pleasant to live in. I was a sergeant in the

13:00 sergeant's mess, up the top end. One night a terrorist or somebody sneaked in and they could have murdered all of us. They sneaked in and robbed the place with twenty odd blokes all asleep, that's how quiet they were. That surprised me the next morning to see our all belongings scattered all around. They could have cut all our throats. After that they put guards on the place.

13:30 And were you working with the British forces there?

Yes, we were sort of under the British forces. The Australians had 1 Squadron and the New Zealanders had another squadron opposite us on the same aerodrome and the Poms had their own squadrons there of course. Well they had lots of squadrons, they sort of ran Singapore, they had one, two,

14:00 three, four aerodromes manned by the RAF, and they had a big flying boat base there also. I can't think of the name of the place now. So the Poms, the English were there in full strength I can assure you.

Did you have much to do with them in Singapore?

Oh, socially we had a lot to do with them, we were in the same mess, yes.

14:30 I was a sergeant in those days and we were all in the sergeant's mess with the New Zealanders and the English. There must have been about a hundred of us living in the mess I guess.

What were the differences between the Australian and New Zealand and then British Air Force?

Not much difference I found. We exchanged duties, a couple of our people were over with the New Zealanders and two or three of our people,

15:00 not in our squadron but they were with the English squadron on exchange duties. Exactly the same as I did when I came home from Singapore, they sent me to America and I was on exchange duties there learning to fly, well learning to crew a Hercules. We were on a big American base where they had Hercules in Nashville where the hillbillies are.

15:30 They used to have a big hillbilly night every Saturday night, we've heard it on the radio sometimes.

In Singapore, would you volunteer for exchange duties, how would that work?

Oh, somebody just posted you I think. The air force picked a certain few to go and that was it. No you didn't just go over or volunteer for it, the air force would choose you, mainly in the officers' field it was.

16:00 I wasn't an officer, well I was a warrant officer.

So, how did you come to be a guard in that situation where there was a riot?

In Singapore? Oh, they would call the squadron out and we would take some troops in and man some building to stop people breaking it up.

16:30 Of course, I've forgotten the name now, but they used to have their Singapore police there also but they couldn't manage thousand and thousand of mainly students. That's how we got an air force guard. It was a frightening thing sometimes to see hundred and hundreds wanting to break something up.

What was the situation there, were you standing in front of something again?

17:00 Yes, standing in front of mainly the universities they were trying to smash up and the Ford building. Ford had a big building there where the surrender document was signed of course. And they often wanted to break that up for some reason. They were wild days in Singapore. You had to be careful if you went into town, well we never went into town in uniform, we had to wear civilian clothes into town, which we were given an allowance for, to buy civilian clothes. So, that was good.

Did you find that made you suspicious of everyone?

17:30 Oh, I suppose so, you had to be careful what areas you went to. If you went to go out of Singapore you

always had to go in twos armed with rifles. I bought a car in Singapore which I've still got. It's worn out now. I've got another car since but I've got the same car there and I was always going to restore it but I haven't done it. Cars were cheap in Singapore in those days.

18:00 **What sort of car was it?**

A 1950 Chev, I bought and I bought it home here and everyone would stand and look at it in the street. I should do it up now but it costs too much money.

I'm intrigued more by the riot, can you give me a picture, whereabouts were you, and how many of you and were you armed?

18:30 Yes, we always went in with rifles and a bayonet on it, I don't know what for. We had some bullets but I never ever shot anybody. I was always frightened. Normally I was a flight sergeant or warrant officer and there you'd go in with about twenty people and I was always frightened one of my men would break and fire at somebody. And you are tempted to when you see them starting to come towards you but it never happened.

Did those students pelt things?

No, not really.

19:00 No, they didn't pelt things much, not at us anyway. They did pelt things but we never copped it. We were always tried to be kept in the background I think because we were foreigners in the place.

It must have strange for you to be back on the riot line again?

Yes, it was very strange as a matter of fact. No, I was always frightened that somebody would fire a shot, but it never happened luckily.

19:30 "Don't shoot, don't shoot," yeah.

What was your command to your men, what did you tell them to do or not to do?

Well, just to remain calm and as I say we were always in the background slightly. If they broke through the other police lines, we were the backbone, so we were never right up the front thank goodness, they were Malayan police.

What did you understand was the point of a riot, well their grievance or their cause?

20:00 I think a lot of them were communist of course, they wanted to get their own government was a lot of the cause of it, they wanted to get rid of the English who controlled Singapore as part of their colony. They wanted to be a separate nation, I think that was mainly what was behind it. But the communists

20:30 were urging it because that was the whole point why we were there was to combat the communists of course. Communists were dangerous in those days they thought.

Did you get a sense that you were fighting as part of the British Empire or part of a non-communist country?

No, I think we considered we were part of the British Empire in those days, to mention the Empire wasn't a criminal word. Empire now is a criminal word,

21:00 sad to say the Empire is gone. To me it was good while it was an empire, although, we didn't want the Poms ruling us here so much but still they did a good job in a way, but that was the main battle.

So, there were others as well, other riots?

I mean to say, when you look back at Indonesia they got rid of the Dutch, all this sort of thing was going on after the war.

21:30 They wanted to rule themselves and that's what caused a lot of the trouble I think, and the communists were exploiting it of course, particularly in Malaya.

So, besides that riot you just described to me now were there other guard duties or crowd control duties that you had to do there?

No, not in Singapore, we just looked after the aeroplanes, serviced them and went out and bombed a few jungle parts. Many times we went bombing.

22:00 **Could you describe that to me from beginning to end, what orders would you get and how would you take them?**

Well, the army would call up, headquarters I guess it was and say they were wanting help, could you bomb a certain area of the jungle, they think there were a lot of terrorists there, as they called them in those days even. And you'd do that and drop the bombs in that part of the jungle and come back, maybe two raids, three raids a day, bombing that square.

22:30 The bombs just went into the jungle and you saw a flash, you never saw much else.

Was that spectacular to watch?

It was spectacular to watch them coming out the bomb bay. When I was crewing the Lincoln, I used to stand and count them and make sure they all went. You didn't want to land with one still hanging up.

About how many bombs would you be dropping?

I think we used to carry fifteen but may be it might have been

23:00 twelve one thousand pounders I think. And we would drop them in the jungle.

Were they long flights, those operations?

Oh, three, four or five hours, not much over four hours, because Malaya is just a short strip. We would go from Tengah up to Ipoh and all places like that in the jungle part of it, up to the Thailand border we would go.

23:30 Where they were supposed to be coming across from, the Thailand border there. We would bomb along the strip there. We never saw anything, there was no fighters against us or anything like that. Supposedly, we flew down one valley fairly low and they were supposed to be firing at us from a high hill but I never saw that, just ordinary rifles I guess they had.

24:00 What was your role primarily on those bombing raids?

In bombing? Well, I was a flight engineer on the Lincoln for a while and then I was transferred of that and just plainly in charge of servicing the aeroplanes. The 'tarmac warrior' they used to call me, "Make sure this one is right" and I had a pushbike, riding here and there and making sure that everyone did the right thing. What did I get? They gave me a MID [Mentioned in Despatches] or something,

24:30 eventually which is on my ribbons. Certain ones they issued around.

How did you find that role, servicing of the planes?

Oh, it was very interesting, you just have to keep the aeroplanes serviceable and you gradually learned a lot about aeroplanes and motors and engines. I was flight sergeant by that time and I was fairly experienced on aircraft in those days.

25:00 How did you get along with the aircrews?

Oh, we got along wonderfully. I was aircrew for a while you see. No, I got on with the aircrew quite all right, no problems with them. I used to have to tell them off occasionally. It was all in fun though.

What would you have to tell them off for?

Oh just, they would want to write something up and you would say, "Hey, hey that's wrong," or something. They were pretty good, they were all a pretty good bunch.

25:30 Did you have a couple of close friends there, I mean it's a fairly large group of people I suppose?

I had a lot of close friends in Malay, you really live together you see. You practically knew everyone in the squadron of about two hundred people. I would have known everybody's name in those days, Tom, Bill and Harry. And a lot of them were sirs of course. I knew their names and I have met a lot of them since

26:00 at different reunions and things like that. No, we were a pretty close group when we were away like that in a squadron.

From your perspective there, did you feel like progress was being made?

Yes, you had that feeling that we were doing something to stop the communist I think. Probably by propaganda or something, I don't know but yeah, we had the feeling that we were doing something, protecting Australia.

What did you observe of the propaganda used there?

26:30 Oh, I don't know, just propaganda we thought and we used to drop bundles and bundles of leaflets over the jungle. I still have a bundle at home I think in different languages, Malayan language, hoping that the terrorists would read them and give themselves up. And to drop them we were loaded with them one day and people didn't realise the weight of paper and

27:00 it was far too heavy. We nearly pranged the aeroplane just loaded with leaflets. Leaflets are heavy in bundles, as you probably know, lift a bundle of paper it's jolly heavy. And that was out of Kuala Lumpur, we were based up there for a while.

Do you remember what the leaflets said?

No, they were all in Malayan language.

You weren't told?

Oh, you could get somebody to read them for you yeah. I have some at home still, you know, pasted in a book somewhere.

27:30 **I wondered about that, when they dropped out would they just land in a big ball or float around?**

No, they'd scatter, you would drop them out in a chute and they would scatter everywhere like a lot of confetti dropping down, all over the jungle. Whether the terrorists ever got any, who knows.

It must have been a nice effect as well.

Oh yes, it looked good. Sometimes about four aeroplanes going in formation just all

28:00 let go at the same time, it was quite spectacular.

What did you think at the time of the effectiveness of dropping leaflets on the enemy?

We didn't think it did much good to be perfectly honest. We didn't think we were doing much good, because you never saw anything as I say the bomb would go in and you'd see a big flash and the jungle would close up again.

28:30 Somebody told us we killed an elephant one day, but we never heard that we had killed any terrorists, probably we might have but I don't know. That was when we were bombing. I was up there just on two years I think all told, once ground duty and once flying duty. I enjoyed Singapore.

Did you have much in the way of leave time, you mentioned you had to be careful when you went into the city, did you go in there very often?

29:00 Probably nearly every night you would go to one of the night clubs, fantastic night clubs there New World, Old World, Mid World or something. They used to have taxi dances, you used to pay the girl, not that I'm a dancer but other blokes used to pay her a few cents to have a dance with her and all sorts of things like that. Strange days they were in those days, and to

29:30 go back to Singapore now and see it, it's a big change.

Was there much availability of alcohol and all the things that servicemen want?

Oh yes, alcohol. Australians started to learn you could go any day, any night and buy as much alcohol as you liked. It was sold on the streets, some of the little barrow boys sold alcohol,

30:00 there was plenty of it in those days. Tiger Beer, they called it and it was a pretty good drop I might add.

You gave it a fair go?

Oh, I had a fair few. I have never been a big drinker, but I drank plenty of Singapore grog.

Well, what were the military police like there, or the air force equivalent?

Oh, I suppose they were all right, we used to condemn then I suppose like when I used to get condemned, yes.

30:30 SPs, they weren't too good, service police in the air force of course but there was MPs in the pommy side of it and they were just talked about, that was about all, but they never worried us. If you didn't do anything wrong, nobody worried you.

Did the Aussies ever get into trouble in Singapore, big nights?

Oh yes, a few of them.

What sort of things?

Oh well, I can't tell you one thing.

You could, you could not name names, you can tell us.

31:00 No names but, well, I was in charge of about fifteen or sixteen troops and one morning or one day I had none. They were all in hospital with girl's disease, pretty, you know, a lot up there.

All at once?

Yes, they were all at once

31:30 just about.

What were the precautions for that sort of thing?

Oh, I don't know, nothing much I suppose.

Was there much in the way of education about that?

Yes, a lot. You got a severe lecture as soon as you went to Singapore about that. 'Cause all the world, the old world, the new world, besides being taxi dancers you could hire the girl for the night from what I understand. I must be

32:00 perfectly honest, I never did it myself, maybe I'm slow or something, never ever. I can swear on a Bible about that.

Maybe it was your experience of guarding those places?

I suppose so, yes. I guess it was.

Were they regulated, were the girls checked there?

No, they weren't checked in those days. No, they were just all there, crowds and crowds of them. There were some lovely girls there too who weren't pick up girls.

32:30 They were mainly ones from the new world and the old world and that. Not a casino, big entertainment sections, they were.

Well, there were brawls and fights at the brothels you were looking after, were there brawls there at the nightclubs?

No, not too many brawls, they were pretty well behaved except when they got worked up on various riots about something.

33:00 It was mainly the students that rioted. Otherwise, they were a fairly peaceful and quiet, good crowd to be with, the Singaporeans.

You mentioned that you were told to be careful when you went into the city?

Well, you never knew where the terrorists might be, particularly when we first went there, we had to be very careful. Before we left, were going in, there was no problems. Anytime that you went out of the country

33:30 there had to be two of you go. And I drove the Chev from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur just to see the country, well three of us went. I was driving and the other two armed. Well, we all had a rifle but I was driving the car and the other two were sitting there with the rifle but nothing happened luckily, I suppose.

What were you told to look for when you went into Singapore?

In Singapore?

Well, if you were told to be careful about

34:00 **certain things, were you told to look for certain?**

Oh, just to be careful where we were, not get stabbed or shot or anything like that. They didn't know who was terrorists, like the same old story here but they weren't as strong as they are today of course. Eventually you just went into Singapore like any other town. Just before I left it was quite good.

Had you heard any stories of people being attacked?

Shot there, no,

34:30 I never heard any. I think there was one shot there, once but that was about all I ever heard and all our troops used to go in, all members of our squadron used to go in fairly regularly and there was nobody got caught up.

It does seem strange taking the precaution of not wearing a uniform, but then you would have stuck out pretty much wouldn't you?

Of course, yeah. It was a ridiculous order in my opinion

35:00 but that was the order that they, well the RAF was the same and the New Zealanders were the same, had to go in civilian clothes. And of course the Australians we got an allowance to buy extra civilian clothing. I have forgotten what it was now but it was quite a good allowance.

Were you able to get hold of things over there?

Oh, you could get anything in Singapore, they made suits and everything. It was a terrific shopping centre, Singapore in those days

35:30 and at about half the price of anywhere else. You could get a suit for half the price, I got two or two three suits I came home with, all perfectly made really. You could get anything at all, and transistor radios started and they were cheap in Singapore, watches by the score and you could

36:00 so called buy a Rolex on the street. You had to watch it because it wasn't Rolex it was only an imitation. If you wanted a good watch you bought it at one of the English stores, where it was truly a Rolex or

something like that. I've got a watch I bought on the street for ten Singapore dollars and it still goes. So, they weren't all bad but most of them were imitations unless you bought them in a recognised store.

36:30 It was a strange place Singapore, everything was there and everything was cheap, half price and no duty.

And the car, was that cheap too?

Yes, the car, I only paid about eight hundred or six hundred pounds and here you couldn't buy them and when I come home I would park it somewhere and you would come back and there would be a gathering around it.

37:00 Felt quite proud in those days.

I mean, were they many Chevs on the streets in Singapore, was that a rare thing there as well?

Started to build up, the traffic in Singapore. It's a bit like now, you can hardly drive in Singapore when I was there last time.

When you bought the car did you have trouble getting petrol?

No, there was plenty of petrol there. It was fairly cheap, whatever it was, I can't think but it was reasonably cheap. I managed to put it on a boat, they

37:30 used to have meat boats going up so my car came home in one of the old empty freezing chambers on the boat, free of salt or anything else like that. It was pretty cheap, they gave you cheap passage home because the ship was coming home to fill up with meat again to take to Singapore.

And you were on it?

No, I didn't come home on it but I sent the car by ship. I could have come home on some of the ships but I flew home

38:00 in a Constellation I think it was, with Qantas.

Sounds like you had everything worked out there at Singapore?

I had everything worked out, oh yes, I enjoyed myself.

We're just at the end of this tape, I was going to ask you what your enduring feeling was about that period of your life?

What was I doing?

Your general sentiment, your feeling about your time in Singapore.

I was just enjoying myself and I really did enjoy myself in Singapore

38:30 and we got on with the English and still correspond with a couple of English friends I made there. I still write to one girl who was there. She's married of course. She was in Singapore. She's now in London somewhere. I haven't heard from her for a while but I got to know some good friends because there was a lot of English

39:00 people there, starting to come back of course. There was an English governor there and things like that. They were starting to really come back.

Tape 7

00:33 **Well, what were you finding out about or hearing about Korea during your time in Malaya?**

All we heard about Korea was reading about it in the paper, The Singapore Times I think, used to print all about Korea and us being in Singapore and things like that. We never heard much through the air force of what was happening in Singapore, that was well over the other way.

01:00 **Did part of you want to be involved in that war?**

If they had sent me I would have went, that's the only thing. I sort of was on the heavy stuff all though my air force career, heavy type aircraft, not in fighter squadrons or anything like that. And that's why I didn't go to Korea, it was fighter squadrons, little aeroplanes as we used to call them. The fighter squadron boys were known as knuckle heads and

01:30 we were called the trash, that's the heavy stuff that carried the trash around. That's just nicknames of the air force.

That's a bit rough, isn't it?

Yes, oh it's just nick names and they are still known as the knuckle heads, the fighter blokes in Williamtown. It's just a name for them.

02:00 **We were wondering also during your time in Singapore if you saw the Changi compounds or prison?**

Yes, I lived at Changi for quite a long while, at Changi aerodrome and I have never been back to see the new Changi airport. We lived on the hill in the sergeant's mess and you could look down on the jail. And I don't know if you have been to Singapore but you could look down on the jail and the runway.

02:30 If you were landing they used to have closed gates on it, traffic went across the runway. When there was an aeroplane coming in the Malaysians used to close the gates while you landed and open it to let the traffic through, that's all gone now. I intend going back next year actually, going back to Changi to have a look at what it is. It's a huge, huge airbase now of course. We only had one little

03:00 runway in those days.

What did you know about what had happened there and what conditions had been like for the POWs?

Oh, I could imagine what they were like. We had a tour through Changi jail, yes.

When you were there in the fifties or recently?

Yes, when I was there in the fifties we had a tour through Changi jail. It must have been cruel with the amount of people that were locked up there, definitely.

03:30 **Well, I was just wondering how much people knew generally about those conditions then?**

Oh, I think they knew a fair bit about it. It was more in the news because it was not long after the war, not like now, it is almost forgotten. No, it was quite an interesting spot, Changi jail they shouldn't shift it. They are talking about

04:00 moving it now and they shouldn't move it, it's a sacred spot in other words but to improve the runway or something they are talking about it at the moment I understand.

It is certainly very important for our history anyway.

Yes.

So, did you have two separate tours to Singapore, to Malaya?

No, I just did a complete tour which I was quite happy because

04:30 I wasn't married or anything. I really took another married bloke's place. He was posted from Amberley to come up and he wrote to me, "Would you like to stay? And I said, "Oh yes, I'll stay." So he stayed at Amberley and I stayed another time in Singapore.

When you came back to Australia what did you come back to?

I came back to,

05:00 I was only back for a while and then I went to America. I was sort of going to get out of the air force. And when I put the discharge in to there the CO [commanding officer] called me and said, "You're putting in for a discharge?" And I said, "Yes," and he said, "We were just going to post you to America." And I said, "Give us the discharge back." That's what happened, so off to America I went. That was about a year after I came back from Singapore. I learned about the Hercules then.

05:30 **Are they a very different plane?**

Oh, well they were the first jet-powered aeroplane the RAAF sort of had so yes, they were a different sort of aeroplane to what we were used to. There was a lot to learn. I was a flight engineer of course in those days, I wasn't involved in the maintenance of them but just learning how to operate the engines and what not. It was quite a big difference from operating a jet engine to operating a piston engine.

06:00 **How long did you spend in America?**

Just on two years. I came home and brought one home and they sent me back to bring another one home, so two trips to America. I brought two new ones home and one of them that I brought home is down here at the Point Cook museum, 214, I bought that one home. All the others are gone.

06:30 **How would you describe your experience in America?**

Fantastic, that's the only word I have for it. I might add I was single and I didn't have to worry about anything, no worries at home, with wives or kids or anything. Fantastic, they really looked after us, particularly when we were at the Lockheed aircraft factory, the civilians there looked after us one hundred percent. There was five of us there all told and we said, "Gee, we would like to see the

07:00 Indianapolis," "You want to see the Indianapolis? There's the aeroplane, we'll fly you up to

Indianapolis." And they took us, seats booked and everything else. This is Lockheed air factory, fantastic company they were in those days and I suppose they still are.

Did you have much contact with the Australian Air Force or were you working primarily with the Americans?

No, we were over there, there were five of us over there learning about the Hercules

07:30 and we went out to Nashville and then eventually about a hundred and fifty people came over and got further instruction, and we formed a squadron there and brought the Hercules home. We all had to be trained because they were something different, Hercules, to what we were normally used to. Electronics had started to come in and jet engines and turbo props and

08:00 we never had any of that. That's why they took everybody over and trained us well. They took us to an American base at Nashville to teach us there. We learned to crew them there at Nashville under the American crews and eventually we got our own and then we stayed there a while and came home.

How was America different from Australia in the fifties?

It was advanced by about fifty years,

08:30 that's the way I look at it. Like Australia is starting to come now, that was America when I was there twenty, thirty years ago.

In what ways?

Well, they had bigger, better cars, the cars were, everybody had a car and they had automatic cars, which we hardly ever had one in Australia. When I first went and drove an automatic in America I thought, "This is great," but we never had

09:00 automatic cars here you see. Nearly everyone in America had an automatic car and they were big cars, fuel was very cheap in America and so it was just a great spot in a way. The Americans really looked after us, well and truly.

Did they have TV then?

Yes, TV was there, it was hardly here in Australia. We'd see this fantastic TV.

09:30 Every lunch time they had a certain program they used to watch. And I have forgotten the name of the program but everybody would go and watch this on TV. I thought it was marvellous watching on a square box in the American mess we were living in. Yep, they had TV, they didn't have colour I don't think while I was there. No, colour came later.

10:00 How did you feel about coming back to Australia after that period?

Oh, I think I was wanting to come back to Australia, I had been there long enough. Australia was the best place for me but I must admit the Americans gave me a wonderful time over there but I wanted to come back, it was about time.

And how did you come to be involved in the Indonesian situation?

Only on the sidelines, we were never really involved, just

10:30 flying around them, outside their boundaries and things like that. That's all, never really became involved in Indonesia.

I think you mentioned before you were doing some transport work?

Yes, the Hercules is a transport aeroplane you see, we used to transfer all the stuff from here up to Butterworth when the air force was manning Butterworth in those days. There would be two Hercs [Hercules aircraft] a week used to leave Richmond loaded up with goods,

11:00 quite a lot of the foodstuffs carted up to Butterworth, to the air force base at Butterworth. When the Indonesians played up we couldn't go over their country, we had to go up around Cocos and come right back past Butterworth, we couldn't turn in because Indonesian country and come back into Butterworth. It doubled our flight time practically, we stayed over night mainly at the Cocos Islands and press on the next day.

11:30 It was too far in one day practically, for a crew.

How did you find working with Hercules?

Oh Hercules were a good aeroplane, a fantastic aeroplane, viceless, you could almost do anything with them. Every aeroplane has a certain vice, they will trap you if they can but no, Hercules, look at them, touch wood, we haven't pranged one yet and there are three squadrons of them.

12:00 We've never driven one into the deck with casualties. That's a fantastic record and they put on a big ceremony which they flew me up to Amberley for, one hundred thousand hours or something in the Hercules C130A. And the ones that I brought, the two I brought home were still flying and they put on a

big ceremony.

12:30 They got the Lockheed factory people out and all that. Mind you we were close to bending a couple but we never did. One in New Guinea we nearly bent one.

What's different in your role as a flight engineer on a Hercules as opposed other aircraft?

Well, you just control all the fuel systems, hydraulic systems, you were more or less the third pilot.

Sure, but how does that differ on a Hercules to when you are a flight engineer on another aircraft?

13:00 Oh, there is not much difference, if you are a flight engineer you control everything anyhow, even on a 727, when I flew with Ansett for twenty odd years, I was flight engineer on a 727. First when I went to Ansett you had to have pilot qualifications well I have pilot qualifications, I learned to fly and I still fly an aeroplane so I had no problems. You had to have pilot experience when I

13:30 first joined Ansett but not now you can just go in as a flight engineer well they have just about gone, all flight engineers, now with electronic stuff. They've got an electronic man sitting there tells them everything, talks to them. Even the latest 727 I was on, it used to talk to you. Something gone wrong, "Check so and so," "Oh, I didn't know that." "Pull up," if hills are approaching, "Pull up, pull up," "Oh, shut up."

14:00 **Cars are getting like that too now.**

Yes, cars are getting like they have satellite nav [navigation] and all that.

How did you find leaving the air force and being part of a civilian work force?

Not much difference, it was sort of going from more discipline to another place. You still wore a uniform and you still, I have never

14:30 in my life worked set hours even in the air force and even in the army, I was always on call out, immediate, dress, go, and in the air force I was the same. I was in air sea rescue a lot of the time, in Darwin air sea rescue and any time, Saturday and Sunday and in the mess at night, "Come on," dress and away you would go. And the same with Ansett you see, you never had set hours.

15:00 One morning I would go to work at five am and the next roll of duty, I might go at two am, in the morning, to do a freighter to Perth, so I have never worked set hours.

Does that have an effect on you in the long term?

I don't think it did. I don't think so, you just got used to it and that was it and nobody really got upset about it. The only thing that used to worry

15:30 everybody was we used to be medically examined twice a year of course, under the DCA [Department of Civil Aviation]. Well, Ansett didn't do it, you had to go to the doctor twice a year and have a medical examination. That was always worrying and you always thought your eyes might be wrong, or your heart might be fluttering, however I managed.

What did you miss about the air force?

Fellowship I think, more so

16:00 than Ansett because in the air force you lived with a lot of people, you were on a base and you got to really know them. When I was in Ansett, you knew almost everybody but you never lived with them. You would see them in Perth or you would see them in Darwin because of change of crews or you would see them in Cairns or see them in Moresby, take over. I was with Air Nauru for a while, I was on loan. And you would see them with Air Nauru

16:30 up at Guam or somewhere. You would know them well enough, they were everywhere. It was a big difference between the air force and Ansett really. It was a fantastic firm, Ansett.

What attracted you to Ansett?

Ansett was an airline company.

Well, I mean over Qantas maybe I am showing my ignorance, was Qantas running then?

No, TAA was running in those days.

17:00 You had TAA and Ansett, no difference. Now Qantas own TAA, so there's only Qantas and Virgin Airlines now. Ansett has gone bust which most of us could cry about it really. No, it was a real family concern, Ansett. Everybody knew one another and everyone helped one another what's more, it was a fantastic firm. That was through Reginald Ansett,

17:30 mainly Hawke and Abel's wrecked Ansett Airlines. Hawke and Abel was the downfall.

At what point did you become involved in the air force association ?

I was in the air force association before I got out of the air force. When I came down here I started going to the meetings and eventually looked the wrong way and the next minute, I'm the secretary. That's what happened, no pay, no nothing,

18:00 just a lot of hard work.

What prompted you to become involved?

I suppose to help other people, people rang up and just to help other people. I'm involved in two or three different things you know. I am still involved in the retired pilots association or retired aircrew association of Ansett and the old Liberal Party. I just get involved with different things.

18:30 Scouts I was involved for a long while. I was never a scout but I used to help them and the air training corps I used to help while I was in Ansett. You've got to help your fellow citizens in other words, that's about what it is. And of course being in the air force association you get other people's problems constantly and they would even ring you up at night time at home,

19:00 they soon found out your number. "Can you help me with this?" And "What do I do about this?" It's amazing how a lot of people are so dumb, they don't understand but, 'Oh yes, that's right," after you tell them this should happen or that should happen. I shouldn't say that I suppose but they are, a lot of people are very dumb.

What sort of concerns would they be?

Oh, a lot of them want help medically and what they are entitled to and all sorts of things like this.

19:30 Some of them get, it's a superannuation pension, and it takes a bit of juggling sometimes and down here you find that both husband and wives, not so much but occasionally, the husband doesn't know how to run a home or the wife. I had one women down there who hadn't paid rates for about two years.

20:00 She didn't know she had to pay rates, her husband always paid the rates. And she just got the bills and just put them aside, imagine the work I had to do with that. She had been summonsed and goodness knows what else but you know, fancy the woman leaving it all to the husband. I blame the husband too not telling her how to pay rates and the same goes the other way, sometimes the husband doesn't know what the wife has been doing all the years. He's just left in a mess when she departs. You should always

20:30 educate your partner, you are not allowed to call them wives now, how about that.

So the association had a real social role as well?

Oh yeah, we have a lot of functions down there. You can't go to all of them, but different ones I go down there.

These husbands and wives obviously see it as a support network as well?

Yes, they used to have a lot of balls, big dances and things. It's drifted away now,

21:00 people are getting older. They have lots of lunches and dinners at night, mainly lunches now, people don't want to go out at night and various things like that. It's big rooms down there, the air force association rooms, oh about the same size as this place.

Why do you think it's so important for people to be involved in those sort of associations?

Well, it's company and you don't get left behind.

21:30 You can get left behind very easily with the world today. I'm left behind, I don't know how to operate a computer but my grand daughter, six years old, "I'll show you Grandpa," and she come in, tap something up, got on the internet and, "There's where Mum comes from," Dublin. And there's on the internet it comes up with the change of street scene every three minutes or something, "That's where Mum comes from." She did it all, six years old.

22:00 I wouldn't know how to switch it on and so I'm behind. That's how you get behind. One of the sons is a doctor of computers or something, he went to university about it, the business side of it. And he is always wanting to give me a computer because he has dozens of them in his office and of course my wife says, "No, he will spend too much time on it, don't want that."

So, when did you meet your wife?

22:30 This is my second wife. I met her at the air force association. She is not here now, twenty-three years. She said she was coming down after. I'll be surprised if she doesn't pop in, about twenty-four years ago but I didn't have any children with this one. The first one I did who probably got tired I was never home.

23:00 I was always away day after day, probably not the main reason, I don't know. I couldn't blame her. I always remember when our first child was born, the daughter, she came home from hospital and I was getting posted, when the troops went to Ujong. I went up to Ujong [Pulau Ujong-early reference to Singapore Island] flying the Herc from Butterworth to Ujong the day after the baby came and

23:30 that upset her and rightly so, but that's what the air force people have got to put up with. That breaks up a lot of marriages and things. I didn't want to leave her, it was a curiosity to have a daughter in the place, a baby and I got back in about a month's time. I was going up there for seven days but ended up there for just on a month and I come home and that wasn't too brilliant. The other time,

24:00 the first Christmas we were married, we didn't have any children, we took a load of medicines up to Milwaukee up the top end of Indonesia, and because we didn't have the right papers they wouldn't let us come home. So, our first Christmas after marriage I wasn't home for Christmas Day which is pretty hard on any woman. I don't know if that's what really broke us up or not, but however.

24:30 **It definitely had a impact on that?**

Well, of course does, it must do. She wasn't that way around, so to speak. It's jolly hard to just walk out and even, I was still married when I was in Ansett for a while and you have to walk out the day the children got sick, they had measles or something, and you say, "All right sweetie, I'm going away for three days," it doesn't impress any girl does it? No, it's hard

25:00 and people don't understand, it is a hard life when you are on something like that, unless she really knows what's happening but even then it's hard.

What did you find most difficult about being part of an armed service?

I didn't find anything different or anything else, you didn't know where you'd be. You might be posted to Amberley,

25:30 I was mainly single for most part of my service life except the last few years and then I was on Hercules and I stayed at Windsor, Richmond all those years. A serviceman goes from here to Melbourne, to Canberra, Cairns you just get settled in somewhere and particularly when the children start coming along,

26:00 they just start some school and next minute you are posted to the top end of Queensland somewhere. School is different for the kids, wife has to pack up and move and she might have a job locally and she has to give that up if she's going to accompany you. It's very upsetting to most married families because your partner, you are not supposed to call them wives now, your partner thinks differently

26:30 when you say, "I've got to go somewhere," you used to have to go to Malaya, they went to Malaya for a while. And you would be up there for twelve months or fifteen months I think the tour was. And your wife could come up and live in the barracks that they had and come home but meanwhile she has a job in Malaya or somewhere as a clerk or a secretary, and it's "Hooray, I'm going to another place." It's jolly hard for a woman, I have got to say that, luckily my wife's not here. Don't put that.

27:00 No, that's the hard part about it and it is hard.

And how long have you been involved with the RSL [Returned and Services League]?

Here?

Generally as an institution.

Oh, it must be forty years, I guess. I joined the RSL just about when I left, at the end of the war I joined the RSL.

27:30 I think I told you I was in Caulfield Central, they used to have a big RSL up there on Hawthorn Road, and because most of us didn't go to meetings they got robbed and thieved and got busted up and they sold the place and then I transferred down to here. I was saying after you have been there twenty-five years or something, you get a big discount on your subscription rates.

28:00 My wife gets it because she's been a member here but I don't because I was in the other one and they don't transfer that around. So, I have a couple of years here. I used to always come here a lot with the wife over the years.

What sort of reception would you get at RSLs because I have heard that some of the old diggers didn't really approve of some of the younger ones?

Well, that's really what happened here. The oldies stayed here and the

28:30 newies went to what they call Caulfield Central, not so much these days, perhaps I'm in the older bracket, I don't know, looking at all the photos. As I said, this is the oldest RSL in the country I understand and I guess by looking at all the photos it probably is.

What was their attitude towards you as you had not left Australia at that stage?

Oh, it didn't worry you much.

29:00 First couple of years we couldn't join the RSL because we weren't returned men but eventually they said they changed it to services then. When they changed it to services I joined the RSL, Returned Services League, it used to be Returned Soldiers League, yes that's when they changed it. No we couldn't join it originally.

29:30 **Was that annoying?**

Oh, I didn't worry about it. I suppose if you looked at it, it could annoy you very much. The girls weren't allowed in. All the girls, for many years they weren't allowed in, now they can become full members of the RSL as long as they were in the service you see, whether they went overseas or not, they didn't allow women for a long while.

30:00 Like the Melbourne Cricket Ground, they didn't allow women for ages and ages. I have been a member there for some years, it must be twenty years I suppose. I had to wait about fifteen years to become a member.

Did you yourself encounter any discrimination for not having been away in the Second World War?

No, I can't say I have. Most people treat it as a serviceman,

30:30 you know what's its all about, you were there. I suppose the hardest part is some people can't get the gold card yet. I have a gold card because I served in Malaya. A lot of people who have served only in Australia can't get the gold card, which is precious because it brings all your medical bills and that's a bit hard for some people. A lot of the WAAAFs and things can't get a gold card because they never

31:00 served overseas but because I served in Malaya I managed to get the gold card.

It does sound like a valuable thing.

It's a very valuable thing. A lot of people don't realise how valuable it is, because if you go to any doctor or hospital it's on the gold card.

What are the differences do you reckon between a service person and a non service person?

It's discipline, I think.

31:30 A non service person doesn't understand discipline, and I think that's got a lot to do with our country. I think they should have everybody in a compulsory service, it gives that person discipline. You have got to have a shave every day and you have got to have your hair cut or something and that's discipline and a lot of people can't do it

32:00 but it teaches discipline. Look at the people who served when they went to Vietnam. I know it was hard, and I don't believe they should have been sent overseas but it brought a lot of kids up to understand discipline and it stops. That's why we have a lot of trouble in the streets now, there is no discipline around the place in my opinion. And I am not having a shot at you.

32:30 **I could do with a shave and a hair cut.**

No, that's the way I find it. A service person understands discipline. You've got to be somewhere at a certain time, you are there at a certain time and things like that.

Do you think you get an eye for it, do you think you could spot a service person and a non?

No, I've got hundreds and hundreds of non-service people as friends. It's just my age because I was around where everybody

33:00 had to be a servicemen, practically now you haven't got to be one. You just understand. No, you don't see any difference now. You go down stairs here, you go and play the pokies, there would be a lot of ordinary people playing the pokies that have never been near a service.

Something I meant to ask you before, your youngest brother did he actually enter any of the services?

No, he was always too young,

33:30 during the war and he'd been on the farm ever since. He went to uni for a year or something and then he went out on the farm. He has had three children, one is an architect, his daughter is a doctor, and the other one is on the farm with the brother now, he is a, he did five years at university, environmental studies, a doctor of something,

34:00 not a medical doctor but a doctor of something. And they all went to Ma Ma Creek School.

You and your brother had quite different life paths didn't you?

Oh yes.

He stayed in the home town, home land.

A big difference, a huge difference between my brother and myself although my brother has done a bit of travelling lately. He's in the farmer's association and he has been over to Sweden and a few other places

34:30 on deputations and things like that.

I mean, in once sense the war changed your life, in that you went into the services?

I had to whether I liked it or not, the army called me up you see. I enjoyed service life I suppose, that's why I stayed in for twenty odd years. It didn't worry me, a bit of discipline and things like that.

From your perspective staying in Australia, how do you think the Second World War changed Australia?

35:00 I think the Americans were the ones that changed it here in Australia. They really brought America to Australia, a bit too much in a lot of cases. But that's the way that it changed. The Second World War really changed the outlook for most Australians although it's drifting away now. Most of them thought, "Gee, the Japs will be here." Because the Japs were knocking on our door

35:30 and they read all the stories about the Japanese occupation of China and all that and it was going to be very serious. I think it woke a lot of people up on how good Australia was and then the Yanks coming here advanced the country so fast that we still haven't caught up.

In what specific areas, how do you think the Americans improved Australia?

36:00 By bringing in a modern way of living. A lot of people didn't have motorcars here. They didn't have this and that until the Yanks came and all of a sudden it was a different world. They had a lot to do with it. If they wanted to go somewhere they just knocked it down. In other words, if they wanted to put a camp there and there was a fence, they knocked the fence down. I suppose it was wartime but that's the way they acted.

36:30 It just advanced the country and they helped us, I'm not saying they didn't come here to help themselves but we would have went if not for the Americans. Truly the Americans came here to help Americans, to stop America being invaded but we wouldn't be here but for the Americans in my opinion.

Was there an attitude change in Australia, an outlook change brought about by the war?

37:00 Yes, I think there was a certain amount of outlook change, of course there was an outlook change. Mainly it brought everybody even, there used to be the rich and the poor even when I was growing up, the rich were the rich. I suppose it's the same now but it doesn't show up so much. You had to be in that social clique to get anywhere when I was a boy or a kid

37:30 I think that's changed now. If you behave yourself you can join practically any club, I mean to say you can become a doctor, if you want to study you can become anything. That wasn't on when I was a kid, even when I left school at fourteen, I didn't want to leave school, I could have gone further perhaps, I don't know. I mightn't have passed but I didn't want to leave school, I just had to leave school. That isn't the case now,

38:00 for most people, I suppose certain families can't afford to keep their kids at school, but not too many, because this government of ours now is helping everybody. Well not the government at the moment but all Australian governments of the last three or four years have helped everybody so much. There is hardly any need for welfare now because look at the pensions people get, enough to at least live, I'm not saying they're going to be rich.

38:30 The average pension to a person now is a great thing, it's something that wasn't around when Mum and Dad were struggling during the Depression. They were lucky to keep themselves alive.

Just at the end of this tape I was wondering if you thought it affected Australia's connection to Britain?

Yes, I think it certainly has but there is still that British feeling amongst a lot of people, because it's the best law. And

39:00 look at the vote for maintaining a queen, not that I am, but what better system is there than the monarchy system. You can't name any republic in the world, and that includes America, where it's better than the monarchy system. I know it's not too right to have a queen over there, but she has no say, let's face it, not these days. She used to have

39:30 but these days she's just a head. What to hang if she's the head of the state over there. Just look at republic systems, always fights and squabbles and even America every election they change the whole lot. Here an election happens and we don't see fights at the polling booths or rifles or guns at the polling booths, how calm it is. No wonder Australia is a wonderful place.

Tape 8

00:31 **I noticed in your photographs a rather interesting looking band that you must have been part of, it looked like when you were in the air force, a band of musicians, there is a photograph of you with a trombone or a tuba?**

No, that's not me.

Oh, that's not you?

No, that's a good friend of mine.

Oh, ok, I apologise for that but I wanted to ask about music in the services anyway, it was a big part of it?

Yes, it was a big part, music,

01:00 everybody loved to march behind the band. I still do as a matter of fact. Lovely to hear bag pipes or a band. No that's not me in that photo, that's a good friend of mine. He just passed away about three weeks ago.

I'm sorry about that. Just in terms of music, three different types, first of all military music, you said everyone liked to march behind a band. What for example did the provos [military police] do when there was a military march on, did you march?

01:30 Yes, we marched a few times.

And would you march as a unit?

Yes, as a unit of provos, yes, they still do as a matter of fact here on Anzac Day you will see them all.

Do you march on Anzac Day?

Yes.

Who do you march with?

I march with the Air Force Association at the moment although I could march with 36 Squadron or I could march with 1 Squadron or I could march with the training and support squadron because I have been in all those. But I generally

02:00 march with the air force association. I am still a director of the air force association, as I said, I used to be secretary, so that's why I generally march.

How does one choose who to march with?

That's a good question. I suppose because I am in the air force association and the president says, "Oh, I want somebody else to keep me company and that's that." And then you go to see 36 Squadron and I know most of them

02:30 there, "Come on, we want you marching here" and I say, "Well, I'm marching up there." And, "Oh that's all right," and things like that. You see everybody on Anzac Day, it doesn't really matter. I often think they shouldn't march in squadrons or units, everybody should just march. But it brings old friends together

Was it ever political who you marched with?

No, I have never struck that at all.

I can imagine there must be a stark difference between

03:00 **the Anzac Days in the decade after the Second World War and these days?**

No, there hasn't been a great deal. It's building back to people wanting to remember now, that's about all I can say, which is a good thing because it hasn't been taught in a lot of schools. People don't know Australian history and we have a terrific lot of history here. That's why we started the Battle for Australia

03:30 ceremony on the first Wednesday of every September and it's spreading like wildflowers. There is a section of it marching in Sydney now and a section marching in Canberra now and section marches in Bendigo and Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast, Battle for Australia, not the Battle for Britain, the Battle for Australia. And I have been on that committee, well since it started, I was one that

04:00 started it. I'm not so involved now but it's growing like one thing.

Was it distressing during the years when there was a backlash towards remembering on Anzac Day?

I guess there was a certain amount.

Did you ever experience marches with people yelling abuse or staging protests?

No, I have never had that at any Anzac Day parade except when some women demonstrated some years ago

04:30 but they didn't come near the Anzac Day parade because I'm afraid they wouldn't have had much show.

We were all determined. I don't know what they called themselves, these women that were going to play up.

Back to the music question, the other kind of music was concert music, did you experience any concerts during the war?

Oh yes, I was on duty as a matter of fact when Bob Hope

05:00 entertained the troops in the Brisbane Town Hall and I was one of the, you know, make sure everyone behaved themselves. I thoroughly enjoyed that concert because I walked in and had a seat or had a stand and saw Bob Hope in concert. And then I went later on when he had a concert in the bush about twenty miles out of Brisbane, I went to that too. I enjoyed Bob Hope. He's just departed this world hasn't he?

He had a great line to a journalist one day,

05:30 **a journalist said, "Who would want to be a hundred," and he said, "Anybody who is ninety-nine." When you were the MP at the Hope concerts were you allowed to laugh?**

Oh yes, of course you were allowed to laugh.

So it didn't sort of break the veneer.

No, no.

I don't suppose you could recall any of the lines that he used during the concert?

I can't recall, I have kept the paper though. There's about a hundred

06:00 lines that you get in the paper, I've got that at home. I can't recall any of them.

Was it just servicemen or a mixed crowd at the Hope concerts?

No, it was only servicemen, it was mainly for the American troops but they allowed, couldn't block the Australians, the Australians went also, Brisbane Town Hall. I think he did two concerts at the town hall and it was packed both times. Then he did a big concert at, I went to that one too, I think it was New Farm. That wasn't the aerodrome it is now, the Brisbane aerodrome and

06:30 he had a big concert out there.

When these concerts were held, were they free for servicemen?

Yes, a lot of them were free and here even in Melbourne the Town Hall had some big concerts on every Sunday evening and a lot of the girls used to wait outside and ask if they could accompany you to go to the concert.

07:00 You always had plenty of girls wanted to go to the concert. You sat with them and they sat with you and that was it. That was every Sunday night at the Melbourne Town Hall, I've been to some beaut concerts there.

Can you recall any of the other musicians you saw there?

I can't recall, I just couldn't remember one of them. Oh, Bob Dyer was starting in the act then I remember that

07:30 and there was another bloke, no Jack Davy was never in that concert. He did put a concert on in Richmond one night, Jack Davy, I think that was just after the war.

That would even have been before Dolly days, Bob Dyer?

Yes.

Did Bob Hope have a band performing with him?

Yes, he had a band and he always had a couple of nice looking girls of course.

08:00 They were Americans I think, and even the English came around and put concerts on when we were in Singapore occasionally, they were jolly good concerts to go to too. They brought a band and everything out and put concerts on.

I wondered if, given how bad things were whether the good times were twice as good in those days?

08:30 Oh, you could make them bad, but mainly, all through my service career there were good times. I had a few frights and bad times I suppose, but normally, if you lived that sort of life and you don't get disturbed about something, it's a good life. If you want to worry about everything then the worry's there but no, why worry?

09:00 Every day I am only seconds away from going into the next world, my heart could stop and a lot of people, just like that, could be gone, so why worry about it.

Well don't do it right now, will you? Were American Negroes allowed into the concerts?

No, I don't think they were most of the time, they had concerts for them also I think. No, I do believe they weren't,

09:30 but I couldn't swear to that.

Did you ever have any altercations keeping people out of the concerts?

Oh, not really, it was all packed up and then people couldn't get in and that was it.

They sound great fun. Oh, the other music question was dance music, I think you mentioned you did a bit of dancing?

10:00 **Yeah, dance music, mainly the old time shotees [?] and barn dancing, I'm not a modern dancing. If you ask my wife I am not a dancer at all but that's besides the point. I did try to dance some of the time. The old waltz and the one I particularly liked, one of the waltzes. I was starting to get pretty good at it but now my legs won't operate properly.**

10:30 **When you went dancing, if and when, would there be a mix of service women and civilian women?**

Yes, mainly a lot of civilian women came in but there would have been a mixture. See if they were service girls they weren't allowed to, and I was a sergeant a lot of the time, a service girl unless she was a sergeant wasn't allowed to come in to the sergeant's mess, a very bad thing, but the civilian girls could.

11:00 So it was mainly civilian girls. It was the same, see I was a sergeant but I couldn't go into the officer's mess.

What would stop a young lady from taking her service uniform off and putting on a pretty dress and going into the officer's club?

I suppose nothing, but if they got caught they would be up for a court marshal. There was one or two caught at different times, escorted in by their husband a lot of the time.

What were the circumstances?

11:30 Well, he just wanted his wife to be at the function and all of a sudden they realised she was a WAAAF or something on the unit or private in the army or something. So, rank was initially very hard, it's not so bad now but boy even I couldn't go to the officer's mess and I was a sergeant but now you sort of can on certain nights.

Did you ever have occasion to arrest a female service woman or civilian?

12:00 No we had service women to arrest, I'm talking about the air force now, no, I never. I have been involved in a raid, well not a raid, but, same sex party. The WAAAFs had one and we decided to break it up, and a lot got discharged over it, I was involved in that. I wasn't an MP or anything then, I just happened to be an orderly sergeant that night.

12:30 **I'm a bit confused they had a party among the women?**

Yeah, all lesbians.

Oh, I see.

They decided that was against the law, the air force of course and about twenty were immediately discharged. That was at Amberley just before I left the air force. And the only reason I was involved was that I happened to be orderly sergeant that night. The police came in and the SPs and all the rest of it.

13:00 **I'm curious to know exactly how they were caught if you know what I mean?**

Oh, they'd probably pick them I suppose and other girls might have reported them. They just raided this barracks, there was only one barracks, I remember that much.

When was this, when you were in Amberley, so about '45?

No, I was at Richmond when this happened,

13:30 just before I got out of the air force, years and years later.

Was there ever any evidence of homosexuality in either gender while you were in the army or the air force?

Oh no, if there was he was immediately disappeared, where he went nobody knows. Occasionally you struck it but he wasn't there the next day.

14:00 It was absolutely banned, they just got rid of them and quickly they got rid of them. And you could generally pick the people, women or men.

I don't know that we have covered the raids that you did earlier on today, I'm just wondering, you know in the movies you see jeeps rolling up and whistles blown, MPs running in, stand at arms and the whole bit, was it like that or was it a bit more like a scrum?

14:30 A bit like that, you would walk in and see it and arrest somebody. You were generally after somebody, there weren't big battles in raiding somewhere. A couple of homes I've raided. In Gladstone there were supposed to be a lot of AWL people in a place called Gladstone on the Queensland coast and we all went up there when a dance or big ball was going on,

15:00 we surrounded the hall and checked everybody and got a few AWL people. I always remember that, Gladstone in Queensland.

You said before there was some black market alcohol around, what about contra illegal drugs for example?

No, never saw drugs. They were unheard of to be honest. I suppose they might have been around

15:30 but there was hardly any drugs.

Is this your lady?

Yes that's my wife, we have a squabble every now and again but normally happy.

I wanted to have a talk about women in general anyway, and whether there was a different view to women in the services and other girls, I say that because the war really changed the future for women?

Oh, I suppose there was a certain amount of difference.

16:00 Like a WAAAF or some of the army girls could tell you all that. The boys initially, they didn't take much interest in them, they thought they shouldn't be there I think that was the story. And eventually they sort of proved themselves and they started to be recognised a bit.

Were they ever considered soldiers in the eyes of men?

No, never

16:30 and I think in the main they should never be in an armed unit in my opinion even today because if you see a line of soldiers lined up and there is one woman, the whole concept goes of being lined up, in my opinion, in a parade and there are girls would kill me for that. No, I don't think they should be, I don't think they should be allowed to be rifle shooters and all the rest of it in combat,

17:00 I really don't.

Do you think that girls shouldn't kill or that they can't kill?

They can kill, there is no doubt about that. I don't think they should be given that job to do in my opinion as long as there are men around. I suppose I'm a bit man happy I guess but I don't think it's a place for a girl. It's like the girls are now flying fighter aeroplanes, what if they get forced down, look at the girl that got caught

17:30 in Baghdad, she could suffer a lot. Say they were forced down in Japanese country, well once again the Japanese would rape the girl. I suppose they would try to do something to the men too but not so much as the girl. It is not a place for women. I suppose they are all right to fly, they are good pilots I'm not saying they're not good pilots but it's not the place, wartime,

18:00 girls. They are pets in other words, I shouldn't say that, they look after sick people and they certainly should be nurses and doctors and things like that. I don't think they should be in so much action and that's my opinion.

Later on when you were still in the service, did you have occasion to meet service women?

Yes, I met dozens of them and they were eventually different sergeants in the mess

18:30 and they would sit down around tables and have a drink with the sergeants and what not.

Did you ever have any senior female officers give you orders?

No, I never had that, in my day they couldn't give me orders, I had left the air force by then. I wouldn't like a woman coming along the rank saying, "You haven't had a shave" or something like that. I couldn't stand that. I would have to get out of the air force or army which

19:00 can happen these days, senior officers walking around, "Your hair is not cut." That's my opinion, that's all.

What about female MPs did they exist?

SPs, they had a lot of WAAAFs. Florence knows a couple right now still around. We never had them in the army of course, I suppose they were there but they were never in our unit but I have met a lot of

them when I was in the air force, SPs.

19:30 And of course when you become a sergeant or a flight sergeant up that sort of rank you meet a lot of the SPs because if they've got thieving or a problem they would come to you and you've got to escort them somewhere to sort it out. They do a good job, I might add too.

What about all those years you spent as a bachelor and I totally appreciate how that is an appealing life style for a lot of men and in these days a lot of women,

20:00 **but when you did finally get married and you mentioned this a bit before, it must have been quite a shift?**

It's a big shock when you get married after being fairly free. And when you get married, my first marriage was very hard because as I say my wife came home with a baby and the next day I was away for a month, well it's not fair on

20:30 any girl in my opinion, but that's what happened.

Also it was and in many ways still is a woman's job to keep herself nice and all that stuff, but not so much for men and without prying too much, about how old were you when you got married?

I must have been well into my thirties.

So, would it be fair to say that you weren't completely naïve when you got married, if I could put it that way?

No, I wasn't completely naïve, oh no.

21:00 **But to have not had female company all that time?**

Yeah but we had plenty of female company but not constantly. I think I enjoyed getting married because you are at home at night with a wife and it was good. When my first wife decided to go with another mate, I suppose I may as well say that, it was devastating to me.

21:30 We had children then and to lose them, she wanted to take the children to woop woop [far away]. Eventually I thought I could have forced the battle but I didn't, I was generous, I suppose if that's the term, I said, "If you want the children I will pay for them and look after them." And they went over to Port Pirie in South Australia and it was the hardest place to get to, Port Pirie, I was in the airlines by now and I couldn't get to see them.

22:00 I think it was done deliberately probably, well, the boy she got involved with went there, and you missed the children when they went like that and I couldn't get there because we had two days off with Ansett. Any city I was in every city, at least once a week for a night somewhere and even up to Cairns but no they went to Port Pirie.

22:30 It's miles out of Adelaide, I could get to Adelaide all right but then I had to get to Port Pirie and the day was gone. When I got there I would have to be catching a train back so it was most unfair in my opinion and the children missed me greatly, what they are saying now. They were always ringing me up and contacting me with letters and things. It was pretty hard on the poor kids.

Is it fair to say that the Second World War had a major impact on the future of traditional marriage?

23:00 I think it did, very much so.

Apart from your experience, could you see examples of that amongst your servicemen mates?

Yes, I think you could, the average married man was always, well most of them were worried about their wife at home and if there come to be a posting, you would be stationed at Amberley and then you get a posting and the next month

23:30 you would have to be at Timbuktu or something. Most of the times the wife couldn't go then and he was back and forwards until she managed to go somewhere. And as I said before some of the wives had little bits of jobs, secretaries and things like that and the kids were involved in school. It's very hard for a married family in the services, extremely hard in my opinion.

What about men that got out of the army or similar after the Second World War

24:00 **and then went on and got married and tried to get on with their lives, did you see evidence of any ill effects on their marriages as a result of their service careers?**

I didn't see much but there was a lot I must agree. I heard of a lot, and blokes have told me they couldn't manage but I never personally saw it, but yes, there was a lot of problems in that way.

I guess for a lot of women for the first time in their lives they had an opportunity to go and be independent and

24:30 **then were kind of told to go back into their kitchens again, and the men were supposed to forget the war and get on with their lives?**

Yeah, there was a big change around then, you could really sense it, I must agree with that.

What about the other thing I wanted to ask, you were still in the services when a lot of the immigrants were starting to come over from Europe, did you notice much of that?

25:00 Yes, we saw a lot of it and then when I joined Ansett I took a trip to Italy and they brought a load out by air. Yes, they were coming thick and fast and it was worrying. A lot of people started to get worried about all this and still a lot of people worry even now, they don't like all the Italians here and they don't like the Vietnamese here,

25:30 well they are here and you just have to treat them as Australians. I don't like people who come here and some of them Italians, have lived here all their lives and are still not Australian citizens, they should be sent home. If you don't become an Australian citizen within a year or two years, well you don't want to be in Australia, go home to your country.

It must have been such a big change so rapidly after the war, there'd been a little country, quite isolated,

26:00 **seven million people, mostly Anglo-Saxon and British identified, and bang, within a few years the whole place seems to have gone through a big change, this is too hard to answer I'm sure, how does a person cope with that, do you just take it in your stride?**

Yes, I think you just take it in your stride, there is nothing you can do.

26:30 And the Anglo-Saxon is not a demonstrating crowd really to demonstrate on the streets, it's generally somebody else demonstrating these days. Well, they demonstrate a bit but not a lot, you have just got to take it that's all.

Did you notice or observe men from World War II who really just were not able to cope afterwards?

Yes,

27:00 quite a few and I actually tried to help a few myself, even to this today there are one or two still suffering from that. There are two people right now that I know now who still can't quite gather it.

Given that you weren't sent to any area where there was a lot of gun shot or bombs going off and so on, was it strange for you being a returned soldier, but

27:30 **you had an experience that kept you away from a lot of those horrors, how did you deal with that when you met or got to know men who had been in the worst of it?**

Yes, it was a bit hard. You think, "Gee, I should have been there," and then you think, "Gee I'm lucky I wasn't there." It was a double way in other words. You'd think, "I should have been there, but they didn't send me," and then you think,

28:00 "Why wasn't I there, what have I done wrong," and things like that. Yes, it is worrying a bit.

So, a sense of fortune and a sense of guilt?

Yes, I suppose.

Sorry, I didn't mean to imply that you felt guilty but that double edge sword?

Yes, I did feel a little bit guilty, particularly when you see your mate who you were with a few months earlier come home crippled or something, that was really hard, blind or disfigured in an

28:30 aircraft accident or something and I saw a lot of that. Those blokes I was on course with and to see them even today. Well, look at John Gorton, not that I knew him then of course, but yes you did certainly feel it and you still feel it today. You see somebody, even some of the kids that come back even now from Vietnam and they can't cope with it.

29:00 It makes you feel guilty, why wasn't it me, but it wasn't me.

Well they didn't send you, there wasn't much you could do about it I guess.

No.

Did any returned servicemen confront you about that?

No, I don't think so, most of them, oh I suppose yes it has been one or two but most of them realise that it wasn't your fault and it was just luck that you didn't. And most of them realise that but no, yes,

29:30 there's one or two confronted people. That's what I say, the two RSLs, they didn't want you here in this RSL, and I went to Caulfield Central you see, that was the cause of that really. And all the old guys here, World War II, didn't want us whipper snappers around here and now we are all old so we're all here.

What about women, did you ever meet any women who had lost their husbands or their sons?

Oh yes.

30:00 **Did they ever sort of berate you, you know in that way that grief makes people behave badly, did they ever give you a hard time?**

No, they were probably fairly steady sort of women that realised what happened and to me mainly since I joined the air force, would come to you for help. And as I said before, some of them didn't even realise what their husbands

30:30 were paying and things like that. And of course Florence is a war widow also, my first wife.

Oh, right. You left your family on the farm as a very young man and came back, well you didn't come back so much but you grew up in that time, how had your relationship with the family changed after the war?

31:00 Oh, not much at all. I just realised that I wanted a different way of life I think. We were still a close family even after the war, Dad and Mum, we always tried to be together a lot of Christmases, we tried to be together and the brother who was on the farm. I suppose they thought, "Well, two boys can't be on the farm, how are we going to divide it?" Probably did a good think now I look at it. My brother's ten times richer

31:30 than I am. He has about four farms now. No, I didn't, my brother and I are very close still and he phones me one Sunday night and I phone him the other Sunday night so there is no problem.

I guess traditionally you would have inherited the farm if there wasn't a war?

I probably would have inherited the farm and of course when Dad died first, and then Mum died it was left to [Unclear]. They gave me a certain amount of money for,

32:00 you know, being away and they gave the farm to the brother.

Had the countryside changed much, just post the war, did you notice it had changed since you'd been a farm lad and had come back after the war?

Oh no, it's still the farm. It's more modern now than when, as I said I used to plough with horses till just before I left to go into the war and we got a tractor. Now my brother has got the farm and he has all sorts of

32:30 machinery there. He is a real machinery crank and he hasn't got an animal on the place.

Oh, I had a note to ask you about the Tiger Moth that you purchased at the end of the war.

Tiger Moth, yes, VH ALG, that was the registration, I still remember it.

What did you do with it?

I sold it

33:00 when I went to America I sold it to a bloke, cheap as anything, now they're worth a fortune.

Yes, that was in hindsight one of those errors. But in the time that you owned it and I think you said you bought it from around, was it Amberley?

Yes, when I was at Amberley I bought it.

And what did you do with it before you sold it?

I just flew it around everywhere, here and there. I had learned to fly by then of course and had it in Toowoomba, flew it around

33:30 and took it here, there and everywhere, just flew it round gently, it cost a lot of money. I did most of the maintenance myself. I had the licence to do it. I still wished I had it, they are worth about a hundred thousand dollars now.

Probably even more. You said there was a lot of other people purchasing things like the fellow that bought, I've forgotten what he bought but he filled it up with crabs?

34:00 An Anson, he bought it for eighty pounds.

Can you recall other instances of people purchasing amazing things like that?

Oh yes, I know quite a few purchased them, particularly Alan Ray. You should get in touch with him to put on a story because he bought these aeroplanes. He started Flinders Island Airways, I think he had twelve Ansons at one stage. He bought them all for about eighty pounds. And they were stored with full tanks of fuel. The fuel alone was worth eighty pounds and so what he did,

34:30 he bought them for eighty pounds and got it flying, they were all serviceable, some of them were almost

brand new, flew them to Flinders Island and filled them up with crabs or whatever they get down there and had them here. And he started a business and that's what Flinders Island were doing, he used to buy the aeroplane it would cost nothing.

35:00 **I guess for a fellow with a good eye there was a lot of hay to be made at the end of the war?**

Yes, there was but a lot of people didn't pick it up and I'm one I suppose. If you'd only bought all these things, well we didn't have the money I suppose, but if we had of bought these things and they are worth a fortune now, old jeeps and motor cars. A lot of them dumped into the water, you could have bought them for

35:30 three or four pounds, but three or four pounds to me in those days was a lot of money. It's not now.

It's all relative isn't it, if we'd all bought houses ten years ago, etc.

Well, just take a house, well I bought a house before I was married and I rented it for a while and eventually sold it and made very little profit, it was right in the centre of town, in Windsor. And now it would be worth ten times as much

36:00 and the home is still there. I had a look at it the other day when I was up at Richmond air base.

Let's in the last few minutes talk about what you are doing out at Point Cook in terms of trying to preserve it?

Well, the government are trying to sell Point Cook and we've formed an organisation and how I became president of it because the other bloke got sick or something.

36:30 And we're trying to save Point Cook, not to sell Point Cook. The government undertook to leave it as an operating air field. Now, we have discovered they are not leaving it as you know as an operational air field. They are selling nearly all parts of it except the museum. What's the use of keeping the museum if there's not flying. And there is all the big exclusive officers and messes. And down on the southern tarmac

37:00 there are all old buildings that are there that was built in 1914 for the first air force, in other words the birth of the air force happened at Point Cook. And they are all in good condition, they are starting to go now because no one is looking after them. They are going to sell all this and whoever sells them will break them all down and there will be nothing there. All the history is there, the heritage is all there. Kingsford Smith flew out of Point Cook,

37:30 Wrigley, the first trip up to Darwin flew out of Point Cook, his ashes are scattered there. All the big cross country and it's history of the air force, the history of the airways are there, Ansett operated from there, TAA first operated from there. Hundreds of, I wasn't trained there but a lot of the pilots were trained there. A lot of them went overseas and never came back of course.

38:00 Some that have come back have had their ashes scattered there. To me it's a very sacred spot and a heritage spot and surely this nation can afford a few hundred thousand dollars or so to keep Point Cook there as an operational place and use it and keep it up to date. It's a beautiful officers' mess there. The sergeants' mess, which used to be the officers' mess was built in 1914 or '18 and is in tiptop condition at the moment because

38:30 it's been looked after all these years. It's there but that's a building that was built there. A lot of the married quarters were all built in 1914, '18 for the troops then and they're still there and in fairly good condition. Why not save all of this but first of all, why not save the aerodrome? And how would you like to live where there's, I heard it was two hundred, but I don't think it was two hundred,

39:00 people who have had their ashes scattered there. I can name about twenty but I can't name two hundred. I was there with David Kemp there last Friday showing him around, the heritage minister telling how we wanted it. And David listened to me greatly, I think, I hope. I don't know what he is going to do about it, but what can we do about it, the government has set about selling it. We've got to use every

39:30 bit of lobbying power we've got. I've got a little bit, as I told you before, I've been a Liberal all my life. I'm in the Liberal Party and that's why I'm getting all these politicians and driving them crazy. It's the only way is to lobby but we won't win, I don't think, probably. This is history going. I don't know whether you have been down to Point Cook or not. The history is there and see the buildings and the museum, although the museum is going to stay there but what's the use of a museum

40:00 when they can't fly out or anything like that. It's a very sad thing. And there is a big memorial chapel built up near the gate and that's going to be sold or given away or something, well why should we? Most of us have had some course at Point Cook. I've done two six month courses there. I was never really based at Point Cook but it's

40:30 history. And they are knocking it down, why? Well, I know why. They are after the money.

INTERVIEW ENDS

