

Australians at War Film Archive

Norman Lee - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

01:00 **Start by telling us about where you were born and your family.**

I was born in Perth in Western Australia, went to school there to the age of almost 10. My father joined the air force before the war. Just shortly after war was declared we moved to Victoria. He trailed around, the family behind him, before he went to New Guinea. I then commenced a Diploma of Mechanical Engineering at Footscray at the technical college and saw and advertisement in the

01:30 Melbourne Sun in the winter of 1947 'Join the navy and fly'. I'd always wanted to fly. I applied and I was selected and I was put on the 2nd Corps because I was one of the younger ones. I was at the very beginning of it. I did my training at Cerberus Naval Base. Then at the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] at Point Cook for 18 months. Post-graduate training at the Uniting Kingdom [United Kingdom] where I did my initial deck landing training. Back to Australia. Joined my first squadron in 1951, 1st of April.

02:00 Good day. We embarked on our first cruise very shortly after we were warned the ship was going to, the HMS Glory in Korea. So we returned to Nowra. Worked up weapons wise, sailed for Japan, relieved Glory. We spent 5 months in Korea. I was flying Fireflies. Our task was to interdict all the rail transport, keeping all the bridges cut, which we did.

02:30 When the operations ceased, we returned to Australia, got straight back on with normal civilian life. Nothing like Vietnam. There's a good reason for that because it was only a few years after the Second World War and the populous was fairly used to the situation of people going to war.

817 squadron was connected to HMS Sydney?

Yes.

Was it always on board the Sydney?

We had two air groups. The 20th Carrier Group and the 21st Carrier Group. 817 and 808

03:00 were the two squadrons of the 21st Carrier Group, which I belonged to. The idea was we swapped. In Korea we had three squadrons on board the ship. I came back and was offered a backing course to be a batsman, that is batting the aircraft on. I had no wish to be a batsman, I'd seen the operating during the Korean War. Not my scene. I set off to get my watch-keeping certificate to be seaman officer, which was one of the best things that could have happened to me. Thoroughly enjoyed it. I then

03:30 was fortunate to alternate general servings postings with aviation postings. That's small ship postings with aviation. I did a flying instructor's course with the RAAF East Sale. I then had exchange postings in the United Kingdom with the Royal Navy flying Seahawks, Hunters, Scimitars, predominantly,

04:00 which was a marvellous two years, it really was. One of the best two years I've ever had.

What years were they?

'58-'60. Came back. Had command of 74 Squadron, led a formation of their batting team. Went back to sea again in [HMAS] Queenborough. The first ship was HMAS Murchison I should mention. I was the executive officer. Had a short command of the ship when my captain's wife died. He was captain Murray who was the Governor of Victoria subsequently.

04:30 I then did a helicopter conversion, which was a fleet of arms going completely helicopter. Was selected for promotion to commander. Did various courses to take up a posting with the air force at Williamstown [Point Cook]. Then went back to the UK again. I had to do a staff course on the staff at Australia House as the staff officer of air. Back to Australia where I was commander air at Nowra. Responsible for flying. I was

05:00 the executive officer at Nowra. Then I was promoted to acting captain of the director of naval intelligence. Then I became the director of naval aviation policy. I bought the Seakings which we see flying around. That was in 1973 would you believe? They'll be going to 2028. I then was given command

of HMAS Vampire, which I had her command for a year, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

05:30 I then ran exercise Kangaroo 3, which was in the Kangaroo Series, which was an 18-month period. I then had command of the naval air station at Nowra and I was told I'd be posted back to Russell and I decided after 33 years I wasn't going back to Russell. I resigned.

What year was that?

That was in '81. I then bought a small business in Belconnen Mall, essentially

06:00 knitting wools, etcetera. I thought I was going to run it as a gentleman entrepreneur and that was until day 2 when my feet came very firmly down to the ground. I ran that business for 18 months, expanded it, decided to sell, which I did, just before the recession thank God. I was then at a loose end so I did some volunteer work with family, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Helping people. Then I happened to meet the owner-editor of Australian Aviation Magazine. I asked

06:30 him would he be interested in articles I'd written about aircraft I'd flown through my navy time, He said yes, and I'm still writing for the magazine 13 years later on, which brings us up to the present time. I'm a volunteer with the Technical Aid for the Disabled of the ACT [Australian Capital Territory]. I make things for disabled children, etcetera, etcetera. I'm the secretary of the Canberra branch of the Aviation Club. That's about it.

07:00 **Run us through the ships you served on starting with Sydney. You were in 817 Squadron?**

817 Squadron.

Murchison was next? Just run through them for us.

Yes. Murchison was a river-class frigate. Very good ships actually. The last of the triple expansion steam engine. That's where I did my watch keeping training. The next ship was

What were the ships involved with at that time?

Not very much. In fact

07:30 the big trips were one trip to Brisbane and one trip to Melbourne and that's about all we did in those days. It used to be said that the fleet used to go to Hobart for the regatta, Melbourne for the Cup and Sydney for the Show. That's true. That's what they used to do before the war. Times have changed. The next ship was Queenborough, which was a converted destroyer. A type 15 frigate and submarine frigate where I was the executive officer, second in command.

08:00 Finally, the last one was Vampire, Daring Class destroyer.

Did Vampire have aircraft?

No. She was the last of the gun ships as they call it. She had 3 twin turrets. No aircraft, no missiles.

What became of the fleet air arm in the Australian navy?

Very sad. When I joined, the plan was to have four squadrons

08:30 and two aircraft carriers. Something like 50 aircraft frontline with 50 plus in support. We had Sydney, we then got Melbourne with angle deck and steam catapult. Then, because of the cost of aviation, one of the lies that are told, and it's true that, instead of saying "We need a fleet air arm, but it's too damn expensive." It was

09:00 reversed: "We don't need a fleet air arm." So we went through various stages of the fleet arm going to be folded up. I remember the first time I heard about it when I was at exchange with the Royal Navy. I was in the Keppel Head Hotel on the harbour at Portsmouth and I heard on the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] news that the RN [Royal Navy] fleet air arms was to be disbanded. That was a good way to hear about it. I almost joined the RN then. My wife's English. She pressed me to join and they said they'd have me, but sanity prevailed and I

09:30 didn't. Then the fleet air arm was going to go completely helicopter. That's why we all had to do helicopter conversion. I learned to fly helicopters and Sycamores, very strange aeroplane. Then we did our training at the Wessex. I did No. 1 Wessex Course. I got promoted out to the job. I was about to get the squadron but I got promoted so I couldn't in get the squadron. Then there was a reprieve and we got Trackers and Sky Hawks. Melbourne continued

10:00 with those aircraft until finally, and I'll never forget the day Hawke [Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke] came to power and he was asked as he stepped up onto the stage, "What about the replacement carrier?" and his comment was, "You can forget about that." That was the end of the fleet air arm as a fixed wing service.

Melbourne was paid off?

That was Melbourne. She was paid off and that was the end of it. From that point of view. But, like the Phoenix, the fleet air arm has risen out of the ashes and is now totally helicopter. All ships

10:30 have helicopters. They are just fundamentally part of it. It's just a change of the type of aircraft you operate.

During your career, what aircraft did you fly?

I was very lucky. I trained on Tiger Moths, Wirraways and Oxfords [Airspeed Oxford trainer aircraft] at Point Cook with the air force. I then did my postgraduate training in the Royal Navy with Fireflies, Mark 1 and Mark 4. Then I flew Mark 5 Fireflies in Korea, which had cannon.

11:00 I then did a jet conversion in Vampires to go over, type of thing, the UK for Gannons. So I was the advanced party to get the Gannons. We did. I then did a Sea Venom [fighter] conversion. I did my instructor's course and changed over into the jet world from the piston world. That's when I got my exchange posting to the UK where I went into the fighter world flying Seahawks. Marvellous little aeroplane. The Hunter and the Scimitar,

11:30 which is a twin-engine fighter. I also had the good fortune of flying a Domini, which is a twin engine biplane whilst I was there. Then I came back as commander at Nowra and I converted to the Sky Hawk and the Tracker and the Iroquois and the Mackey. That's about it military wise. I was lucky, I flew all

12:00 the operational fixed-wing aircraft the RN ever had, which I'm proud of, by the way.

The only bit missing is your personal life. You married early on?

Yes. I met my wife in a bombing range in Northern Ireland. I was doing an air weapons instructors course at a naval air station just six miles out of London Derry and she was in the WRENS [Women's Royal Naval Service] and I went out to the bombing range to do some bombing and I failed to get

12:30 a range call sign, which you're supposed to have. Then we had a little argument on the radio and the following day I had a blind date and it was 49 years ago.

Children?

You got me.

Take your time.

Didn't think I'd do that. Don't let my wife see, for God's sake.

13:00 You're not still filming are you?

We can stop whenever you like.

I have 4 kids: 2 boys, 2 girls. Girls, boy, girl, boy. All married, all tertiary qualified, all in full employment as are their marriage partners. I'm the only one without a degree. My wife has a degree. But in my day you didn't get degrees.

13:30 I got mine in the 'school of hard knocks'. Sorry about that emotional thing.

It's an emotional journey today. The 'school of hard knocks', what do you mean about that? Let's talk about your childhood.

I had a very happy childhood. Extremely happy. In Perth before the war

14:00 we kids could just go off on our own. There was absolutely no question of molesters. I don't know where they were, they must have been around, but it was not a problem. Very happy. Not so happy when we went from Western Australia to Victoria. In Western Australia, children didn't wear shoes. Just one of those things, you didn't. That's why I've got very good feet, which I have. When I arrived at

14:30 Footscray State School at the end of 1939, not wearing shoes, it was like I was from Mars. You can imagine. Other things, we wrote our Rs differently, we wrote our Ts differently, we pronounced words differently. It took me three months to recover from that. That's why I hate Melbourne.

What do you remember of the Second World War?

Not as

15:00 much as I would have liked to, because I was only 10 when it started and we very shortly went to Deniliquin, following my father who was an engineer of the RAAF. That was very divorced from what was going on. Then we went to Wagga [Wagga Wagga] where he was the engineer officer of 30 squadron, a Beaufighter squadron. He then went off to New Guinea and then we came back to Melbourne

15:30 in 1944. So the effect of the war personally was minimal. Not like my wife who was very much involved in it.

Before that, probably while you were in Perth, Australia was going through difficult times. Do you have memories of that?

Yes I do. Very much indeed. My father was a, before the war was a motor body builder. In the days

where they used to import the chassis and

16:00 built the body for the car. Very, very skilled I might add. He had established a business. It was caught out in the recession and his partner shot through and left my father with all this debts. He managed to gain employment, we're talking about mid-30s. I think that was probably one of the driving factors of why he joined the air force, to get some permanent sort of employment. I can remember quite distinctly, we were living in South Perth opposite the golf links in quite

16:30 a nice area. It went downhill from there as you can imagine, until we climbed out of it after the war had started.

What was it like to be following your father around to all these air force bases?

Very difficult from a schooling point of view. Fortunately, and I boast a little here, I was fairly bright. I didn't have any scholastic problems. I topped stacks of different state schools. I was ahead of my fellow

17:00 students. So from that point of view, not a problem at all. Culture wise, yes, there were problems. I found that each school I went to I finally learned not to wait for the school bully, but to find the school bully, thump him, and I didn't have a problem. You can delete that if you want to.

Was that something you took on later on in life?

What?

The lessons

17:30 **you learned in the school ground?**

No. Don't misinterpret me. It was just that if you let a bully bully you, it's best to stop it from the beginning.

Did you have siblings?

Yes, I do. I have a sister down in Melbourne who's 2½ years older than me. We communicate on our birthdays and occasionally

18:00 I visit her in Victoria. We're not close by any means. We've gone our separate ways, but people do. I had a brother who died when he was 17.

How close were you growing up?

I was the youngest. It was boy, girl, boy. I was the youngest. My brother was an amateur boxer. Very keen amateur boxer. In fact he did very well. He suffered from peritonitis. It was diagnosed too late and

18:30 we're talking 1941 and there were no antibiotics or anything and it was just too late for him. He died. We were close as much as siblings are close.

How did your brother's death affect your family?

Quite a lot. I think I may have misinterpreted my father who said shortly after my brother was dead, "You've always got all we've got left." I interpreted that as meaning

19:00 the lesser aspect, whereas perhaps he meant 'all we've got left'. I think it made me try very hard subsequently.

What was your mother's reaction?

Interesting. My mother died as a result of my birth, which I didn't know till the age of 10 when my family was in a room and my father

19:30 said to my brother with my mother standing alongside him, "What would your mother have said if she'd known you had done this?" It didn't take my 10-year-old computer long to work out that my mother wasn't my mother. It was like a bolt of lightning went through me, it really was. It was traumatic. Just the realisation. Except that my stepmother, I always saw her as my mother. She was an angel actually.

20:00 **You must have spent a lot of time with her with your father in the air force.**

Yes, I did.

What was your relationship like?

Quite strong. Very strong. She took we three kids on at the age of, I was just a baby and the eldest was five, and she was in her 20s. She was in the Depression and we were almost off to orphanages, it was that bad. And she took us on. Didn't have any children of her own.

What kind of

20:30 **a woman was she?**

She was half Spanish and half French. Her father was a professor of languages, her mother was just a

Spanish woman. I often wish I had her blood in my veins.

Did you inherit something from her none the less?

Oh yes.

What was that?

Interesting.

21:00 My mother was an angel and the way she treated the family I thought all women was like that. She spoiled me for women. I expected women to be like my mother. I discovered they're not. Do you follow me?

What kind of a bloke was your father?

Strict.

21:30 He served 15 years in the air force. I think he joined before the war and retired in the mid-50s. Marvellous craftsman artisan. Brilliant. Very good air engineer officer. Excellent. Very well liked. Very much a man's man.

Who did you look up to as a boy?

I don't

22:00 think I looked up to anybody, in all seriousness. I just sort of got on in life.

Your interests tended towards your father's career later on in life. How much of an influence was he early on?

I don't know. I've often pondered that. People say, "Why did you join the navy when your father was in the air force?" I said, "That's a very good reason to join the navy." I just always had a fascination with the navy. I've always had a fascination with aircraft. So the two just went together.

22:30 I can remember the first aircraft I ever sat in was at Bull's Brook, which is now RAAF Pearce in Western Australia. in 1935 I was put in a big biplane in the cockpit and I can remember it vividly. I was about 6.

What did your father tell you about the war?

Nothing, effectively. A little bit. I regret very much that I didn't really

23:00 interrogate him almost, because he was the engineer officer of the 30 squadron which was a Beau Fighter Squadron. Black Jack Walker. You may have heard of. He was the CO [Commanding Officer] in New Guinea. Not that long, really, but they were there. That's all I know about his. He then was running a repair and salvage unit in Darwin after that. Interesting, I was to do a diploma of

23:30 mechanical engineering at Footscray technical college and he was a flight lieutenant. This was 1944, '45. '45. '46, sorry. The question of my upkeep on a flight lieutenant's pay was an issue. He suggested I join the Victorian railways as an engineer apprentice because if you were bright enough, they put you through a

24:00 diploma course. If you're really bright they put you through a degree course, because in those days the diploma and the degree were much higher qualifications than they are nowadays. People respected the ones who had them. I went to the interview and I learned a very good lesson because the interviewer and then they said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "Quite frankly, sir, I don't really want to join the railways, I want to finish my diploma." "Wait outside." So I went outside and I was called back to be informed I'd been selected. The moral of the story is; play hard to get.

24:30 I fortunately won a scholarship and I wrote to my Dad and said, "Please Dad, I'd like to carry on." And he said, "Carry on." But then I joined the navy.

What were your other interests as a boy?

Horses very much. Country life. Model aeroplanes. Boats. Other nature things.

What kind of model aeroplanes would you build?

25:00 Rubber powered, balsa wood aeroplanes. Stinson Reliant Light I particularly remember making in 1944. The interest in aviation was always there.

Was it interest in military aircraft?

Yes, more the military than civil.

What was your favourite aircraft?

25:30 Nothing. I don't remember a particular aircraft during the war. Spitfire of course. Not that we saw many out here - Avro Anson. My father, as a fitter 2Es [2nd Engineer Battalion] as he joined the air

force just before the war, he had a flight round Australia looking for airfields, they had predicted the war would occur. He

26:00 flew round in A443, I remember the number. I remember going down to Point Cook in 1939 with my Dad. I was 10. I was taken down to a hangar down near the slipway where they were working on the Ansons. Two Ansons there. A443 and A436. I've got a very good memory. I was allowed to hold a spanned whilst they adjust the tappets. I was absolutely wrapped in that.

26:30 **What other air force friends or contacts did you have at the time?**

None.

What chance did you get to ride horses?

I learned to ride in Deniliquin. Suffered the usual pick routing and so forth you do with horses. Rode them in Wagga when I was a kid. I rode them when I was at the air station at Nowra. A fellow had some retired

27:00 thoroughbreds which he used for polo and wanted the worked and I used to ride them. I've changed my views on horses completely. I think that horse is a much maligned animal. Dominated by man.

You reacted badly to moving to Melbourne. What was your schooling like there?

The schooling was no problem.

27:30 What used to annoy me, we had dictation and you passed it round the class so the other person could mark it. Because I wrote my Rs a different way to and my Ts a different way, they'd mark it wrong. I'd get very cross. Apart from that, no problems. I can remember actually the day, it was a Friday afternoon, I can remember it was 3 months after we got to Footscray where I felt

28:00 I was comfortable in the environment. It took 3 months, but it was very scarring. Very scarring. Took me years to understand why. I worked it out later on why I don't like Melbourne.

What was your religious background in your family?

Not very much. We did the usual things you did in those days of scriptures and Sunday school and all the rest of it, but it wasn't strong. Certainly not strong now,

28:30 I can tell you.

What celebrations do you remember marking in your family?

Christmas certainly was an event as a child. Your birthday, obviously, was an event as a child. Easter. But they were holiday events as we saw them. But in my day we still did scripture at school. Ruth gleaning in the fields and all that stuff.

29:00 **Do you have any memories of Empire Day?**

Yes. I can, it's an old cliché I know, but it's very true, I can remember before the war where we did talk about the united Kingdom being home. People when they went to the UK didn't go to the UK they went home. Very much.

What were the celebrations like for Empire Day?

Bonfires. But I don't have any deep recollections of

29:30 Empire Day. Guy Fawkes Day, yeah.

What about Anzac Day as a young man?

Not then. It was there. I don't have any recollections of deep significance as a child. It hadn't really been developed to the stage it's been developed now. It was there,

30:00 it was accepted, it was a part of the scene, but it was not what it is nowadays.

What do you recall of the end of the war?

I can remember quite distinctly being on a train at Flinders Street railway station when the Market Garden [Operation Market Garden] the attempt

30:30 to take the bridges at Nimwegen [Netherlands] occurred. I remember seeing the headlines. That was what, late '44 wasn't it? Yeah. I can't honestly remember the significance, or being aware of the significance of the atomic attacks of Hiroshima. Although I went there during the Korean War.

Footscray is not near the ocean.

31:00 **What was your relationship with the sea?**

None. Well, that's not true. In Perth I had quite a strong relationship because we lived literally on the Swan River before the Depression. Or before the effects of the Depression I should say. I'm talking

about the mid-30s. We used to go swimming at Crawley. We were allowed to go and off we'd go. So yes, the beaches at Perth, City Beach, Scarborough Beach,

31:30 we used to go. So quite strong then. The reason we were at Footscray was because it was the nearest habitation to Laverton, the RAAF base at Laverton.

What knowledge did you have of the navy as a boy?

Not that much. I obviously knew it existed, but I didn't have any detailed knowledge of it. It was more the, dare I used the word, the

32:00 romance of it that attracted me to it.

What books did you read?

Very interesting. I topped the class at Footscray and I've given the title of the book *The Ship we All Command*. It was a civilian ship that I thought afterward, "Gee whiz, somebody was being very clever." I didn't

32:30 have that much deep thoughts about the navy, it's just that it was a concept. Like my father was in the air force. You had the airforce, the army, the navy, you didn't go into the fine detail of it, you just wanted to be in it.

What did you enjoy studying at school?

I was very technically minded. Physics, mathematics, geometry, loved it.

33:00 Metal work. Doing the Diploma of Mech [Mechanical] Engineering we used to do a half a day a week machine shop practice. I have a lathe down below still, was very lucky that I learned how to weld and use lathes, etc.

What first inspired you about mechanical engineering?

I think it was in the blood. My father was that, and

33:30 I seriously do think it was in the genes. If I hadn't have joined the navy, I'd have gone in to automotive engineering, which is what I wanted to do. Subsequently I've restored a lot of cars.

Did you have a car as a young man?

No.

Your family?

No. Not in those days.

In Perth your father worked for an auto repair?

Yeah, but we certainly didn't have a car.

34:00 **What did you do when you left school?**

I essentially left school directly into the navy with a 5 month break in between. What happened was I was interviewed for selection for the navy and

34:30 the receiptal letter saying I'd been accepted in and I'd be in the 2nd Corps and the 1st Corps. I was younger. I was in the second year of the diploma and my parents were in Japan with the occupation forces. I wrote to my father and said, "Dad, I'm going to get a job between now and joining the navy." He wrote back and said, "Good son." I got a job with John Danks, the hot water manufacturing people in Melbourne because I knew

35:00 how to work a lathe. Whether I fell out with the foreman type person in the organisation I don't know, but I ended up grinding tap handles. Cruciform tap handle which has a flashing where it's cast. I was meant to stand in front of an emery wheel with four gallon drums of rough cast tap handles. a notched stick, an emery wheel, a thing of water put my finger on it got too hot an I was supposed to stand there for

35:30 8 hours of the day doing this. I nearly went mad. I went down with the flu. I wrote to my, because we communicated with letters in those days, my father and said, "Please Dad, can I have the allotment back?" He wrote back and said, "Sorry son, you've got to get another job." Because I gave away the John Danks. I got a job in a delicatessen shop which was where I lived in Camberwell Junction in Victoria. To my surprise and to a certain extent horror I really enjoyed it.

36:00 I analysed it afterwards, because I was dealing with people. The hierarchy, this is true, they wanted to keep me on, these two ex-army fellows who'd set up the business after the war. This is 1947. They kept on offering me pay increases to stay. I said, "No, I'm going to leave." Then I put my finger through a bacon cutter and I've still got the scar. Then I thought, "That's the end of my career in the navy forces." It went halfway through my finger.

36:30 Then I was told to front up at Lonsdale and join the navy.

What kind of people came into that delicatessen?

Just ordinary people, but it was such a wonderful experience. I came to understand why people who work in mundane jobs go on strike. It was a good lesson for a youngster. I was 17 and it really struck home. I thoroughly enjoyed, I got to know the customers in the shop and all the

37:00 old ducks you know. Good fun.

How close were you the shop's proprietors?

Quite close. They'd had a series of young girls as assistants and these were a couple of old army fellows. You can imagine, we're talking 1947, the girls certainly couldn't handle the direct attitude of these young fellows whereas I could. I was probably far more efficient than the girls were. I'm not boasting, it's a fact. The fellows wanted to keep me on.

37:30 **What did they tell you about what they'd done in the war?**

Nothing. I couldn't ask them.

Were there obvious signs of returned soldiers around at that time?

Yes, very much indeed. In fact, when I was doing my diploma, I was 16 at that stage, and they started coming back ex service people who had had their education interrupted by the war. They were in their early 20s.

38:00 Compared to us, they were so motivated. I can remember quite distinctly how much more motivated they were than we were.

Tape 2

00:32 **Tell us about your decision to join up and how you discussed that with your parents at the time.**

There was absolutely no discussion. My parents were in Japan with the occupation forces. I had a guardian because I was under 18. Friends I boarded with. I just made the decision. Simple. Didn't discuss it with anybody.

Mates?

01:00 No. It was instantaneous. I remember the page in the Melbourne Sun - 'Join the navy and fly'. It had inviting RAAF people and people like myself, youngsters, to join the new fleet air arm. That's for me. 33 years later on.

Any consideration of the odds of getting in at that time?

No.

01:30 I had no doubts. I know it sounds I'm boasting, but I'm not. I used to top all my classes so I had no trouble educationally. In fact I used to top all my courses in the navy as well. I was just lucky. Exams never worried me, whereas it frightened the daylights out of my wife. So I had no doubts from that point of view. I was physically fit.

What were the entrance procedures and tests?

02:00 We had standard medicals to see we were fit. There were background checks on us. We weren't like just ordinary sailors joining up. We joined to sail as I might add. That was the method of entry, recruit rating pilots. It was a concept that the Brits had dreamt up at the closing stages of the Second World War that aircrew would be non-commissioned. That they didn't need to be commissioned. It was subsequently reversed, but it meant that we joined as rating pilots on a 12-year engagement. Never gave it a thought.

02:30 The future will sort itself out. It did. No, it was an instantaneous decision. The type of decision you don't have to think about.

Can you tell us about the induction?

Yes I can, in detail. My guardian, dear old Laura Dickinson, marvellous woman, she took me

03:00 into Melbourne on the day, 3rd of May 1948, to take me to lunch and put me on the train to get to Port Melbourne to HMAS Lonsdale. I remember walking passed a nunnery as we walked down to the tram. I said, "I don't know how people can live in those conditions." She said to me, "Do you realise what you're letting yourself in for?" Very perceptive. We

03:30 arrived at Lonsdale. This very gaunt lieutenant commander who inducted us, we signed on the dotted

line, swore the oath, given a train ticket down to Cerberus. We arrived there at about 7 o'clock at night to be met and taken to the recruit dining hall, if you could call it that, where we had cold congealed, hard fried eggs, bacon with bristle sticking out of the back of it,

04:00 all cold. That was my first meal and I remember it very well. Fortunately the catering's come on since then. We then did 3 months of seaman type training. Weapon training, marching and all those good things to make us into sailor type people before the air force got their hands on us. We went from Cerberus to Point Cook in a 3 ton truck. The difference between the two services were like chalk and cheese virtually.

04:30 We were in hammocks in Cerberus. We had individual rooms in Port Cook. The buildings are still standing. All pre-war wooden buildings. We had no duties, so at weekends we could do whatever we liked. Some of us were mad keen and we'd go down to the classrooms and strip 4.5 Brownings for something to do. We spent 18 months doing that.

How many were you?

We started with 13 and ended up with 3.

05:00 **How great was the fear of washing out?**

It was there. In those days, flight grading was like 10-12 hours. If you didn't make it in 10-12 hours, that was it. The navy wasn't taking observers at that stage because they were getting a lot of RAAF ex navigators. They didn't need observers. If you failed, if you'd been at direct entry, then you could just go back to civvy street, or you could transfer to the RAAF, as two of our course did.

05:30 Peter Trederman and another fellow by the name of Johnny Hearpes. They joined the RAAF as navigators and were killed on their first flight. In an Anson. That's life.

How much was the competition for positions?

You are competing against yourself. It wasn't competition. It was you against yourself if you follow me. I can remember when I finally achieved three point landing in a Tiger Moth. It was a great, big sigh of relief.

06:00 It finally clicked. From there on in I didn't have any problem.

How quickly did you embody the spirit of being in the service?

Straight away. Remember, I had a service father. I adapted. There was no difficulty at all. Discipline to me was natural and normal.

06:30 What I expected it to be and it was. I had no troubles with it at all. I don't think any of our class did.

Why did you prevail and 10 of your group didn't?

Obviously because I could fly an aeroplane. I topped the course. I guess that's why. I topped the course navy wise, I didn't top

07:00 the total course, I topped the navy bit. I know it sounds like boasting, but you want the facts don't you? They are the facts.

How were you treated by your RAAF recruits there who were also training?

We were all the same. It was interesting. We just all fitted in. There were 12 of us to start with. I think we had something like 40-odd I think, something like that,

07:30 overall in number 2 Corps post-war. That was number 2 RAAF Corps, we were number 2 Navy Corps, I also happened to be number 2 RAAF Corps. They're up to 170-odd now. No, we just fitted in. We did our own drill. They didn't want us to be polluted by the air force.

What's the difference between a naval airman and an air force flying officer?

You haven't lived till you've

08:00 deck landed. That's the difference.

Personality wise? Were there different types of people in the RAAF doing the same thing as you?

We had some ex Second World War people. We had a fellow been a gunner with the DEM [Defensively Equipped Merchant Ship].

08:30 No, we were, I think the RAAF people were a bit more relaxed than we were. We'd already been beaten into shape for 3 months beforehand with the navy. Totally different discipline. Totally.

Was there any sort of...

Animosity?

No, I was thinking more on the naval side, was there any brutalised,

09:00 **is it a brutalising process at that time?**

No. Not at all. Definitely not. Most the people on the course, practical jokes were played on each other. Like you'd take all the screws out of somebody's cabin. Somebody'd open the door and the door fell open. Fell on the floor, and he sat on his bed it collapsed and he'd been ashore for the weekend and he had to put it all back together again. Yes, they'd do things like that. Short shooting sheets.

09:30 Putting lizards in people's beds. Water fights. What do 18-year-olds do?

Did you go on leave back in Melbourne at that time?

Yes. I was wondering what I did with my leave as a matter of fact. I know my father ended up at Tocumwal. It was a 2IC [Second in Command] at Tocumwal. I remember going on leave there, but I can't

10:00 recall going there during my training. Yeah, we had leave, but it was an 18 months course. They'd cut it down to a year very shortly afterwards. We didn't see an aircraft for 6 months at Point Cook.

What naval traditions were you introduced to?

Everything. Nelson. The whole procedure of navy in terms of watch keeping and guards and

10:30 the culture of the Navy. That was all put into us in 3 months.

Was there a mascot?

No, we didn't have one. No.

Did anything else happen before you went on to Point Cook that sticks in your mind?

Vivien Leigh and what's his name, Olivier, visited Cerberus and we were all busted

11:00 for divisions. He told us how he'd bent more aeroplanes in the fleet than anybody else. We were very impressed. That's about it.

Was there a sense that you were the elite?

We were treated differently. I must say, I've missed a point. I applied to join the naval college as a 13 year old when I was at Deniliquin and I failed.

11:30 Wasn't selected. I always had a bit of a hang-up whilst I was at Cerberus to see the cadet midshipmen there at the same time, before they went to Jervis Bay. A bit of psychological scarring there. The fact that I absolutely passed them all and won promotions, still didn't erase the scar that I didn't get selected. I don't know why I didn't get selected. I was dux of Deniliquin

12:00 State School. So academically, the fact that my father was a flight sergeant at the time may have been a factor. I don't know.

The navy out of all the services takes very young men.

It did.

Why?

It was just a concept they had. The 13-year-olds they, and you could tell them, they were moulded. They didn't have any adolescence as such. Not normal adolescence.

12:30 They were moulded in the navy way. They were different. It's terribly young, isn't it? A lot of them are good friends of mine. But you see the attitude was very much modelled on the Royal Navy. In fact, that RAN [Royal Australian Navy] was more Royal Navy than the

13:00 Royal Navy. Do you follow me? In its attitudes. So when I joined in the '50s and '60s. It's now its own person than in those days.

Flight training at Point Cook must have been exciting days for you.

It was great. I remember my first flight. 17th of January 1949. Looking out the side of a Tiger Moth at all these little ants walking around. Marvellous. But the

13:30 biggest thrill of the lot was my first solo where the Tiger I was in, have you flown Tigers?

No.

They have what's called a cheese-cutter trim. It's a quadrant on the left-hand side. You pull the knob out and you put it in a notch. The standard trim for a Tiger Moth is 11 o'clock position. The CFI [Chief Flying Instructor] checked me off and said, "Right off you go lad. Don't forget this aeroplane is not correctly trimmed, it's at 11 o'clock, it needs to be at 1 o'clock." Of course I completely

14:00 forgot. Put it at 11 o'clock, took off and found I was carrying an awful lot of forward trim. I took my hand off the throttle to change the trim, whereupon the throttle closed. I hadn't tightened the friction up enough. So I put my hand back on my throttle. I took my hand off the stick, whereupon the aircraft pitched up. There I was thinking, "What do I do now?" Finally when I got to 500 feet I'd calmed down a bit. Throttled back, dropped the nose a bit and sorted things out.

14:30 I remember it well.

What particular incidents stick in your mind regarding flying a Tiger Moth?

Nothing in particular. If you used – if you dropped a wing, that was very naughty. Particularly in a (UNCLEAR) way because it meant that it used the wrong control. You should know. It was the opposite rudder. That could be a cause to be

15:00 put off corps if you didn't fly the aircraft properly. No, the Tiger, we went low flying as a procedure with my instructor. He was my normal instructor. I said to him, "Please sir, the bubble is about to disappear." The bubble's a fuel indicator in the tank which only the fellow in the back seat can see. It used to float. "Not to worry son, there's plenty of fuel when the

15:30 bubble disappears." "Please sir, the bubble's gone." One mile short of Point Cook it stopped and he did a marvellous job, I must admit. We came over into a ploughed field with him fishtailing about 30 degrees either way at wash-off speed, and it worked too. Put the thing down on the ploughed field whereupon cows and little boys appeared from everywhere. He went to the local farm and phoned

16:00 the Point Cook. The CFS [Central Flying School] came out with some people. They cut down the fence, got the Tiger in the road and the CFI detailed two hands to hold the wingtips whilst he put the power on. Prior to that, one little boy said to another little boy, "I know the routing to this. The pilot will say to the fellow on the ground, 'Contract.'" Sure enough, one person let go before the other and the CFI and the Tiger went sideways and he got airborne and flew back.

16:30 I then had to front the CO, the flying training school who subsequently became, it was Charles Reid, he became chief of air force, to explain what's gone on. I think my instructor had a rap over the knuckles. It was the only thing that happened in a Tiger.

It's one of the scariest sounds you want in an aircraft. The lack of noise.

Yeah, the lack of noise. We knew precisely what had happened. We'd run out of fuel. There was no point in doing any checks. There you go.

17:00 **Were you flying at the time?**

I can't recall. Most likely. He certainly had it off me very quickly. But he did a marvellous job. Particularly, it was very impressive this use of coarse rudder which you can use in anything to kill speed. You might arrive in a funny fashion, but it will kill the speed.

17:30 **How did you go with cross control with use of the rudder in cross wind landings and things like that?**

No problems. It was very much, as you come onto deck landing, very much a thing you need to be aware of, what the various controls did. If you used (odour UNCLEAR) on the point of stall only to be sent round again, you do a talk stall. But I'll go onto that later on. Wirraway, if you want to go onto Wirraway.

18:00 **How were you going with aerobatics?**

Fine. The only thing I can, no problem there, the only thing I can recall is forgetting to take my cigarette lighter out of my trouser pocket and being up at about 7,000 feet. It was a petrol cigarette lighter and the reduction in pressure and so forth it leaked and I ended up with a petrol burn down my right thigh. Yes, I remember that well. Moral, don't fly with a petrol cigarette lighter in your pocket.

18:30 We had one student on the next course to us who spun a Tiger Moth in and walked away. He got himself in an absolute stable flat spin. The aircraft was bent around in the direction of the spin and he just stepped out of it. Good aeroplane.

How would you go with airsickness?

Never had a problem. Or seasickness. So I was very lucky.

How long did you take to go solo?

The standard.

19:00 8, my logbook's in the war memorial so I don't know. About 9 hours I think, which was pretty standard in those days. This business of going off in about 3 or 4 hours wasn't the routine. You had to do the various things you needed to do to be able to go solo. But I was within the norm shall we say?

Low flying? Anything outside the parameter of the instructors?

No.

Getting off to mischief?

No.

19:30 Not in Tigers. Very well disciplined young lad, I was.

At that time, what were you being trained for? Multi engines, or fighters, or what was the aspirations of the fleet?

We knew that we were getting Fireflies and Sea Furies. We didn't know which one, stream would be allocated to you. Never entered my head. I was graded as a strike pilot. Firefly pilot,

20:00 which in retrospect I think I would have queried. I would have said, "Please can I go into fighters?" which I subsequently did, but not then.

What did you know of the fleet air arm?

Quite a lot. We had lots of lectures on its operations during the war. We had an RN commander by the name of Stan Keane who'd flown from Victorias where they were chasing Bismarck.

20:30 Flying swordfish and telling us about how the ship was pitching. The stern was going way up and down and how they managed to get on and off. We were all rapt in this.

What was the model for the fleet air arm at that time?

How do you mean?

What was the structure of it?

It was supposed to be two carriers and two air groups of two squadrons in each air group. Plus second line squadrons. Each squadron had 12 aircraft

21:00 with 2 what were called FAR aircraft, which was reserve aircraft. The navy had something like 50 frontline aircraft in the '50s.

At that time, what was the compliment of ships?

How many ships did we have? For the navy?

No, that were connected with the aircraft.

We only had one carrier and one naval air station, Nowra.

21:30 **The instructors, were they coming from the Royal Navy, or were they Australian navy?**

No, there were no Royal Australian Navy, because we hadn't reached that stage. Our instructors were mainly non-commissioned RAAF aircrew. Pilots. In fact, two of the instructors I had, one of them is the treasurer of the Aviation Club

22:00 and I'm the secretary here in Canberra. How about that? We had as I say, ex RN people, but from the point of view of naval indoctrination, etc. Not flying training per say.

Tell us about the Wirraway.

It was quite an experience. It was quite a big jump from the Tiger to the Wirraway. Not that I think, none of us had any problems with it, except it was

22:30 vicious in the stall. It would drop a wing. A few held off trying to achieve a three point landing and hold off too high and stalled the aircraft. It would drop a wing very rapidly. The correct technique is opposite rudder, unless the wheel is on the ground when it's the same rudder. I speak as an old QFI [Qualified Flying Instructor]. Quite a lot of people had trouble with it. But the Wirraway had a rather peculiar to operate the undercarriage and flaps.

23:00 you had what was called a powered button, which you hit with your elbow. You'd select the control and then you hit the button. So you selected undercarriage up, then you hit the button. That would hydraulic power the undercarriage circuit. If you wanted flap, you selected flap and you hit the button. Very early in my checking out an aircraft, I was on short finals, I had an undercarriage down and I selected flap to land and was sent round and unthinkingly selected the undercarriage up and hit the button.

23:30 And of course my undercarriage cam half up and my flap went down because I had it selected. And both were going at half the rate they normally do. I froze on the throttle. What do I do now? Obviously I survived. It was a bit scary for a moment. It was good for aerobatics. We did cross-countries in it. We did night flying. In fact, my father was at

24:00 Laverton with number 1 aircraft depot. We went over to Laverton to do our night flying there to ease the pressure on the circuit at Point Cook. He went out to watch the flying going on and he spoke to one of the instructors and said, "How's this?" and the instructor said, "That's young Lee."

Quite a proud moment for him.

Yeah.

What about the guys that weren't making it through?

24:30 **How did that work?**

We had a couple who couldn't, one fellow couldn't handle it academically. He was a fleet entry. A sailor who'd been selected. He just couldn't handle it academically. We had one who just couldn't handle the flying. We had one who broke a leg playing sport and he was back classed. We had one fellow who was the odd one

25:00 on the course. A real trouble maker this fellow. He went low flying in a Wirraway and hit a wire and got one of his ground troop mates to paint over the pewter head, which had been bent as it turned out. An instructor went off with a student and they soon discovered that the aircraft ASI wasn't reading properly. It was just towards the end of our course and it all came out and he was out.

Quite serious.

25:30 Yeah, very serious. He subsequently went gunrunning in New Guinea. That gives an indication of the character.

Do you know where he ended up?

No, I don't. Dead I would imagine.

Any other accidents that happened?

Yes, we lost one of our course fellows, Sheridan. Youngster. He was the youngest one on the course by quite a bit actually. One of the RAAF people had had an engine failure

26:00 or engine problem in a Tiger Moth, sorry Wirraway, and put it down on somewhere. We suspect that Sheridan, because of his nature God rest his soul, had faked an engine problem and tried to put it down into a race course I think it was and hit the trees. So we buried him at Boot Hill at Cerberus. People do those things.

26:30 **Why did he want to?**

Just like a young Hornet pilot who took his oxygen mask off. Remember?

Yes I do.

Disappeared into the far blue yonder. People do these things. It was, that was what was suspected that happened. He was on the outer fringes of the group and you put two and two together you work out I'm up right here, I've managed

27:00 to achieve a four standing successfully. Gives you kudos, you know? That was the supposition. Might have been true. Who knows?

Ego can be a dangerous thing.

Very much. Very much indeed.

Was that your first encounter with loss?

Loss? Oh, yeah. Interesting. You know the German expression 'schadenfreude'?

No.

You don't?

27:30 It's where you get a curious pleasure out of somebody else's misfortune. It's a recognised syndrome. If somebody in the squadron crashes you get that thing that it wasn't me.

Thank goodness it wasn't me?

Yes. And took pleasure out of the fact that it wasn't you. It's a recognised syndrome.

28:00 you've not heard of it?

I can relate to the feeling.

you can relate to the feeling

But I haven't heard of the expression.

So poor old Sheridan. But you've got to remember we were only 18. You're immortal when you're 18. It won't happen to me. It happened to him, but it won't happen to me.

Do you recall the service you held for him?

Yes. We carried him up the Boot Hill and put him in the ground. I remember the day well. 1949.

28:30 **Was his family there?**

Can't recall. I don't know how much of him was in the coffin. Anyway, we buried it.

The aircraft burned?

Yeah.

What fears did you hold for flying?

None. True. That's not quite true. You have your moments, but, or I had my moments

29:00 I guess. I mean, subsequently I did. I have frightened the daylight out of myself. I'll tell you about later on. Then, no I didn't have any sort of. I loved it. It was great. I enjoyed it. It was what I always wanted to do. So there you go.

Did you grown fond of the Wirraway?

Yes. I flew it subsequently I used to fly my father's aircraft at Tocumwal when I was on leave.

29:30 It was in air force orders that an air force pilot, qualified, could fly a RAF [Royal Air Force] aircraft at the discretion of the commanding officer and my Dad was a CO. So we used to shoo the sheep off the runway at Tocumwal and off I'd go in his Wirraways. Good fun.

After that course you got your wings?

We got Oxfords.

30:00 We were the only course to do Oxfords. One course and two course, they scrubbed it after that. We did about 20 hours in Oxford, 20 each in training. Which was good because it had to be then qualified in twins for subsequently. Then we sailed to the UK. One of the five trips I did with a passenger liner to the UK. Where we used to be paid 10 shillings a day in shipboard allowance. We'd be on board for 30 days and we'd get leave when we got there. I tell you. It was good.

30:30 **Is there anything in particular that stays in your mind about the Oxfords?**

Yes. How rude can I be?

Please.

The aircraft we had had been navigation trainers. They'd been gutted and there was just the main spar, which went through the fuselage. There was a hole in the back for drift sight, but there was no drift sight. We used to fly two students to an instructor. So two would be up front and the other student would be sitting on the

31:00 spar. Not strapped in or anything. The trick was to be able to pee up through that hole. The aircraft banked for a turn. You had to allow for the trajectory. Also smoking. You were allowed to smoke in them. We used to open the windows and just get the ash off it. We used to think they were marvellous.

When did you take up smoking?

We all smoked. I smoked at about the age of 15. It was, everybody

31:30 smoked.

Interesting.

Just routine. Everybody smoked. No different to eating food.

Any difficulty flying the twin?

The only snag on an Oxford, when you simulated an engine failure, it was a fixed pitch propeller. You'd throttle it back and you, the greatest problem was

32:00 you couldn't maintain height on one. It just did a sort of a gentle glide down and hope you got to the airfield before you opened up the dead throttle. The greatest difficulty was taxing them, because we heard all about bomber crews and this business. Of course we'd be doing, if you're not careful you ended up with so much power. No, they were straight forward. But the one thing about an Oxford, you did not spin an Oxford.

32:30 I think there was only one recorded case of somebody surviving a spin. They would not come out.

Any leave before you set off for the UK?

Yes. Went home on leave to Tocumwal then, I'm pretty certain from memory. Then went off to the UK on the beginning of 1950 in the Strathmore.

What did you know of the world events at that stage?

33:00 **In particular the Korean crisis.**

I was at HMS Fulmar in Scotland when the Korean war started in June 50. I remember that day very well indeed. Not that I thought for one moment I'd be involved in it. I was doing my first bit of post-operational training. We were aware of aircraft developments, jet developments,

33:30 we were aware of world tensions as they were then. But not any great degree, because you're 18, you're not fussed about those things.

Talk about the trip over. It must have been exiting.

It was. It was good fun. Quite remarkable. That's the way you went in those days, by ship.

34:00 **How many of you went off to do that course?**

Three. Four sorry. We got one fellow from the first course who had broken his arm playing sport. There were four of us.

How long after you had finished at Cerberus and Point Cook?

Almost straight away we went. We had leave and then off we went to the UK. We went straight up to, we obviously went to London, Tilbury.

34:30 And then up to Lossiemouth in Scotland.

Take us through that trip, your first trip going away from Australia and your family?

Eyeing off the girls. I remember that lot. Excellent food, which it was. We got tourist class because we were non-commissioned. Visiting all the ports. Ceylon,

35:00 Bombay, Aden, Port Said. I remember them well.

Any girls in particular stood in your mind from that period?

No, unfortunately. There were a couple, but.

How was the social life in Melbourne as a young sailor?

Difficult. Because I had a girlfriend.

35:30 Poor girl. Point Cook's a long way away from Melbourne and we travelled by bus and train. Train and bus. It wasn't that easy to carry on a social life as such. We did, but it was very sporadic.

Did you attempt to maintain that relationship after you left

36:00 **for the UK?**

Yes, I did. I got slightly carried away some years later on, a couple of years later on when I was at Nowra writing to her. She thought I was serious and I regret this. She arranged to come up to Sydney on holidays and at that stage I had found myself another girlfriend. We won't go any further than that. I was a bit of a cad actually.

36:30 **Other than the UK, talk us through your introduction to the training there?**

We arrived in the UK at Lossie [Lossiemouth], which is on the Moray. It's about 39 miles east of Inverness. We did part 1 as it was called of the operational flying school training. Three months worth

37:00 where we checked out in a Mark 1 Firefly. Then we did all the things you do; formation flying, night flying, cross country-s, getting to know the aircraft. That was three months worth. I then met up with one of my course mates, a friend of mine by the name of Noel Knapstein who's still alive down in Melbourne. We shat with each other every now and again. He was down at Coldrose in Cornwall doing a Sea Fury

37:30 training. We met up in London. Had a great time in London. Then went over to Northern Ireland to an airfield called Eggington about 6 miles east of Londonderry, where we did part 2 of the course, which was weapon training. Rocketing, bombing, strafing. Then deck landing qualification.

Tape 3

00:32 **What were your first impressions of England?**

I loved it. It was everything I had expected it to be. The softness of the countryside, the people, I found them very friendly, not like they are nowadays. You could go up to a newspaper seller on the street and say "Look, can you point me in the

01:00 direction of such and such a place?" and they'd go out of their way to show you where to go whereas nowadays they'll tell you to go and buy a map. No, it was literally like coming home. Ah the softness of it all.

How were the people getting on by around 1950?

Some rationing was still on. Sweets were still rationed. This was 1950,

01:30 the Festival of Britain was '51, I think. They were climbing out of the Second World War, but it was still there. All the in London there were plenty of bombed out sights.

What did you see of London in your first trip?

As much as I possibly could. The museums in particular. Just going round to see the places I knew of. Oxford Street, Trafalgar Square. For a youngster very exciting.

What particular sights

02:00 **would you seek out?**

Just those. Trafalgar Square in particular. Nelson's Column, Buckingham Palace, the usual things that tourists do nowadays. I wouldn't dream of doing it now, but I certainly did then.

What's Nelson's place in the naval tradition?

Depends who you read.

As you were taught when you first joined up.

02:30 Nelson was pure. He was a Galahad, if you follow me. There's been a lot of revision since about his personal life. He would have been hopeless as a shore based administrator. But as a commanding admiral he was brilliant.

In the Australian navy, were there any

03:00 **Australian figures that were looked up to in a similar vain?**

Not really. No. Nelson was it. Put it in the context of, we were still very much attached to the United Kingdom It was as much ours as theirs.

Who were you with on that trip over to England?

03:30 I can tell you their names. Blue McMillan was a Firefly pilot. He and I did the course together in Scotland and in Ireland. Noel Knapstein was a Fury Pilot. Eldring who had been on the number 1 course disappeared in a Sea Fire on a sea nav-ex, navigation exercise and just didn't. Obviously speared in. That just left the

04:00 three of us. McMillan subsequently in the Korean war, he and his observer, they were shot down and it was the longest helicopter rescue of the war. It was very exciting stuff that. He then converted to helicopters long before the RAN totally converted. We had rescue helicopters. Left the navy and was killed in 1960 taking a beauty queen to a pageant. He hit a wire. The

04:30 classic helicopter crash was hit a wire. They were the other three.

How tight a group were you?

The three of us, Knapstein, Lee and McMillan, KLM, were very tight the three of us. Eldring was an outsider because he was number 1 Course, not 2 Course. We just came together the three of us.

Was KLM a name you used for yourselves?

05:00 Yup.

What did you do together that had made you close?

We were all interested in cars and motorbikes. We seemed to have a basically similar background. The three of us were fairly bright.

Was there

05:30 **something about the navy that made you close to the people you were training with?**

No, It's no different to being in a boarding school or jail. True, it's that relationship that develops, not in adversity, but under stress, tension that you come together. And certainly our training, the two years of training we'd had, almost three

06:00 years by the end of it, was pretty full on and made you together.

Was there more naval training after the initial 3 months?

Yes there was. But you're skipping a bit.

It happened later on in

It happened later on.

By the time you went to England you had spent more time with the air force.

Oh yes. But there was no question we were navy.

How did that definition come through?

06:30 Because we'd been indoctrinated at the beginning. There was no doubt that we were navy, and saw ourselves as navy. Even though we'd spend 18 months with the air force.

The trip was your first long sea voyage?

Yes.

How did you respond to the sea?

Loved it. Yes. 30 days, 5 weeks I think of luxury living. Marvellous.

I'm sure it wasn't quite like that when you joined the naval

07:00 **ships later on.**

No, slightly different.

What about seasickness?

No. Never suffered from it. Or airsickness, as I mentioned earlier. It's not a problem with me.

What was the set-up in Scotland where the OTU [Officer Training Unit] was?

What do you mean?

can you describe where it was and what the

It was a naval air station, which is just a big airfield like any other big airfield. Which had been an RAF station during the war.

07:30 A lot of operations went out of Lossie. Particularly to the northern area of Norway etc taken over by the Royal Navy. It's now back as an RAF base and in fact we're going to be visiting it next May. My wife has a WREN reunion, which is being held at Lossie, the RAF base, and we decided we'd go. We were accommodated in wooden buildings. Old wartime

08:00 buildings. Pretty cold I can tell you. Nothing outstanding, just a normal military establishment.

Where was the closest civilian life?

A town called Elgin, which was about. Well Lossie village was just outside the, Lossiemouth it's called, which is obviously the mouth of the Lossie River. Elgin is the county town

08:30 of Morayshire. Very old town. Very old shire. Very old town indeed. Old cathedral which sat at the Wolf of Badenoch. He tore all the lead off the roof and as a result the buildings are derelict, but like the Brits have done, there's preserved ones there. A lot of history. You felt the history too, this is the thing.

How much British history had you been

09:00 It's absolutely true that we did very little Australian history, the school children, and mostly English history. I could rattle off all the kings and queens of England. Totally irrelevant, but that's what we did because we were, the relationship we had with the UK.

Was that where the idea of 'home' came from?

Yes.

Was there more to it than that?

My parents, my father, his family migrated

09:30 after the First World War. The reason I'm a Westralian is the first place they came to was Western Australia, and I was born 10 years later on in Western Australia. Very, very strong ties. Both the First World War, Second World War, culturally. It's totally different Australia from what it is now. Totally. Which I regret.

What did you think of Scotland in particular?

Loved it. Loved it.

10:00 In fact, jumping ahead, when we had our 2 years exchange posting we lived there for 2 years and it was

marvellous.

It's quite distinct from England.

Yes. The Scots are different from the English. Very much so. Because, we young Australians, I'm talking about schoolkids, you thought England was the whole of the British Isles. You didn't know there was Scotland,

10:30 Ireland or Wales and so forth and you didn't understand the difference of relationships between the Welsh, the Irish, the Scots and the English. Not until years later. We just bumbled in, thinking they were all the same. They're not.

I imaging you'd get into a bit of trouble in Scotland with that attitude.

Yes. Well, we didn't interface that much with the locals. It's interesting how the English celebrated Christmas Day and ignored New Years Day. The Scots

11:00 celebrate New Years Day and ignored Christmas. Whereas the Australians have combined both. Very clever.

Do you remember any particular Hogmanay celebrations?

yes, but not then. Later on when we went first footing.

When were you back in Scotland?

'58-'60. We're talking about 1950 at the moment.

What was your contact then with the village and the civilian life in Scotland?

11:30 Minimal. We'd go down to one of the local pubs and have a little weekend and have a few beers. I remember having a tricked glass put up to me with a hole in it. I don't know if you've come across these tricked glasses? You go to drink the beer and you dribble because it's got a little hole in the rim. They had this glass and it was all great hoot at the Steam Boat I think it was called, the pub.

What was the relationship between the naval air people and the civilians?

12:00 Relaxed, normal, no tensions, nothing. They knew that a lot of their income came from the air station. If you wanted to make a local town to a military establishment, know where the money comes from, pay the troops in 3-dollar bills. If you follow me. The town's suddenly full of 3-dollar bills. Message, all stamped

12:30 'Courtesy of HMAS'. It gets the message across. This happened at Nowra.

Was there tension between the civilian population at Nowra?

Yes. Very much.

Why did that come up?

Young sailors going ashore into Nowra, being rough and ready. Initially Pix [magazine], remember dear old Pix? It ran an exposé type thing and interviewed all the local citizens and they were

13:00 up in arms. When the fleet of arms was going to be wrapped up, the local citizens realised, "Gee whiz, the bottom of our economy's going to go." It changed them. I'm not really a cynic.

It's a very good point though.

It is.

What was the reputation of a man in naval uniform in the UK?

Very much accepted. Remember, it was only

13:30 a few years after the war. All the services had saved the United Kingdom, there's no question about it. It was part of the overall thing, they had national service of course. Everybody had 2 years national service. So everybody was involved. They were just propping up the structure of the country.

What was your uniform?

We wore, we weren't in round rig. We were in

14:00 a jacket and peak cap was what we wore as rating pilots. We weren't dressed as sailors.

Was it an identifiable uniform?

Oh, yes. Only snag was that cook, stewards and stores people wore the same uniform.

Just a jacket and

Straight trousers. White shirt and black tie.

14:30 What distinguished us from everybody else, we wore our wings on our sleeve.

What sort of flying gear was worn in those days?

We were still using the World War 11 Mae West, kapok type Mae West lifejacket. Leather helmet, cape leather gloves, flying gloves. We weren't

15:00 issued with flying boots. I think that was a problem when we went to Korean, we didn't have proper boots. That was it.

What did you wear on your feet?

Shoes. There were some flying boots. They were survival boots that you could wear or you could get the long fleecy lined boots but they were very uncomfortable. They looked good in pictures, but they were not very comfortable to wear.

15:30 **When was the division made for the Fury pilots and the Firefly pilots?**

At Point Cook.

How did that work?

I don't know. You realise you must have people of equal capability to go up in all the various aspects. It's no good having all the cream going to the fighters and all the deadheads going to the transport, because then your transport's going to

16:00 be full of deadheads. It's your personality, your flying ability and their assessment of whether you're a steady type of person will determine whether you're towards the strike side or if you're a bit gung-ho or not safe to fly with, somebody else would go to the fighters.

How was the strike role of the Fireflies explained to you at that time?

It wasn't.

What did you think you were going to be doing?

I expected to be doing

16:30 basically anti-submarine work because that's what the Firefly was essentially for that we had. Although we had ground attack capability which we subsequently used in Korea. I'll explain that later on. I accepted it quite cheerfully that I was in the anti-submarine stream.

When did you first lay eyes on a Firefly?

On board Sydney ship in 1949 when she came into

17:00 Melbourne and we were at Point Cook and were taken to the ship to have a look at the ship.

Which ship was this?

Sydney. The carrier, she looked awfully small.

What did you think of the aircraft carrier before you'd flown on one?

Much as what I subsequently saw. The island on the starboard side and the big flight deck,

17:30 the arrester gear, the arrester barriers, the catapult, the paliffs [?], aircraft, etc. There was no surprise really.

What about flying one? Where was the first chance you had to get into a Firefly?

At Lossie. I mentioned I did part 1 in the Mark 1 Firefly.

Who was in the second seat in that plane?

Nobody because

18:00 at that stage we weren't crewed. I didn't crew up until I came back to Australia. Joined a squadron then and was crewed up with an observer.

Tell us a bit about the Firefly.

Yeah. It was developed by Fairey's, the aircraft manufacturer from the Fairey Battle to the Fulmar and then to the Firefly, the trench and away it went. The Firefly was developed as a multi role aircraft. Anti-submarine,

18:30 strike, night fighter, reconnaissance. Two seat aircraft because in those days with very limited navigational aids, if you're going to cover long distances over the sea, in terms of navigation it was thought or felt that you definitely needed a second crew member. It weighed about 13,000 or 13,500 pounds. Maximum operating was 15,000 pounds.

19:00 Had a Rolls Royce Griffin engine, developed about 2,200 horsepower. A very good aircraft to fly. Very heavy, but a good, stable aeroplane to fly. I'm going to fly one tomorrow.

What were its weaknesses?

Heavy on the irons as I'll tell you about the Korean bit when we tried to dive bomb and it wasn't a dive bomber.

Anything else?

No, no.

19:30 It was a good solid aeroplane. A very good deck landing aircraft, which I'll mention when I come to deck landing. No, it was a good. I flew the Mark 1, the Mark 4, the 5, the 6 and the 7. The 7 was a three seater, which the RN developed. I know the Firefly pretty well.

How much did it evolve through those different?

20:00 In different ways. The Mark 1 was a much lighter aircraft and it was much more aerobatic and more pleasant to fly perhaps. But not so much the handling characteristics, but the weapons that fitted the aircraft was a major consideration and in any submarine situation or configuration the Firefly was electronically fitted out for anti-submarine work.

What weapons do the Mark 1 carry?

20:30 Rockets, bombs and cannon, 20 millimetre cannon. The Mark 6, which was the first aircraft I flew in a squadron, didn't have cannon. It was strictly an anti-submarine aircraft. So again, when I come onto Korea, we have to go back to the Mark 5, which had cannon.

Were the bombs death charges?

We operated, perhaps, can I suggest to leave that bit to the Korean story?

You weren't training on weapons for the first part

21:00 **were you?**

Not bombs, no. We were using practice bombs. Little 25-pound practice bomb, but we weren't using full size bombs, no.

What was it like inside the cockpit?

There was enough room. Quite comfortable. You couldn't see over the nose in the landing attitude, which was a point about deck landing.

21:30 No, it was different to the Sea Fury. The Firefly you sat fairly flat forward and the wing was about here, whereas in the Fury you were sitting on the trailing edge of the wing, so all the wing was forward. The Fury had about 13 feet of nose in front of you and I felt a little bit hemmed in in a Sea Fury because the size of the cockpit came up to your shoulders.

22:00 Whereas the Firefly, you could open the canopy, stick your arm on the sill and fly with your arm out the side. Deck landing.

How easy was a Firefly to get in and out of?

No problem at all. Just had a footstep at the back and you could get in no trouble at all. It's a tail wheel aircraft also don't forget. Of course tail wheel aircraft were different technique to tricycle undercarriage

22:30 aircraft. Quite different.

You said before 'baling out', how did you get out of these aircraft if you

Never had to, fortunately. It was a case of throwing open the canopy and literally throw yourself as far onto the wing as possible to avoid the tail plane. That was the drill. The observer could jettison his canopy and then dive down

23:00 to avoid the tail plane.

How aware were you that you were at the tail end of a technological error with the piston propeller driven aircraft? How aware were you of the new technologies around and the fact that you were flying

The Fury was the most advanced single seat piston engine fighter that was ever developed. The Yanks would say the Air Cat was better,

23:30 but they were certainly the top front runner. It was as you say the end of that particular era, and from there on in it was jets, but they were a pretty highly developed aircraft.

How interested were you in flying the latest technology?

Very much. Goes without saying doesn't it?

You must have been noticing that the jets were coming though?

Yes. I was streamed anti-submarine as I said, and therefore my

24:00 next progression was to the Gannet anti-submarine aircraft, which was twin turbine primed. To check out in the Gannet we had to do a jet conversion via the Vampire so you know how to handle jet engines.

Over to deck landing,

24:30 **how do you start off learning to do that?**

Let me say, deck landing is the second largest struggle. What we used to do were called ADLs, Aerodomic Deck Landings. We used to fly the circuit at 400 feet all the time in naval air stations. It was a 400 foot circuit even when you were

25:00 doing the ops [operations]. To keep you in deck landing practice because you flew the aircraft at that altitude. So under the control of a training batsman, we did ADL after ADL after ADL after ADL where you learned to follow his directions. Now, let me try and explain. I can go through the signals, batting signals. Roger was the bat straight out.

Hold your arms.

Bats straight out. I can't, they were like that. That was called

25:30 a Roger. That meant 'Come on as you are'. If you were high, the bats were facing like that, which meant you were high and you had to step down. If you were low you had to step up. You then had what was called a high dip and a low did. The high dip was the bats would go up and down again, which meant you were just a little bit high, just drop the nose a fraction and recover just to step down that little bit. Low dip meant add a bit of power, just pull forward a fraction and maintain your airspeed to get

26:00 back up to the height you should be at. Fast was one bat out, which meant you were fast, which meant you slotted back and adjust your airspeed. Slow was the bats being clapped together. That was very, but the signals to avoid like the absolute plague was called the 'come on'. The 'come on' was the 'you're low and slow', and it was scooping like that, which meant 'get up and

26:30 get some airspeed', right?

Can you give us some examples higher up?

Scooping, the batsman almost on his knees with the bats coming together and scooping up, which meant you were low and slow and a very dangerous situation to be in. Particularly if you were waved off, because if you added power you could enter a talk stall. Do you know a talk stall? The aircraft rotates around the propeller. The other signals were, there were 2 other signals,

27:00 the cut, which the bats were held like that, that was the cut. That was mandatory, you had to take a cut. You had no option, because if you didn't take a cut at that point you would most likely end up crashing the aircraft because of the position you were in; i.e., you wouldn't be able to clear the barrier, so you had to take a cut.

A cut?

Cut the throttle. You literally closed the throttle, bang, like that. The other signal's a wave off,

27:30 which was pretty obvious like that, which meant you didn't have enough power and away you went. When you got the cut., the natural inclination the aircraft was when you cut the throttle, the nose drops. That gave you a momentary glimpse of the flight deck. It was at that point all you could see was the island and the batsman. You couldn't see anything else. Couldn't see the flight deck, you were relying totally on the batsman. Then after you were

28:00 given the cut, you dropped the nose and you could assess your height and your position, because he cut you in a box. Have you ever flown gliders? You know how you have a box and if you get fast you put your speed brakes out a bit early and so forth and so on. So forth with batting. He could tell your speed by the attitude of the aircraft. He could see the relationship of the tail plane to the main plane, that told you the attitude of the aircraft and the speed. Then you could adjust the flare,

28:30 which was essential that the flare not be too dramatic otherwise you would balloon if you were with (UNCLEAR) the aircraft. If you didn't flare enough you'd land on the main wheels and bounce. The idea was to flare the aircraft so you ended up with no vertical velocity and you hooked the wire, but if you didn't, there were barriers across the island to collect an aircraft that missed the wires because all the other aircraft were parked forward.

29:00 That's the whole point of the angled deck. With the angled deck you can park aircraft forward and have a deck that you can overshoot on. How about that?

Describe how the practice strip looks from the air?

Some air stations did have a dummy deck marked out

- 29:30 on the runway. It wasn't necessary really. So when you were doing this you went round the circuit. There was three or four of you going round the circuit going round and round being batted by the batsman. As you got the cut, you dropped the nose, flared, you'd bounce onto the runway and immediately add full power and turn to the right to clear the slipstream for the fellow behind you. When I joined the squadron, I inherited a petty officer observer who's
- 30:00 pilot had been waved off and had turned to the right and changed his mind and, sorry, turned to the left, changed his mind and turned to the right. All the time progressing up the flight deck. He hit the funnel. The aircraft went over the side, he was killed, my petty officer observer was rescued. They discovered broken ribs subsequently. We were told that if we were waved off on approach that we
- 30:30 go whichever way you were going to go, but don't change your mind. Because you appreciated if you rolled from one side to the other, you're progressing forward. Because we always jiggled to the right doing WD [?] trainings ashore, I got waved off, having joined the squadron in Australia doing my initial deck landing practice, and I got waved off at the last minute and unthinkingly rolled to the right. I should have turned to the left, because rolling to the right
- 31:00 put you towards the island. I realised I'd made an error, but stayed with it. I ran into the funnel smoke. I don't know if you remember the formula for lift? Lift equals a half row, v squared, s equals weight. Row being the density of the air. I got in the funnel smoke. Suddenly the aircraft just literally fell out of the sky and I had bank on, I disappeared below flight deck level,
- 31:30 my propeller slipstream was leaving a wake in the water. I had full top rudder on knowing not to use aileron. Saying, "Please Lord, let me get away with this and I won't do it again." Right. I survived. How about that?

This is after you'd practised your deck landing?

This is when I joined my first squadron. Now, going back to deck landing, we joined HMS Illustrious in the Irish Sea. I think

- 32:00 she was in Belfast and we walked on board and we started our deck landing training. My first deck landing. I didn't flare sufficiently and hooked the wire and bounced and came to the end of the wire and arrived fairly hefty, bent a little bit of the torsion box in the aeroplane. Didn't one after that ever. We then, we were doing free
- 32:30 takeoffs where you down the backend of the ship and take off. Because of the torque effect, which in the Firefly, the aircraft swung to the right, not to the left like the American aeroplanes, it needed an awful lot of left rudder to keep it straight. If you didn't get the left rudder on right at the very beginning you'd lose it and you could end up into the island. Then, having done a few free takeoffs,
- 33:00 we were then introduced to the catapult, which was the hydraulic catapult, not the steam catapult we have nowadays. The hydraulic catapult, all the energy was transmitted at the beginning of the stroke, whereas the steam catapult is progressive, that's the whole point of the steam catapult. It's like being kicked up the backside by an elephant. We were warned or told, open the throttle slightly, lock the friction nut on the throttle, take your hand off the throttle,
- 33:30 put your hand, palm behind the stick, put your arm across to hold your hand and sit there. Don't hold the stick because you pull it back. Off we went. Even though we had been briefed, it was nothing like you thought it would be. The acceleration was terrific. I thought, my arm slipped and I thought the stick had come back and I pushed it forward, but I was still on the catapult and nanoseconds,
- 34:00 the brain works very fast believe me. Instead of going off like that, I went off like that and disappeared below flight deck level. They thought "There's another one gone." I realised what I'd done, I recovered very heavily and they almost had a plan view of the Firefly. So you survive. Good pun.

Did you do any arrester hook landings on the dummy airstrip?

No.

- 34:30 We did subsequently with arrester gear ashore, but that was just emergency type arresting of an aircraft like a Tracker or Sky Hawks would just take the arrester gear, but it's just the same as the RAF using the arrester gear for an emergency.

Before you go off on free takeoff without the catapult, what sort of briefing to you get? Introduction to the aircraft carrier.

- 35:00 The briefing was "Hold the aircraft on the brakes," hydraulic handbrake, "Get as much power as you can with the tail bouncing on the flight deck," which it did because the aircraft wants to go. Then the batsman, the flight deck officer would give you the signal that he's lighting you up, drop the flag. He would judge the pitching of the ship. The idea was,
- 35:30 as the ship was going down he'd drop his flag. So by the time you got to the front end, it was going up.

You wanted to be pointing down. It was essential to really literally stand on the left rudder, the amount of torque, to hold it. Because if you lost it you couldn't get it back. And that was the briefing. Pretty straight forward.

After your first takeoff, what were you then to do?

36:00 The interesting thing was, which you don't think about, having taken off on my first, my first operation with the aircraft was a free takeoff, because I'd walked on board. Got the Firefly at the backend of the ship where I went. Suddenly there's nothing in front of you. It's all water. You hadn't thought about that because operating from an airfield you have the visual. Trees and houses and all those things. Once you

36:30 clear the flight deck, all the waves looked the same. That was the biggest "Goodness me, nobody had told me about this." Also when you're doing the circuit, as you fly passed the carrier, you could see the carrier come up on starboard side. There's the carrier. Once you've passed it you've lost all reference, so you have to do it in an instance. A gyro.

Did you have emergency procedures explained to you before doing your first takeoff?

37:00 Not really. Like what?

Perhaps if you had to land straight ahead.

If you've got to land straight ahead, you had to land straight ahead. Get the undercarriage up.

You've also got a big aircraft carrier bearing down on you.

Yeah, it happened quite a lot. In fact a fellow by the name of Pat Hanna, on his deck landing, I don't know what happened, but he was literally teetering on the forward rundown of the ship. I don't know what had happened, but he must have gone

37:30 through the barrier or something and they said that if you could have just walked up and put your hand on the tail plane you could have stopped it. The aircraft just pitched straight down into the water and as a result he's now deaf because he went down a considerable depth and he could hear the screws go over the top of him. My friend Blue McMillan, who I mentioned earlier, on his first deck landing, he got the cut and flared, didn't drop the nose. As a result he just sailed straight into the barriers.

38:00 I was watching it and it was the most expensive noise I've ever heard as the aircraft stops in about 2 meters. He tore his airscrew off, his flaps off, the undercarriage off. The aircraft continued up the flight deck, through the barriers. There were some sailors on the front gun sponson. They were rapidly getting out of the road. The amusing bit was, when it was all over and all the noise stopped, a sailor walked down the flight deck wheeling one of the oleos, which had been sheared off, which was still

38:30 shooting hydraulic fluid out of the, because it was still compressed, carefully holding it as he wheeled it off the flight deck.

On that landing, do you have an instructor with you or someone else?

No. You're solo first go. The Americans, with the Goshawk jet, which is an adaptation of a Hawk, which the RAAF has got, they go do dual deck landings.

Tape 4

00:34 **Describe what it feels like to walk out to your aircraft on a flight deck?**

It varies. It's quite remarkable. You walk out the flight deck on the door of the hangar, of the island I should say. It can be blowing a howling gale down the flight deck if the ship's steaming into wind,

01:00 it can be absolute still calm if the ship is steaming downwind. It can be pitching and you think gee whiz. It can be cold, it can be hot, it can be acrid with funnel smoke particularly if it's steaming downwind. It's a very noisy place. You got to have your wits about you that's for sure.

Very exposed I'd imagine.

Yes.

01:30 I guess so.

What wind speed did you need across the deck to make it safe for operation in a Firefly?

Deck landing speed in the Firefly was 90 knots, and it was 90 knots. If you were 2 knots fast, and I'm not, this is true, if you're 2 knots fast you had too much energy in the flare. If you then applied the normal flare you'd balloon the wires. If you're too slow, there's a chance of

02:00 hitting, run off the rundown, because you didn't have any energy in the aircraft. 90 knots.

What windshear effect do you get from the carrier itself?

Nothing really. The ship steamed downwind. The ship steamed about 7 degrees out of wind to get the island effect. You had the wind to the port bow. You really couldn't detect it. You appreciate

- 02:30 you could steam an angled deck into the wind, the ship out of the wind, the deck into the wind and the same for the straight deck obviously. No, that wasn't an issue. The flight deck is 44 feet above the water. It was on the Sydney, which is a fair height.

How fast did you have to steam?

She'd be steaming 20 knots. Depended on the wind.

- 03:00 There were ten arrester wires and three barriers to stop and aircraft if it missed the arrester wires. The Firefly had what was called a belly hook and the Sea Fury had a sting hook, which meant the hook was right at the backend of the aircraft on a Fury, under the belly on a Firefly. A fury, if it caught a ten wire, the last wire, it guaranteed to hit the barrier, because the hook was, the aircraft was that much further forward. Firefly could get away with it, but only just. If the barrier

- 03:30 operators were switched on, you heard of a few too I might add, that dropped the barrier if they realised you had caught a wire and you were going to hit the barrier.

Coming in, do you aim for a particular wire?

No, you don't aim. The batsman is putting you in a box and you'd normally be ending up 3-4-5 wire.

- 04:00 Not like on the rear landing site where you're landing it down on the rear landing side. It's set for you to trap a wire because of the height of my hook comes into it. Different aircraft, a different height of the pilot side of the position of the hook, is a factor.

Is there kudos in which wire you pick up?

If you're consistently in the middle, 3-4-5, that's.

- 04:30 At the end of each day's flying, we all used to, after dinner, see all the films. Every deck landing, every catapult was filmed. They were developed, they were negative, so you'd see it in negative, which you didn't need to have it developed. And you could see everybody's deck landing and there'd be some ribald comments about, "Here comes Joe Blow, doing it again."

You have no idea what

- 05:00 **you're going to experience what you hit your first wire. What does it feel like?**

Relief. I think each deck landing was, particularly when we were operating in Korea. The RAAF would go off and do their thing and then slant on the airfield. We had to land on the carrier having been out in operation. Bombs and so forth. So there was a big difference. You were still, it's a record of the United States navy the pilot's heart rate was higher

- 05:30 on a night deck landing than it was dropping bombs over the land.

Did you get any night deck training?

Yes. I did a few deck landings in Gannets at night. That's a bit of a thrill because you've got no reference, you've just got the flight deck and the mirror landing site and you've just got to, in your mind, know that if you keep the ball in the middle,

- 06:00 the date of lights, and your speed is right, you'll arrive where you should arrive.

How do you navigate back to an aircraft carrier when you've got no visual reference?

As the aircraft, particularly with us if we were operating in radio

- 06:30 silence, there'd be a big board with it chalked on it would be the ship's position. Which the observers could write down. The fighters were normally under radar control when the strike aircraft were out on their own, hence the need for an observer. We had very primitive navigation aids. We had what was called the YG [homing] beacon, which transmitted on VHF [very high frequency] limited range.

- 07:00 Transmitted Morse code. 15 degree sectors. "A damn fine girl, kissed landing marine, now regrets, sprog under way." That's code.

What were those things you just mentioned?

15 degree sectors. There's a letter in each sector. The polite version was, "A damn fine girl, kissed landing marine, not really successfully, under water." They were the letters. When I was on exchange with the RN.

- 07:30 **What's the not so polite version?**

"Now regrets, sprog under way." When I was flying with the RN, flying Seahawk jets, we used to

operate on this and we could operate out of a cloud no trouble at all.

What's the greatest fear when you're operating under this environment?

Can't recall

08:00 any. Had absolute faith in the engine. I never had a Griffin malfunction on me at all. I've over a thousand hours flying in them. Plenty of faith in the aircraft. Faith in my observer. I had a number of observers throughout the years. I'll tell you how accurate their navigation was. We used to operate what we called grid navigation

08:30 where you had a geographic position and then you had an overlaid grid, so you could report your position in grid so the enemy didn't know where you were. So each aircraft that took off would lock itself into this, the observer would on this grid layout. I remember this particular day, we went off and the other aircraft was told to drop a marine marker, smoke float, in the water, and report its position in grid.

09:00 We were directed to go to that position. This was some hours after flying. On time, on track, I rolled the aircraft like that, and there was the marine mark. That's not bad. Sheer luck actually.

How many deck landings did you have to do in the UK before you were qualified?

6. 6 was the qualification. Then, subsequently when you re-embarked each time you did another 6 as DLP, Deck Landing Practice.

09:30 The first lot was DLT, Deck Landing Training. So each time you embarked you did six lots of deck landings and then away you went.

How long did you stay on the DLT?

In Ireland?

Yes.

About a month I think roughly. I know we went round and round and round and round. Until you got comfortable

10:00 flying the aircraft. You could see the attitude of the aircraft and you had to get the seat height right so that you were sitting at the right height to get the attitude of the aircraft.

What was the possibility for recovery from a go around if you hit the deck in a deck landing?

None. You couldn't go round having hit the deck. If you hooked a wire you went into the barrier or you went over the side as a number of people did.

10:30 **Were there any accidents while you were training?**

Only the one I mentioned. Blue, who flared and went through the barrier. I think he's the only one.

How do the barriers work?

They were steel wire horses. Thick things about yay-thick with stanchions either side of the flight deck. On the portside and on the island (starboard side). There were three of them. Depending upon the aircraft and

11:00 depending upon the circumstances, you could either be operating 2 barriers or 3 barriers. If the barrier operators knew their stuff, they could drop the barrier if somebody looked as though they were going to hit, but they took the wire. Mind you, if they'd have gone into the barrier there would have been trouble.

What was the relationship between the aviators and the

11:30 **ship's crew?**

It was interesting. There were two expressions. General service people called aviators 'Birdies'. Aviators would call general service people 'Fish Heads'. There was friendly rivalry. I think the Fish Heads sort of

12:00 a bit jealous of aircrew. A little bit jealous. Not from the glamour bit. It was routine, you were doing a job. It was just that the way we didn't keep watches and we had special nutty toffees and so forth. Things like that.

Over there, the three of you were still together at this stage?

Yes. One down at Cornwall doing the Sea Fury, and the two of us in Northern Ireland.

12:30 **You lost one of your friends?**

We lost one in a Sea Fire, which was a naval Spitfire, at Lossiemouth in our first bit.

Tell us what happened.

It's interesting. He told me the day before he disappeared that he dreamt that I disappeared on a sea nav ex, navigation exercise at sea.

13:00 What we were doing at that stage of out training was going out and shadow the ship. The idea was that you'd find the ship and then turn away and then go round the perimeter and then come in again. Find the ship and reporting where the ship is. Do you follow me? I remember I experienced bad weather and pulled out of it all right. He obviously didn't. He obviously experienced bad weather and flew it and

13:30 disappeared.

You were together on the same operation?

Sam type of operation. He was flying a Sea Fire I was flying a Firefly. He disappeared the day after me.

How did you find out that news?

He just didn't come back on time. The endurance of a Sea Fire was pretty limited, there was no question he'd disappeared. We mounted a big search for him, but there was nothing ever found.

Were you involved in that search?

Yes. In the backseat of the Firefly.

14:00 It's interesting, I didn't get on very well with Eldring. I had that feeling of schadenfreude. I'm honest. He and I didn't see eye-to-eye so it removed a problem.

Was there competition amongst you?

No.

14:30 The competition was with yourself as I've said before. If you see what I mean. You had to extract what you could out of the training you were getting.

From that incident, were there lessons drawn?

Instrument flying wasn't very good in those days. I don't know how they got on in the Second World War. They lost an awful

15:00 lot of aircraft through weather related accidents. Flying with very limited aids. We never really got into weather because we were operating at 2,000 feet. You weren't in weather as such. Then if you ran into weather, bad rainstorm or something like that, there on instruments. If you weren't au fait with your instruments you're, as you know.

Did you go scud running?

15:30 No. That's why I'm still alive. I was also instrument instructor, so. I'll tell you about an exciting experience I had. They set me off at Eglinton before I do my deck landing training in a Firefly to drop a flare at night. Big whopping great big 210 million candle flare with no briefing. Just "Off

16:00 you go lad. Get off the northern coast, make certain you're over the ocean and drop this thing." So I did. What they hadn't told me is that the flare was ignited behind me. Suddenly, all I had was a great big silver disk in front of me. No horizon, just this great big silver disk and the propeller. That was frightening, I can tell you, because my flying was pretty limited. I did a very, very gentle turn round until I could see the lights on the

16:30 coast and survived that one.

Fascinating experience.

Yeah. A lot of people, that's the problem. I remember my first RATOG from the deck of Sydney. Rocket Assisted Take Off Gear - have you heard of it? You had rockets strapped to the side of the aircraft and the idea was that you could get an aircraft off on a free takeoff off the deck with these rockets. The Firefly had 4 rockets. Great big rockets strapped on the side of the aircraft. The Fury had 6. My briefing consisted

17:00 of, "Wind it up as much as you can, hold it as much as you can on the brakes, let them go and when you're alongside the fellow holding a red flag, hit the button on the end of the throttle." That was my briefing. Did that, and suddenly, these rockets, and the thrust was unreal. Because of the thrust you accelerated the aircraft and naturally the lift was, so the aircraft went up in a nose high pitch. The fellow behind me in the Sea Fury torque stalled when the rocket stopped

17:30 and crashed into the sea. That was the end of him. So we didn't do any more after that.

Why did he torque stall?

Because he allowed the aircraft to pitch up and when the rocket stopped he was on the point of stall and he just rotated around the airscrew.

Take us through the danger of the torque stall.

Bot the Sea Fury and the Firefly rolled to the right on a torque stall. We were deck landing on a left hand turn.

18:00 So if you did get on the point of stall and the aircraft started to go, you still had that much to go. Whereas American aircraft operating the other way around, you're already going to go that way. All it is, is the aircraft stalls and because of the amount of power, this is with full power on, literally the airscrew bites, it's just like holding a rubber driven aircraft by the propeller. Hold the propeller and the aircraft rotates. As soon as the

18:30 wing goes down it stalls it even more and you just auto rotate into a, and there's no recovery. So there you go.

You can't hold it against the torque of the engine?

The last thing on earth you do is use aileron, because if you go to pick up your wing, all right it swung to the right. If you go to use aileron to pick up what are you doing? Increasing the angle of attack. You're already

19:00 on the point of stall. You're just going to completely stall the wing, so it's full opposite rudder, which lures the aircraft to accelerate that wing to get lift by accelerating it and you recover that way.

When you're flying off the deck, what is the circuit direction and how soon do you have to?

Left hand circuit, 450 feet is what we used to fly. The extra 50 feet because of the height of the flight deck.

19:30 On the gyro, or compass, you'd come in in a flight of four aircraft say, you would fly in echelon starboard, past the island, then you break at 10 second intervals you'd wash off the speed. Deck landing interval was about 30 seconds between aircraft which is not bad when you think about it.

Your first deck landing,

20:00 **you've come to full stop, how are you feeling?**

Big sigh of relief. That's for sure. And a bit of confusion, what happens now as you get another new experience. What happens, you've got to stop the aircraft on the brakes, a marshaller marshals you with these things, tells you off brakes to roll the aircraft back to release the wire from the hook. Then they marshal you up to park you and you're

20:30 under total control the whole time by the marshaller.

Pretty dangerous for ground crew.

Yeah. They've got to know what they're doing. I've been marshal of the aircraft sticking over the side of the carrier.

Any ground crew accidents?

No. They watch themselves. No, we never had anybody carved up.

Did you do catapult launches in the UK?

Yes.

21:00 We did our first lot of 6 free takeoffs and then we did the catapult.

The catapult launch. It was a piston?

Yes.

Take us through the lead up to that.

You we taxied up onto the catapult by a marshaller. The way the catapult works is you have what's called the catapult spools on the

21:30 end of the aircraft, which are hooks. You can see it on the Firefly photo, which a wire strop goes round the shuttle of the catapult onto these hooks. The hooks just point back so when the aircraft's gone they release. The way it works is, you've got what's called the hold-back. The hold-back has a precisely machined ring of steel. It's about that diameter and it's about that thick. The pressure's

22:00 put on by the, in the case of the hydraulic catapult, the pressure's introduced by the flight deck machinery trying to pull the aircraft forward. When it reaches sufficient pressure that will launch the aircraft properly, the ring breaks. It then flies apart and releases the hold-back and away the aircraft goes. That's how they still do it.

How many Gs are you pulling at that moment?

That's a good questions. I don't know. It's about 3 or 4 off the hydraulic

22:30 catapult. If you didn't have your head on the headrest, you ended up with a very sore head. You had to brace yourself.

What instruments are you watching?

You're flying visually? You're sitting there, full throttle, lock the throttle, 18 pounds of boost, 88 inches, so a fair whack of boost I can tell you on the old Griffin winding. Not

23:00 holding the stick, hands behind it. You indicate to the flight deck officer that you're ready.

How do you do that?

Salute. He winds you up, and down come the flag and away it goes. Your first reaction once the acceleration is finished, you've then only get the acceleration of the aircraft, is get the gear up. That's the most important thing. Gear up. You don't want to hit the water with the undercarriage out. Then

23:30 progressively raise the flaps and fly away. It's been going on for years. There's no real great drama. Providing you're trained to do these things, you can do anything. They put a man on the moon by training. Same thing.

How close to the water were you on that first takeoff?

Very. I was below flight deck level. I disappeared. But I didn't hit it.

24:00 **When you stepped off the aircraft after your first landing, was there a ritual associated with that?**

No. Not really. A de-brief from the batsman who probably told you "You shouldn't have done that" or something or other. There was no, you weren't a hero. You thought you were, but you just got a de-briefing. I'll never forget, we were working up to going to Korea. I took off with two 500 pound bombs on and

24:30 two full drop tanks. My radiator shut was jammed just off Queensland in summer. The poor old Griffin started to overheat and I reported to the ship I had a problem. I was told to jettison my bombs and tanks and return to the ship. So I dropped the bombs live, which was good to see these great big bangs go off, and hit the two buttons for the tanks. Only one tank came off. There I had an aircraft with a 55-gallon tank out on the port wing and nothing on the starboard wing.

25:00 The subsequent deck landing was a bit hairy I must admit. I was skidding because of the weight and drag of this tank. I was a bit fast. They cut me. I got on, they realised I had to get on. I couldn't gone round again, the engine would have failed. I thought I'd done a good job and all I got was a roasting for being fast. So there you go.

Any difference between the steam and the piston?

25:30 Ah, yes. Considerable. Very gentle when you got the steam. It's just a progressive acceleration. Whereas all the energy in the hydraulic was in the beginning, with steam it progressively puts the acceleration on. So you just go down from the. Without the steam catapult the jet fighters could not operate from a carrier. You would rather launch them.

What was your sense of difference having concluded your first deck landing?

26:00 It was a sort of almost, it was 2½ years. It was a combination of a lot of training. I think it was more when we'd completed all the deck landings and survived them all. I had a nasty incident about my second or third deck landing where I thought I was coming in okay and the batsman started to give me a 'slow'

26:30 and I ended up having a 'come on'. As I was adding power, my young fellow's brain concluded that something was wrong. I'm adding power and I'm still going down. I had a quick check of the cockpit. My pitch lever had slipped back. Do have constant speed you must be over two tenths. The pitch lever had slipped back. If I'd have rammed that pitch lever forward, where would I have been? Up on my back. It was training, training, training

27:00 that I was aware of the implications. I couldn't close the throttle, then I would have been in the water. I had to very gently ease the pitch lever forward, which I did and locked it. It subsequently turned out there was a special flying instruction that warned, that I didn't know, if you had the friction that you could operate the throttle comfortable, the pitch lever was liable to slip back. If you locked the pitch lever you couldn't, it was difficult to throttle. I survived, but it was training.

27:30 Straight deck carrier, it was only called a straight deck carrier up to the development of the angle deck carrier obviously. A carrier was a carrier. The point being, remember I said we were landing at 30 second intervals in Korea? You had to be able to park those aircraft somewhere and you couldn't put them down in the lift, down in the hangar, it would take far too long. You'd have to fold the aircraft and put the lift down. You couldn't do it. So you had to park the aircraft on the

28:00 forward end of the ship. You had to prevent subsequent landing aircraft crashing into those aircraft. Hence you had the barriers. If you missed the arrestor wires, you went into the barriers so you only

bent one aeroplane as opposed to bending the lot. It was a severe restriction on operating aircraft from a carrier. A Royal Navy officer by the name of Campbell

28:30 conceived the idea of developing the angled deck. All that happened was, they took a carrier with a straight deck and built an angled deck on it. So the ship was still pointing that way and the angle deck that way. It meant you had all that space forward of the island where you could park aircraft and the landing path was clear of the parked aircraft. Therefore you didn't need to have barriers. If you missed the wires you just went round. Easy. That's the difference

29:00 between the straight deck carrier and the angled deck carrier. Straight deck carriers are a thing of the past. So the Brits developed the steam catapult, the angled deck and the mirrored landing sight as it was called.

They went on to develop the jump deck.

Yeah, quite right. Coming back from the UK, we came back by sea again. Wrong. I came back in the Sydney ship.

29:30 She'd gone over to pick up the 21st Carrier Group and we joined her to come back in the Sydney. We arrived back in Australia, I went on leave to Tocumwal and received a signal on the 7th January 1951 I had been promoted sub-lieutenant because it had been realised that aircrew from here on would be commissioned. We then did our officers' training courses at

30:00 Cerberus naval depot in Melbourne and in the various schools in Sydney. Anti-submarine, navigation, damage control, all those basic officer type trainings that you should do as a young sub-lieutenant to be able to fit into a ship. Not just in a squadron but in a ship. Then that took about three months. Then on the 1st April 1951 I joined my first squadron at

30:30 Nowra.

For the Royal Australian Navy, Sydney was a new ship wasn't she?

Yes. She'd only been commissioned in '48. August '48 is recognised as the beginning of the fleet air arm. I joined in May '48, so I was there at the beginning.

What aircraft did she have on her at the time when you went back to Australia on her?

She had a lot of all the aircraft for the 21st

31:00 carrier group were all cocooned. Wrapped up in silver thingamabob to preserve them from the sea. She didn't fly obviously. I also came back in Melbourne when Melbourne commissioned the same. Subsequently 60 aircraft on board. Plus my car, I might add. Then we joined the squadrons at Nowra. McMillan and myself joined 817 Squadron, then we embarked on our first cruise. We were in Port Lincoln

31:30 in South Australia when we were informed the shipment was going to relieve HMS Glory in Korea. So the ship immediately returned to Sydney to get itself fitted out for going to Korea. The squadrons disembarked at Nowra and we commenced a weapons work up. Keep going?

On a cruise, in the period before they went over, how much flying

32:00 **are you doing?**

Enough. In those days if you didn't fly for more, had a gap of 10-14 days you had to go ashore to do ADLs to get yourself back into practice. You had to maintain currency. The ship would visit various places, but you'd be out at sea again just doing exercises.

32:30 Weaponry and navigation and all those things.

What was your understanding of the strategy of the fleet air arm at the time?

Only saw it as a force in being. It was a part of the armament of a country. The Korean war had started, but we never

33:00 thought we'd be involved. It's only when the Royal Navy wanted Glory to be relieved that the Australian navy offered Sydney.

Why at that time, did you think Australia needed a fleet air arm?

Because the Second World War had proved conclusively that ships at sea must have air

33:30 protection. Must have air protection. It's no good having the air protection tomorrow or later in the day. You want it when you want it. It's the same as the army, The army has close air support from the air force, but you must have it guaranteed. It's no good it being available tomorrow if the enemy's rushing over the hill. We want it now. That's the same with

34:00 the fleet air arm. It's supporting, defending the fleet. It's an integrated system. Nowadays of course, although there is a big deficiency in the fleet of anti air capability from the ships themselves with

missiles. It is a big deficiency.

The Firefly was primarily a surface attack aircraft?

Yes. Anti-submarine and strike, as it's called.

Any particular strike training that you did at that time?

34:30 Yes. Rocketing. Bombing. In the work up, when we came back to Nowra, we knew that we were going to be interdicting the North Korean transport system in an area, I don't know how well you know Korea, but from west of Seoul, up to Japan, across, at an area where it was our responsibility to keep all road and rail transport cut. So we started

35:00 off dive bombing. A dive bombing attack from 8,000 feet releasing out bombs at 3,000 feet. Two 25-pound bombs. The old Firefly, you can see it, it's not really designed as a dive bomber. It built up speed fairly quickly and if you didn't get it properly trimmed, particularly the rudder, you could end up going down sideways almost. So off we went. We persevered. We strafed as well. We had Mark 6 aircraft. Remember I

35:30 mentioned we had Mark 6 without cannon? We had to borrow some Mark 5s from our sister squadron, 816 Squadron. Why 816 didn't go to Korea in stead of us, I don't know, but I'm very thankful that we went.

Was the Sydney a happy ship?

Yes.

Is that a concept that you as an aviator was familiar with?

Well, let me

36:00 put it the other way like Bob Menzies when he was asked whether he was just disgruntled. He said, "No, I'm very grunted." We weren't unhappy, but if you follow me. The ship, it's a pretty rough life for a sailor on a ship. Very rough life.

Were you a sailor or an airman?

Fortunately I was an officer before I became a general service person, yes. Do you follow me?

Tape 5

00:33 **What did you have to get used to in your second bout of naval training that had to do with life on board a ship?**

I did my watch keeping training after we came back from Korea. Do you want to go on with that?

You hadn't been on board a ship in the navy before you joined the Sydney.

No.

So what was new about life on board a ship for you?

Well, as an

01:00 aviator in the carrier, it was just the nature of the accommodation you're in. It was limited. It was hot. You were in the dark, no natural light in the decks, but it was more like being in a strange hotel if you follow me. We weren't part of the ship's company as such. We weren't operating the ship. Not

01:30 like it was when I did my watch keeping training in Murchison subsequently.

What were the conditions like for you in that floating hotel?

Pretty basic. The junior officers were accommodated forward because during the Second World War they realised that with all the officers accommodated aft of the ship, it was hit in the aft of the ship which the Germans were aiming torpedoes which aimed on the screws. You could loose all the officers. So junior officers were accommodated forward in what was called the Kasbah.

02:00 6 berth cabins. So you just had a bunk, a locker and that was it. So you had to tramp the whole way up the ship, down to the wardrobe.

What was in your locker?

You didn't carry much in the way of civilian gear. That's for sure. Although we never went ashore in uniform. Not in peacetime. That's changed. So we needed civilian clothes, but we didn't have that much. It was just your basic uniform and

02:30 a bit of personal effects. Books and so forth. That's all. You couldn't really have anything else.

Was there a particular personal effect you took away to sea with you?

No. Not really. Nothing special.

What other areas of the ship did you have access to?

The whole ship. We were free to go anywhere we liked on the ship. The bridge, you'd always ask

03:00 the officer of watch could you come on the bridge. The flight deck. We used to play volleyball in the hangars. You lower the hangar and put a net across and play volleyball. We had duties on board. We were responsible for, we'd be second officers of watch in harbour where we'd stand on the gangway for four hours hoping to learn a few of the routines. We didn't keep watches at sea, not seaman

03:30 watches at sea, but we kept watches in terms of the squadron duty officer, checking the aircraft were properly lashed down in the hangar on the flight deck, etc., etc.

Describe the bridge of the Sydney.

Sydney was equipped with 2 bridges. It had an admiral's bridge, and a captain's bridge. It was fitted out as a flagship. You had admirals quarter aft. Fairly big. Enclosed. There was a captain's chair. A communications

04:00 area where the chief yeoman operated with his signal man. Because they operated both radio and flag signals because there was a flag deck arrangement for signalling ships in company either by light or by flags. The ship was conned from the bridge. Behind from the bridge was the air operation section, which was where the commander of air of the ship

04:30 functioned and controlled air operation from there. So the ship, the officer watch duty was to maintain the ship into wind or steam the ship as directed by the captain. But the air operations were controlled by the air department. Below that was the operations room and air direction room. The air direction room was for the fighter direction was radar control, the other direction was

05:00 for surface direction upstream.

Where were your briefings held?

Either in our respective crew rooms, each squadron had its own crew room, or in the, what was it called? It was a bigger briefing room lower down in the ship. That's where we used to

05:30 watch the deck landing films at night, which could accommodation all the squadron aircrew. What was it called? I've got a good memory too. It's slipped.

It had a particular name on board the Sydney?

Yes.

If it comes up, tell us what it is.

I will.

What was in your crew room?

Lockers for our flying clothing, chairs

06:00 to sit on. We all smoked in those days, so there'd be ashtrays. That ubiquitous game called euchre. Ludo? No? We were always constantly playing euchre. There was nothing else to do. You could be briefed, then you'd get a pipe aircraft, 'Man your aircraft', you know that you were detailed and up you went onto the flight deck, manned your aircraft.

06:30 **Is euchre and ludo the same game?**

Sort of.

Was it played for money?

No. Entertainment.

What other forms of entertainment were there on board ship?

We had films. Sydney films. Sport. Flight deck hockey. Pretty vicious game, flight deck hockey I can assure you. Volley ball as I mentioned. People would do their training exercises. Running, etc.

07:00 Skeet shooting. Fishing occasionally when the ship was in harbour. At anchor I should say. We weren't short of entertainment really.

Describe a game of flight deck hockey.

We had sticks that were steamed, bent bamboo. Solid. Not like a normal hockey stick. I think the puck was made of

07:30 sort of rubber. Of course, the flight deck had securing bolts and what have you, all over it, for securing aircraft to, so you not only had the obstacle of the other team, but you had these ringbolts in the deck you could hit one of those and you'd end in trouble. It was a pretty vicious old game. Each department had its own team for competition. As with volleyball.

Who were the best teams

08:00 **in the Sydney?**

I don't know. Really.

Would the ground crew, or the Fish Heads, play?

Yes, everybody played. They all mustered a team. There'd also occasionally be amateur theatricals, but not that much, no.

The Sydney's a huge ship. How much of

08:30 **it did you spend time in?**

You mean the totality of the ship?

Yeah. Obviously you didn't go all over the ship all the time.

No, you tended to your cabin, the briefing rooms, the lower briefing room, that's what it was called as I now recall, the ward room for meals and relaxation. Yeah. That's about it.

09:00 She's not that big. 20,000 tons is not that big. But still.

How hard was it to find your way around?

Initially, difficult. Because once you're below decks out of natural light, you don't know which way is which, which you soon learned. Some of these big American carriers, people get lost for years. They've got something like 5,000 people on board.

The Sydney had a compliment of almost 1,000?

Yes.

09:30 **Below deck, how much signage to help you find your way was there?**

Quite a bit. All the decks were marked and indicated. There was a marking system. You had the main deck. Then above the main deck it goes 01, 02, 03 as you go up. Then below the main deck it goes 1, 2, 3, 4. So you could just tell by looking at it where you were in relation to the main deck. The decks were the

10:00 hangar deck, the gallery deck, the main deck were the main decks of the ship. So below the hangar deck was the gallery deck, which was on the outside of the ship. Then below that was the main deck, which was inboard of the ship.

How did you adapt to sleeping at sea?

You were very conscious of it initially. The ship rolling and pitching. Rolling was worse than pitching.

10:30 Because bunks were fore and aft. But you soon got used to it rolling around a bit. You had restraining boards on the sides of the bunks to stop you falling out.

I've heard the Sydney was a particularly rough ship to travel on.

In what way?

It pitched a great deal.

It pitched, but no more than any other ship. I spent a few years on Sydney.

11:00 Not really.

Were you on board when the typhoon hit the Sydney?

Yes, very much indeed. Typhoon Ruth. In fact I've got to give a briefing to a group on my time in Korea and I've been writing on my word processor and I've just done yet again the Ruth bit.

What did you eat on board?

I can tell you an amusing story here. This is after Korea.

11:30 There was a stage where we had what was called commissioned catering officers. These were cooks and stewards had been given a thin stripe commission. It was an absolute disaster as a concept of catering. During the Montebello cruiser, the Montebello explosion, I think all we had on board as I recall was mutton, cabbage and potatoes was just about the sum lot. I was down aft lift well one day on

- 12:00 Fremantle and I got a pipe to report to the bridge, which I did. I was detailed off to fly a sick sailor ashore who had appendicitis. The ship couldn't operate because it was rolling too much. You get a long swell on the west coast. So the aircraft was on the catapult and the sailor, to this day I marvel, we put him in the back of the Firefly and he was catapulted with appendicitis. He survived it.
- 12:30 I flew ashore to Perth airport and I hadn't flown at night for about 18 months and it was dark. I reported my position as Rockhampton. I meant to report it as Rockingham. You can't get two places further apart in Australia than Rockhampton and Rockingham. The airport controller thought this was a funny this one, "What have we got here?" We sorted it out. I landed at Perth airport
- 13:00 in the dark, and they turned the taxi lights on for me and I taxied in. There was an ambulance waiting for the sailor, there was a car waiting for me. They were going to take me to Leeuwin, the shore establishment, but my aunt, my family's Westralian, owned a big bakery in Western Australia. I said, "I'll go home to my aunt's." They took me to my aunt's. I'd been living on cabbage, potato and mutton for the last few months.
- 13:30 My aunt had a Kelvinator refrigerator. A massive thing. Glass fronted. Everything in it. My grandmother, who was living with my aunt at the time, said just the thing, "We've got lamb tonight." I didn't tell her until 10 years later I told my aunt who said, "You bloody fool, there were steaks in the fridge." The moral of the story is, that morning,
- 14:00 in the local paper, it had all the facts absolutely perfectly reported about what had happened. I hadn't spoken to anybody. But it was absolutely what happened. 'The Firefly had flown ashore, the sailor had appendicitis', blah, blah, blah, blah. Gee, that's good. That afternoon I landed back on board the ship that following morning. Pardon me for a second. I was standing on the flight deck with a RAAF aircraft was doing photographic runs up and down Fremantle. That
- 14:30 evening in the local paper, headlines, 'The Firefly, which flew ashore yesterday, beat up Fremantle on return to the ship'. It was my first introduction to the media. There you go. Digressing slightly.

The media came up again?

Yes. Many times, yes.

Hoe much fresh food was available while the ship was in operations off Korea?

Not very much. The thing we ran out of first was milk.

- 15:00 We didn't have long life milk in those days. There were attempts to reconstitute milk with powder and butter and so forth. It didn't work. The thing we missed the most was fresh milk. The powdered milk was terrible in tea, it was horrible. So far as vegetables and meat and so forth, it was okay. During Korean, we used to go
- 15:30 ashore to Sasebo, the American PX, Post Exchange [American Canteen Unit], and our great delight was to have their milkshakes. We were only youngsters and we loved their milkshakes.

What alcohol was available?

Too much. We didn't fly at night

- 16:00 because we weren't operationally capable to fly at night. Not with (UNCLEAR) the type of aircraft we were operating. So, the bar opened at 6 o'clock. You could have a beer or gin and tonic, brandy, whatever. Occasionally there was more alcohol drunk than should have been.

Were there celebrations on board ship?

Occasionally.

What was a typical naval celebration?

Somebody got promoted

- 16:30 or a decoration. The expression was you 'pushed out the boat'. Have you come across that?

What does it mean?

'You pay'. You pushed out the boat, so you pay for the round of drinks because you've got something.

Were the airmen introduced to other naval traditions that surprised you?

I can't think of anything.

- 17:00 **The squadron was formed in Australia.**

Actually it was formed in the UK to be absolutely correct, then came back in Sydney.

What was the basis of the squadron?

We had 12 frontline aircraft, and to reserve aircraft. Commanding officer was a Royal Navy lieutenant

commander. We had a lot of Royal Navy people then still because we were still

- 17:30 working ourselves up. We hadn't come up through the system as yet. Our sister squadron in the air group was 808 squadron, a Sea Furies, and they had the same number of aircraft. They had the same sort of leavening of RN officers to (UNCLEAR). Had a lot of ex RAF people, both as pilots and observers.

When did you first form a crew with an observer?

In 1951, when I

- 18:00 got petty officer, the fellow who went over the side in the Firefly with Smith who hit the funnel.

What was the observer-pilot relationship like?

I must admit Petty Officer Bunning. In Korea there was really no need to have an observer in the back of the aircraft. There was no point in my opinion.

- 18:30 Operating the aircraft as anti-submarine aircraft, yea. Totally different thing. They were responsible for navigation, monitoring the sonar buoy pattern if we put sonar buoys down to track a submarine. The observer would tell you the course and you steered the course. So we worked as a crew.

Did that cause resentment for the pilots, the unnecessary nature of their role?

You mean in

- 19:00 Korea? No. I'll have to answer that, excuse me.

You heard the news that the Sydney would be leaving the Glory (UNCLEAR)?

You mean specifically?

Explain the situation when you heard you would be going to war.

It was interesting. It was known as the buzz cruise of 51. The rumours were flying around the ship that the ship was going to be doing the most amazing things. Going back to UK and down to the Arctic. They were just rumours. Amongst them was that

- 19:30 we were going to Korea. Korean was the one.

What was your reaction to hearing this news?

I honestly can't specifically recall any sort of dramatic reaction. Subsequently I saw, being in Korean, the combination of all the training I had done over the last three years. That's what we were trained for. No, there was no

- 20:00 apprehension or excitement or. Well, I expect there was to a certain extent, gee this is going to be another adventure.

What had you heard about the war at that point?

Not very much. It was a war going on up there, 10,000 miles away and we were, I personally don't recall. You've got to realise we didn't have television. Nothing. We didn't have newspapers on board. The odd person had a radio and that was it.

- 20:30 **What did they then teach you about the conflict?**

Not terribly much as I recall. I've got a pretty good memory. I don't specifically recall being given at Nowra indoctrination type lectures. Far from it. We went back to Nowra to work up in weapon training. That was a major thing.

- 21:00 That's what we were focused on. Weapon training.

Detail the weapon training and what you learned in Nowra at that time.

We had to swap our aircraft. Some of the Mark 6s with Mark 5s. So we started off both strafing and bombing. They were the two methods of attack. The Furies

- 21:30 were rocketing. We were bombing. We were doing dive bombing attack and strafing ground targets with 44-millimetre cannon. I must admit the great satisfaction to hear the 44-millimetre cannon for a young fellow. Exciting stuff. Unless one stopped and the aircraft then started going sideways because we were out on the wings you see.

- 22:00 **Apart from the cannon?**

Bombs, 500-pound bombs. If you want to go onto weaponry. There's an aspect here. We started off when we got to Korean, but we need to go back on how we got to Korean. When we got to Korea we started dive bombing on bridges. We were straddling the bridge like that and not knocking the bridge down because it just dissipates the energy. If you drop bridges into

22:30 the water of the bridge, it doesn't do anything, you had to straddle it. At that stage of the war there wasn't that much opposition. It was there, we lost something like 10 aircraft and 90 aircraft ended up with holes in them. It was decided we'd low level bomb. Actually put the bombs into the abutment of the bridge. Low level is low level. A couple of hundred feet. What we adopted was our anti-submarine attack, which, the attack we'd

23:00 all trained on for attacking a submarine, which was diving to drop death charges on it. So we just adapted that to dropping the bombs into the abutment. We were doing it in flights of 4 aircraft. Because we were low level, you had to have delay fuses. 27 seconds delay. If you were the last in, like me, I was the tail end fellow, number 4, you had to get in within the 27 seconds, otherwise you ended up blowing yourself up, which

23:30 didn't happen. We were very successful. As we developed our technique, we reduced from flights of 4 to 1 aircraft. In fact on record, we dropped down one bridge with one bomb.

What techniques were you trained in before you left for Korea? One was attacking a submarine at low level?

That was the major one that, because I was anti-submarine trained. It was a new experience for me to go into a dive-bombing

24:00 role, which really, in retrospect was a bit stupid because to get clear weather at 8,000 feet, it doesn't happen that often. That's what we started with.

Was it part of the training to fly in teams of 4?

Normally, we operated in flights of four. They were split up into sections of two.

24:30 We would go off on a mission with 4 aircraft. But we're getting into Korea now. Do you want to go up to Korean or?

Take us on the trip to Korea. What was that like?

Because we had to arrive ready to go on operations, we flew on the way up to Korea. So as the ship went north we would continue to fly. I had a very, very exciting experience. My section leader and myself went off the

25:00 strife some smoke floats. You'd drop some smoke floats in the water and strife it as practice. As was the usual routine, as you returned to the ship you would drop your deck hook. The Firefly didn't have an indication that the deck hook was down. So you had to rely upon the other aircraft to tell you that your deck hook was down. My deck hook wasn't down. I tried again to get the deck hook down. I got my observer to reach underneath

25:30 his cockpit to see if he could find the wire to release the deck hook. We were unsuccessful. Fortunately we were near Guam and we could divert to Guam. So I diverted to Guam. No radio contact with Guam. Landed on, I'd never come across parallel runways before. We didn't have them in Australia. I landed on the wrong one as it turned out. As I taxied in, my brakes failed. So I arrived on the flight

26:00 line and they said, "What's the trouble, son?" I said, "Well, the hook's baled when I came down and my brakes are failed." They quickly sorted out a wire that came off the pulley for the hook, but we couldn't do a thing about the brakes because it was a different connection between the Americans. They fell apart when they discovered they were pneumatic brakes as opposed to hydraulic. Signal came to me that I was to return to the ship regardless of all brakes because the ship was steaming north and couldn't hang around for me.

26:30 It would mean I'd have to land on the barrier. Taxied out without brakes. Got airborne and as I planed up the aircraft the battery in the back seat, the observer sat with the battery between his legs, started to boil. You could always tell a Firefly observer because he had battery burns down the inside of his flying suit. So I had to switch off the electric. As we got back to the ship I caught a 9 wire and I stopped with a spin of the propeller sitting over the top of the barrier.

27:00 It was a very exciting day, I can tell you. I was called up to the bridge. I got up to the bridge and the captain said, "What happened?" I told him. I said, "Please, sir, who sent the signal?" It was like a comedy of nobody knew who sent this signal that I was to return to the ship. It went down all the people to the ship's cat you know. Good story. True story too.

When you catch a 9 wire, what other names are there for different types of landing?

27:30 Well, 1 wire wasn't recommended. That's for sure. Because it's too close for the aft rundown. 8 or 9 wire was not good, because it meant you were too far down the deck. Normally it was because you were a bit fast. Can I carry on to Korea? We steamed up to Japan and we entered the ex Japanese naval base at Kure where we berthed on a finger wharf with Glory on one side and our on the other. As we

28:00 steamed in, Glory's band was playing If I'd known you were coming I'd have baked a cake, which was a very popular tune at that stage of the game. I don't know if you've ever heard it.

How does it go?

'If I'd have known you were coming I'd have baked a cake, baked a cake, baked a cake'. So it goes on. Which was very good. So we then took Glory's aircraft, Fireflies, because we only had a few Fireflies. We got a briefing on escape and evasion. What to do. If you're shot down on the friendly

- 28:30 side then you should put your hands in the air and laugh, ha-ha-ha, so the Koreans knew you were friendly. Away we went. We then operated out of Kure and Sasebo, which are two naval bases. Sasebo was an American base, or was, and Kure was an RN [Royal Naval] base. We used to spend 11 days at sea on the west coast or the east coast, with a replenishment day in the middle to take on
- 29:00 fuel and more weapons, etc., etc. We sub-lieutenants went to school would you believe. Then we'd go back into Japan for a week on R&R [Rest and Recreation] as it was called in those days. Sasebo or Kure. We very rapidly learned that dive bombing was not the way to go in a Firefly. We were very successful. We lost a few aircraft. We lost about 10 or 12. We lost 3 pilots. But we had a lot of aircraft hit
- 29:30 by small arms fire. What the Koreans would do with rifles, they'd have a team of half a dozen or whatever they could muster. They'd see a diving aircraft coming towards them and they'd line themselves up in the path of the aircraft with the rifles like that. The leader would blow a whistle and they'd all fire at the same time. Hopefully the aircraft would fly into one of those rounds and that's how a lot of our aircraft were hit. We had some pretty dramatic rescues. Helicopter
- 30:00 rescues. What else can I tell you? I occasionally flew the mail ashore to Kimpo near Seoul. I remember seeing Seoul city. There wasn't a building standing. It was only about a 2-storey buildings that didn't have a hole in it, and the only bridge was sitting in the bottom of the Han River, because they'd been backwards and forwards. You know your history. When I went back to Korea 2 years ago there are now
- 30:30 19 bridges across the Han River, high rise buildings, traffic jams, smog. Totally different scene. Completely. Kimpo is now the international airport. I used to meet up with my RAAF course mates, who were in 77 Squadron. It was interesting that they were living in card paper huts. Very basic accommodation. Extremely basic accommodation. I'd fly back
- 31:00 to the ship, have a shower, put my mess kit on, go down the ward room, have a glass of something, silver service, tucked into bed.

Was this when 77 Squadron was based in Korea?

Yes. They had just converted from Mustangs to Meteors. Have you interviewed any 77 unit?

We have.

Who?

Dick Cresswell.

Oh, Dick? Dear old Dick. He's aging.

We're supposed to keep that under our hat, but.

Dick's a great mate of mine. I had lunch

- 31:30 with him yesterday. Shot down the first Japanese aircraft in Darwin. Under-recognised, Dick.

Quite humble about it, too.

Yes. Known him for years.

Take us through your first mission.

I was very cheesed off. My first mission was an anti-submarine patrol. I was very unhappy that I'd been

- 32:00 tailed off to have to do an anti-submarine patrol. We had to do anti-submarine patrols around the ship although there was no submarine threat that we knew of, but nevertheless we had to patrol. We used to do what was called a Cobra 15, which was a 15 mile radius circle around the ship with depth charges and sonar buoys on. Then we would land back on the ship. All my other junior course mates had been off on ops and I had. But I got off the next trip.

What was

- 32:30 **the first mission you flew over Korea?**

As I recall, my logbook's in the war memorial. I left it for them because they don't have any Korean artefacts. I'm pretty certain it was a fairly big city called Chanampo on the west coast. We dive bombed, they had a series of bridges, about 4 of them, across a river. We went down. I'll never forget my observer, poor old Petty Officer Bunning, "They're shooting at us, they're shooting at us." I don't know what the hell he thought I was going to

- 33:00 do about it. I watched my section leader who hadn't got the trim right and his aircraft was going down sideways. We dropped our bombs in the area, but I don't think we achieved anything because of what I said earlier, if wasn't a successful way of bombing a bridge.

What's it's like to be under fire for the first time?

Well, you're young. You're immortal. "They're not going to hit me," you know?

- 33:30 True. Didn't worry about it. Both my course mates were shot down, but for some reason or other, it didn't affect me. That's McMillan and Knapstein were both shot down.

It startled your observer on that occasion.

It did. He was not very happy I must admit. He was powerless sitting in the back of the aircraft. There was no point in him being there. Here we were, hurtling earthwards, trying to drop two 500-pound bombs. So there you go.

- 34:00 Apart from that, I never ever saw any ground fire. We were being shot at, but you couldn't see it. I didn't see a rifle.

What damage did that do to your aircraft?

If they hit you in the right spot they could bring you down. Knapstein, the Fury pilot, he comes from the Knapstein wineries in South Australia, Tim Knapstein's, his cousin, he got hit in the oil cooler of a Fury.

- 34:30 The Fury had a sleeve valve engine. I don't know how good you are on engines. The valve worked on a sleeve and it very depended upon oil. Because he ran out of oil, the engine ceased. He ditched in the Han River. Lucky for him, the correct drop tank broke off from the aircraft and it slewed him onto the southern side, which was the friendly side. He went up the beach into a

- 35:00 stone wall, the aircraft broke in half. He's undamaged. It was true, he then sold his aircraft for wreckage to the local Koreans for a couple of million won, it's only two [shillings] and sixpence or something or other. A week later on he finally came back on board the ship. Toting his parachute. He's just had a 6-way bypass, so he's still alive.

- 35:30 **How ere you briefed and how did they identify your targets for the missions?**

We had maps marked in a grid system. We had maps of Korea. I've got one in there. One's in the war memorial. We knew a good position, where the bridge was. We'd fly to the bridge and separate out into sections. Identify the bridge and then take it. We didn't have a very big area

- 36:00 to operate in so we got to know the local countryside quite well. That's on the west coast. We operated on the east coast once.

What were flying commissions like in Korea?

Pretty good. I was just reading, because of this lecture I've got to give, about the number of operations we did. The Furies did about 1,600 ops the whole time and the Fireflies did about

- 36:30 700 ops. Because there were 2 Fury squadrons and only 1 Firefly squadron. We only lost 7 days for weather. At the end when Glory was on the way back, because she came and relieved us, she had been down in Australia refitting, it started to snow and the weather deteriorated. We had the two catholic padres on board. The catholic

- 37:00 padre and the protestant padre, which we always named the black bishop and the white bishop. These two were see strolling up and down the flight deck. We always said to God "Keep the weather crook so we don't have to fly any more." We didn't.

What was the worst weather you flew in?

Snow. We experienced quite a lot of snow on the flight deck, but it didn't last because of the heat of the ship it soon melted.

How does snow

- 37:30 **affect your flying?**

We didn't actually fly in the snow, but we had snowing conditions. I did a lot of UK flying in the snow, but that's a different scene. We had some funny incidents. A Firefly's wings folded like that with the cannons pointing up. In wartime it was permissible for the aircraft to be armed in the hangar because it was just too

- 38:00 complicated to disarm them. Obviously you disconnected them. A young electrical sailor on detail was checking the aircraft he did, and he'd forgotten a particular tool. He went away to get the tool, came back -you are probably ahead of me - got in the wrong aircraft, pressed the button and all four cannons fired. It went through the hangar deck, which was the ceiling and through the flight deck. My CO and the ship's engineer are walking up and down the flight deck. He missed them by a couple of meters. A couple

- 38:30 of yards in those days. Very amusing.

What were the repercussions of that event?

I don't know what the outcome was, but the ship still had these little brass plates welded on the flight deck where these rounds had gone through when she paid off.

Tape 6

00:24 **Take us through an operation that sticks in your mind,**

00:30 **start at the briefing and walk us through the day.**

We would have a briefing the night before of the general situation so far as the targets ashore. We'd be designated a target. We'd go away and individually mark our maps. We'd then have a flight briefing, the 4 aircraft, in the briefing room. Then, the ship operated to a very rigid timetable, there'd be a pipe which was

01:00 broadcast and made in the ship "aircrew man your aircraft." We'd go out and carry out a preflight inspection, checking the bombs in particular. Man up and then we'd get "start engines." You'd start them with a Coffman starter.

Describe the Coffman starter.

It was like an overgrown shotgun cartridge. It produced gas into a turbine, which spun the motor.

01:30 With experience you knew exactly where to put the throttle and how much to prime, because you've only got one go at it. It was 6 shot. You could pull another one into the bridge. You then run the aircraft up, check it out, do your pre takeoff checks, indicate to the ground crew if you're ready to go. The marshals would then come up to the aircraft, indicate to the chock men 'away chocks', because you had chock men on the deck.

02:00 In the middle of winter, pretty chilly lying down alongside the aircraft, because they had to hold the aircraft and it had to be very, particularly with the ship rolling. Then the marshal would marshal you forward onto the catapult in tern. Then you'd all be shot off individually. Form up, then we'd fly in fairly close formation to the coast, but once we got into the coast we broke into what was called battle formation,

02:30 which is two pairs. The Germans introduced this in the Spanish Civil War as a matter of fact. Fly in two pairs about 800 yards apart. You can cover each other's tail. We then tracked. We used to cruise at about 180 knots. We tracked to our target. Initially, after we had realised that dive bombing was no good, we then went to low level bombing, and initially we started attacking with 4 aircraft in a very short, 27 seconds

03:00 is not that long. So you had to fit in pretty quickly. Then, as we gained experience we just reduced to one aircraft attacking. We knew we could knock a bridge out with one aircraft. Having knocked out the bridge, they were very flimsy affairs there, they were sort of peasant type railway bridges and road bridges. They used to build them overnight. We'd come round the next night and knock them all down again. We were then spilt up to sections and go into a road recce, reconnaissance, which we generally

03:30 flew about 2,000 feet, which we discovered after the war was the ideal height to get shot down by small arms fire. We didn't know that. We thought we were safe at 2,000 feet. Not so. I can remember one particular mission where we'd been specifically briefed that ox carts were to be attacked because they carried munition. Whether we liked it or not, that was what we were instructed to do. I must admit, I

04:00 regret this poor old ox, but I lined the poor old ox up in the middle of the road and I just walked it through with 44 millimetre cannon and that finished the ox and his cart. That's war I guess. I did make a little joke to my observant in the back that about the farmer. He obviously got off somewhere else so we didn't worry about him. In retrospect, 50 plus years later, you think about things like that.

04:30 That's war. Then we'd form up and go back to our rendezvous point, which was to the western south of Seoul, form up into a parade formation, close up, all drop our hooks, so we could see we each had a hook. There was a modification that was introduced, mod 12-11 it was called, which improved the deck hook damping. And not only did it improved the damping of a deck hook,

05:00 because a deck hook used to bounce. It made it go down lower, and you'd look across the other three aircraft and you could see who had the one with the modified hook. He was the lucky one because he usually plucked a wire out of the air. That's very good. So we'd come back to the ship, stream passed the ship, 30 second intervals, land on. We'd have a short de-brief of what if anything unusual had happened. I flew something like 50 plus missions, so it became

05:30 routine after a while. There was no air opposition for us anyway where we were operating. Except we came across some United States Marine Corps Corsairs. A Firefly looks a little bit, if you're not very well-up on your aircraft recognition, like a Yak 9. They looked at us, we looked at them. We knew what they were, but they weren't too certain what we were. We were flying around until things were sported out.

- 06:00 That was interesting. One of the last missions we did, we hung out to go and bomb a village. Again it was enemy territory and this village allegedly had munitions and stores and therefore was a legitimate target. We did a sort of a modified sort of dive bombing low level bomb. I hadn't sustained any battle damage to this point. We
- 06:30 pull away from the target, there was a dint in my port wing. I thought, "I'm a hero at last, I've been hit." When I got back to the ship I saw what's in the wing. They got it out and gave it to me. When we got back to Australia and my father was at Tocumwal he said, "How did it go son?" I said, "All right, Dad. I got hit when I was up there." I showed him and he said, "Looks like a piece of bomb to me, son." And it was. My own bomb. I'd gone too low. My CO,
- 07:00 if you saw motor engine vehicles on the road in daytime, something was wrong, because they just stayed off the road. Our CO was a funny fellow. Been a schoolteacher. His nickname was Throm, which was short for thrombosis, which was the wandering plot.
- 07:30 My section leader, he's just recently died, he'd been a Beaufighter pilot during the war and he carried quite a few missions. When we had our CO say he'd found a truck, I just formed up on my section leader. He looked across at me and gave me a great big wink. I knew precisely what he meant, a truck trap. Very shortly afterwards came up, "I've been hit, I've been hit," from the CO. He made it back to the ship only just., He'd been hit in his main fuel tank and was losing fuel.
- 08:00 That was that one.
- Where were the flight traps?**
- Back on the road. Guns around. A honey pot inviting somebody to have a go at it, which he did. Got it?
- He fell for it.**
- He fell for it very much indeed.
- Was there a chance to warn him?**
- He was a CO, he was a big boy, should have known better. Shouldn't he? What else? We were then detailed off to go to the east coast. I showed you the map.
- 08:30 **On those operations, what range of targets were you...**
- Just bridges.
- Were the ox carts exceptional?**
- You rarely saw them. We had instructions that more than 7 people on the ground were to be attacked, which of course we never did. They were just peasants in the fields. You wouldn't dream of doing it. But they were the United Nations' instructions.
- 09:00 But we didn't.
- Were there incidents where**
- people did things they shouldn't have done? No.
- Friendly fire?**
- No we never had any friendly fire. Not that I know of. There was nobody friendly to fire at us at that stage.
- What was the situation on the ground at the time you were operating?**
- We came across some Chinese troops on the ground once. My gun sight wasn't working.
- 09:30 It was a bit of a shame, because it was the first time we had come across Chinese troops on the ground. You could tell the Chinese from the Koreans very simply. The Koreans ignored you and the Chinese would run. That's the difference in the character of the two people. Koreans were totally stoked. Don't worry about it. We attacked this lot. All I could do was point the nose down and spray. It's a true story. Afterwards, sitting in the bridge mess was a little space
- 10:00 behind the bridge where you could get coffee and stuff. My air group commander was there. He came in and said, "How did it go?" Told him the gun sight didn't work, it's not good. Maintenance was poor and they should sort it out. A knock on the door and a petty officer put his head round the corner and said, "I've found what was wrong with your gun sight, sir." I said, "What was that?" He said, "The brilliance was turned right down." So I had a few words from the air group commander. Somebody had turned the brilliance right down so that removed the projection
- 10:30 of the gun sight.
- How did the gun sight work?**
- We had a gyro gun sight which was developed in the Second World War, which had a gyro capability and

a fixed capability. The fixed capability had a ring across and it was fixed. It was projected at infinity. So you point it on the ground and it was projected at infinity. With the gyro gun sight it was controlled by a throttle.

- 11:00 You had six what were called pippers [dots in the gun sight]. You set the wingspan of the enemy aircraft and then rotated the throttle until you clipped the six pippers and then as you pulled into an attack the G-loading processed the gyro, which gave you lead on the aircraft, and providing you kept the aircraft in the six pippers you should be able to shoot it down. Not that we came across any aircraft
- 11:30 to shoot down. There you go. I had an incident where an American B29 Super Fortress was very badly mauled by MiGs [Mikoyan & Gurevich Russian aircraft] in what was called MiG Alley. Have you heard of MiG Alley? Where the Russians were, very much indeed. This aircraft limped across to the west coast and they baled out. This crewman was seen in the water up well north of Chanampo. I was detailed off to go and drop a rescue dinghy to him.
- 12:00 We went up there and I remember very carefully testing my cannon in case I came across any MiG. Not that I could have done very much against MiGs. We found him, I dropped the dinghy. Just as I dropped the dinghy to him, Murchison, which was standing off the coast of Shalo on the west coast, couldn't get in close, sent its whaler to pick him up. Just as he got in the dinghy, Murchison's whaler arrived, pulled him out of the dinghy, stabbed the dinghy to sink the damn thing and that was
- 12:30 it. So my trip was pretty unnecessary. We did one operation on the east coast at Hung Nam, which is up there. It was the time when there were attempts to negotiate a truce. The frontline was static because they had been backwards and forwards. As the things that people do,
- 13:00 when you're negotiating with the other fellow for a piece, you beat the living daylights out of him, to show him how strong you are to make him come to the table. So we were detailed off to go to the east coast to carry out attacks on the frontline, which the Furies did, while we Fireflies attacked some tunnels and also did shore bombardment. Spotting. With shore bombardment, the ship will come up as close as it can to the coast
- 13:30 within reason. The target has to be within gun range, which is a bout 10 miles for a destroyer. You then spot the fall of shot for the ship, because the ship can't see the fall of shot, and you give corrections. Up 1,000 right 1,000 and away they go again. Off we went and my section leader was detailed to shoot with HMS Belfast, which was a cruiser. I was detailed to shoot with
- 14:00 HMAS Tobruk. So we exchanged call signs and the procedure is that you went through a patter, the spotter will adjust, meaning the aircraft as a spotter, will adjust the fall of shot as opposed to the ship adjusting it on you telling them where they were. The ship then says, "Ready." You acknowledge that. You then say, "Shoot," to the ship, because you've got to be ready to see where the rounds fall. The ship will then say, "Shot,"
- 14:30 as the rounds are on the way. Then a couple of seconds before the rounds are supposed to arrive on the ground, the ship will say, "Splash." That means you know where it should be and you know where to be looking, because it's not that easy to see it. Away we went and Tobruk fired its round of a couple of ranging rounds and I saw them and made a correction and a couple more rounds, and the
- 15:00 corrections were no relation to what was on the ground. Some thing's wrong here. The ship then said, "We'll have to come closer to affect your last correction." I thought, "Something's very wrong. There's the ship, there's the target." They were well within range. Then the penny dropped. I said, "Are you using Woolly Peter?" which is white phosphorous ranging rounds, which are special rounds with white phosphorous, and when it hits the ground it gives a big white puff of smoke. Back
- 15:30 came the reply, "Negative." I guess you've worked out I was ranging the destroyer on the cruiser's fall of shot. So we unscrambled that lot and finished the shoot, which was not very successful. When I came back to Australia, during my watch keeping time, we had Tobruk's officers over to lunch. The gunnery officer of Tobruk had been in Tobruk, saw my wings and said, "You're a birdie?" I said, "Yup." He said, "I met the biggest idiot." So
- 16:00 there you go. Good story. We were then detailed off to attack a tunnel. They used to park their trains in a tunnel during the daytime and then move the traffic, it was the east where they needed their supplies. We did 140 with 1,000-pound bombs. Because the weight limitation of the aircraft, we had to fly
- 16:30 with less fuel and we had to loose the amount of 20 millimetre ammunition we had to bring the aircraft weight in the CG [Centre of Gravity] range. Off we went. It was just the two of us, my section leader and myself, my section leader dropped his bombs, which didn't go off. Whether he had failed to fuse them, I don't know. I then attacked, I managed to put my bombs into the tunnel and they countermined his bombs. Are you familiar with countermining?

No.

Countermining's where

- 17:00 an explosive will set off another explosive by the explosion of the first explosion. As a result we had 4,000 pounds of bombs going off together right in the mouth of the tunnel. We were credited with a train. Good fun. That's about all. The operations were pretty routine. We went out and attacked bridges,

we did recces [reconnaissance]. If we saw something

17:30 we shot at it and then we came back to the ship.

Did you always come back to the ship?

I did. I was lucky. I always came back to the ship. A lot of the people had to divert to the shore because they'd been battle damaged. There were two islands on the west coast. If you go from Seoul the land runs east west and then turns the corner and then goes up to Chanampo and then Pyongyang and the Arlu (UNCLEAR). There were two islands. Cho-do and

18:00 Pyongyang-do. Pyongyang-do is where you turn the corner and Cho-do is a bit further up. Both these islands had South Korean guerrillas on them. They were islands you could go to if you were shot up and you had to get down on the ground. We had one of our young sub-lieutenants in the Royal Navy, a fellow on exchange with us, who had to land on Pyongyang-do and he was sleeping. He woke

18:30 up and there were a pair of ears on his chest. The South Korean guerrillas had been on a raid and been successful. Came back and he was a hero so he got two ears. He was as white as a sheet for weeks afterwards. The losses. We lost Keith Clarkson in a Sea Fury on a rocket attack. He was diving and he rolled in and went straight in. So obviously he was hit.

19:00 The aircraft crashed. It was in November.

What did you see of that accident?

Nothing. I wasn't there. That's what happened. Then we had a fellow by the name of Sinclair who was hit by a radar control gun and he tried to bale out and hit the tail plane. That killed him. His body was picked up by chopper. Our chopper, it was on a mud bank somewhere and we took him back and buried him off the quarter deck. Then one of my course mates who had been back coursed to the course

19:30 after us because he had broken his arm or leg or something. He was on a combat air patrol in a Sea Fury in very bad weather. We can only surmise he lost his instruments and spun in. So there were three losses. So we were very lucky, really. We lost 10 aircraft and 90 aircraft, we didn't have 90 aircraft, but over the period of 5 months, 90 aircraft suffered battle damage. Typhoon Ruth.

20:00 **Tell us about the burial at sea of your.**

We just mustered on the quarter deck and the usual routine for burial at sea. A few prayers and wrapped him in a hammock with a shot at the foot, so the body sinks, then slip the body over the side and that was it.

Is there a ritual in stitching up a hammock?

They used to say that the carpenter was meant to put the needle through your

20:30 nose. Have you heard that one?

Yes.

Did you hear the story about the chief of noble staff who died, Arch Harrington?

No.

This is going on well after. They buried him at sea, but they forgot to, they buried him in a coffin and forgot to put holes in it. There was the coffin floating around and the family standing on the quarter deck watching this coffin and they said, "Boat away," and they couldn't sink the damn thing. Typical old Arch. True story.

21:00 Typhoon Ruth?

Does the last stitch go through the nose?

I think it's one of those tales.

What sort of bombs were you dropping?

Standard 500 pound HE, high explosive, bombs. But we used delay fuses.

Any other bomb?

The 1,000 pound bomb I mentioned in the tunnel which we used once.

21:30 The Furies rocketed all the time 60 pound HE rockets. We just bombed.

Napalm?

No. Wouldn't want to take napalm off the deck, that's for sure.

What was the tactical advantage of a carrier based aircraft as opposed to land based aircraft?

The beauty of carrier based aircraft was the flexibility. We could range up and down the

22:00 coast and be where the area of operations was just like that. Which is the advantage of carrier based aircraft. But, the west coast is shallow and therefore the carrier couldn't get that close to the coast.

How far from the coast were you flying?

We'd be 20 miles, something like that. Quite close relatively speaking.

What was the length of an operation?

About an hour and a half as I recall. Roughly an hour and a half to

22:30 two hours. Depends on where you were going and what you were doing.

The search

23:00 **and rescue operations that you were on, how were they coordinated?**

In the Korean War, if somebody was shot down the war stopped almost. Air war. All air assets that were there were put on to put protective fire around the downed aviator or aviators until a rescue chopper could get in and pick them up. Did you see the film Bridges of Toko-Ri? Do you know of it?

No.

Worth seeing. Sums it up.

23:30 United States carrier. Mickey Rooney was the chopper pilot. In the case of Blue McMillan when he was shot down, his engine stopped. They were too low to bale out, which was fortunate that they didn't. He managed to put down, force land it, wheels up of course. His flight knew he'd been shot down. We immediately called in, I wasn't there, it was another flight. Immediately called in

24:00 Sea Furies which were there to put a protective ring around him. They bombed anybody on the ground making a move. They were a long way inland. We had a United States Navy Dragonfly helicopter. UP28. With a United States navy crew. There was some doubt whether it was within range of the helicopter. This chief pilot in the United States Navy

24:30 said, "I'll go" and he took his crewmen with him. They were escorted to where McMillan and Hancock, his observer, were on the ground. The crewman, United States Navy crewman, bit of a character, shot a couple of Koreans as they came into the hover. They picked up McMillan and Hancock and flew back to Kimpo. They couldn't get back to the ship, it was too far away. It was on record as the longest rescue carried

25:00 out in the Korean War. In fact it featured in the Illustrated London News. Remember the Illustrated London News? They were sketches in there. Blue arrived back at ship. It's the first time I've seen the bar opened out at sea. The captain allowed the bar to be open at sea. Blue had a cut in his forehead. I said to him, "Did you hit the gun sight?" which was always a problem. Remember Gorton hit his gun sight, that's why his face all over the thing. He said, "No, it was

25:30 getting in the helicopter." He was so enthusiastic leaping in that he didn't look where he was going and hit his forehead.

Were there particular things you carried in case you were shot down?

Yes, we had a 38 pistol and 40 rounds of ammunition, which would have been absolutely useless. We had them anyway. We also had a fluorescent panels, red and orange fluorescent panels and we had a code. Don't ask

26:00 me the code because I can't remember it. With which you could indicate where the enemy was by pointing, making it into an arrow and so forth. You could also make the code 'I'm okay' or 'I'm not okay' with these two panels. It was very effective. In fact the Yanks adopted it after we developed it.

What was the code radio call sign if you had been shot down?

'I've been hit'. Simple as that. I never had to do it.

26:30 The ship's call sign was 'Shoeshine', which got abbreviated to 'Shine'. The ship was just called 'Shine'. We just used our old peace time flight call signs. '20 flight', '21 flight', so forth.

And your individual call sign?

27:00 You had a flight call sign, that's all.

What was yours?

I was in the 2nd flight and I was 22-4. My aircraft was 207.

Were you always allocated the same aircraft?

No. You couldn't be. We only had a bit over 12 aircraft in the squadron. They ended up being used by

everybody, but you had your name on the side of the aircraft, but the chances of flying your aircraft were pretty remote.

On the ground

27:30 **attack role. How much can you see of the object you're attacking?**

A beach, no problem at all.

I'm thinking more of troops.

It depends. In the case of the Chinese, they were in white for some reason or other and you could see them quite clearly running around. In fact, the Furies, when we went to the east coast, their task was supporting 3RAR [3rd Royal Australian Regiment] on the front line. They got in amongst the Chinese and

28:00 were credited with 200 Chinese.

Were there tactics used to minimise time over enemy territory doing a ground attack?

You got in quick and got out quick. You only attacked once. You didn't attack twice that's for sure. That's a good way to get yourself shot down. You went in as deep and quick as you possibly could.

28:30 Then, as you climbed away you were weaving.

What was your parachute drill? Did you feel adequately briefed?

I did. I mentioned earlier about baling out of a Firefly and how you leapt along the wing and the observer dived down. No, we were pretty happy about that. The essential thing was not to get caught up in your dinghy. We had a dinghy lanyard, which was attached to your Mae West.

29:00 You could bale out, if you jumped out of the aircraft without the parachute, having undone it, you could still be attached by the dinghy lanyard. It was absolutely essential to disconnect it before you entered the deck landing pattern.

Tell us a Bingo fuel story.

We didn't use Bingos then.

Can you tell us a story of, it's obviously a concern to a pilot.

Dead right. I had a very nasty incident when I was on exchange with a student flying Seahawk.

29:30 Bingo 1, each aircraft had its own fuel state for Bingos. Bingo 1 was the first level that you alerted your flight leader to. Bingo 2 you had to go home. When I was on exchange with the Royal Navy in '58-'60 and I was learning Seahawks

30:00 we had an aerobatic team. We used to use one of the fuel tanks for oil for making smoke. This student had one of these aircraft, he was down on fuel, he missed his first Bingo call and he came up with Bingo 2 and I thought, "Oh my God." We started homing, there was weather, overhead cover. We started homing. I guarantee you it was the longest homing to the overhead I've ever done. We had the wind against us. Then they declared we had to do a ground controlled

30:30 approach as opposed to just a simple let down. It was a Vickers 3 aircraft. I was prying he would run out of fuel. We touched down, turned down the runway and he flamed out. I had some explaining to do.

What about in Korea?

We didn't have any problems there. Plenty of fuel. We flew two double 55 gallon drop tanks on, plus a 200 gallon main tank. So we had stacks of fuel. Never an issue. Unless you got hit in the tank.

31:00 **What was the endurance of the Firefly?**

It would have been, depends what power you carry, it would have been at least 3 hours. More. It was never an issue. The Firefly usually flew with a radar on the right wing called the ash radar for anti-submarine work. It had originally been developed for night fighter work, when the Firefly was being used as a night fighter. So we

31:30 didn't have those. You could put a drop tank there and that's why we had double drop tanks.

How vulnerable did you feel to the new threat of jets?

In Korea?

Yes.

Not at all. They just weren't in our area. Perhaps I'm being a bit casual, but it's true. It was never, the MiGs never came down south that far,

32:00 because they were mainly being flown by Russians. If they'd been shot down, that would have been

World War 111, if you appreciate the point. I've subsequently read about the Russian participation in the Korean War and it was considerable. Really considerable.

What was your closest shave in Korea?

Didn't have one. Truly.

32:30 I had some embarrassing incidents, but I guess I could have been disabled by my own bomb, but I wasn't. I didn't even know it had happened until I got down on the ground. Out deck landing performance improved considerably, because we were worked up. I think we only had 1 accident in about 400 deck landings. That is considerable, very good. So deck landing wasn't a problem. Weather wasn't a problem.

33:00 Interesting enough, in the cabin I was in, in the Kasbah which I mentioned earlier up forward, it was a 6 cabin. Everybody in, two had been shot down in my cabin, my two course mates, McMillan and Knapstein, both recovered. The others had all been hit. We had a steward who looked after us in this cabin. Just at the very end of our operation he said, "Something's been worrying me.

33:30 You're the only one that hasn't been hit." Bugger, I wasn't hit. It made me think a bit.

What superstitions did you have?

None.

Pilots in the Second World War used to have a piss on the rear wheel.

True. Yes. I wasn't superstitious, but you really wanted a cigarette when you came down. That's for sure.

34:00 No. I can't, we didn't have any that I can think of.

Any mascot on the Sydney?

No. Animals are not allowed in the RAN. There weren't any. Unless there were rats.

Were there rats?

Yes, all ships have rats. It seems impossible to keep them out. One of the interesting things, when we were operating in the middle of winter, it was freezing cold, we had what we called poopy-suits,

34:30 immersion suits, which were rubber fabric, a ring around your neck and your sleeves. The boots were part of the suit. Survival. Because the Firefly was liquid cooled engine, it had a problem up on the flight deck because we were carrying aircraft on the flight deck, we couldn't put them all in the hangar. It had to be oil diluted. It was a system that was installed in the aircraft that you injected

35:00 petrol into the oil. I don't know if you've heard of it. So you ran the engine up, got it warm and then operated this control which injected a given amount of petrol into the oil, which diluted it considerably. But when you started the following day, it evaporated fairly rapidly. It was called dilution. We sub-lieutenants had to do that on the flight deck in the middle of bloody winter. It was cold I can tell you. I felt more for the sailors who

35:30 were hanging on to the chocks, lying on the flight deck freezing. We didn't have much in the way of protective gear. We weren't geared for freezing cold weather.

Did anyone ditch while you were up there?

Yes, quite a few. We had one fellow bale out and he was the CO of one of the Fury squadrons. He was worried he was going to go into the water and would his dinghy

36:00 work. He arrived, he was up to there, standing in the mud. He was picked up by chopper.

What did you see of the operations on the ground? Did you ever go ashore?

No. I went ashore, yes, to take the mail ashore occasionally. But that was Kimpo and at that stage, the line was static just north of Seoul.

36:30 We never saw any ground operations, no. Not on the ground.

What was the hairiest operation you went on?

I don't know. Good question. I suppose the first attack we did at Japan, which I mentioned we had the four bridges. We were dive bombing and my observer said, "They're shooting at us."

37:00 That was a sort of an introduction to operations. More concerned about making certain you hit the target. Got to remember I was 22 years old. If you're 22 you're immortal.

Nevertheless, there are fears you hold in an aeroplane.

I've been frightened in an aircraft, but not in Korean. Sorry about the bit. You can

- 37:30 take that out. Can I just make the point that our operations in Korea were not the blood and guts stuff of 77 Squadron. 77 Squadron lost 40 something pilots over 3 years. We lost three. When we were there, Glory before us had lost stacks of aircrew. We were just lucky. We were there for 5 months and it was a relatively quiet period.
- 38:00 So it was not a case of heroic or anything like that, it wasn't.
- How often were you flying?**
- About twice a day when we were on ops.
- Any difficulty or uncertainty about finding the location of the aircraft carrier once you came back?**
- No. It was quite close. The ship was fairly close. We knew where it was. It was only about 20 miles off the coast. We were under radar control, so
- 38:30 never a problem. I must admit, coming back, having dropped the dinghy to the American, it was getting dark by the time I got back to the ship and the escorting destroyers had their top lights on. I was cocking up the deck landing approach because I had a bee in my bonnet about having dropped the dinghy, which was all psychological as it turned out. They finally cut me, I got on. I didn't bend the aeroplane. But
- 39:00 that was a bit, getting a bit dramatic, but I got off.
- How often did you get the cut?**
- How do you mean?
- They finally cut you. Why was that landing dramatic?**
- Because I was skidding in too fast. I thought I had an unbalanced aircraft again. Remember I told you about the bombs and the drop tanks that weren't coming off? I'd had an aircraft that I kept on getting, which wouldn't
- 39:30 feed its drop tank. I got very cross with the ship's engineer officer, I was only a sub-lieutenant. I said a few words to my CO, I got very cross with him. This damned aeroplane wouldn't drain this particular tank. You've got 55 gallons of fuel stuck out on the one wing, and nothing on the other. It's a pretty unbalanced aeroplane. They ended up changing the wing, which you could do. I just had this psychological thing that I was skidding and when I got out of the aircraft all had gone
- 40:00 with the dinghy. It was up here.
- Was there any possibility because of the unsafe aircraft that you had to ditch and they'd pick you up?**
- No.
- Was there any training in that regard?**
- We knew how to ditch. You ditch along the swell, you don't ditch in the swell. That type of thing. You touched down as slow as you possibly can. We knew
- 40:30 all that. Yes. We'd been briefed. There wasn't great emphasis on it. Most of the aircraft had to have forced landing on those islands, but didn't ditch.

Tape 7

- 00:31 **What was the lead up to the Typhoon Ruth?**
- We were in Sasebo at that stage. We alternated between Sasebo and Kure. We were in Sasebo and Royal Navy philosophy was that you did not stay in harbour on a typhoon. Do you know about Calliope?
- 01:00 She was the only iron ship, there was a lot of foreigners on a port in the pacific and she was the only one that sailed and the others all were blown ashore. We sailed and immediately double lashed the aircraft in the hangar and on the flight deck, because we had aircraft on the flight deck. We couldn't put them all in the hangar. Very shortly afterwards, we were into the thick and the ship was rolling, there have been various statements, 30-35 degrees. That's a fair roll, believe me.
- 01:30 It's a fact that the waves were over 45 feet in height. Because the flight deck was 44 feet and we lost a boat which was stowed behind the island on the flight deck, and we lost a tractor which was forward of the island which was just taken away by the waves. The ship was effectively battened down to damage control state. There were various pipes broadcast, they call it a pipe.
- 02:00 One of the standard ones is 'Fuel danger, no smoking on the flight and weather decks'. Of course this

kept on being made. You couldn't stand, let alone smoke, on the flight decks, but we went on with the routine. As people do. Because the ship was rolling so much and there was so much water, it was going down the exhaust-trunking of an electric motor, which operates things like lifts and so forth, causing electrical fires. Throughout the night, there were constant pipes about 'Fire

02:30 here', 'Fire there'. They were never, they were all electrical fires, they were never any other type of fire, which is worse. We sub-lieutenants were up in the Kasbah. The ship was pitching and rolling and we were being thrown around, our lockers were being thrown open and our gear would fall out, we'd put it all back again. I remember my mate Blue McMillan used to wear silk underwear. He had a bristle brush that fell on his bunk and he fell back on it. He thought he'd been

03:00 bitten by something. Very amusing. We were playing pontoon and there was a pipe 'Fire, fire, fire, fire in the bomb room'. The bomb room was right underneath the Kasbah. We all looked at each other, "Wow." Just dust off our hands because that's all you could do. We sub-lieutenants and the other squadron officers carried out rounds of the hangar

03:30 during the night. We didn't suffer any damage at all on the hangar to the aircraft, not a scrap of damage. It was remarkable. And the hangar was really crowded with aircraft, really jammed in. Have you ever been on a carrier? I don't suppose so. Different story on the flight deck. I think we, I don't know how many aircraft we had on the flight deck. It would have been roughly 10. They got really badly battered. One Firefly

04:00 broke its lashings completely because once they start to loosen up, then they'll just break. There were steel wire lashings. This Firefly went over the ship's side, taking other aircraft into the gun sponsons with it. All that was left of the aircraft the following morning were its wingtips, which were only about that wide and that long, still lashed to the deck with wire but no aeroplane. The following morning, in the daylight, we went up on the

04:30 flight deck, and it was just like a car wreckers yard. It was chaos. So they assessed the aircraft. Those that were written off were written off, those that could be repaired were taken off later and then we got back on the operations. But it was pretty exciting stuff.

What happens when there's a fire in a ship?

I've been in a couple. It's frightening. Really is.

05:00 Depending where the fire is and what the circumstances are. When I was the Executive Officer of Queenborough, when I was off Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean where all the fellows are, would be markers. The petty officer stoker lighting the boiler spilt it. Spilt some fuel and it flashed onto the bottom of the

05:30 boiler room and flashed up a bulk head. By the grace of God, the engineer officer pumped out everything before we got into Christmas Island. If he hadn't that would have been it. So that was exciting stuff.

How far did the fire get?

Only in the boiler room. It damaged a lot of electrical equipment in the boiler room, but it didn't go beyond the boiler room.

What about the electrical fires that broke out in Sydney?

They put themselves out. They were just flashing type fires. The motor would just stop.

06:00 Didn't have any other fires.

What facilities for fighting fire are there on an aircraft carrier?

Quite a lot. Very much so, because we were dealing very dangerous fuels. The hangar for instance has a flooding arrangement that you can just flood it with water. There are big fire curtains that come down to compartmentalise the hangar.

Who was in charge of that fire fighting?

Don't know.

06:30 Good questions. It would have been the hangar control officer would have been the responsible part for the hangar, but fire parties for the various parts of the ship would have been responsible for those various parts of ship to go and check. There's a very proper organisation to monitor things like that. Not only just fires, but damage you know.

The signal went out that the ship was in emergency mode.

07:00 **What was that mode?**

Ships have damage control states, which have two aspects. There's the actual damage control and there's the nuclear attack aspect of it. You go down to a state of 1 x-ray if I recall, where it's completely closed down. Every hatch is closed down, everything. Then if you're in a nuclear situation, the fans are

off, etc., etc., etc. So

07:30 yes, there's a well laid down procedure for buttoning a ship down.

How are the aircraft lashed?

Each naval aircraft had strong points set up in the wing for instance, on the wingtip, the fuselage and you just lash it to the ringbolts in the deck. You can shift the ringbolts to suit the aircraft. The cable's about that thick.

08:00 **What injuries were there?**

I don't think there were any, that I knew of. No, we were a pretty worked-up ship. We were pretty healthy bunch of young fellows. They could look after themselves. I don't think there were any injuries. There were certainly no deaths or major injuries that I heard of, no. It was very good. The captain, Harries was his name, his nickname was Darbo.

08:30 You're horse racing people? Ever heard of Darby Munroe? He was called Darbo because he was always on your back. But he was a good captain. It stripped the paint of the ship's side. That's something.

Is the ship at anchor?

No, no. Steaming at sea. Just steaming to maintain steerage way

09:00 to get the best aspect to the wind and sea, because it was a combination of both wind and sea. The last thing you want is the wind and sea up your backside. So it was just keeping it on the bow you had control of the ship. We had a Royal Navy commander navigator on board and he was a very good shore handler.

What was your role in the cleanup?

Nothing very much actually. The ground handling party handles that

09:30 sort of thing. I just go round and look at the aircraft and saying, "Gee whiz," you know.

How many of the aircraft were damaged and what was the damage?

I've got the figures actually. A number were definitely written off and some were damaged, but repairable. They were sitting with collapsed undercarriage, some were in sponsons, stopped from going over the side in a, gun sponson on the side of the ship. It was pretty dramatic.

10:00 **How did that affect the missions?**

It didn't. We sailed back in when the typhoon went, because typhoons go, replenished the aircraft because the RN had stocks of aircraft there which we tapped into. We just replaced our aircraft and got on with it.

Was there other damage to the ship apart from the paint?

When I was a captain in the port of Sydney, I was responsible for ships in reserve. Sydney was up for sale and a

10:30 Canadian tended for Sydney and he complained that the weight that had been declared for the weight of ship was wrong because he'd surveyed it and had already bought more fleets. You can imagine he knew stuff. He said, "By the way, you've got a 2 inch twist in the ship." Whether that was a result of Ruth I don't know, but it had a 2 inch twist in it. And he'd surveyed the ship. The front head was

11:00 doing that and the back end's doing that. Like you've seen big aircraft's wings flex, so the ship has to flex. If it's rigid it will break. It was interesting how the front end could be doing that and the back end was wagging.

What did it sound like on board when the typhoon.

It was noisy. Not so much in the Kasbah because we were inboard. But

11:30 all the pipes going on and. It was a pretty exciting night.

Does the ship itself make a noise?

It depends where you are on the ship. You can hear crinking and groaning.

What other noises apart from the pipes?

Just the crinking and groaning. There's always machinery noise. In fact, when the ship is shut down it's suddenly, "What's the noise" because there's no noise. There's always machinery noise. Fans and

12:00 generators running.

How much can the ship steer itself out of a typhoon?

Well, the secret is to accurately assess where the typhoon is. I'm certain you know that typhoons rotate anti-clockwise in the northern hemisphere and clockwise in the southern hemisphere. You know that, and you know by the pressure differentials where the eye typhoon is. I've been in another one by

- 12:30 the way in the States, but it was nowhere near Ruth. The measure, the seamen's skill is to know where to steam to get out of the typhoon, which we did.

What's it like in the eye of a storm like that?

I don't recall Ruth eye, but I recall the one in the States. It's exactly as they say it is. It goes quiet, the wind drops and the sun's shining.

- 13:00 All of a sudden it reverses, because you're actually right in the eye of the. It tracked right over the top of us in Florida. Fascinating. Only a little one.

What were you doing at that stage?

I was on an aviation history tour of the States. This was a few years ago.

What did you see of Japan during the Korean War?

Well, we didn't see that much. I had to go to

- 13:30 Iwakuni to test fly a Firefly and also to compass swing it, turn the aircraft round to check the compass. I took a couple of observers with me. We were in uniform because we were still at war with Japan nominally, this was '51. We went by train from Kure to Sasebo. We said, "Well let's go to Hiroshima." So we did. We stopped off at Hiroshima

- 14:00 and it was absolutely flat. This was '51, five years after the event. We wandered round, saw the peace building. You know the peace building there? And everything was flat. We wanted to try and get something to eat. This was 5 years after the event. So there were obviously places you could get a meal. We wandered into a place which we thought was sort of a café. They were pretty cool to us until they realised that we'd made a

- 14:30 mistake. It wasn't a café, it was a private club. When they realised that we'd made a mistake and we were innocent, they took us out the back and we were there for about 4 hours having what they call a cow sukiyaki, drinking Asahi beer, which tastes all right, but smells terrible. The Japanese women were on a one-string samisen playing the Japanese coal miners' song. Have you ever heard that? Quite an experience.

Was this entirely Japanese

- 15:00 **this club?**

Yes. Totally. Also in the club at Kure there was a BCOF, a British Commonwealth Occupation Force, and they'd set themselves up very nicely thank you. We'd go to the club, because we were desperate for fresh food. You'd have a Chateaubriand steak for two. There was a little Japanese waitress. She would have been about 16.

- 15:30 I found the women were perfectly all right. Didn't like the men. This was only 5 years after the war. This little girl, she had a sense of humour and we called her Tuppence. She'd serve us, Tuppence. We'd get our menus and we'd look at her over the top and the poor kid couldn't help giggling at us looking over the Mama San was saying "Don't do that, don't do that" and the poor kid would sort of put a serious face on and very amusing. Brings tears to my eyes, remembering.

- 16:00 That's about all I saw of Japan that time.

What was the situation with the occupying forces and their relationship with the locals that you saw?

By that stage it was pretty well established. They'd been there 5 years. My father was there with my mother with the occupation force. They went up in '46 I think. He was the engineer officer for 78 Squadron. It was just by sheer chance he wasn't the engineer of

- 16:30 77 squadron. 78 came back and 77 stayed.

How much leave, R&R would you get?

We subs were under some control. People stayed ashore overnight but that's all. Didn't go off somewhere. I think a few managed to get away, but I certainly didn't. I didn't have enough money.

What did the sailors and

- 17:00 **naval airmen like to do on their leave?**

Can I turn that thing off?

It's a ribald tale?

They'd just go to the local brothel obviously, which they did.

Was Japan well serviced for brothels?

Well services, yes. Particularly at Kure and Sasebo.

What was the situation on the ship re disease in that respect?

It wasn't good.

17:30 **How did the navy try and control that?**

Education. I remember when I joined they showed us some photographs that put you off it for life, I can tell you, of syphilis and gonorrhoea and all the rest of it. Jolly Jack is driven by other things that that. They'd get in among. Some of them had their Popsies. Some of them got themselves established.

18:00 **Albeit only, they'd visit them each time we came in.**

What was the term you used?

Female, Popsy.

What does that mean?

Just a term for female. Popsy. Where have you guys been? I thought you were historians.

18:30 **Is there any other naval slang you can recall from your time?**

We had terms for everything. A meal of scrans - you always went ashore. You had to make 'a mend'. A bugler was called a drummer for very good reason. You've seen your history films, 'Beat the quarters Mr

19:00 captain', so the drummer goes tum-tum-tum. They then moved on to bugles for the bugle calls. Didn't change the name. So on Sydney you'd hear, "Drummer, lay aft," it was the bugler. Perhaps illogical. Very much tradition in the navy. Much more than the other two services.

Any other interesting terms that spring to mind?

I'll try to think. Soft drink was a goffer.

19:30 The toilets were the heads, which springs from the fact that the toilets used to be in the bows of the ship, the heads. If loose gear was left lying around it'd be put in the scrans bag [a bag a mess deck in which spare or damaged clothing and rags are collected], scranned was an expression. Better ask my wife, she'd know more than me.

20:00 **What nicknames did people get on board?**

I've told you about Throm, the wandering... He actually phoned me one day in the Kasbah and actually said, "It's Throm here." I nearly dropped dead.

Do you think he was aware of what it meant?

Oh yeah. No question. We had a Scottish senior pilot who was a 2nd commander this one, Matt Wetherspoon. He was a hoot.

20:30 We used to have the authorisation book, which you were entered in the authorisation book. You were authorised to go and fly until you became self authorised. He'd walk into the crew and say, "Where's the book, where's the boooooook?" Dear old Matt's dead now. They're all dead. Our air crew commander was a fellow by the name of Fell, who had a DSO [Distinguished Service Order] and two DCMs [Distinguished Conduct Medals] and he ended up as vice admiral, sir

21:00 Michael Fell. Had a charming wife, Jane, gorgeous creature. In fact, he was CO of Lossiemouth when I was exchanged ... in '58-'60. He was CO of the air station. Jane used to wear purple. Some years later on he was captain of Victorious, which was a carrier, and I was flying to the UK, I had just been promoted to commander. I was sitting in the seat and there was an empty seat alongside me

21:30 and all the wives had come down from Singapore to visit Australia, tourist you see. Joan must have got the message I was on board this 707 and came up and sat alongside me. "Hello Norman." Marvellous. It's good to see a woman like that. I didn't have any designs. Don't misunderstand me.

Did he have a particular name?

Just known as Mike Fell, the air group commander, you didn't call him anything else.

22:00 Good operator. He had been a fighter pilot with the RN during the war. Oh dear. Keep going.

The Korean War was static.

In our day, yes.

How did being used for political purposes affect people on the ground?

I don't think it made any difference to be quite frank.

22:30 You're talking about the North Koreans?

No, how did it affect you as a fighting crew, being involved in a war where nothing was happening?

We were all for it. We knew what it was for and we hoped it would bring the war to an end, because there was no point in the war. It was static. In fact, what was the call sign? We were given a call sign, a word. What was the word?

23:00 It'll come to me. If we heard this word we were to immediately abort an attack because it meant that the truce had been agreed. In fact if you'd dropped a bomb you would have leapt down to grab it. What was it called? It'll come to me. But it didn't happen, and the war went on for another couple of years. 53. In fact we just had the ceremony here for the celebrating the end of the war 50 years

23:30 after the end of the war. I was the Master of Ceremonies at the Korean memorial. We had two interesting ships with us. We had a Canadian destroyer called the Haida, who had a doctor on board who did the most amazing things, operations and so forth, but he wasn't a doctor. He conned the Canadian navy that he was a doctor and he

24:00 faked it in Life, US Magazine, afterwards. He couldn't do this, but he was highly successful as a doctor. Quite amazing. The other ship we had was the Van Galen, a Dutch ship. I'll never forget they invited us over. They used to have Bols gin. Have you ever drunk Bols gin? Don't. She did a shoot. Remember I mentioned the procedure for spotter will adjust, shoot, shot and all that stuff. Van Galen in English would say, "On zee vay.

24:30 Splish." Very amusing. Instead of 'splash'.

When you bombed a bridge, the next day it would be rebuilt. How did that affect morale?

Not at all. We appreciated what the poor old North Koreans were doing and they had to rebuild them and we had to knock them down. Simple as that. Again I make the point I was 22 years old.

25:00 You don't think about politics and the higher policy. You just get on and do the job. That's true.

You are seeing people die, though.

Ah, yeah. But it won't happen to me. Because I'm immortal. As a youngster. I've read extensively, I'm a war historian type of person, and I've read extensively on a considerable number of wars and how people survive

25:30 in war. The dominant factor, you're not there for God, queen or king and country and all that. You're not. You're there so that you don't let your mates down and they don't see you letting them down. That's the single strongest factor. That's very true.

You were

26:00 **replaced by the Glory again?**

Yes. We relieved Glory and then Glory relieved us. She came down to Australia to re-fit.

What was the procedure for being relieved by the other aircraft carrier?

Just briefed on what was happening operation wise, sorted aircraft out because we were combining aircraft. We were commonwealth situation. Sorry about this.

26:30 Then we just steamed home, we didn't fly on the way back, there was no point. When we arrived home we went on leave, rejoined our squadrons and just got along as though absolutely nothing had happened. Nothing at all. The only concession we got in Korea was penny postage. Tax free and penny postage. My son-in-law was up in East Timor, 120 dollars a day for God's sake. Unreal.

How was

27:00 **the mail? You did the mail run?**

Yes.

What was it like to receive mail when you were away?

Excellent. You really wanted it.

how did it come to you?

It could be Jack Stay transferred from another ship, or me bringing it back from Kimpo, but it was arranged, the mail authorities knew what was happening and so it was arranged.

Was there any particular gift of clippings of news that you recall receiving?

Christmas Day

27:30 1951, who made the gift to us? We had Black Velvet, which is stout and champagne. Stacks of it. Somebody donated this lot. It was a jolly day, I can tell you.

What was it like to be home?

Good. How can I say it? It's true, It

28:00 is true when I say I really enjoyed my time in Korea. I did. It was 3 years of training, then I went and did what I was supposed to be trained for, I survived it and I enjoyed it. I learnt a lot. I've now got a gold card from veterans affairs and I get all my medical bills for free. Marvellous.

I'm sure that's not why you went there in the first place.

I would have tried twice as hard if I'd have known.

28:30 **What were your ambitions once this had happened.**

We went back to the squadron, we went back to Mark 6 Fireflies with our cannon. Got on with anti-submarine work. Very shortly afterwards I was sent off to go to sea in Murchison, the little frigate, to get a watch keeping certificate. To train me as a seaman officer. The concept was the an aviator is not meant to be any different to any other specialist. A gunnery officer could

29:00 communicate a anti-submarine. A pilot observer, all the same. You were meant to be able to go up in your specialisation and a seaman officer. Didn't really work out because you were spending an awful lot of time flying. I went in Murchison. I had a two day handover. I was the fo'c'sle officer, the anti-submarine control officer, the captain's secretary, the ward room mess secretary, the sports officer, the national service training officer.

29:30 No courses, two day handover. How about that?

You were still 23 years old?

I was about 23.

How did you handle that?

I did, didn't I? I did. I loved it. This is what happened. You tend to think in the services that you're doing the same job. You're not. Every two years in the services you get a totally different job, just when you know what this job's all about you go to another one.

30:00 It was a case of sink or swim and I got in there and swam.

How did your view of the navy change when you were given this new role?

Quite a lot actually. I thought, "This is the best of both worlds." In fact, I asked permission to go and do some refresher flying halfway through seagoing time. I went down to Nowra and flew and anti-submarine patrol with the ship.

30:30 I thought, "Here I am, flying an anti-submarine patrol with that ship."

You had joined the navy to fly.

Yes.

You'd been trained for war.

Yes.

You'd been to war, you'd come back.

Yes.

What were you thinking about doing in the navy now?

Staying in it. The point being, the reason we had to be seamen officers was especially if you stayed in

31:00 submarines too long, that was the end of your career because you were then not capable to go along on the main stream. Same in aviation. You couldn't stay in aviation totally because that was the end of your what have you. You can't do it nowadays. I was extremely fortunate that I managed to get both up the commodore's ranks. You can't do it nowadays.

Was there a turning point in your naval career where you started to think, "I could climb up."

Yes. I got promoted to commander.

Get ambitious.

Yeah.

31:30 **When was that?**

Where?

What was the situation?

I had just finished the first Wessex helicopter course and I selected for promotion. You selected 6 months before you were promoted. It's being pregnant if you understand the expression. I was supposed to have the squadron, but I couldn't. Not as a commander I couldn't have the squadron, it was a lieutenant commander's job. I didn't expect to be promoted, it was the first time in the zone, and

32:00 I didn't expect it to happen. I was one of the youngest ever to get promoted. At the age of 32 would you believe? You can't be promoted now under the age of 36. I thought, "Gee whiz, this is it." Then I, where are we?

What did you think the Australian public saw and felt about the Korean War when you came back?

32:30 Nothing. Nothing at all.

What are some examples of you getting this message?

As far as they were concerned, it didn't happen. Except those who were directly affected who lost, there was something like 570-odd people killed in Korea. They were affected, but the rest of the population. You've got to remember that it was just after the Second World War. They were still trying to recover from 5 years of war. They really didn't want to know. There was no question about

33:00 us doing the right thing being part of the United Nations' force, there was no question about that. So there was no antagonisms against us, because you didn't take any notice of it.

How did that complacency make you feel?

Didn't fuss me, not a single, I didn't even think about it. I just thought, "I've come back, I've done my bit in Korea, I'm now going to get on with the rest of it."

33:30 **How did you see the war in the media?**

Unfortunately, it was a great tragedy that the records of all three services operations in Korea were pretty minimal. I've been in a great battle at the War Memorial which I think I've just about won, thank God, about, I gave them maps and so forth. Their display there, I don't know if you've been recently, but their display is nowhere near what it should be.

34:00 I finally got the director to see my point. The reason I gave those things was because there was nothing else. There was no effort to collect things like from the First World War or the Second World War.

It was the forgotten war in many ways.

That is the expression used, 'Ignored War', I prefer to call it. Only now, after the Korean War Memorial has been established on

34:30 Anzac Parade some 3 or 4 years ago, I get invites from the Korean Ambassador, in fact I'm supposed to go next Thursday I can't, for a reception because they reckon we were good chaps. They really do too, think we're good chaps, because they were on the skin of their teeth down at Pusan, literally.

Up until recently when that commemoration began, who did people respond when they learn about your Korean service?

35:00 Quite good. I think there's, like Anzac Day is becoming more and more a thing, you go to the Anzac Day here and the crowd is much greater than it used to be, there is this recognition of accepting Anzac Day as a national day. Therefore Korea is locked in with it., We get out recognition.

Did you join the RSL [Returned and Services League] when you left the navy?

I didn't join it till I left the navy.

35:30 **After the Murchison, what was your next bit?**

I went back to squadron flying and then I selected to do an instructors course. Wrong, I was selected to go to United Kingdom to pick up the Gannets, one of those ghastly aeroplanes there, as the advanced party for the Gannets. So we joined RN squadrons in Northern Ireland again. That's where I met my wife.

36:00 I had done a Vampire conversion to learn to fly these things with jet engines. I did a weapons course, that is where I was doing the weapons course. Came back to Australia with a squadron and was selected to do a flying instructors course, which I went down to East Sale in 1957 and did the No. 17 Flying Instructors Course. Came back to Nowra as the resident jet instructor at Nowra. Then was offered this posting in on exchange to the

- 36:30 UK, '58-'60, which surprised me, because I've always been basically anti-submarine. I was going to a fighter school. I was a flying instructor, but even so. I managed to, fortunately I had a very good commanding officer at the squadron I went to, and I managed to gently worm my way into the fighter world until I had completely transitioned into the fighter world. The fleet
- 37:00 air arm was going to be wrapped up at that stage. The RN fleet air arm, and they tried to get me to join the RN, but common sense said, "Don't do it." I came home to command a second line squadron, Sea Venoms. I was tasked with forming an aerobatic team to open the big airfield down at Avalon. This was 1961. We worked up for about 3 months to do that.
- 37:30 Formation aerobatic. I did a mini night fighter course whilst I was at the other squadron, because it was a night fighter squadron. So I qualified in lots of things. I was then posted to sea again in Queenborough as the executive officer designate. But I hadn't been to sea since 1953. This was 1962. So again, it was sink or swim.
- 38:00 I was essentially promoted out of Queenborough. Captain Murray, the Governor of Victoria, you may know of him, he died, he was my captain. His wife was very ill, she had cancer and I was given command of the ship for a while, which was great. I then went to the UK for a staff course as a commander. Then on the staff at Australia House for two
- 38:30 years. But at that stage, the RAN was going to American aircraft. We had Fireflies and Furies and Wessex helicopters, but now were going to Tracker and Sky Hawk. Therefore the task for me in London was going down. So I took on other jobs like helping them launch the submarines, which was good fun. Came back to Australia, posted as commander of air at Nowra, which
- 39:00 is the fellow who runs the flying. Checked out on the Sky Hawks and checked out on the tracker as commander of air. Didn't - wasn't flying operation, but I flew the aircraft. I was then posted from that position to the Executive of the air station. 2IC of the air station. From there I was selected to be an acting captain to the director of naval intelligence. It was almost a fill-in
- 39:30 job before I became the director of naval aviation policy for 3 year.

Tape 8

- 00:31 **When you went back to sea on the Queenborough after having been on land for a long time, how did you feel things had changed in the interim period?**

Considerably. We were now operating with US Navy forces in the Pacific in major fleet operations, which were very complex. My training had been, the furthest we'd been was Brisbane and Melbourne by ourselves. So we weren't operating ready to

- 01:00 operate with other ships. So it was a very rapid learning process. But again, seamanship is airmanship at 12 knots. If you take the point. They are much the same. Being spatially alert, where you are, what you're doing and what's happening. I remember I arrived as the quarterdeck officer before I became the executive officer because I had a couple of months to get back into the thing.

- 01:30 The quarterdeck party thought they'd try me on. They had a piece of mangled manila which is rope, big thick rope longer than the quarterdeck. One of the leading hands was detailed off to try me out. What do I think of the new way of tying a carrick bend as it was called. There were three ways I could have handled it. I could have bullshitted my way through it, "Yes, definitely very good." I could have said, "I don't know."

- 02:00 I'm not boasting, I'll tell you how I did it. I said to the sailor, "You're the expert, you tell me. Is that a better way?" It took the wind out of their bloody sails. Because you've got experts, you use the experts. When I had my short drive of the ship, we did far better than Voyager who we were operating with. We had a four stripe captain. I was just a 2½. Because I took the advice of the specialist officers on the ship and that's the way I survived.

How had the

- 02:30 **RAN changed in terms of professionalism?**

Considerably. Much more professional. Much more. Several quantum leaps.

Can you think of some concrete things that reflected that change?

Well, operating with a lot of other ships. It can be an awfully dangerous thing if you don't know what you're doing. Things like rotating screen. You had the carrier and you had a screen of ships. The carrier changes course, you have to rotate the screen and you have to manoeuvre your ship to the new position.

- 03:00 You got to know where you're going and how to get there and so forth. It was much more professional.

What things had changed for you personally?

I'd obviously moved up in the rank structure. I think I was the junior 2½ [stripes] on board. I was a senior seaman officer, no I wasn't, there was a supply officer was one day junior to me, but the others were senior

03:30 to me, but that didn't matter because I was the executive officer, and the executive officer is the second in command. They were not seaman officers because that's the way it goes. I sought advice. I got promoted out of the job, so I obviously managed to handle it okay. But again it was this sink or swim. I only ever had one job which I knew all about, which I will tell you in a minute.

04:00 I had flown much faster and more exotic aircraft than the Sky Hawk.

On your command, you'd now moved well up to the rank. What sort of commanding officer were you?

Bit hard.

04:30 **What do you think the crew talked about you as?**

I think most people realises what you see is what you get with me. I don't have any hidden agendas or plays or things like that. When you're in a position like I was, twice particularly seagoing, where you're in a sink or swim situation, you can't give and inch. If you're seen to be weak or

05:00 insufficient knowledge, you'll lose it. Therefore you've got to maintain that. See what I'm getting at? I don't know if you've been in a command situation, have you?

Not in military situation.

You know what I mean. There'll be somebody in the system who, if they think they can work you, they will. It's the same in the military. Not to that extent because you've got the naval discipline act, death or any punishment, here and after mentioned.

05:30 It's a marvellous bit of kit that.

What's that again?

Death or any punishment herein after mentioned. It's the articles of war which you have to read out to the ship's captain every now and then. If you mutiny, death.

Talk about the Gannet.

06:00 The Gannet was the fat lady you get in the barn dance. You know how you do barn dances and you get this fat lady and to your great surprise she's light on her feet and can dance. That was the Gannet. It was very light, had spring tab (UNCLEAR} rings, great rate of roll, very easy to deck land. Nothing in it. Because it was angle deck and you could see where you're going, which makes a big difference. I did mainly

06:30 most of my fluing, I started off in the squadron, but I had to relieve a good friend of mine who was killed in a Vampire, so I had to be pulled off the squadron to be the Gannet instructor. I then went and did an instructors course after doing all the Gannet instructing, but that's by the way. So I did a lot of conversion training, instrument flying and so forth in the Gannet. It suffered badly from engine vibration. They never did resolve the relationship between the twin engines and the combining gearbox.

07:00 But it served well.

Why was it such a good carrier aircraft?

From a carrier point of view, deck landing. You could see where you're going. Approach speed was 90 knots. You just drove it down on the mirror and crunch. You didn't flare you just drove it straight in, no flaring. That takes a bit of doing, I can tell you. Driving an aircraft straight in. Any aircrafts on the backend of the drag curve you must drive it

07:30 straight into the ground. I flew Scimitars and they were in the back of the drag curve. If you flared it all that happens is you accelerated down wards as you created more drag. Well, deck landing is the same, you just drive it straight on. Very easy.

What was the role of the Gannet?

Anti-submarine. That's all strictly anti-submarine. I did the weapons course to be the squadron weapons instructor, so I knew all the weapons systems in the Gannet pretty well.

08:00 I was embarrassed flying a Gannet. Such an ugly aeroplane. But then you get to the little Seahawk and that was absolute perfection. I saw two Seahawks, I told this story, in the hangar of HMS Bullock, when I was doing my initial deck landing training in the Gannet, converted to Gannet. There were these two Seahawks sitting in Bullock's hangar with their wings folded. Beautiful

08:30 little aeroplanes. I thought, "Oh, I'd love to fly those." The chances were zero. I got this posting to the UK and we had Seahawks. Marvellous. I'll tell you a story. We had a surgeon lieutenant on course. I trained up ten courses of fighter pilots. He left one of his old peacocks off and it drained the front tank.

All the fuel's in the fuselage of a

09:00 Hawk. He drained the front tank and his COG [Centre of Gravity] ended up basically on his tail plane because the aircraft was pitching up, he was doing gunnery, and the aircraft was pitching up violently. Finally it flamed out. He set up for a forced landing at an RAF base, King Loss, which is quite close to Lossiemouth in Scotland. He didn't quite make it. He bent the aeroplane a bit, but he was all right. I wrote an article for Aeroplane, the UK magazine about my time on

09:30 Lossy. I mentioned this and I got a letter from him would you believe. I thought, when I saw his name, "Oh my God, what's he going to say?" He was quite congratulatory that I actually had all the facts. Other people had written about it and got the facts wrong from what had happened.

The RAN had Skyhawks?

I'm talking about Seahawks. Seahawk is a totally different aeroplane. The Seahawk followed on from the Sea Fury.

10:00 Then the Hunter followed on from the Seahawk. Then the Harrier followed on from the Hunter. Sydney Cam designs.

You got to fly those aircraft?

Yes.

Onto deck landings?

I did deck landings in the Seahawk yeah. On HMS Centaur.

You went through the period from prop driven aircraft to jet aircraft in the RAN.

And helicopters too. I've been lucky.

What advantages did the jets provide?

It was so much easier to fly.

10:30 Except for instrument flying. Because we were flying, remember I mentioned instrument flying was not the best in the early days because you couldn't go above 2,000 feet. Whereas the jet you're up 45,000 feet and if you're going through weather then you've got to know how to handle your aircraft on instruments. I converted to the Hunter to then convert to the Scimitar. I don't know if you've ever heard of the Scimitar.

11:00 It's a big twin engine jet fighter. 2 AVENS [?]. You take off and it had a two-handed ASI [Air Speed Indicator]. It calibrated in hundreds of knots. As you took off in hundreds of knots it accelerated like that, in hundreds of knots until you got to 500 knots and you climbed at 500 knots. Good fun. That was 40 odd years ago. But it

11:30 was absolutely useless, because when you got to 45,000 feet it wouldn't turn. You needed a G-stall or mark stall. It's what's called coffin corner. You've heard about coffin corner? Depends on the aircraft design, but you end up in a corner where you can't do anything. The aircraft stall through G-loading, a 1 G-stall, because you're on the stall, or it pitches up because you're into mark numbers,

12:00 but that's all gone now as aircraft design has developed.

Doesn't sound safe.

You knew it was there and you avoided it.

Did your heart lie in naval aviation or in command?

Both. Totally split. Because

12:30 you could do it. I did it. I got command of Vampire. I had command of Vampire for a year from 77 to 78. She's the one up in the museum now. Marvellous. I had very good navigator. We got on exceptionally well. He was the professional from the ship's point of view. We did very well indeed.

As you moved up the ranks, how much talk was there about the changing world that changed the purpose of carriers?

We fully appreciated the demise of the carrier was political. The cost of a carrier replacement was too much for each successive government to bear.

13:30 When New Guinea goes to completely sour, which it will, we're going to get our nationals out and that's where you need a carrier to provide a deck to operate helicopters etc.

Talk us through your conversion to helicopters.

We were

- 14:00 all a bit, I'd been flying fast jets and to have to go to fly helicopters at 65 knots. I learned to fly in the Bristol Sycamore. There's a photograph of one there. Which was the first British helicopter produced after the war. It was a very strange beast. If you could fly Sycamore, you could fly anything helicopter wise. It really was a strange aeroplane. But it was very good training for flying a helicopter.
- 14:30 We did about 60 hours in the conversion. Got an instrument rating in it. Then we went and did the Wessex course. The Wessex was quite significantly advanced. It had a flight control system, stabilisation system. You could take your hands and feet off and it'd fly itself. Whereas you don't do that with a Sycamore. You're on your back in seconds. I flew the Iroquois when I was captain of Nowra and I flew
- 15:00 the Hilar 12 B, you know about it? When I was in London I was allowed to do 25 hours a year I discovered. So I organised some Wessex flying with the Royal Navy down at Coldrose at Cornwall. They were charging something like £110 an hour in the mid '60s. That's a lot of money. Then I discovered that Bristow at Red Hill, just south of London, had these little 12 Bs and I got onto them and said, "Can I fly?" and they said, "Yeah, no
- 15:30 problem." About £29 an hour. Rather amusingly, just as I'm about to go off in this thing, somebody raised the question did I have a private helicopter licence and the answer was no. I thought "Oh God that's." But the secretary of the company, a fellow by the name of Fry, he said, "Oh, there's a regulation in the air navigation act of the United Kingdom that a military pilot can fly a civil registered aircraft, providing he's flying on the Queen's business." So we all agreed that
- 16:00 unquestioningly I was flying on the Queen's business. So on I went. Good fun.
- How do you like helicopters generally?**
- Love them. Ever flown one?
- I've had a bit of a peddle.**
- They're fun.
- I've flown a 12 E.**
- You've flown a 12 E? They follow on from the B, yeah. We were flying the Wessex at night at
- 16:30 35 feet out in the middle of the ocean on a black night, hovering on the automatic flight control system, waiting for it to go unserviceable. Just sitting there.. Which occasionally it did.
- In the '60s the Melbourne came along.**
- 17:00 **Was this when you had two carrier operations?**
- No, we never actually had two carrier operations. We did, we had Vengeance in Sydney for a short period back in the early '50s, but Melbourne never had another carrier with her. Sydney was used as a troop transport on Vietnam.
- Where were you at that time?**
- I was in the UK and came back to Nowra as commander air just
- 17:30 as the second course of group was being trained of navy helicopter pilots to go and fly with the US army in Vietnam, because we had an excess of helicopter pilots. HFV as it was called, Helicopter Force Vietnam, we sent 3 groups up and they spent a year each. I was commander of air at Nowra when that was going on. I never got to Vietnam.
- A little bit of history we skipped over was your association with**
- 18:00 **the A bomb tests in the '50s.**
- Our task was to do patrols to make certain there were no ships in the area.
- Take us back to the beginning of that story.**
- I'll tell you. 4 Fireflies and 4 Sea Furies, we flew up to Manus from Nowra via New Guinea.
- When was this?**
- This was whenever the nuclear thingo was. Was it '53 or '54? That was
- 18:30 an interesting experience flying to Manus which is 2 degrees the other side of the equator, in a single engine aircraft. Then we flew onto, the ship arrived in Manus and we flew on board the ship, went round to the West coast of Australia to do patrols to absolutely guarantee there were no ships in the area.
- Why was the Royal Australian Navy involved in this**
- 19:00 **Royal Navy exercise and which ship did you fly on to?**
- The '50s, come on we were still the mother country. England all that lot. We were very much tied to the

UK. Woomera, same deal, same thing. We just went along. We wouldn't do it nowadays, but we did then. If the Brits asked for it, we gave it to them.

Which ship did you fly these planes on to?

Vengeance which was on loan to us

- 19:30 whilst Melbourne was being converted to the angle deck. Originally we were supposed to have 2 straight deck carriers, then the angle deck came in and it was realised, "Gee whiz, we're going to have to convert Melbourne to an angle deck," which was done by just welding a bit onto the left-hand side. She only had a 5 degree angle. I think it was 5 and a bit degrees. As opposed to American carriers, You see their massive overhang on the port side.

Take us through

- 20:00 **your role during the tests, what you saw and what you could talk about or what you were told.**

We knew there was going to be a nuclear explosion in Montebello obviously. We knew it was the Dr Penny I think was the scientist who ran the thing. I've got a good memory. Trying to remember that word that meant you couldn't bomb. It'll come to me.

- 20:30 It was '54 I think. Nuclear, it was necessary as we saw it then, nuclear weapons. The UK reckoned they should. So Australia was being supportive of the UK, and our role was to fly patrols before the explosion to make certain nobody was in the area where

- 21:00 they could be affected by, it was a very dirt bomb by the way. Extremely dirty. We heard the explosion. We didn't see it. We were quite some miles away in the ship. On the ship. I don't think we had any sort of political briefings or anything like that. We just had a briefing to go and fly these patrols. One interesting thing though, we experienced extreme difficulties with radio for some reason or other. Whether it was some inversion or something was affecting our

- 21:30 radios, I don't know. But no conspiracy theory. Juts that we had trouble with our radios. Because you could see the other aircraft but you couldn't talk to him. Juts couldn't receive. Why, I don't know. That's what we did. When it came time for the thing, the ships ceased flying and steamed away from the area and the thing was exploded.

Were you asked to be backs to the blast sort of thing?

- 22:00 No, we were too far away. None of that, that picture you see them all running round, no. We were too far away. We heard it, but only just. It was day time.

What does it sound like?

Like a big bang, surprisingly. No, again, not terribly dramatic. Obviously I would have seen it in a totally different light if I'd been there now. But, again,

- 22:30 as I say, youngster, you get on with the job. I drove Vampire from '77 to '78. Then was nominated as the deputy director for exercise Kangaroo 3, which was a tri-service, US service, Brits, Kiwis, etc. As the deputy director I was the full-time organiser. The director was a
- 23:00 nominal position. He was the GOC [General Officer Commanding] Field Force Command at Victoria Barracks in Sydney. So he was the nominal director, but I did all the work. Which is the way it was done. I had a staff of about 35 and it took us 18 months to plan the exercise, which we subsequently held at Shoalwater Bay.

What was the premise of the exercise?

The usual Orange people fighting the

- 23:30 Blue people as you do in military exercises.

Yes, but who were the Orange people supposed to be?

It was starting to be developed in my time. We have an enemy now in exercises. I don't know what they call them nowadays, but there's an enemy. There's an order of battle for the enemy established, and you could take that order of battle and plan an exercise on that order. Do you follow me? You can situate the exercise,

- 24:00 although it's being run in Shoalwater Bay, you can position is somewhere else in theory. The exercise ran for a month. We were Enoggera. I lived in Victoria Barracks with the army for 18 months, which was an interesting experience. I remember standing in the shower towards the end of my time saying, "Thank goodness I joined the navy." Different. From there I was posted as

- 24:30 commanding officer for the air station, and that's the job that I finally had that I know what it was all about because I had been in every single position you can have at the air station. From a sailor all the way through. So I knew all the lurks and all the things that go on.

How had the role of the navy changed at that moment, looking back over your career?

When I left, I was being posted back to Russell,

- 25:00 I was warned out I was being posted back to Russell the following year and I thought, "Well, it's time I left." So I resigned. Most stupid thing I ever did, but I resigned, as I subsequently discovered.

Why was it

I had every chance of getting another star. But I didn't did I? I also resigned just before a massive pay rise,

- 25:30 which I didn't know was in the system. My pay would have gone up by about \$10,000 a year. How that navy's changed?

During your time in it. How had the role of the navy changed?

When I left we had 7 naval air squadrons and we were going to get a replacement carrier, remember? That's when Hawke said, "You can forget about that." That's when, that was the demise of the fixed wing carrier. After the Falklands, we're talking '81-'82.

- 26:00 That was the end of fixed wing flying in the RAN. But, as I say, it has risen out of the ashes as a helicopter force. All ships now have very effective helicopters.

During your time in naval intelligence, what were the big issues from an intelligence point of view?

Unfortunately, just prior to my taking over as the director of naval intelligence,

- 26:30 there had been a massive re organisation in defence. All the intelligence, the true intelligence gathering had gone into Defence Central. It left the three service officers essentially gutted. We relied upon Defence Central to provide us with intelligence as opposed to us, in our own right, providing the intelligence. I only had the job for

- 27:00 9 months I think.

When was that?

71. First time I'd ever been declared intelligent by naval board decree. There you go.

Tell us about your time in command of the Vampire.

- 27:30 Again, this will shock you, I hadn't been to sea in a general service posting for something like 15 years. 1963, and I took command in 1977.

- 28:00 So it was another learning process, very rapidly. I had very good officers. It was a first class ship, but a very old design ship. She'd been modernised. She had no missiles, she was a gun ship. She had an M44 gunnery system. We could hit anything that got within 10 miles of us, and we could too. I found ship handling, I thoroughly enjoyed ship handling as an aviator. I had an aviator's eye,

- 28:30 that's true. I remember putting her alongside in Singapore with one engine order. My navigator was very impressed - boasting again. You learned too who you could trust in the ship professionally. You soon learned very rapidly. My supply officer said to me, "Don't worry about me knocking off the pay, it's

- 29:00 not worth it. It's only about 60 grand." Joking of course, and I think he was older than I was. So I knew that he was running his department properly and it was good. No problem. As I said I had a very good navigator. Where I had problems with my executive officers, I had two of them, one after the other, I know you could

- 29:30 probably think that me as the cause of the problem, but I wasn't. They weren't as professional as I thought they should have been. Both in running the ship and handling the ship. I used to sit in my chair, and when we had a stationing manoeuvre where we had to go and go somewhere in the fleet, I had a little device I'd had made that I could just check that we were going the right way.

- 30:00 I had to correct a couple of officers of the watch. With the officers of the watch, you soon learned which ones you could trust. I could live on the bridge, go down the sea cabin and rest easy. There were others you kept a weary eye on them. We had one young fellow, a sub-lieutenant, who was absolutely first class. He really was absolutely first class and I had all the confidence in the world of him. I had a young officer under training,

- 30:30 because we had training people coming through. This poor kid just could not hack it. He wasn't spatially aware. He couldn't get the picture of what was going on around him. A good officer of the watch would listen to the signal man reporting what's happening for the chief yeoman to tell the captain, and the officer of the watch has already worked out what should be happening. You know what I mean? This couldn't, no

- 31:00 idea in the world. That was very disappointing, but there you go. We sailed to Singapore and we went to the Indian Ocean of 4 weeks at sea, operating with a mixed fleet down to Fremantle. We did the capital

cities for the Queen's silver jubilee. In each place we went to,

31:30 I was required of the commanding officers to invite local VIPs [Very Important Persons] on board for dinner. My leading steward, whose name was Borton, was a First Fleeter [British First Fleet to Australia, 1788], and I always used to work into the conversation with the guests that he's a first fleeter and you could see the change of attitude of people. Otherwise he's just a steward, but when he was a first fleeter steward, different attitude. I also used to tell them I had 40,000 head of stock, and that

32:00 really impressed them, which I did. Two beehives up the back here. You can con people. It was good fun. Very sad to leave her. Very sad indeed. One of the most emotional experiences I had was Queenborough. She was in dry dock in refit and I was being posted down to Nowra to do this Wessex helicopter course. I handed over the ship as the executive officer, and

32:30 she was in Captain Cook Dock in Sydney and I walked up the dock steps and I went to go to my car and something grabbed me. I had to go back and have another look. It's that sort of. You do get emotional. But there you go.

What is the relationship like between a commander and his

33:00 **ship?**

You mean the people?

The whole institution I guess. It's a machine, it's a group of people.

Vampire had a ships company of 325. There was enough normal tension between males without throwing in 20 bloody females. I'm afraid I'm a dinosaur, I'm sorry. How they cope, I don't know, but they do.

33:30 The males must be totally reprogrammed to accept the females, particularly now we've got female commanding officers. I just don't know how the. As I say, I'm a dinosaur. I know that. But how they cope, how they do it, I don't know. I used to talk to the ships company eyeball to eyeball in the various

34:00 categories in messes to tell them what was happening. Try to establish that relationship, but then, I was a four stripe captain and you've got a young seaman. That's a bit different.

The captain is very much God on board the ship. How did you play God?

I think the biggest thing that I, when I took over Queenborough from captain Murray whose wife died, remember I said that, he said, "Look you'll have to use my cabin"

34:30 because that was the voice pipe down from the bridge. So I had to use his cabin. He said, "Use my books and so forth." The first book I opened, there it was and it said, "There is one man in the ship who can ask no other man for advice, he's the captain." You're on your own. You do ask for advice, but you are the top. I think the thing is not to have to be

35:00 responsible to somebody else. You are it. Not in a God sense, but in the sense of not having to worry about somebody else that you're answering to. You do, the fleet admiral of course, but not in your ship. Make sense?

How lonely is it at the top?

Very.

Talk about the loneliness of command.

My wife and I are going over the Nowra next weekend. There's a

35:30 fleet air arm reunion. There's a big reunion, three days. The problem will be that I have no contemporaries having been the commanding officer, been one of the older ones. There are very, very few people who are my contemporaries. They will always be backing off a bit from me, because I was the commanding officer. Even though I can try. That makes it lonely. Whereas you'll get aircraft handlers, the class of

36:00 55 for instance, all met at Nowra, all get pissed together and have a ball with their groups. So yeah, command can be lonely.

When you are the only person you can ask for advice is yourself, what things do you need advice?

It's interesting. It's not so much advice, you do ask for advice, I shouldn't use that expression, it was doesn't answer to anybody else.

The buck stops

The buck stops, yeah. But you're an idiot if

36:30 you don't ask advice. You got to ask it respecting a person's professionalism. You're not sort of

demeaning yourself by asking for that advice, that's his job, that's their profession. So advice me. That's the way you go.

How do you gain the respect of your crew?

Good question. Very good question. Respect doesn't come, respect has to be earned. So you can't walk on board

37:00 a ship and expect respect. You have to earn the respect, which is down the track and hopefully you won't make a cock of it in between earning the respect.

From your own experiences of that position, what ways do you earn respect?

By being honest. Having no hidden agenda. Was he weak?

37:30 what you see is what you get, that's what you get with me. I might post a bit, but I'm straight up and down. I think when people realise that no favourites, nothing worse than having, we had some admirals who had favourites, that's the path to disaster. No favourites. It does happen. What else can I say?

38:00 Seen to be professional. I particularly was proud of my ship handling because you had 66,000 horsepower in a daring class destroyer and you could make it sing with, you could stop it on a sixpence and you could turn it. We lost a boiler down off Jervis Bay and we had to steam into Sydney on one engine

38:30 because the boiler only goes to the respective engines. So I stopped outside Sydney Heads and played around with it to see if we could get a kick with an engine, you can turn the ship. I played round with it until I was satisfied I got a feel for how it kicked with just the one engine. Took her into , we had tugs and attendants, and put her alongside on Garden Island dockyard. The correct way to get

39:00 the kick to be able to get the stern in. So that's seaman ship.

What do you mean worries as the captain on board a ship?

That somebody's going to cock it up. Perhaps yourself. You might end up in an area where your expertise and knowledge is not sufficient in

39:30 those circumstances. Particularly in operations I'm talking about. Not on the ship handling, not insofar as the ship's company is concerned, but in terms of operations, yeah.

What does the ship's captain actually do? What are the day to day duties of the captain of a ship?

Not very much of he's got his officers properly organised. I always put the ship

40:00 alongside myself, I always took her away from the thing. Occasionally I let the navigator do it. I let my first lieutenant do it, but he screwed it up, he bent it. It's a bit of a shame. That's only a little bend. He put it alongside HMAS Supply, the old tanker and Supply had a counter on her stern and we went into the counter. By the by. Just keeping an eye on things.

40:30 I remember we went over to New Zealand, I took Stalwart over with me. We were allowed to go to New Zealand as a bit of a jolly. We'd been working hard and we visited Auckland and Wellington and what's the name of the place, can't think of it, and

41:00 coming back, we came back in a very heavy storm. 960 millibars, which is pretty low. Unfortunately it was behind us and the ship, she was riding all right, so we just kept going. The following morning I was speaking to some young sailors, "Were you seasick?" and they said, "Too scared to be sick, sir." It was their first trip in a ship and it was exciting for them. It's great fun.

41:30 Oh, dear. I am suffering.

Tape 9

00:28 **you went back to Korea**

00:30 **recently.**

Yes.

How was that experience for you?

It was very emotional for the army people at Kap'yong, where we went to Kap'yong and Maryang San. Have you spoken to? We went to those battlefields and. Particularly we had two prisoners of war with us and they were bonded just like that, which you can understand why. The army had a much rougher war than we did, that's for sure. As did 77 Squadron.

01:00 So I confess, perhaps I'm a cold fish, I don't know, but there was no emotional thing for me. Not at all. I was just surprised to see Seoul like any other international city. High rise buildings, traffic jams.

What memories came back to you during that trip?

Went back over flights that were,

01:30 which are all obviously in the head. But only just thinking about them no different to, I get just as much pleasure, probably more so, about my flying in exchange with the Royal Navy, which professionally was just out of this world. It really was. I did 2 years of weaponry. Rocketing bombing and strafing with the students. That really

02:00 hones your weapon skills I can tell you. Air to air firing on the banner. That's the ultimate skill, attacking it (hand movement) One thing I didn't mention. When my wife was paying off as a WREN, I'd arranged to take her up in a Sea Fury trainer the Saturday, we used to work on Saturdays in those days, and she was paying off on the Monday, leaving the navy, and her boss wouldn't let her go. I was very cross, so I went off and flew the Fury by myself.

02:30 I should have fronted him and said, "Don't for goodness sake." So anyway, at Lossiemouth in those two years, we had an air day where we had a Tiger Moth race. We got some Tiger Moths to come to the air station and we flew them. I got her down to this squadron, dressed her up in a flying suit and put her in the front seat of the Tiger Moth and took her flying. So she got to fly with me then. She flies with me now all the time. Loves it.

What do you love about flying?

03:00 I don't know. I've often thought about that. It's like golf. If it's easy, you wouldn't do it. It's that challenge to achieve the perfect landing and so forth. I just flew up to Brisbane with a fellow, he's another navy chap. He was not a naval aviator. He owns the aircraft and has just recently, he's only got a couple of hundred hours. I went up as his sort of mentor.

03:30 He did a shocking landing when we arrived up at Radcliff up at Brisbane. I said to him, "I really must debrief you on that." As and old flying instructor I ran him through what he'd done wrong. One the way back we landed at Taree to refuel. He said, "Do you want to land it?" I said, "Oh yeah, if you like," from the right-hand side. I greased it on. That was you know, it's ego. Of course it's bloody ego, but that's the thrill of

04:00 achieving a perfect landing.

Looking back over your aviation career, what are you most proud of?

That every takeoff had a landing, if you see the point. I never had a bale out, I never crashed an aircraft. I was just so lucky

04:30 to fly those aircraft. Even the Lincoln, that whopping great big 4 engine bomber when I did my instructors course at East Sale. We did 5 hour duals, two pupils, and then we were sent off by ourselves to go and fly these bloody great big thing. It was great.

How much, since Korea, have you thought about those who weren't so lucky?

It's fate.

05:00 I'm a firm believer your number's written. It's everybody's number's written. It's just a question of when is it? Also, it depends upon luck. The Indonesian armed forces, when they're selecting people for high rank, take into account whether they are lucky. Truly, because they consider it as part of a thing, not just their profession or what have you, but are they a lucky person, and there are lucky people.

05:30 I'm unlucky and I never win lotteries, but I will, when I'm 95 I'm going to win a major lotto prize, but I can't do a bloody thing with it., that's the way it goes. But in my flying career, to date anyway, I've had some things happen over the years. But the ball has always bounced my way. You're building up experience in a bank. If you don't get the ball bouncing your way at the

06:00 beginning you'll kill yourself. The more the ball bounces your way, the more you build up in the bank, the more you're capable of coping in the future.

Do you feel, looking back now, that you were lucky to be involved in the Korean War?

Absolutely.

Why?

Got a gold card didn't I? No, I'm quite proud of being part of the Korean War, yeah. I'd hate to have just the ordinary medals they hand out.

06:30 In fact, it's rather amusing when I got my, one of the medals I got, it has a class with Japan on it. I rang the medal section in the navy officer and, "Hey, what's with this Japan bit? I wasn't involved in the Japanese War." She said, "You were in Sydney in Korea?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Well, used to go on R&R in Japan, we hadn't signed a treaty, we were effectively still at war, therefore you've got a Japan

class.”

How much stock do you

07:00 **put in those kind of things?**

I respect them very much. You look at a person’s medals and you can work out what they’ve been doing. Very much indeed. You mentioned Dick Smith, he should have got more medals than he got. That’s for sure. But he fell out with people I think.

How did being involved in the war change you and how important was that in the career you subsequently had?

I don’t think it

07:30 changed me or had any effect on me until much later when I came to realise, “Gee I was lucky that I was in the Sydney carrier group.” There are only about 30 of us in the air group, might be a bit more than that. There was others who, by just the timing of their course, missed out. So I was very lucky. And as I said, I saw it as just the combination of 3 years of training.

08:00 **Have you dreamt about the war?**

No, I think is the quick – I’m hesitating to answer you. Certainly not in any post traumatic stress or whatever it’s called. No. Not at all. I’ve been involved in a mid-air collision in an aircraft, a ship collision and I’ve been in a war.

08:30 Okay. I can whack in and say, “Gosh, I’m stressed.”

Where was the mid-air collision?

In my aerobatic team.

Take us quickly through that.

We were working up, it was 4 aircraft, Sea Venoms, you’ve seen them there. I was the squadron CO and the commander of the time said, “They’re getting too close to you. Tell them to move out a bit.” I said, “Yes, sir, I’ll tell them to move out.” Because the Sea Venom

09:00 had parallel over arms, which meant you really couldn’t feel any external force, but this fellow was just getting too close. I could feel him on the parallel over arms. So upside doing a roll. Suddenly my rudder bar went like that and I thought, “My God, I’ve snapped a rudder cable.” We carried the roll, finished the roll, separated and landing. On my bullet fairing. The Venom had tip tanks. On the

09:30 bullet fairing on the rudders, a transfer of green and gold paint. That’s all it had, just green and gold paint. What had happened, because the venturi effect between his tip tank and my bullet fairing, it sucked my rudder across so we didn’t suffer any damage. But it was exciting.

Was it something that put you into shock for a little while afterwards?

No. I could see there was no great deal.

The ship collision, was that,

10:00 **what happened there?**

That was when Bataan, after the Royal Tour of ‘54, we were off Crocus Island where we left the Gothic to go away with the Queen. We were heading for Darwin and we had to refuel Bataan. Bataan was a very unlucky ship. You know the story of ‘you should never re-name a ship’? That’s a thing, she was a battle-class destroyer,

10:30 a sister ship to Anzac and Tobruk. She should have been named something else, but they named her Bataan in honour of the Americans. She had trouble right, left and centre. She came alongside us about midday. I was down in the ward room. Suddenly it went terribly dark in the ward room and there was a lot of noise and crunching and grinding. I rushed up on the flight deck and she’d hit us. She’d been sucked in and she was just paying off down Melbourne’s side like that. Crunching everything as

11:00 she went. She stoved in her the bows and the gun tower and the wing of the bridge. That, poor fellow, the captain, had to come back alongside because he had to refuel, which he did. What had happened was the water hose, which we were transferring water to her, had started to get a bit tight. It was too far out. He turned in just that little bit, and you get sucked in. That’s interesting. When you’re replenishing at sea you’ve got to pump your way through the wake effect of the other ship. If you dawdle,

11:30 you get caught in it. The technique in Vampire was to ring on a lot of revs, 150 rev remember, it’s a lot of power in a Derry, and just at the point where you want to stop, you’d stop both engines and the engine room would put 100 pounds of pressure he reverse turbine to stop the screws. That stopped it dead, then you just hang on the stationing revs and there you were. But you had to punch through that thing and he hadn’t done that.

What damage had you sustained in that collision?

He wrote off a

12:00 boat, the ladder, the ship's side got sort of mangled a little bit, very sad.

What was your role on board the ship?

I was just a squadron pilot. That was the Gothic 1954.

How do you feel about instances of post traumatic stress and the talk about these days?

I've never experienced it. I recognise it. I have no doubt that it exists whatsoever, but

12:30 I'm very distressed at the amount of rotting that's going on. I've been asked to give specialist knowledge of circumstances, and people have been saying things that just didn't happen. I was there, it didn't happen. The trouble is the tribunals believe them and they get millions. Like that idiot, this fellow who smoked on the flight deck of Melbourne. He got half a million dollars. He was a

13:00 stoker. He shouldn't have been on, this was the Melbourne voyager, he shouldn't have been on the flight deck. He said that because of the stress, he took up smoking and he took up drinking and that's why he wanted half a million dollars. Crap. That's my view. But I recognise, in a real stress situation, that it exists.

Do you have any personal insight into that incident?

Yes. Very much indeed. Captain Robertson was totally innocent. That

13:30 documentary was absolutely first class. It amazed me. I expected to see a typical ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] doco [documentary], you know, with wild statement with what have you. It was absolutely first class. The facts presented were exactly as they were. Clearly, we all knew him as Drunken Duncan, I knew him as Drunken Duncan, you know?

No.

You've heard that his nickname was Drunken Duncan Stephens. Trouble was his father was sir Jack Stephens.

14:00 He applied an awful lot of political pressure in the system of the liberal party and that's one of the reasons, apart from the fact that Bob Menzies wasn't told before the following morning, which is unreal, and he's the Royal Commissioner. That's the worst thing that could have happened was the Royal Commission, because you get totally adversary, find somebody to blame, you can't blame the dead fellow, you blame the captain of the Melbourne. Terrible, He should have turned down.

14:30 Subsequently, at Vampire, I did 'res des' as it was called, rescue destroyer of Melbourne, and the rules had been completely changed and you stayed 1,000 yards behind Melbourne in Melbourne's wake. That's where you stayed. That's where we stayed, I can tell you. Stayed well and truly away from Melbourne.

Was there any other fall out in the navy?

Considerable. The naval board, ah, it was disgusting. It really was. They stood from under,

15:00 it was shocking what went on. His ship manoeuvring, whether he was drunk on the bridge as is alleged. I don't know. Nobody knows. There was blood in his alcohol. Probably the other way around actually. Blood in his alcohol might be... This is probably all on tape, ha ha. It was on the documentary, so I'm not telling tales out of school.

15:30 The trouble was that Melbourne was trying to find the wind. The wind was fluky. It was all over the place, there was little puffs of wind. They were chasing the wind, and pretty clearly, Voyager didn't know what course Melbourne was steering. And a carrier, I showed my wife the other day, I've got an albatross bird, which I was presented with when I was commander of the Albatross, I turned it and I say, "Which was is it pointing?" Because it's symmetrical you can't tell, particularly at night.

16:00 Therefore, looking at the carrier, very hard, if you don't know what course it's steering, to know what aspect it's got, I've got a feeling they thought that Melbourne was further that way and turned in, but Melbourne wasn't. Melbourne was that way. Once they turned it that was it. I'll tell you, I had a nasty one in Vampire. Frightening. Refuelling the log supply, this Vampire, that supply. Finished refuelling I was told to

16:30 take station way over there and you must never cross in front of the senior ship's bows. That's a real no-no. You have to ask permission to do it, which means you've got to go a long way ahead. So I'll do a U-ey [U-turn] and come round the stern and head off to my station. As I got round the stern, there was Swan, roaring down to refuel and we were stem to stem like that. Both doing about 25 knots. I had a nanosecond.

17:00 "God, which way do I turn?" Just, thank God I turned to the left. That was frightening because it was circumstances that were suddenly thrust in front of me.

What event from your career do you still think about today?

I think a major thing, Vampire, my 2 years exchange at Lossie,

17:30 I flew a Domini, you know Domini, biplane? From one end of the UK to the other with just the aid of the radio set. So I have one of the slowest flights from Scotland down to England. Then I flew a Scimitar several times down God knows how many times faster. That was great stuff. They are the major points.

18:00 Vampire and the exchange. Because of the professionalism of the flying.

The Korean situation is much the same as in 1953. There's still a parallel. How does that make you feel assessing that?

I don't have a solution. When we went to P'anmunjom when I went up there two years ago, we actually stood in

18:30 North Korea which you can do, in the conference room. Big deal. There's no question, both sides are well and truly keeping their eyes on one another. The South Koreans have massive blocks of concrete set up over narrow bits of road that if the North Koreans came over with tanks they can dynamite these bits of concrete and block the road. So it's deadly serious. As you know, you are a historian, they almost got completely

19:00 done at Pusan. We went to Pusan. When you talk to the Koreans, they've been there and they. Us, we hadn't been there yet. They are appreciative of the support, hence this business with the Korean ambassador. I don't have a solution. How do you indoctrinate

19:30 a people like the Koreans, who are totally different to us believe me, after 58 years isn't it? The 38th parallel was in '45, that's about it. You've got generations on generations there. Only they can do it. For anybody to go into North Korea and attempt to do it, it'll be

20:00 another Iraq. I think China though would not do what it did back in the '50s. They've got more sense I think. I know.

How do you feel about war these days?

War is a human condition. It is. We've been fighting wars since the year dot. There will be armed

20:30 conflict in some shape or form forever because war is in the human condition. I reckon you should castrate 90% of the males, keep 10 for breeding and let the women run the country and it would be a damn sight better. A joke. But you know what I mean. I don't know who the 10% are going to be, but. It's testosterone that drives men, and they forget the history.

21:00 The Japanese are going to come up again, no question about it. They've changed their self defence force charter that they can go outside Japan, which they couldn't do, they want to be involved. They've got economic problems. What they'll do I don't know, but it's not a happy situation up there. Not at all. You've got North Korea, South Korea and Japan. And China.

21:30 I think the Chinese have matured. They know which side their bread's buttered on now.

As an ex military man, what are your views on the situation in Iraq?

It should never have happened. Anybody, Blind Freddy, could realise, look at the US destroyer, look at the Brits in Afghanistan. Not last century, the century before, the Frontier Wars. The

22:00 Pathans. They never ever tamed them. They make their own rifles. The same with Iraqis. You can beat the daylight out of peoples like the Germans did with the blitz, and people bounce back. The only way that Iraq could be sported out is by being done by themselves internally, like hopefully one day Cuba might sort itself out. But go in

22:30 externally, what Bush and Blair and Howard are thinking, I don't know.

How do you see Australia's place in the world at this end of your

I'm a firm believer in having powerful friends. Whether America will come to aid in a frontal type war, I don't know. I'm talking about Indonesia of course.

23:00 Don't know. But it's good to have powerful friends, but where do you draw the line? We were extremely lucky to get out of Iraq without any casualties. Howard would have been long since gone if there had been any casualties. What's in their mind? Vietnam.

History may tell.

Yeah, true.

How do you feel about the future?

I must admit I'm not optimistic.

23:30 I'm unhappy about my country. I'm not a racist, far from it. I've interfaced with all types of people. I see them from their culture and their professionalism. Particularly the US Navy where I've dealt with admirals and so forth back as the ace of spades. First class people, no question about it. I've got good friends who are not the same as me

24:00 colour wise. But I think multiculturalism is bloody disastrous. Multi tribalism. It's just not coming together as a unified nation. How we're going to do it, I've no idea. How about that for an old dinosaur redneck, hey?

Taken into account your own personal experience, is there anything you can say

24:30 **to someone watching this in the future?**

My greatest worry, after the Second World War we have the various people that came out. Displaced persons in the Snowy Mountains what have you, and they all integrated into the country. Their children, the second generation, all became Australians. The only way to tell them nowadays is by their name. Voluntarily Australians. My concern is these religious cliques that are being established in the country. There's

25:00 no integration whatsoever. None. They are just going to grow, just like the United Kingdom. It's just going to get worse and worse and worse. What do you think?

My opinion is irrelevant. Any other message for the future? Any piece of advice that you might have picked up in your lifetime?

I fell for my grandchildren, I really do. I think if they're not careful They'll end up as the poor white trash of Australia.

25:30 You look at any graduation ceremony. Who's graduating? Asians. Nothing against the Asians. My doctor's a 5th generation Chinese. Great guy. I respect him and he respects me. But we're slowly being pushed out as I said. I think if I could be dictator of this country, the great tragedy is, we're talking about federation, that we, when we federated,

26:00 we didn't become a republic, and we didn't do away with the states. If we had become one country, 2 levels of government. Look at Kiwi Land. I was just over there last year. One government. Marvellous. Mind you, they had to change their political system to overcome the problem of people being in power forever, but even so. I just don't know. I'm not optimistic.

As a future dictator of the

26:30 **Australian**

Sorry, I fell off the track. Health should absolutely be Commonwealth. Why do we have 8 different health systems in this country? You tell me. Education. Why do we have, having shuffled from Western Australia, Victoria, NSW, back to Victoria, as a kid, why do we have 8 different types of education? Road rules. Why do we have all these different road rules

27:00 in the country? Nobody's going to give up power, are they? Carr is not going to say, "Look, Ross, you can take over NSW [New South Wales]." No way. So how do you do it? I think I make a valid point. I'm not a political animal. Not really. I just see it and I'm depressed. I think I'm a natural born conservative, naturally. 33 years

27:30 as a military officer. What else would I be, for God's sake? I used to think a lot of Howard, but I don't any more. I'm sorry. But I certainly don't think anything of the opposition either. There's only one polliie in there and that's what her name, the ex leader of the democrats. What's her name?

Natasha Stott Despoja?

No. God no, not that one. The one before her. Meg Lees. She's pretty honest.

28:00 You get that Western Australian woman who's so ideologically wrapped up in 'kill the bosses and the working class'. You're going to expunge all that aren't you?

It will be there, but someone watching this in the future 'one-state Australia' may think you were a visionary.