Australians at War Film Archive

Arthur Thompson (Max) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:33 **We were talking about the life overview concept, would you like to tell us, maybe starting off with where you were born?**

Start with where I was born? Pittsworth, on the Darling Downs in 1924. Farm boy, Dad had a wheat and sheep farm out on the Darling Downs which he was part of the Soldier Settlement [Land gift to veterans] of Cecil Plains, which he

01:00 settled when he got back from the First World War and Dad got a bad, very severe, head wound late in the war. He got back about a year later, after the war ended. He was given a full pension, told that he was invalided out. He had a plate in his skull which in those days, of course, was pretty something, quite extraordinary I think.

01:30 Anyway Dad selected a block of ground, won a block of ground in the Soldier Settlement Scheme and went out onto the area of Cecil Plains between Brookstead and Cecil Plains, about twelve miles out of Brookstead and twelve miles out of Cecil Plains and from a bare block of ground, my Dad a year or so later married my Mum

02:00 and went to Cecil Plains and bought the school building, which was apparently for sale for some reason, a one room building and took it back onto the farm and he and Mum settled there. I was born in 1924 and that was I, where we lived. Of course

02:30 additions were made to the house and Dad prospered, he was a good farmer. He had a great land and a good farmer. He looked after it and the land looked after him.

And how was your childhood? What was that like?

Well I rode horses, I think probably about three year old, I started riding a horse and I loved riding and I didn't go to school. Mum taught

03:00 me by correspondence until fifth grade and then fifth grade I went then to Pittsworth and I boarded with Mrs Chain in Pittsworth and five, six and seven grade and I got my scholarship and then I went to Toowoomba Grammar [school] for two years. And at Grammar I got my Junior Certificate and then went home onto the farm.

03:30 I think that would have been when I was fifteen I think, when I got my Junior [certificate] and then when the war started, I got the idea, 'I was young and strong and willing and educated', so I started harassing the people in Eagle Street in Brisbane [airforce recruiting centre], "I want to fly".

04:00 And they said, "go away and come back in a couple of years when you're old enough to fly". I went I think, two or three times down to Brisbane. I once tried to tell them my age was different to what it was but they wouldn't cop [believe] it. They knew me, I think and anyhow they did give me a correspondence course that taught me how an aerofoil lifts, how aeroplanes go up in the air and this sort of thing,

04:30 which I enjoyed doing. But all that time I was, of course, on our farm. Normally, we had a man working for us permanently and he and I did most of the [work], in ploughing time we'd work twenty four hours a day. I'd take twelve hours a day, George would take another twelve hours. Dad couldn't drive the tractor, because he used to get headaches if he did

05:00 and eventually there were three of us. My sister Val was born five years after me and five years after that my brother Trevor, and anyway, come 27th of April 1942, I was eighteen years of age and that day I was on the doorstep of the recruiting office in Creek Street.

05:30 And I was given the option at that time of doing what they called, normally the situation was, you'd wait about six months for call up and then you'd go into aircrew training in the normal course. But they gave me the option of coming in as an aircrew guard, as they called it,

06:00 where I would go to a station and I would be on guard, treated as a normal guard and actually they said “aircrew guard or transport driver”. I elected transport driver but when I got in, I was a guard. Anyway they called me up three weeks later. The 21st of May I think. I became officially part of the scheme. Went to Kingaroy I think it was, or Maryborough, [RAAF Kingaroy, Queensland]

06:30 I’m not sure, either Kingaroy or Maryborough, did a two week course, I think it was teaching me how to march, how to slope [present] arms and to get my shots [inoculations] and anyway that went on for, I think a couple of weeks and I was posted to Canberra.

07:00 Canberra in June, having lived on the Darling Downs, cold in the morning but lovely days. Canberra was a bit of a shock. Particularly when you get, which we seemed to, the two or three of us who were there as aircrew guards, we were not really favoured by the guard group. Oh the group was alright but the sergeant in charge was certainly anti-aircrew and

07:30 he made sure that we did the ‘two to six’ in the morning, shift, out on the side of a hill in Canberra. It was quite an experience. Anyway after about four months, I think it was, call up came, to go back to Kingaroy. It was at Maryborough that we did our training, the first training,

08:00 back [though, is] at Kingaroy. And there we started to learn about flying, what it was all about, why aeroplanes lifted off the ground and that sort of thing. From there I was transferred to Mt Gambier [Air Observers School] where we did, I elected, I was a little different to a lot of them. Most people wanted to be pilots

08:30 and of course, there were more than pilots, required. Frequently people would get pilot training and anyone that didn’t come up to it …, it was pretty difficult, they put a high standard on it and anyone who didn’t [make it], then they became navigators or bomb aimers or gunners or whatever. However, I elected that I wanted to be a navigator

09:00 and from initial training school in Kingaroy, I went down to Mt Gambier, where we were. It was a specialist school for navigators. Actually we were trained and the terminology was ‘observer’, not ‘navigator’. Observer, was taught bomb aiming and navigating, so

09:30 I don’t know how long it lasted, probably three months I would guess, two months and then we went to Evans Head, [for] some practical and bomb aiming. Quite a lot of bomb aiming we did, at Evans Head and after that we went home, on leave, and we were transferred to,

10:00 I can’t remember, in Sydney, an embarkation depot in Sydney, Bradfield Park. We went to Bradfield Park and from there got on a ship and went to the States and got on a train and crossed the States from Frisco [San Francisco], where we landed, over to New York. We had a week’s leave in New York and during that time, one of the people

10:30 that I had, that I did the course with, was a guy called Warren Hart, known as “Wirra” because he got as far as Wirraways [light reconnaissance aircraft] in his training to be pilot and he got scrubbed [removed] and then he became an observer or navigator, as we were. And I was on a course with Warren, I think we met up at Mt Gambier, anyway we

11:00 were good mates and we got to New York and we went out on the town, mostly bars, and after a couple of days. I won’t go into the full detail of this, I’ll go into the detail later, but we spent seven or eight days on leave in New York and

11:30 then we got on the ‘Isle de France’ [a passenger liner] and a week, about a week I think it was, a week or eight days, we landed in England. Landed at Glasgow and then a train down to Brighton and Brighton was basically the staging place for Australians, Australians that came to England under the [Empire Training Scheme ?], all the fliers [air-crew] of course. And

12:00 then we were transferred to a flying or a training station up in the North country. I forget the name, I forget the area, the Lake District, and then from there, was transferred down to another station, where we teamed up as crews.

12:30 Navigators came from here and everywhere, and we teamed up on this station, which you were there about a week, in which time everybody sorted each other out. We became members of a crew. First up, it was the skipper of course, the pilot who, he looked for the people he thought he could [work with], the best of course,

13:00 and anyway I ended up in the crew, the main members were; I was at that stage a bomb aimer, assistant navigator but mainly bomb aiming, which was what I choose to do rather than be a navigator, assistant bomb aimer. I became a bomb aimer, assistant navigator. And Lancasters [Avro Lancaster – heavy bomber] were the aircraft we were headed for.

13:30 The skipper that chose us, or we chose him, I don’t know which it was, a Norwegian fellow called Vickholt, who had already done a tour of operations in Bomber Command [Allied, European bombing control] and as such he was a very excellent captain to get. An excellent skipper, because he knew what he was doing. And his navigator was also a Norwegian called Fermastat [?].

14:00 And Vic and Fermastat and there was myself as bomb aimer, Dick Cantwell, who was also an Aussie, as radio op and Paddy Peden was the rear gunner and we had a mid upper gunner also, whose name escapes me at the moment. And anyway we, in due course,

14:30 after a week or two, transferred to 166 Squadron, which was about, we were located, about ten miles south of Grimsby, at Scunthorpe and 166 was part of the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] operational part, and we did

15:00 a little bit of training together, as a crew in the early days, on the operational station but gradually, training was seldom done. It was just operationals [actual combat missions], just ops and the first op we did, the target was Stuttgartf

15:30 and I will never forget, it was very traumatic to me, that trip was. All gung ho, raring to go [enthusiastic], and behind the curtain, we had a radar called H2S [Height to Slope Radar], which I was the operator of. [With] the radar and with the navigator, we knew where we were

16:00 and the navigator could also do astro-navigation. Get up in the astro-dome [aircrafts observation window, atop the plane] and take shots of the stars and that way, we knew where we were. It was night flying of course and anyway, it came, probably, ten minutes before the target, Vic said to me, “right-o, down the front.” I went down the front

16:30 and all I saw was a mass of searchlights, ack-ack [anti-aircraft] fire and my thought was, “how the hell can you get through that? Impossible”. And I was probably scared, very frightened I would think. Anyway as we got closer, the searchlights thinned out, didn’t look as close together as they did from fifty mile out

17:00 and we got there and went through without a scratch. There was ack-ack of course firing and that sort of thing but we had what became a normal trip, even though the approach to it, to me, was very scary. Got back to England, no problems and that was the start of our ops. It became relatively

17:30 easy, we thought. We went to many towns in Germany.Vic had to do twenty trips, not thirty. The normal situation on a tour, the normal criteria for Bomber Command

18:00 was, you do one tour and that was thirty trips on heavies, on Lancs [Avro-Lancaster], on Halifaxes [Halifax heavy bomber], you did thirty trips and then you would have six months off. You’d go as a lecturer or something like that, to training stations and then you’d do a second tour, which was twenty trips. And

18:30 with the Empire Training Scheme [arrangement for commonwealth air crews] basically, they said, if you did two tours, you could go home, you could elect to go home and for Canadians, New Zealanders and Australians this was basically the criteria it was. However it was a little difficult for us, for the simple reason that Vic intended,

19:00 when we first met up, to do thirty trips for his second tour. He was a Norwegian who escaped from Norway, very dedicated to killing Germans and Vic would have just kept on [going]. Anyway, when it came to us having done, maybe, fifteen trips, something like that, Vic said that he wanted to go to Pathfinders [lead targeting aircraft]. Well

19:30 it wasn’t a happy crew, Fermastat was a pig, and Vic was a nice guy, but our navigator was not, he was an abrupt fellow and he and I didn’t get on very well and Dick Cantwell didn’t get on well with him, no-one got on well with Fermastat.

20:00 The thought of us going to Pathfinders, we knew that if you go to Pathfinders you normally do a lot more trips and we said no, not going to Pathfinders. So Vic said, at twenty trips, he had no doubt been discussing it, and he said, “at twenty trips, Fermastat and I will finish and we will go to Mosquitoes” [DeHavilland, Mosquito, Fighter bomber]. Which

20:30 are; Mosquitoes carried a crew of two and they [Vic and Fermastat] would go to Pathfinders, Pathfinder Mosquitoes, anyway.

Just hold it there for a second.

Do you want to turn it off? Alright I was, Dick and I, Dick Cantwell, the other Aussie and I, were

21:00 concerned about the fact that at twenty trips, if Vic left us, then our crew may be split up and we may be sent to other squadrons or stay on in 166 as spares. Now a spare meant that you flew with, if for instance, I was a spare navigator or a spare bomb aimer, as I was then a bomb aimer - I was a spare bomb aimer on 166, any crew, whose bomb aimer got sick

21:30 and that crew was on [duty], I’d go as the bomb aimer for that crew. And there was no doubt about it, statistically, if you were a spare, your rate of loss was much higher. Crews that are used to flying with each other, they knew each other’s talk, they knew each other’s abilities and as such

22:00 they were a much more proficient crew but when they had a spare, it created a great loss of proficiency in that crew, and as a result spares got knocked off [killed in action], a lot more often than normal. So

this was one of our concerns and Vic was very sympathetic towards it and he had arranged, he told us he had arranged that we would be kept together with a crew and we'd get a new navigator and a new skipper,

22:30 and that was that. It didn't happen. We went on leave when the twenty trips were up and Vic was going off, Vic and Fermastat were going off. We went on leave, we came back, I had a posted over to 460 [squadron], Dick Cantwell had a posting somewhere else and Paddy, oh Paddy wasn't with us anymore. Paddy got killed

23:00 on one of our trips later. The night Paddy got killed. And anyway, we were all split up. 460 was an Australian squadron, and were predominately Australian. There were a few Pommes and a few Canadians and so forth, but it was very heavily, Australian crew members.

23:30 And I think there's one thing that I should include first go, I'll go back now. While we were on 166, at one stage fairly late I think, it was fairly late in the tour with Vic. We were transferred to a station temporarily and Squadron Leader Maxwell

24:00 trained us. There were four crews [who] had been selected to do this strike and we were to fly low, at night, over the sea and we did training on that and we did a lot of night flying for about a week and then we were all sent back to our different squadrons. We weren't all taken from one squadron, we were all taken from different squadrons and there were four crews.

24:30 Anyway, about three or four days after we got back, a week or something, we were on ops, we were the only one's that night, on ops and anyway we got a briefing, yeah we got briefed. A briefing was sent over to us, I forget now but anyway, we got briefed and we had to go to, at low level, as low as we wished to fly,

25:00 which was probably about a hundred feet, or something like that and we were going into the Skagerrak [channel], at the top end of Denmark, [near] a very narrow neck of land [Skagen], [used for] our aiming that we were to fly over. When we got over it, so many seconds and then we dropped our load, and we were taking mines, we weren't taking bombs, we were taking mines. So anyway, we did that trip and as far as we were concerned [it was fine],

25:30 but when we got back, they said at de-briefing, "what happened?" "Nothing, we got there, we flew low, we never saw a shot fired in anger, we think we hit [the target], we dropped them where we should have, we were certain we got good visual recognition of where we were, and we dropped our mines and we come back and you can send us there every night if you want too, that will do us."

26:00 Anyway that was our experience out there. Anyway when I got to base, I was transferred to 460 [squadron] and I got there and I'm told I was a spare and I just made a statement, "I'm not flying, I'm finished" and I was told to go and see the Squadron administrative officer and I walked into Squadron administrative officer's

26:30 office and here is a guy that I had trained with at Mt Gambier and most of my flights, his name was Paeke, and he was known as Perko Paeke, because every time he got off the ground he spewed and I did his job when we were flying. There would be two of us go out on a trip and we'd

27:00 go from Mt Gambier to Nhill and back to here and there, and so forth. That was our navigational training and Perko would have his head in a bag and I would do his work for him and this went on almost the entire training period, but he was very good. He knew his stuff and he graduated

27:30 as an officer. He got his Commission, of course. Anyway when I walk into the [office], and I'd never heard of him after we trained at Mt Gambier, and I walk into the office and here's Perko. And I said "G'day Perko, what the hell are you doing here? What the?" And he said "Thompson" and so forth

28:00 and we talked a little bit and I said, "what are you doing here as administrative officer?" "Oh" he said, "They scrubbed me". "Oh" I said, "how many trips did you do, mate?" "Oh no, they scrubbed me at training, through my air sickness". "Oh lucky, bloody, you". "Anyway, what's this about, you not flying?" I said "No, I will not as a spare, as simple as that."

28:30 He said, "Well, we'll court martial you". I said, "Bullshit, you court martial me, you will?" and he was a light lieutenant at that stage and I was a warrant officer, I think, yeah I was. And anyway we talked for a while and eventually, I just walked out of the office and in the mean time I'd asked him, I'd said "Squadron

29:00 Leader Maxwell here?" He said "yeah". I said, "Oh yeah, what's he do?" He said, "He's specialist training and he also does ops and so forth." I said, "Yeah" and anyway, I ended up walking out of Perko's office and I went down to the administrative section and I said, "I want an appointment with Squadron Leader Maxwell." Maxwell saw me and we talked naturally about the trip that we did, and by the way,

29:30 about a week after we were on that trip the Tirpitz [German heavy cruiser] got sunk in the area. It had been in dock for six months or a year or something and it was headed out to sea again and it collected someone's mines and we of course claim, it was our mines but the Tirpitz got sunk. And anyway, Maxwell. We talked and he said, "you had a good trip I believe?" And

30:00 I said “Yeah, we saw nothing”. And he said, “Was it a success?” and I said, “Yeah, I knew where we were when we hit Denmark, where it was the right place.” And he said, “That’s great.” And I said, “How did everyone go?” He said “You were the only crew that got back.” And I said “What, bloody impossible, there was nothing”. He said “Dunno, we just never heard anything from anyone, except you.

30:30 you came back.” Naturally it was radio silence, we never did anything like that and anyway, that staggered me but anyway we talked and I told him my problem. “Oh” he said, “Thompson, forget it. You go on leave for a couple of days”, and with that he rang the orderly officer and he said, “give Thompson a two day pass.” And when I got back, he said, “When you get back, come and see me”

31:00 and when I went back he said, “Look we’ve got a crew over at”, I don’t know the name of the station, he said, “Just next to us”, and he said, “A fellow named Tom Grant is the skipper and their bomb aimer has had an accident and will be out for several months”, I think he had a leg shot off, or some bloody thing. “Anyway”,

31:30 he said, “Tom needs a bomb aimer, go over and see him, see the crew, come back and tell me whether they want to fly with you and you want to fly with them.” And I went over there and Tom Grant was an Englishman who, a little bit of his history, he, when the war started, Tom decided that the Air Force was the place to be. And then he found out that the Canadians and the Aussies

32:00 paid more than the Poms [the British] did, so he said “Alright, how do I get to Canada or how do I get to Australia? Right, I’ll join the Merchant Navy.” So he joined the Merchant Navy and they sent him to Crete and they sunk him. They sent him back to Cairo, put him on another boat and took him over to Greece and they sunk him there and he said, “Unless I get an Atlantic or Pacific run, I’m off.” They sent him out to Australia, a run to Australia, he

32:30 got as far as Fremantle, he departed and a week later he was in the Air Force. He joined up in Perth, as shown on his records, and he was a great guy, a really good fellow. Wild as they come and anyway, I spend a day over there and we went out on [the town ?], they weren’t flying at that time and anyway I got on

33:00 well with the crew, they liked me and we more or less said, “Righto’, I’ll be their bomb aimer” and then Tom said, “By the way, we’re going to Pathfinders”. I said, “You’re bloody what?” He said, “Yes, I think we’ll be going, we haven’t had the [order], we volunteered.” He said,

33:30 “We wanted to go to Pathfinders.” “Oh,” I said, “‘What the hell’, no problem.” So I went back to 460 and I was transferred then, over to Tom, over to the next station, joined Tom’s crew and then by the time all this happened, about a week or something like this, okay, we’re off to Pathfinders. And then we did, how are we going with time? Alright? Okay?

34:00 So anyway we went to Pathfinders and we were a very happy crew, we all got on well, we were all fairly proficient I think, I know we were and we were enthusiastic, we loved what was happening. We were so pleased we were at Pathfinders and

34:30 we, Pathfinders are totally different to the main force. Pathfinders you flew every day, regardless of whether you were on ops or not. You might only be on ops a couple of days a week but every day, you’re up there training, doing your own thing, mock attack by night fighters or something. The rear gunner would give the word and Tom would throw her into a dive

35:00 and all this sort of thing. And as far as from my point of view, we wanted to be the top and you had to have very efficient blind bombing abilities, which was purely the ability of the skipper and the bomb

35:30 aimer to relate. Tom reckoned he could tell by the tone of my voice, how urgent the move was that we had to make and it was right too. Anyway we became [a good team]. First up, you start off as a backup marker, what do they call it? I forget.

36:00 And then you become a primary marker, or a, yeah, a primary marker and then you become a master bomber. The system on Pathfinders basically was that you would if ‘H’ hour [departure time] was ten o’clock, at about six minutes I think it used to be, I think it was,

36:30 about six minutes before ten o’clock, the people would go in with flares, the parachute flares that lit up the area and a minute after them would be the primary marker, the primary visual marker if it was a night where you could see,

37:00 no cloud cover, the primary visual marker and they would drop incendiaries [explosive, fire-creating, ordinance] that were coloured, green, red, yellow flares. And they would drop and then the master bomber he would be, we would be, doing this at sixteen to twenty thousand feet, the master bomber would be downstairs [below the other aircraft],

37:30 probably three or four thousand feet and visually identify the aiming point and where the markers had been dropped and then he would broadcast to the main force to overshoot the green markers by two seconds or drop to the right of the green markers

38:00 or before the green markers or something like that, sorry. And that was the function of the master bomber but first up, the guys that dropped the flares, they were the rookies [new recruits] and then you

graduated to blind marker, no, visual marker

38:30 where you operated and dropped your flares if you could visually identify where you were. And by visually identify, we had radar, this H2S was like a screen which had an arm going around and it would bring up a certain area under the aircraft or in front of the aircraft. Actually, I think it was aimed towards the front of the aircraft,

39:00 in front of the aircraft and it was purely a reflection of a radio beam and if the radio beam hit water, it wouldn't reflect and it showed up on the screen as black, as dark, not lit. And iron roofs and roofs of buildings, they had a reflective [surface],

39:30 the reflection was taken by our instruments and as a result we could get a pretty good [reading] and once you knew what you were up to [the target], you could read it almost like as if you were looking at it. You could identify where you were. Okay, the visual marker was, well first up there were the

40:00 ones that dropped the illuminating flares, that were parachute flares, then there was the visual marker and then there was the primary marker who was there and he would only drop his bombs, if cloud cover had come in.

I think we're close to the end of the tape.

Tape 2

00:35 As I was saying, concerning Pathfinders, the format of the bombing raid; the visual marker would do the marking if you could get a visual view of the target. If cloud came in then the primaries [primary marker] would use their

01:00 flares, which was called a Wanganui flare, the same as the town in New Zealand, Wanganui and it was a flare that we would drop and it would light above the clouds and then main force [the main group of bombers] would bomb that light and that got them to the within an acceptable

01:30 range of the aiming point. And I must say at this stage, the aiming point of a city was anywhere within two or three mile of the aiming point [and] was considered a hit on the target. It was mass bombing, it was not pin point bombing, it was mass bombing and if you got within a mile or two of where you were, what was designated as the aiming point, that was fine.

02:00 It would drop on a house or a factory or a something. Anyway, going up the training. You started off as your visual marker, then there was the visual 'blind' marker, there was the blind marker and then there was the master bomber. Master bomber, as I said, used to fly at three or four thousand feet

02:30 was the usual height, visual, and he was there for the full extent of the raid. Other markers, we'd come in, we'd drop our markers and we'd just head back, but that system worked extremely well for most bombing and that was what the RAF [Royal Airforce] did in Germany .

03:00 Anyway, from our point of view we became [proficient], first we did dropping flares, then we became visual and we were qualified but had not been tested for our primary blind marking. We were blind marking, but not primary and

03:30 we had a night off and went out on the town and the next morning the skipper come over and said, "Just got word that we are doing our 'primary blind' exam today" and someone came from another Squadron and flew with us. And the test normally was, that you'd go up and

04:00 you'd go to about eighteen thousand feet, or something like that, and I would get onto the radar, the H2S, I would drop, we would make [dummy] bombing runs on six towns around England. The normal thing was that you would be given two that

04:30 you could say, "No, I was not satisfied" but you had to pick four of the six. Anyway, when we were overhung [hung-over ?] and so forth Tom said, "Oh well, the usual." As soon as you got off the ground you started sucking oxygen [from a face mask], pure oxygen, and that was the best headache cure and the best hangover cure you could ever have, was to suck pure oxygen.

05:00 And anyway we, by the time we got to 'height' [correct altitude], all heads were clear. We were clear anyway, but just we weren't as clear as we could have been before we got off the ground. However, we did our six runs and the guy who was the instructor, he asked me which one's I would have dropped and I said, "None,

05:30 they were all good", so anyway we picked two but I said, "I would have dropped on all six of them" and that was fine. Anyway, he shot through, we got down and that, we were on 'ops' that night. Our Squadron Leader, yeah our Squadron Commander, was a guy called Squadron Leader Letford and

06:00 when we got their for briefing, Letford said, "Well Grant's crew tonight, are on standby for any fill-ins needed and Thompson will be flying with me tonight." And that was great, as far as I was concerned,

master bomber, one of the best in the world

06:30 and anyway, and also, where were we going? Berlin? I'd never been to Berlin and of course it was one target that everyone in the RAF would have loved to say, "I've been to Berlin", to Berchtesgaden, to Hitler's hideout. This was almost the end of the war. Hitler's hideout, just outside Berlin [actually near Munich, though Mr Thompson could be referring to the military H.

at Rastenberg, East Prussia] and anyway we got to the [briefing], and at that briefing Letford said, "I want to see how good this

07:00 **fellow Thompson is", he said, "Because today" he said, "The average error that Grant's crew did on six runs, I think it was, a hundred and sixty, or a hundred and seventy metres", not metres in those days, yards, "And the previous best was two hundred and something". We broke the record and anyway, we got to the end of the**

07:30 **runway and the flight was cancelled. It came in, "cloud in the area" of course, and they just scrubbed the op. I didn't get to Berlin and I didn't get up with Letford and to me that was, I would have like to have done it, but I didn't. Letford, by the**

08:00 **way, he was fairly famous in so far as he, and his crew, did a hundred trips as a crew and then the navigator, they say, the navigator 'shit' himself. He said he wanted some time off. He got married, so he turned 'yellow' [fearful]. That's what they said of course. It was all jokingly,**

08:30 **because he was a, they were, an outstanding crew. When we talk that, about doing a hundred trips, in 1942, which was the worst year of course. In 1942, thirteen percent of crews that started a tour, finished it. The rest were shot down, or killed, or got out, or POW's**

09:00 **or something, but only thirteen percent finished their thirty trips, their first tour. So to do a hundred trips was quite extraordinary but he did and as I say, his navigator then turned 'yellow', they said. The, I don't know how many squadrons on,**

09:30 **there was only, I don't know, probably no more than two or three squadrons of Pathfinders but it was an elite service, an elite section of the service. We were given all sorts of ['extras'], I'll tell you some stories of some of the 'extras' [extra missions] we got and anyway next thing, the war**

10:00 **ended. The war ended and we were given [an 'extra']. Two or three days after it ended, we started flying in to pick up POW's, to bring them home. That was rather dramatic. Poor buggers, when they saw the White Cliffs of Dover, they cried. It was quite**

10:30 **dramatic and some of them had been locked up since [the beginning], for four years, five years, this sort of thing and anyway, after the main force of course, there were hundreds of aircraft went over to 'pick up'. And then one day when that was all finished they said, "Right-o, you've got a tank full of gasoline, go and have a look,**

11:00 **don't kill yourself, don't fly too low, go and have a look". And we just had eight hours. We visited towns we'd visited previously, of course. They were our main areas to look at, what we had been to and it was quite a [sight], looking back now, dreadful, dreadful. You**

11:30 **know the damage that was done, the cities that were totally wiped out, were hard to realise and one that impressed me more than anything was a place called Hildesheim. Hildesheim was a small town, the reason I remembered it was when we attacked it, it was a daylight trip, not very far from the end of the war [22nd March, 1945] and it was a town like Toowoomba, where I came from.**

12:00 **I could relate to it there, as a lovely little country town, not small, but a big country town and the reason we went there was it was a 'rest home', they had a 'rest home' or it was a rest area for German officers and that was the only thing. It had no factories, no nothing, but we went there and flattened it. And when we got there, it was**

12:30 **the centre of the town gone, the urban streets, and by the centre of the town I mean, probably a radius of one mile and it was quite [a sight], I related it to Toowoomba and it was a dreadful thing.**

How did you react emotionally to this?

At the time I shrugged the shoulders, "the bastards got it there,

13:00 didn't they?" Our crew, anyway, most of us, I think, we didn't like Germans and whatever we did to them we didn't give a 'stuff' what we did. And my first mother-in-law, I told a story once and she told me, "I was telling lies." "The British wouldn't do that" and it was Dresden and

13:30 Chemnitz and this was just before the end of the war, a month or something like that, and Dresden was a city that had not, I don't think, had a lot of punishment and the Russians were advancing and reinforcements were coming up from the 'West' to try and stop the Russians and they sent us to Dresden to hunt the people out, onto the

14:00 roads and we went there and we bombed Dresden and the next night it was on again and it was Chemnitz and Chemnitz was about forty mile west of Dresden and they said, “You did a great job last night, you killed five thousand people” or something and, “We estimated you killed five thousand people and you put twenty thousand people onto the roads to Chemnitz. Tonight we’re going to Chemnitz and we’re going

14:30 to blow it up.” And this my mother-in-law said, “It’s not true, we wouldn’t do that”, but we did, it was [true]. There was no [coverage?] and I’ve seen documentaries recently, the last six months of the RAF’s life was a very

15:00 dishonourable [one], we killed a lot of people we didn’t have to kill.

What was your opinion?

The war might have been extended a little, but anyway, it doesn’t [matter now?], that’s the way it was but we had no thought about that. We, as crew members, ‘Hey good, we did a good job, look at them.” And as we were leaving, “Look at the bloody fires, lovely”, that was our attitude.

Was there any kind of, I guess disassociation?

15:30 **between, sort of, “Look at the fires, look at the results of the bombs” and then did you associate that to people?**

No, no. The fact that was some poor ‘bugger’ down there that had two arms, two legs and one head, made no difference. He was a ‘bloody’ German and that was our thinking. If we had, I think if we’d had the realisation of what we were doing, there’d be a

16:00 hell of a lot of people stop flying, I think. I don’t know.

When did the…?

We were young and there was a lot of ‘brain washing’. I mean ‘hell’, on Pathfinders we were brainwashed.

How do you mean?

If you did thirty trips and had six months off, they reckoned it took thirty trips to train you and at the end of thirty trips you were becoming a valuable, a very valuable person

16:30 and as such, by the time you’d done thirty trips, with us it was ten trips, because we’d done twenty before we got there. I think Tom had done about eighteen, so it was. We’d done eighteen and by the time we’d done our thirty, which at that stage we did have the right to say, “I want six months off”. We all had ‘acting rank’ [field rank higher than normal] and if we said, “We want six months

17:00 off”, our pay would go down by thirty, forty percent or something. We had a library, an ‘intelligence library’ [Pathfinder, data library]. We read stuff that no-one else read.

What sort of things?

One thing that I have a particular memory of and it’s influenced my attitude to antibiotics.

17:30 When the ‘Yanks’ [Americans] landed at the bottom end of Italy [September 3rd, 1943] , while they were coming up towards Rome, ‘Jerry’ [Germans] got hold of all the prostitutes in Rome, infected them with Gonorrheae, gave them restricted

18:00 dosages of Sulfanilamide, which was then the cure for Gonorrheae, which was quite effective. But they, these prostitutes, became infected, they didn’t kill all the Gonorrheae germs, and as a result they were still infected with Gonorrheae that Sulfanilamide wouldn’t cure. So after ‘Jerry’, after the ‘Yanks’ got into Rome they ended

18:30 up with more people in hospital with ‘black pox’ that they couldn’t cure, than they had battle casualties. They had hospitals full of guys that they couldn’t cure and anyway then they said, “Let’s try this stuff called penicillin” and they started injecting and penicillin worked and a week later they had a gun in their hand again.

19:00 But that was in intelligence reports that we got, in our intelligence library and that sort of thing and a lot of stuff that was, that would have made no, thinking back, probably if we’d dropped this information into Berlin it was all stuff that would not have caused any real difference.

19:30 But of course, we got it and we were the elite, it was us that got it, the Pathfinders. We were ‘the greatest’ and that little thing there, believe me, you went on leave, the little insignia that we wore under our ribbons, that denoted that you were a Pathfinder, oh ‘boy’, it opened doors. It was a very respected

20:00 thing, the Pathfinders. And anyway the war ended and we, VE Day [Victory in Europe Day], we went on leave, did stupid things. I was lucky I didn’t kill myself that day. I climbed the statue of Eros, in Piccadilly Circus,

20:30 and I was sitting up on bloody Eros, at the top of it, which, as a kid, we used to climb trees and all that sort of thing, it was nothing to me, climbing to the top of, to Eros. But the damn thing was only, it's a bit of brass and could easily have broken and I'm twenty foot up in the air.

What had you had to drink at the time?

Oh plenty.

21:00 I remember a policeman came up and he begged me, "Please sir, come down", he said. I said, "You'll bloody well lock me up." He said, "No I won't, I promise you. Just please come down." And the 'cop' helped me down.

What were you doing up there?

I just got up there because it was something to get up, no reason. You did all sorts of [things], it was, nowhere else, no, nothing

21:30 for that day or two or three. It was quite an 'open [season]' and you did all sorts, as I said, probably one of the most dangerous things that I'd been involved in, for possibly the war, 'cause all I had to do was slip and the bloody thing broke. I've looked at it since and thought, "Oh my God, it's stronger than it looks". Anyway if I'd fallen twenty or thirty feet

22:00 down onto concrete, the probability is, I could, easily have not come back. Anyway we were, after celebrations and that sort of thing, we were sitting around the squadron and Tom had talked and talked to us first, "Yes, let's keep together

22:30 as a crew, let's go out and see the bloody 'Japs'" [The Japanese] and anyway, we were talking about getting out to Burma but then that fell over and then next thing we're told, we're going home. And then I was posted down to Brighton, which was the incoming and outgoing station and I was in the Grand Hotel when I was a sergeant

23:00 on the way out, on the way in and on the way out, I was at the Metropole, which is for officers. But it was, then I come home on the Stratheden [P and O liner] from England and landed at Perth and came on home and got home I think, I know,

23:30 it was harvest time, got home in November and Dad and Mum came down to Toowoomba and met me at Toowoomba, or Brisbane. No, met me at Brisbane and went home and we're in the middle of the wheat harvest and Albert Barr was over there, our next door neighbour, he was helping with getting some wheat in. In those days it used to be bags of wheat and I was a pretty strong, young, kid

24:00 when I was on the farm and a bag of wheat weighs a hundred and eighty pounds and you could 'plop' one on my shoulders and I'd run up and stack it and it was no problem to me but you had to take it right. And Albert Barr, the first, when we got home it was three o'clock in the afternoon or something like that and there's a big panic on. There's big black clouds in the west and we didn't want the wheat to get wet, so we had a couple of trucks there

24:30 pulling the [wheat], loading up with wheat and taking it into the shed and I come up to the shed and Albert said, "Come on, get under this bag of wheat, don't loaf" and I went, "Yes, come on" and you can drop a bag of wheat on a fellow and you'll flatten him every time and bloody Albert did that to me and there I am, flat on my belly, on the ground, with a bag of wheat on me and of course, I cursed. I knew he'd done it on purpose and the

25:00 big story, "Oh the Blue Orchids [slang for air force], look at them, flat on their belly". Oh anyway, and then we, I, spent another oh, I think after Christmas, I looked at the tractor and I thought, "Oh my God, I've got to sit on that thing for twelve hours, four miles an hour, oh God."

25:30 Anyway I of course, I was still, in uniform. I hadn't been discharged and I used to go down to Brisbane to the officers' club in the old Hotel Daniels in Brisbane, which is where I was, most times and after, probably two months I knew

26:00 it was getting very close to [the end and] they were going to shove me out. I did everything I could to 'stop in'. By then of course, Japan had surrendered before that and yeah, when I was at the embarkation, the Metropole in Brighton

26:30 Japan quit and anyway the Victory parade, up in Tokyo, I said, "I'll go to that" but I didn't get in and it would have kept me in the services another month or two. Then the Occupation Forces and so forth but they had more fellows wanting to be in

27:00 than they needed and anyway I didn't. I think it was the first of April I was discharged and I had, which was pretty true in that period in discharge, I was asked [about] problems and so forth and someone said, "Do you dream?" and I said, "Oh yeah". "Oh" and

27:30 the next thing I was at a bloody psychiatrist, and that suited me because all they did was listen to my story and talk, and we talked a bit and he said, "You'd better go on leave for three weeks" and I said, "Well that's a good idea" and that kept me away from the farm for another three months. That was the early part of forty six and anyway eventually I had to return. And

28:00 Dad knew I was not [well ?], it was difficult for me and we had a visit from a real estate agent in Pittsworth and the bank manager. One day we were actually crutching [shearing the rear of sheep] and they arrived, Edgar Corfe and

28:30 Mac, the bank manager and after we'd had a rum or two, sitting down at the sheep yard, Edgar Corfe said, "Dave", he said, "Herbert's is up for sale, four thousand acres, they want four quid an acre for it and now that Max is home, we thought maybe you'd want to buy it".

29:00 Dad said, "I haven't got sixteen thousand quid, where would I get sixteen thousand?" and the bank manager said "well you've got", I forgot what it was. He had eight thousand or something in the bank and he said, "We'll give you the rest, no problem". And Dad said, "I'll think about it". And he said to me after they left, he said, "Well you know, I'm not sure that you want to stay farming." I said, "Dad, I've applied to Qantas for a job,

29:30 and if I get a job I'll take it." I said, "I'll know within the next couple of weeks" and I said, "If not, then okay, we'll buy Herbert's, we'll go big." And anyway we, oh a few days later, I got the word from Qantas, "Go down and get your navigator's [license], second class required.

30:00 Do the exam and get [the license]", which automatically I had the qualifications for and "you've got a job", so I went to Brisbane and got my navigator's licence number two and went to Sydney and started flying with Qantas on the flying boats. We used to take the, Qantas in those days took the flying boats up as far as Singapore and we took 'Lancastrians's'

30:30 which was a converted Lancaster bomber, carrying I think it was, eight people. We took it as far as Karachi and then BOAC, which was British Overseas Airways Corporation, now it's, what's the British airline? British Airways is it? Yeah. It's now B.A. but then it was B.O.A.C. They used to

31:00 take it on from Singapore to Southampton. They took the boats and the Lancastrians's they took from Karachi to Heathrow, I think it was. Anyway did that for eighteen months and in that time got one trip back to England. They had an arrangement that the British crew would take the Lancastrian from Karachi

31:30 down to Sydney and you'd slip a service, or have a week off, or something and they'd go back and we would take it on to England. And I got one trip back to England. When the war ended, I nearly stopped in England. Oh I was like that. Great country, great people, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful

32:00 and I very nearly made the decision. I missed two boats and eventually 'Swanie', the guy who was 460, ran the 460 Squadron and he was running Metropole [RAF station], disembarkation at the time and Swanie got me and he said, "We're going to court martial you, if you miss another boat. So don't be bloody silly, make up your mind. Do you want to stop here or do you want to

32:30 go home?" And I said, "I'll go home." But anyway it was wonderful to go back to England and I really [liked it], it was great and that was a year after the war had ended or yeah, maybe a bit more. And things were starting to get back [to normal] and anyway I flew with Qantas for about two years and then there was an airline called British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines

33:00 formed, which ANA [Australian National Airways], pre-run of Ansett, ANA were doing the trip under this company which was owned by the British, no it wasn't. It was owned by New Zealand, Australia and Canada and it was called BCPA, British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines,

33:30 and they had the run from Sydney to Vancouver, through Nandi, Honolulu and we'd terminate there at 'Frisco or Vancouver, alternatively. And it was of course, a great run. Better than the Far East, better than Singapore, which, in those days Singapore, was a stinking, dreadful place, open sewers and stunk.

34:00 And when I go back to Singapore, now it's incredible. That is the one part of the world that has changed most, I have no doubt. In my mind the change in Singapore in fifty years, you just couldn't believe, because it was a stinking, stinking place. Anyway

34:30 I heard about BCPA, that they were going to, the ANA charter was due to stop at such and such a date or something and then the Company was using it's own crews and so forth. So I went across to see them and they said, "Oh no, if you're with Qantas, we don't take Qantas people." And I said, "Alright I was thinking about leaving Qantas". He said, "Well if you leave Qantas then come and talk to me."

35:00 And of course, I went straight back to Qantas and resigned and went back to BCPA and said, "I'm without a job, mate" and anyway, I became navigator with BCPA and flew for three years with BCPA and I met Nan or Nan was a hostess with BCPA and we decided

35:30 to get married. And at that stage I think I would have been, let me think, I was about twenty eight and I said that I was, and navigators were going to get the push and I decided that I was too old to convert to be a pilot and ever get anywhere,

36:00 so it was the finish of flying for me. So I said, "Alright I'll go home to the farm" and Nan came from a rural area, came from Redcliffs. Her father had 'drawn' a block after the First World War at Redcliffs,

growing grapes and oranges and that stuff. And anyway we went home and had a look at Lone Pine, which was Dad's property, and

36:30 Dad said he would retire, he and Mum would retire and build a house in Toowoomba and I would take over the farm. So anyway, Nan had her reservations about it, but we decided to go on with it. So we finished flying, that ended dramatically, which I'll go into detail about that later,

37:00 but I, we went home to the farm and within a year it was obvious that Nan just didn't like it. And we decided we would stay for two years. By then, we hoped to have a bit of a bank [balance], which was not the case. We had two of the worst years on the farm, that we ever had. The

37:30 first year was a drought and the second year looked like it was going to be a 'bumper' year and we went to a ball at Yarranlea, a 'black and white' ball they called it, and everyone dressed up in tails and all that sort of rubbish. Country town with a …, Yarranlea was a hall, that was it but everyone dressed up in their tails and that. And Ted Offener who was a good friend of

38:00 ours, had a property a few miles from us, and Ted rang me about three o'clock. He said, "Max, get on the road, get off the black soil, otherwise you'll never get to the ball tonight". So anyway we got dressed early and we went off because the last mile into our house from the road, which was a gravel road up to about a mile from our home, and

38:30 that was black soil. And you'd go about five yards and you're 'bogged' when it's been raining. So anyway we headed off and it rained all night and the next morning they said, or next morning, or three o'clock I think the band was due to go home and they said, "You've got to stop till daylight, and then we'll get the tractors and

39:00 pull the people out onto the main road", which is what happened. We got home to Lone Pine. I've got a photo of the corner, where the property name is, and it was under water. There was wheat that high, with heads that long, bumper crop, and we walked home the last mile and all you could see was water.

39:30 And instead of having a bumper crop we had a very ordinary crop, a poor crop, one of the worst. And we left there, two thousand pounds I think we had, and we knew two things, how to farm and how to fly, not enough money to buy an aeroplane or a farm, so we got to Sydney and stayed with the Mulcahys.

40:00 Joy was a friend of ours. She was also a 'hostie' [air hostess] with BCPA.

We've just reached the end of that tape, again.

Oh yeah.

Tape 3

00:32 We arrived in Sydney, couldn't buy a farm, couldn't buy a plane. I answered an ad, I saw an ad in the Sydney Morning Herald, "Earn a hundred pound a week" and I thought, "Oh yeah, that's reasonable money, probably more than I was earning when I was flying" and I answered the ad and it was selling vacuum cleaners door to door. And the guy gave me a decent pitch

01:00 and anyway I ended up, after a week doorknocking I said, "That's not for me". I went in to hand in my gear and I met an old fellow there called Bill Wallace. We were waiting to see the sales manager and he said to me, "You got a car?" And I said, "Yeah". He said "this place here, it's not good. I'll see you in the pub downstairs after. Now come and see me". So anyway I went downstairs, after I handed in my gear and

01:30 resigned and so forth. I sold one vacuum cleaner, or someone bought it I think, sympathy sale and anyway I met Bill Wallace downstairs and Bill got in my ear. Bill was an old vacuum man from way back and a good one and anyway the upshot of it was, on Monday we went out to a different distributor and we picked up a car load of vacuum cleaners and

02:00 floor polishers and we head to Cowra. And that was the start of me becoming involved in selling. We went to, after three months or something 'barnstorming' around the bush of New South Wales, Bill heard of the franchise for Silovac available in Victoria, so we went to Melbourne and we set up distributing Silovacs and Silovac

02:30 vacuums led to other things and we built a very successful business. I decided if you could sell vacuum cleaners on the door, you could sell other things and Bill was very, very anti, against that. You had to specialise and what the format we used was; we'd advertise,

03:00 I would interview and then after two days in the office we'd go out on the road and Bill and I would take them on the road and then I'd leave them with Bill and then I'd advertise again next week and you'd get ten starters every week, forty in the month and at the end of the month if you had two salesmen out of it, or no, one a week you'd get, with a bit of luck and

03:30 that's how you built your team. And we, after four or five months I think it was, we had a good little team of ten, twelve, fifteen salesmen doorknocking and selling. And I decided and talking to Guy Veals that used to be in Melbourne, one of the major retailers, who

04:00 was doing our finance paper and the guy at Veals got in my 'lug' about selling refrigerators. And anyway, I gave it a lot of thought and I rented a trailer and hooked her on behind my car and on Monday morning Bill said, "Where's your 'school'?" "I didn't advertise it." "Oh yeah, alright. Are you having a week off?" I said, "New idea Bill, come on, we'll go out the back". He said, "What for?" and I said, "Come on".

04:30 And I had two refrigerators on the back of the trailer, hooked up to the car and Bill said, "What's this?" and I said, "Refrigerators". He said, "Oh, you've got an order for them?" I said, "No, we're going to go doorknocking on them." "You can't doorknock refrigerators, you've got to get them in, you've got to do a demonstration, you can't sell refrigerators doorknocking." And I said, "I believe I can."

05:00 And anyway I had a big strong young fellow in the back seat of the car and old Bill in the front and anyway he grabbed, Bill was an absolute 'victim' for the racehorses, or anything. Racehorses, dogs, trots, Bill used to earn big money and if he backed the last winner, he'd still have money on Monday morning and if not Monday morning he'd say, you could have paid him the equivalent of

05:30 two, three, thousand dollars on Friday, and on Monday morning Bill would say, "You'd better give me fifty quid," or fifty bucks, "To go to the bush." If he backed the last winner, he might have fifty grand, twenty grand but he would do it, he was an exceptionally good destroyer of money. Anyway Bill just buried his head in the paper, "Oh, I'll just pick a bloody winner", so

06:00 he buried his head in the bloody newspaper. So anyway, I went doorknocking and I had this young fellow and a wheelbarrow and after about an hour I got an 'in' [a potential sale] and he got the thing off the back of the trailer, into the house, set it up and I sold it. Came out and said to Bill, "I've just sold ten vacuum cleaners, mate.

06:30 Two hundred quid, instead of twenty quids worth of vacuum cleaner, two hundred quid I've just sold. Bill said, "You can always fluke a sale". Anyway we went and had a counter lunch and after lunch I sold the second fridge and at the end of it I said to Bill, "I've sold forty, bloody vacuum cleaners today, have you ever sold that in a week? And you reckon we can't sell refrigerators?"

07:00 Anyway it started up, we became, we started selling refrigerators and Veals owned Homecrafts. Homecrafts was a group of retail stores. I think there were about twenty in Victoria, predominately Victoria, in various country towns and Melbourne and within a couple of months, I was selling more refrigerators than Homecrafts were.

07:30 And I had an office about the size of this and nothing else and an old fella called Hughie doing my books for me and answering the telephone. And anyway all country, predominately country and it became huge. We made big. I had a problem getting trucks.

08:00 To take a truck load of refrigerators, say we were going to Bendigo, take a truck load of refrigerators to Bendigo and then we'd put them onto utilities and so on and we'd go out and sell them off the 'ute'. And I was always having trouble getting a truck for the week. Eventually I bought a [few], I heard of, or someone told me, I don't know, but I ended up

08:30 buying a transport company out of Darwin, because they had four semis. And I left two semis on the 'Adelaide- Darwin run,' I think they were run, and the other two I bought back to Melbourne and we used them to do that and fortunately they all made huge money, because the two that were left at Darwin I think they blew a tyre every fifty miles. I lost a heap of money as a transport company until

09:00 I eventually sold the damn thing or gave it away or something. But in the meantime, made a lot of money and then started into New South [Wales], once you do a town a couple of times, you've taken the 'cream' and anyway I started up into the Riverina and then the next thing Bernie Seibright had heard what I was doing in Melbourne and Bernie was barnstorming New South Wales,

09:30 so that was nearly finished. And I had a team of twenty good salesmen, good, competent salesmen, doorknockers.

What was this business like at the time, like were many people doing door to door sales as such?

Not a lot, yes and no, Electrolux always, Electrolux has always been a big seller of doorknocking. That's how they sold their vacuum cleaners.

10:00 That was pre- war and that carried on after the war. Nothing like it would be like now, but there was a certain amount of it going on, not a lot. Anyway my sales started to diminish and the salesmen, one or two left because we'd done the territory, basically

10:30 done the territory and one day I was out at Dandenong and I saw, I was in a hardware store there and I saw something that intrigued me. It was called 'Protect-a-pan'. In those days, of course, a hell of a lot of Australia was not sewered. You had the 'dunny' at the back and you had a tin there that you 'poop' in

the tin and once a week the night cart man would come and he'd take your tin and put a new one in.

11:00 And the Protectapan was a cast, oh light weight, steel which had a seat on it, a toilet seat, and that toilet seat, and inside the toilet was a stainless steel bowl which had two flaps

11:30 and when you sat on the seat the flaps would open and you'd do your 'poop' and get up and the flaps would close, so you never looked at that unsightly, dreadful thing that was mess. And I looked at it and I thought, "Oh God, I think we could sell that" and because, naturally, we never had a [toilet?], we had an outhouse and we used to build big pits on the farm but

12:00 anyway, I bought a couple and went doorknocking with them and yes it was a 'seller', I said, "I can sell this." I went to Warrington, who were the sheet metal people making them and I got 'the agency'. I said to Warrington's, "How many are you making?" "Oh, ten a month or something". I said, "Alright, I'll take ten a day, but I want 'exclusive'"[exclusive rights to the agency], so I did and I got it and we sold thousands of the things. Put the price up from fifteen quid they were selling for

12:30 in the hardware store. Put it up to twenty five and just barnstormed and sold one in every [town?]. Jimmy Tinworth, one of my main salesmen, Jimmy would put twenty on a 'Ute' and stack them up and they were that high and that wide, a dunny seat, and Jim would take a couple of salesmen with him.

13:00 He was unique, he was the only one who did it this way and Jim would then go doorknocking in a street. He'd stop in the middle of a street and all the houses and his fellows would be done up in a white coat, "Health Department now, come on, in the interests of health get out here and have a look at this" and you'd have twenty housewives behind the 'Ute' and Jim would give them a talking too about the flies and maggots and getting in your food and this and so forth

13:30 and then he said, "Alright", Jim was good, "Mrs So and So," he could remember names and everything, "You want one don't you?" "Yes". "Righto Robbie, Mrs So and So and you, Mrs So and So" and then the next thing he'd empty the damn thing and then he'd have to find them, which house they'd gone into, and he did of course. And Jim would knock off twenty in a couple of hours. It took two hours to then go in and sign them up on hire

14:00 purchase and all that sort of thing.

Was it an unusual job at the time, to be an entrepreneurial sales manager?

I suppose so, I don't know. I saw refrigerators, when Bill showed me vacuum cleaners and floor polishers.

Was it training or just a natural ability, kind of?

I didn't get any training. Old Bill told me how to train,

14:30 how to sell, on doorknocking. The main thing was to get 'over the door' and when you got in, as soon as you got a 'yes', if it was five minutes after you got in the place, you'd grab your receipt book, no more talk, no more sales talk, just get the money and perhaps a tiny little bit of talk after but make sure you had the money in your pocket and the receipt written and the sale finished before you talked anymore.

15:00 Or you might stay there for an hour. With the vacuum cleaner of course, "You think this chair is nice and clean, yeah, nice chair, well let's see" and then put it out and you'd empty it out on the arm of the chair, which everything is full of dust and dirt and you put this dirt on the arm of the chair and the housewife would faint. High pressure selling.

15:30 **Was there also people you would target for sales over others?**

No. Bill taught me that

A wife over a husband or?

Oh whoever was there, no, most of your sales were done to women because you worked during the day, but Bill taught me one thing, which was the day we first went to Cowra.

16:00 "Now knock on that street, now if you get an 'in', bring me across, introduce me as a sales manager or supervisor or something and then shut up, don't you ever say one word, while I'm selling, don't you ever say a word." Occasionally I did and the next thing I did, was get a blast from Bill. It was all just closing, and as soon as you 'closed' and you got a 'yes', grabbed the receipt book, finished, sales over.

16:30 It was high pressure selling but most cases they needed a vacuum cleaner, they needed a refrigerator, and the refrigerator's were a different story. Halstrom started mass manufacturing refrigerators at the end of the war. He was making guns or something and then he started making refrigerators, Halstrom Refrigerator,

17:00 and it was not a sealed unit, it was a refrigeration by heat and it had an element in it and it used to cost about seven shillings a week for electricity. And when you were getting two quid a week as a wage, seven bob a week was a lot. And Halstrom's motto was, "He would put a Halstrom refrigerator in every

17:30 working man's home". And we made the rule that yes, it was the one way you'd keep them a working man all their life, paying for the electricity this thing would use. But it was a great time. We used to trade them in for five quid or something and sell them a sealed unit and a different [unit], bigger and better and all this sort of thing. So that got me into selling and from then in I

18:00 suppose I was not stable, didn't build a business that was stable but if I saw an opportunity I'd try it and many times I lost money and that went on all my life. I mean I went from vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, 'thunderboxes' we used

18:30 to call them and then what? Oh then I got into, oh yeah I got into mining. I bought the 'Great Australia' up at Cloncurry, two thousand acre freehold, when there's no freeholds basically. They were given to people who found a new [property]. Back in the seventeen,

19:00 eighteen hundreds, people who found a new mineral field, they gave them freeholds and I bought the freehold. The 'Great Australia' was on it. It was closed in 1920 because the price of copper went down to nothing and they shut it up and it had never been opened. And I said I would open it, in the meantime I'd had a little fling up

19:30 on the, a fellow saw me one day in Sydney, Gough Atkinson, and Morley Cutlack. Gough and Morley had a little tin outfit on the Atherton Tableland, alluvial tin and needed money, didn't have any money and I had a bit of money and anyway I financed it. It was all finished in six months, but it was, as they said it was and we made quite a bit of money,

20:00 a 'quicky', and that got me interested in mining and I ended up at the Great Australia. I spent [money-?] and I put a concentration plant there. I was going to make money from the concentrating plant from all the gouges there. There's heaps and heaps of little tiny shoots of copper in that area and at the same time I'd open the Great Australia, but

20:30 of course the wood all needed replacing and the shafts and all that sort of thing and I spent a lot of money. And the bloody Japs, had Mitsui and everyone interested in it but wouldn't give me money. And the only people I got money out of was the ANZ [Australia and New Zealand] Bank and anyway in 1960,

21:00 about 1960 or 62 I think it was, 1962 I went bankrupt because I owed so much money and I owed the ANZ Bank a hundred and fifty thousand or something, big money, and I spent. I had a lot of money. I lost probably half a million pounds on the Great Australia.

How did you get restarted?

Beg your pardon?

How did you get restarted?

I never stopped. I got out of the bankruptcy

21:30 hearing and I said to the OR [Official Receiver] in that hearing, public hearing, I said, "Keep the 'Great Australia' in my estate and everyone will get paid fully, and I will be wealthy, but if you sell it, you'll get nothing for it and you'll never get anything from me. I owe too much." But the OR said, "Yes, but you

22:00 owe the Cloncurry Shire Council, two hundred pounds and you've got nothing in the estate." I said, "I'll get the two hundred tomorrow, if you need it." "Where will you get it from? You've told us you've got no money" and I said, "I'll borrow it". "You can't borrow it." I said "yes I can, providing I tell them I'm bankrupt. I can borrow as much as I want, as much as people want to give me." And I said, "Look, just keep the Great Australia in

22:30 the estate". And that was probably two years after I declared bankrupt, the hearing, that would be mid sixties. Anyway, Morrie Shields who was one of my Cloncurry people, a director of our company I think, yeah Morrie bought it from the receiver for two thousand pounds.

23:00 And he sold it about four years later in the 'Poseidon boom', Poseidon broke in 1969 or 70, 1970 I think, Poseidon broke and Morrie sold it for a million quid and they floated it and so forth. Anyway my estate got exactly what I said they'd

23:30 get, that much, zero pence in the pound.

So what did you get up to in the 1970's?

In the sixties that was, the day I got back from the bankruptcy hearing, I opened an office. I forget what we were selling, selling something or other and I never stopped. And every year, I was supposed to fill in, every year,

24:00 a statement of what I'd done. I refused to do that because they'd sold the 'Great Australia'. When they did, I said to them, they contacted me or something and I said, "Look I told you, 'keep the Great Australia', we'll pay everyone twenty shillings in the pound, without her, you get nothing. I'm doing nothing, I've done nothing, I've made no money, that's it". But all the time I was in business,

24:30 [in] my wife's name or something.

Tell us about the bungie?

Well that was years later and basically just going an overview of it, after in, must have been 1970 I sold a business,

25:00 I forget what it was and my wife Pat, said to me, “Look Tracy’s got quite a bit of money in” and Tracy was probably four year old at that stage, “got quite a bit of money in the bank, what will I do with it?” I said, “Oh, buy some shares.” And she said, “what BHP or?” I said, “No, under no circumstances. Go and buy the ‘penny dreadfuls’,

25:30 something that’s a penny a share, something like that, oil or something or other and one day one of them might strike oil and if so, it’s great and if not, well bad luck, she gets three or four grand or whatever she’s got.” And anyway the next thing, and I started and I read up and so forth, “’Buy ten thousand off shore’ and so and so and so and so” and we did that.

26:00 And I said to Pat there, spend up to three grand, I think she had. Anyway six months later Poseidon, I see the world’s gone mad, nickel’s gone mad, mining’s gone mad and the next thing Pat said, “Hey look, we’ve got some of them” and we looked and anyway we worked it out that Tracy was worth, her three grand was worth about

26:30 eight or ten. And I said, “Oh this is interesting”, so I became a punter on the stock exchange. I went in, I bought myself a little aluminium ladder that high and a pair of binoculars and the visitor’s gallery at the stock exchange in Sydney, I was there every day. Run to the telephone and, “Buy ten thousand of this, sell five thousand”. On

27:00 at Christmas, which was about two months, I must have been, I don’t know, two or three hundred thousand in front, and everyone said, “Get out, get out” and I said, “No, when I’ve got half a million, I’ll get out.” So anyway come January the slide started and one day I was in the gallery and a tap on the shoulder and it was the geologist that had gone up to look at the Urban Bank tin prospect,

27:30 Doug Campbell, and Doug tapped me on the shoulder, “How are you?” The first time I’d seen him for ten years and went across the road to the ‘Wentworth’ [Hotel] and got into the drink and rang Pat that afternoon and said, “I won’t be home for dinner” and before Doug was a geologist with AMDEL, stationed in South Australia.

28:00 And before the, we had dinner together and we shook hands that he would resign, I would sell up and he said, “How much have you got?” and I said, “I reckon a hundred grand or something”, so he said, “Alright”. He said , “we’ll go find our own mine”. I said, “Yeah, let’s do it”. So I sold up, oh Doug rang me the next day and he said, “Remember our deal?” And I said, “yes” and I said, “Still in it?”

28:30 And he said, “Yes, if you are?” and I said, “Righto” and I rang Ralph King and Neil and said, “Sell, sell, sell.” And we went over to the west for two years. The best two years of my life. Rented a Toyota or a Landrover, a Land Cruiser, and headed for the bush. A couple of motorbikes on the back and go ‘cracking rock’ [prospecting] trying to

29:00 find one and we spent two years. Used to go away for about two months, come home for a couple of weeks, back to the west again. Found a [seam] out [there], at one stage, after about a year I suppose, Doug had access, AMDEL which were Australian Mineral Development or something.

29:30 It was a combination of Government and the large mining groups of Australia, mainly for research and Doug had access to their libraries, of course and all the aerial photographs and there was a patch of land up in the Kimberleys, out from Derby in the McClarty’s, over the Coppermine Creek, about eighty mile, that looked terrific on the aerial photographs.

30:00 And Doug and I said. “They said a white man had never been across it,” so we said, “Right, we’ll go”. And we had it all, two Rovers we rented and a chopper was going to come in and get us if we couldn’t continue, sort of thing and we got out there and we went in one, with one Rover one day.

30:30 And we came back, we were only going in a few miles, just to test a couple of things and we’re next morning setting up to boil the ‘billy’ and anyway, as usual, if you saw a rock you cracked it and we were sitting, Doug broke it, a rock, he looked at it and he said, “What do you make of this?” And I looked at it and I said “’shit’, I don’t know, it looks a bit like a Gossan, is it?” And Gossan was the

31:00 residue of a sulphide ore body that has the mineral leeched out of it and it looks like a honeycomb, an empty honeycomb, because the sulphide ore has been leeched out. And it was a Gossan and Doug was a big fellow and we were sitting , he said “it’s a Gossan.” And we went around

31:30 fifty yards here and picked up the rock here and it was still bloody Gossan and we’d fallen onto something that was good, something big.

Can we just stop there for one second.

Without going into full detail on it, we spent our money and we had a, what we thought, was a mine and we did a deal with the company to come and explore it, they had two years to explore it. They had to spend a million and a half or something, They put down a lot

32:00 of holes and in, I think it was October, I got a message from the geologist in Perth to meet him in Sydney. And Doug came across, Doug had gone back to working with AMDEL and Winters and when he opened the door he said, “Congratulations fellas, you’ve got a mine” and Doug wept. And I was starting to tell you

32:30 we were sitting on a rock and Doug said, “we’ve found a Gossan, we’ve found a mine” and tears were streaming down his face and he’s a big brawny fellow but he cried at the drop of a hat. Anyway Doug bawled and we got ‘boozed’ and the deal was that we would get a lot of money in January and Kennecott [Rio Tinto Mining], who’s the biggest copper miner in the world, would take an ‘option’ [a speculative interest] and they were going to do the exploration and this was about a hundred mile out of Derby.

33:00 And anyway we had an election on the 13th of December that year and a fellow called Gough Whitlam got in and they said they would buy back the farm and they wouldn’t allow the farm to be sold anymore and within a few weeks all of the major global, well Kennecott anyway, and all the others, said Australia’s finished and they walked out. So instead

33:30 of us getting half a million bucks, dollars, on the 31st of January, we got nothing. And royalty and God knows what, we were rich, anyway it’s still sitting there. And so that was mining, two years, the best two years of my life out in the bush. And anyway, I don’t know, then I got into importing furniture, no, I got into then, making billiard tables

34:00 and putting them into pubs, ‘coin in’. I had southern Queensland tied up and came up to Queensland from Sydney, went to Toowoomba where Mum lives, Mum and Dad, and I had southern Queensland tied up and making and constructing them in Toowoomba. I had a factory there and anyway I wasn’t getting production. I went to Singapore and

34:30 got them made [at a] ‘knock down’ there and in the process, furniture was the obvious thing. The next thing, I was importing furniture from Taiwan, Singapore, Philippines. Became a large importer of furniture, selling it retail and I had no shops. Used to, I think lasted three years. At the end of that three years, I think our last year ,we did

35:00 about two million, all retail, no shops. Used to get to a town, land maybe twenty containers of furniture at Adelaide, go and find a warehouse, empty or a something empty, and we’d have a ten day sale. Heaps of advertising, ‘liquidation sale, imported furniture’ and we’d sell a couple of hundred thousand in ten days.

35:30 It was a good deal but we knew as soon as someone started in opposition to us, it was finished and it took three years before someone did. And by then it was the mid seventies, late seventies. When that finished, that’s right, when that one finished I took my wife and daughter, Tracy, wife Pat, daughter Tracy, Tracy must have been then about thirteen, we went for a trip around the

36:00 world, six months and had a look at everything. What happened? Then we, I don’t know.

Tell us about the bungie, even though that.

So anyway in 1981 we split, Pat and I. I said, “I’m off to London for a year” and I went to London and it was a year

36:30 but it was a year I didn’t enjoy. London’s a totally different town. It’s a ‘shit’ town now, in my book and after a year, I went to Montreal. A Japanese lady that I met in London, she lived in Montreal, I went across there. We started a business importing from Taiwan and three

37:00 years [later we] sold that and the intention was then to go to the Greek Isles and do the same in Europe as to what I’d done in North America, from Montreal. I got to Taiwan and the two partners that owned the factory that made the goods for us, were going to shoot each other. I think one fellow had caught the other fellow in bed with his wife or something and they didn’t like it. After six months, after a week or so it was obvious, there was no

37:30 production was ever going to come out of ‘Royal Fortune’ again, so I went to the Government and I said, “I want to set up a factory here. I’m going to buy Royal Fortune and so forth”, and they said, “Chinese partner?” and I said, “No”. Anyway we did a deal and I went to Taiwan for three years. And then came back to Canada, that was in the late eighties, mid to late eighties, went back to Vancouver, after three years

38:00 in Taiwan I said to Amiko one day, I said, “Listen, this is no bloody good, we’re like bloody Taiwanese now, we work seven days a week, about twelve hours a day and the only time we ever get any [time-off was] if I’ve got to go the States on business or something The only time we ever relax, do anything but work”. So we sold, went back to Vancouver. I got a very heavy dose of

38:30 ‘salmon-itis’, which is an addiction to catching salmon, and during the summer I used to spend Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, catching salmon. Had the sale rights of all the stuff we were making in Taiwan for North America and oh, after about three years and Amiko got a message from her mother that she was sick and Amiko went over and Amiko said, “I’ve got

39:00 to come back to Japan and look after Mum." She was an only daughter, it was her duty. I went over and I said, "I can't live in urban Japan, no way", so we said bye, bye and I said, "it's time I went home" and that was 1989.

The tapes just about run out so we'll switch over so the tapes.

Yeah, alright. Sorry.

No, that's okay.

It's hard to shut me up once you start me.

Tape 4

00:36 **So tell me the name of the ship that you went to war on?**

Don't remember, it was an American, a cargo ship come, I don't know. Must have been more than a 'cargo' because there was more than a hundred of us on it but it was not big and it was, oh the Holbrook, God, I haven't remembered that forever, the

01:00 Holbrook, yeah it was called the Holbrook. And anyway we went from Sydney to San Francisco.

What were you quarters like on the ship? Where did you sleep?

I don't know, it was alright.

Were you sleeping in hammocks, in bunks, on the deck or?

I don't remember, quite frankly, but it mustn't, it was probably bunks, I think. Yeah I think it was bunks,

01:30 like a dormitory, maybe this room was big enough to get twenty, three-storey high, bunks, oh it was pretty rough but, we were young and we were going to war and it didn't matter a stuff what it was like.

What were your feelings like leaving Australia the first time?

Oh, there was too much ahead, to think of what you were leaving behind. We were, it was,

02:00 well the greatest thing that had happened to us, at that stage. We were going to England, we were going to fly, we were going to fly over Germany and oh no, there was no, I don't think there was any crying on the deck as we left, not like they do now. If they're going away on a tour of duty now, they get down there, wives and kids and they're all crying,

02:30 there was none of that.

And this was 1943?

Yes.

So Japan had entered the war?

Yes, oh yes.

So what were your feelings, I guess, going to England?

Oh England was the place, for flying. I mean England was the place and we were very happy that we were going to England.

What sort of, I guess

03:00 **allegiance did you feel to England, to the Empire?**

I think I was a good British Empire person. Yes, I was. I mean the King was the King and he was our King, my King and my upbringing was the fact that

03:30 Dad spent four years 'in', just on four years in the service. He did a lot of time in France in the trenches and he told us a little bit about it, but not much. He didn't talk much about the war.

What were your expectations of war, based on your father's experience?

Oh no, not based on Dad's experience, Dad's experience was terrible. I mean they lived like dogs in

04:00 a trench, oh no ours, at that stage we'd done our training and the training was pretty good. We had a pretty fair idea of what was going to happen and there wasn't too much happened, oh well there were the refinements and the methodology of a bombing raid. All that we didn't know a lot about, but we had a pretty fair idea of what

04:30 was going to happen and we just looked forward to it, everyone of us. That was something too, at

Bradfield Park. They called for volunteers to go to, to do the Catalina [Catalina flying boat} run from Perth to Colombo, thirty hours or something flying, but it was a little faster than a Bulldog tractor, but not much.

05:00 The old Catalina chugged along at about eighty mile an hour, I think and one of our group, one of our mates, George Hall, George did it, he volunteered for it and he spent his entire war, still in the service, it was run by the RAAF [Royal Australian Airforce], but their flight was Colombo, which was in

05:30 Sri Lanka now and it was I think, thirty hours they used to fly to get there, and then thirty hours back, and they did it every month, or once a month, or something. I forget, but anyway George, and we all said, Wirra and Ray Forbes was part of our group, Wirra and 'Nim'. 'Nim', we called him Nim because he was very tall. He was about six foot four. We reckoned he was up in the

06:00 Cumulo-nimbus cloud, a very high cloud, that we learnt about in meteorology. Anyway we got to the Holbrook, we went on, that's right. We saw, what's the name of the prison in San Francisco Bay? Alcatraz, we saw Alcatraz, we went passed that.

Just on the trip, do you remember any sort of duties that you had to do while on board?

06:30 Oh nothing, no.

Was there any sort of submarine watch or?

No, no, no. They did that, the sailors did that.

So what did you do to pass your time?

Played cards.

What games?

Oh dunno, played cards, told lies, swapped 'fibs' [untrue stories].

What kind of lies?

You know all 'bullshit', like young fellas.

07:00 **What was the main topic of conversation?**

Women. A bit of 'nooky'. No, I think it was eighteen days it took us to get up to 'Frisco, if I remember correctly. That doesn't seem, yeah it would be about right, I guess and

Were you a good sailor in terms of?

I didn't get seasick, yes, so yes I was a good sailor. We got into San

07:30 Francisco Bay and we passed the 'lock up', the island they used to put all the baddies on and that was a highlight, because we'd all heard of that. We saw the Golden Gate Bridge, of which we'd heard of and the rest of it, we knew nothing.

How were Aussie sailors received in San Francisco?

Oh look, in the States we were received with open arms. Do anything,

08:00 the 'Yanks' were great.

Was there anything, what would they call you if you?

Hi 'Aussie', I forget, but they were so open and so good and if you walked into a bar, even here, you walk into a bar and the Yanks had a lot more money than we had and they used to spend big, oh yeah. Get in the main bar at

08:30 the Australian Hotel in Sydney and you'd drink, you'd buy the first drink but the rest of it, you'd walk out of there boozed and cost you nothing because you'd picked up a couple of Yanks.

So how long did you spend in San Francisco?

Oh only a day or two. I don't recall really, a day or two, I think. And then we got on a train and that took, I don't know, two or three days or something.

09:00 **What was the train like?**

Oh we liked it. We liked everything. It was different, it was new, it was different. Oh yeah, we liked it.

What did you do on the train for two or three days?

Probably drank 'grog' and played cards and

How did you get 'grog' onto the train?

I don't know if we did or not, but I'd be surprised if we didn't. I really don't know, but I know we

enjoyed it, there was nothing

09:30 that we were, everything was new, it was a different world. I mean America too, particularly to me anyway. I was a farm kid. I'd seen a bit of the world in the twelve months, I guess. I saw Canberra, and Mt Gambier and that was all different to Brookstead and Pittsworth and Toowoomba, and we,

10:00 it was very enjoyable.

And did you sit up all night on the train or?

Oh yes, there weren't any sleepers. You probably curled up on the floor or something, with a blanket under you. One on the floor, one on the, I don't know. Oh we used to sleep a lot, always on trains, on the roof rack where you put your luggage, oh yeah, get up there, you could sleep. It was only about that wide,

10:30 but you didn't fall off it. Put a blanket up there, yeah even in Australia, we used to do that.

And what sights did you see on that train journey across America?

What?

What sights did you see?

I don't know, but you saw a lot of towns and some big towns. Seemed to be ages going through this town and I don't even know what towns we did go through, but we

11:00 probably went through Chicago or I don't know. It's hard to know, I don't know.

Would you stop anywhere for some PT or?

Oh yeah, there'd be half hour breaks and that sort of thing. You'd get to a station and you'd get off and get back on, most get back on. Occasionally you'd loose one or two [people] and they'd catch them up later.

11:30 But anyway, that's how we crossed the States. I don't have a very good recollection of that, but we did.

Did America at all, give the impression of a country at war? I guess in terms of what you might have noticed in Australia?

Oh look, I wouldn't know what a country at war looked like then. Just our little group, we were a little group of guys that wore [Australian uniforms-?]. They used to talk naturally when you spoke with an American civilian and

12:00 if there were servicemen certainly, but civilians, even yeah, you were headed to England to the war and you were going to get killed probably and this sort of [thing], yeah. But no, it was just something. New York was a great experience. Something that I remember fairly well.

So tell me about New York?

We got to New York and I think we had about a week or ten days

12:30 leave and we were billeted at the English Speaking Club, I think it was. Something to do with English Speaking but anyway, we were billeted there, our group, which was. Our group

13:00 was 'Wirra' and I don't know, anyway we were certainly there. Anyway we went out in the town, ten o'clock, into a bar, and probably fell out of there late that night. Did that for a couple of days and Wirra was very much more American oriented than I was

13:30 and I think it was the third day, or second day, third day, I think. Wirra said to me in the morning, he said, " Now look if we're going out together we're not getting 'pissed', we're not going into a bar, nothing to drink all day. Let's go and see Radio City, let's see the, let's see New York, let's see where Times Square is, let's see." And I said, "yeah, that's a". I was all for it too.

14:00 We were coming down from the roof of the Empire State Building at about four o'clock in the afternoon, and when I got into the lift I said, "Wirra, I'm gonna have a beer, I'm thirsty." And he said "yeah, good idea" and they had an elevator driver on it and he said, "You boys want to go to a bar" or something.

14:30 He said there's a nice little bar on the, I don't know, the twentieth floor or something, so we said, "Yeah, that will do". So we walked into this, oh lounge-come bar which was tables and chairs and women and men and so forth and a little orchestra playing. I think a piano and it might

15:00 have been an organ, I don't know, piano and a couple of violins, a little bit of background music. And as soon as we walked in the door and they saw us, the next thing they're playing Waltzing Matilda and, oh I said to Wirra, we were getting a bit 'jack' [annoyed] of Waltzing Matilda because Waltzing Matilda was everywhere that we went. And anyway we didn't, we nearly turned our back and walked

15:30 out but we didn't, we sat down and ordered a beer and anyway by the time the waiter bought it back he

said, “Mr So and So over there, he’d like you to have this one, on him” and so forth. So our eyes become accustomed to the semi-darkness and among others and not too far down from us, there was obviously, Mum, Dad and two

16:00 daughters. And they were very attractive young women and I looked and I got ‘eye-contact’ I think and I said to Wirra, I said, “If that fella buys us a drink, I’m going to going and thank him, instead of telling the waiter.” Which sure enough, next thing, “Mr Schulz sent this over” and pointed over where he was and I said, “I think I’ll go and thank Mr Schulz”. Of course, we were invited to join them, which we did and

16:30 we talked for an hour or two.

What sort of things did you talk about?

Oh I don’t know, just about you going to the war and Australia, and, “What’s Australia like?” and “Have you met any Australians in?” and, “We know American’s, American Armies in Australia” and so forth. And Joy and Jill, were the two, they were twins, twin daughters, I think eighteen years of age and

17:00 anyway, the old fellow said, “Look, where are you staying? Oh yeah, we know that Club” or hostel, or whatever it was and after a while, next thing, the old fellow said, “What are you boy’s doing tonight?” “Don’t know, nothing.” “Well why don’t”, yeah,

17:30 that’s right, he said, “Why don’t you go out with the girls tonight? They’re members at all the clubs.” He said, “Where have you been?” and we’d been to ‘Bill’s’, ‘Bill’s Bar’ or something and he said, “The Stork Club and the Diamond Horse Shoe, all those things, the girls have all got accounts there, they’re known.” He said, “Why don’t you join them for the night.” And

18:00 “thank you, we’d love too.” And so he said, “Alright, I’ll send a car” and I think he called a car and we went out to the place we were staying and changed and back to, I think he said, oh that’s right, we were to go to their apartment and they had an apartment on Fifth Avenue. And when

18:30 we got there, the apartment was the floor of the building, and it was monstrous and anyway the girls were all done up and they looked, you could eat them, beautiful. And we went out and we went to the ‘Stork Club’, we went to the ‘Diamond Horseshoe’, we went to.

What were those clubs like?

Oh top flight stuff.

I mean how were they set up? What sort of entertainment was there?

19:00 Yes, there was entertainment, there was singing, entertainment, dancing, and dining of course, and bloody expensive food but of course it was all on the account and champagne and that sort of thing, which we’d never, I don’t think I’d ever had champagne, till that night.

19:30 And anyway we got on very well with the girls and the old fellow was number one, he was ‘Pepsi Cola’.

When did you find this out?

I don’t know, that night I guess. Yeah, it must have, that first night we would have and anyway we were sent home and arranged and

20:00 next morning we got a, Schulz was his name, Mr Schulz, we got a telephone call from ‘his’ saying, “Look, do you want to come and stay at our place for the rest of the trip?” So we booked out and the car came and picked us up and we went to the Fifth Avenue apartment, which was their town apartment, for when they were in town, and we had a ball.

What sort of things did you do?

20:30 Got into the ‘cot’ with the girls and.

Did Mr Schulz approve of this?

Well the girls had their own wing. The place must have had thirty rooms, I think. It was an entire floor of the building and the girls had their wing and we were sort of at the side of their wing. And whether we were in their bed or our bed, it, I don’t think it was Mum or Dad’s business.

21:00 And anyway we had a, oh I don’t know a couple of days before we were due to leave, Wirra said to me, that’s Warren Hart, Wirra said to me, he said’ “Why don’t we stop here?” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Why don’t we stop here and marry the girls?” I said, “I’m going to bloody England,

21:30 on Thursday we’re going.” “No” he said, “The old man can get us out of any trouble.” I said, “They’ll shoot us, bloody desert, you can’t do that.” Wirra said, “The old man can get us out of anything”. And I said, “No, not me, I’m going”. And he said, “Oh yes, so will I.” So we gave up, it was a five minute thought of desertion.

Would you have married her?

Beg your pardon?

Would you have married her?

Oh, I wouldn't have minded that,

22:00 oh yeah, I was enjoying it and anyway, we said 'bye, bye' and we were going to write everyday and this sort of thing and I might have wrote two or three letters when I got there, but I found the 'Pommy' birds were very receptive too. So anyway.

But what about Warren? Was he a bit more smitten?

So that was fine. Warren he was very much in love with Jill

22:30 and anyway we got there and we just went our [separate ways], he went off to this place, to do more training, I went off to there and that was that. Didn't see him again until, would have been with Vic. We were going down to London, no would have been with Tom, because we were in the car. We were going down to London on leave,

23:00 and we stopped at a pub for a counter lunch and walked into the pub, and Wirra's there. The first time I'd seen him since for a year or more. And anyway we got in the corner, naturally, he and I, 'cause we were real good mates during training and so forth. "What have you done?" And he said, "You, you silly bastard, I am going back to marry Jill".

23:30 He said, "I've got one more trip to do." He said, "I'll be posted to Canada for flying, for pilot training." He always wanted to be a pilot and it hurt him greatly when he was scrubbed on Wirraway's. And he said, "I'm going to stop and I'm stopping in New York" and I'm confused now whether it was Jill or Joy.

24:00 Anyway which ever was his, he was Jill, yeah I was Joy and he said "I'm marrying Jill." And he said, "You, you silly bastard, you never, ever, wrote to Joy" and I said, "I did once or twice" or something, but anyway that was that. And so Wirra said, "We're 'on' tonight" and he said, "I'll go in about a week's time, get my boat and go to, go over and marry Joy." And I said,

24:30 "Oh Jesus", so I was sorry then that I hadn't written. And anyway that was fine, that's right, it was with Tom. We were on Pathfinders then and when I got back, the first thing I did, was look and see what was on that night. And they went, five hundred aircraft went to Brooks Oil Refinery in Czechoslovakia and they lost one,

25:00 and I said, "That's him, great". He's over there, he's getting married now, he's having a great bit of nooky, oh lovely, lovely, lovely, anyway, good on you mate, and that was fine. The sequel to that was, after we got back, I don't know, six or twelve months after the war, I thought, "I wonder where

25:30 bloody Wirra is?" Oh that's right, it must have been a bit longer than that, because it was when I joined BCPA, and I had the run to the States, which was two years after the war. And I thought, "I'll find Wirra, he might be in New York or he might be, or if not he'll come across to see me I'm sure". Anyway I rang and eventually found the Hart's in Bundaberg, oh Mackay at least, he

26:00 came from [there] and anyway, I got on and I said, "It's' Sharky' Thompson here". I was always called 'Sharky'.

Why was that?

I'll tell you that story, it's another story. And anyway, I said, "I'm looking for Warren Hart". I said, "He was flying during the war." "Yes, Warren's our son." And I said, "Oh good,

26:30 where, what's he doing, where can I find him?" And they said, "Warren got killed." He was the one, which was not right. Anyway that was that, out of five hundred, one, on their last trip, experienced, experienced crew,

27:00 their chances were two or three to one, better than the guy's who were doing the first trips. As you became experienced they didn't get you. Not many people on their last trip, you'd get through it because you knew what you were doing. It was lack of experience that killed a hell of a lot of airmen and anyway, Wirra [was] missed.

27:30 **Did you ever try and contact the Schulz's, was it?**

No, no, no, no, it was history and as I said, it was probably two or three years after the war that, probably forty nine or fifty, that I found out that Wirra missed and by then I was interested elsewhere. Once it was over,

28:00 it was over. So anyway we went to England.

Tell me about how you got to England?

Then we went across the Atlantic on the Isle de France, which was the pride of the French passenger ship.

What was she like?

Oh she was a nice ship. It was different to the bloody old Holbrook that we went across on.

What was the difference crossing the Atlantic to the Pacific? I guess tension wise was there more of a fear of?

Oh no, we didn't fear anything, if it happened it happened,

28:30 and it wasn't going to happen, not to me. That was the attitude of everyone I think. Oh yeah, I suppose we might have talked for five minutes about these bloody U boats [German submarine] and if one of those bloody things get hold of us, I don't know, it would be bloody cold out there, but we didn't, that was something you just didn't worry about.

Did you travel

29:00 **alone or as part of a convoy?**

Alone, yeah, no, ships like that just did a run. They just put their heads down and did a run. There was no convoy. Convoy's were for the slow ships, the supply ships, but not I don't think ever when the Queen Elizabeth or the Isle de France

29:30 or any of those or the passenger liners that were taking people across, I don't think they were ever in a convoy. I don't know, but I know we weren't.

How many people were on the ship, how many troops?

Oh God knows, a thousand, a hell of a lot.

How were the conditions?

Oh cramped but alright, probably breakfast would last three hours.

30:00 You'd be scheduled in for breakfast from seven o'clock to seven thirty, was your go and someone else would be on, nine thirty to ten, and then lunch would start. Oh no, it was very crowded.

And what was I guess the feeling of anticipation like?

Oh the main thing is, "What are we going to do for money? We've got no bloody money. I spent the lot in New York. I'm penniless." And we,

30:30 a group of us, Ray Forbes and Gavin Green was amongst us then, and Ray and Gavin and Wirra, anyway four or five us decided we'd buy cigarettes. Because war torn England, poor buggers they'd have no cigarettes and everything. We'd get a decent price on the black market if you had

31:00 a big bunch of cigarettes, so we started playing cards.

Whereabouts?

On the ship, oh there'd be about five hundred games going, from poker to, well you didn't waste your time. That was turned into a gambling ship very quickly and every time we got, I forget, fifty bucks or twenty bucks or something, we'd go and buy another five cartons or ten cartons, or something, of cigarettes

31:30 and when we got off, we all had a kit bag full, a kit bag that round and that high, full of cigarettes because that was our bank. And we were all lucky we won and only once, or twice did we go broke. Each one of would take it's turn and we'd have, I don't know, ten dollars, ten quid or something and if you won, when you got it up to thirty,

32:00 you'd finish and then someone else would take over and then you'd go and spend twenty bucks on cigarettes. Then anyway, when we got to England, we all had a big kit bag full of nice 'Camels' [Camel cigarettes] and all of those cigarettes, and got there and England's full of bloody cigarettes and there's more cigarettes than you can poke a stick at, everybody had cigarettes. They were a bit more expensive, we made a bit of money, but not much. It was not the bank we thought it was.

32:30 Because in Australia cigarettes were very short, quite different in England. In England there were plenty of cigarettes still, but anyway we made a little bit of money because they were very cheap on the boat.

And you were first based at Brighton?

Yeah, went to Brighton, which was the, I don't know, it was the staging point

33:00 and

Do you ever remember hearing, when you were there, Lord 'Hawhaw' [anti-British radio propagandist] on the radio at all?

Yes, at different times, we heard that.

What would you hear?

Some bloody idiot telling a lot of lies.

What sort of lies?

Oh I don't know, I don't remember, truly, but it was a joke. Lord Hawhaw, there was some bird too I think [Axis Sally],

33:30 but it was a joke and we thought it was, treated it [as a joke], enjoyed listening to the crap. But didn't .. At Brighton we were only there a week, ten days, and then we were posted. But one of the things I will never forget was, I was a sergeant, when you're finished

34:00 your training in Australia you become a sergeant, or a pilot officer. If you got your Commission you became a pilot officer, if not you became a sergeant and no, probably not, a flight-sergeant by then. After six months you automatically become a flight-sergeant, after a year you automatically become a warrant officer and anyway, one of the things we had to do was a night vision test

34:30 and went up to this place and sat in a chair with a high back and a bulldog clip on the back of your shirt, and that kept you the right distance from a 'gizmo' [a device] in the middle, that came up with various stages of 'lift', might be a ship, might be an aircraft, might be a letter 'A' ,and you had to distinguish

35:00 what you saw, or what you thought you saw, to test your [vision], which was an indication of your night vision, your vision in poor light, or night. And anyway, I did the test and about an hour later on, there's a message comes out, comes over the public address system, "Sergeant Thompson go to the night vision testing" and I got there and there's an English

35:30 WAAF [Womens Auxillary Air Force] female officer and she said straight away, "You're Thompson, you're the cheat are you?" I said, "What do you bloody mean?" She said, "You cheated". I said, "I did not cheat and don't you accuse me of cheating" and then we got 'hammer and tongs' [into an argument] and the next thing I was going to be court martialled because I spoke to an officer like that. And anyway I said, "Easy. Just do the bloody thing again" and I said,

36:00 "You hang onto the back of me neck, instead of the bulldog clip". She accused me of having moved the bulldog clip of my collar, got up close to it, and then I could see it, and anyway, the upshot of it was, she made sure I didn't undo the bulldog clip and I got thirty two out of thirty two, perfect score and she'd never ever seen it. They'd never seen more, than I think thirty, or something,

36:30 but I had extraordinary night vision and that's what made her, when she saw the first result I think. I think the first result, I got thirty one, and she said, "No, that's impossible, he cheated, he undid the bulldog clip and got up close". And then she just accused me of it when I, saw it. And anyway, she didn't apologise, but she didn't court martial me.

Just on that, did you notice any difference between I guess?

37:30 **The way the Australian troops treated their officers and the way it was expected to be done within the British forces?**

In air crew, there was not nearly this 'rah, rah crap', see. And that's very understandable, because you're a small group of people, five or six people, and you get in a tin box and you go and fight your war. Well one of you might be a flight lieutenant and the other fella, a sergeant, but you all depended on one another and there was no sort of, the distinction of rank diminished enormously in flying. And naturally,

38:00 rank was nothing as far as one another, was concerned. And even on the station and the CO, [Commanding Officer] he'd have done fifty trips or something and he'd have two or three tours and this sort of thing. And as I say, when I went to 460 as a spare and Perko Pete, Perko was Perko as far as I was concerned and if

38:30 there had been no animosity, when I walked into his office, I'd have said, "Hello Perko" and he was the flight lieutenant, and I'm a warrant officer, at that stage. There was no, very, very little distinction by rank.

Did you observe any, I guess, class related hierarchy in the British forces?

39:00 Not a lot. See we only, we were always 'on a station' [on base]. We weren't in a situation where we were always on an operational. Initially training, I think we then probably saluted more often than we did later. But on an operational station, it was back to everyone else.

39:30 Rank was not something of any consequence and it was something that was not (UNCLEAR), but when you talk of rank, probably, one thing we did notice, and this was particularly at Upwood, or the

40:00 other one, also on 166 that, alright, you stood down, get the message around three o'clock in the afternoon, "Alright four o'clock, you can head for the local town, and play up". And you'd go and have a shower and a shave , or shampoo, or whatever, and the ablution huts [Shower/washing facilities] were along

40:30 probably, about this width, the width of this room, with a row of hand basins all around the side and up the middle, a double rank of showers, and probably fifty showers and two hundred wash basins, was the ablutions hut. And you get the message, “You’re not flying tonight, go, go, go!” and you’d go down there.

41:00 And the showers would have probably, ten people in them, and they’d be ‘Aussies’, or ‘Yanks’ or ‘Kiwis’ [New Zealanders] and all the basins had a queue behind them. They’re all the ‘Pommes’, just with the sleeves rolled up, having a scrub up to the elbows. And they reckoned these bloody ‘Aussies’ were mad showering every day, ‘gawd maud’, no one does that, but we used to laugh about it.

We’ll just change tapes.

Tape 5

00:38 **Yes, we were just talking about the night vision. We just want to know about the test, if you could walk us through it?**

As I recall and this recall may be three quarters fact and one quarter imagination and filling in the holes, but as far as I do, specifically, remember, it was a high back chair we sat in and we got a bulldog clip put

01:00 on the back of our collar. And there may have been six around the table, or five, or something, and each one of us had this segment that we’d look at that was directly in front of us at probably, at about two feet in front of our nose with the bulldog clip on and they kept and they changed it thirty two times. I recall it was thirty two

01:30 and it was maybe an image of, a silhouette of a battleship or an aircraft or a grasshopper or a cat or a letter and we just wrote down what it was on a piece of paper that as I recall, I think it was

02:00 lit by a red light, a very dim red light that we could sort of see where we, and red light, red didn’t destroy your night vision, white light did. As soon as you got white light on you, your night vision was diminished. And anyway, we did the test that way and as I say, it must have been thirty two images because I know my score, that was not believed,

02:30 was thirty one out of thirty two. And then when I did the repeat, to prove that I wasn’t cheating, hadn’t cheated and removed the bulldog clip, that was what I was accused of, that I’d removed the bulldog clip and instead of two feet from it, I was six inches from it and much easier to see. And so, I know it was thirty two, because the second time round I got a perfect score of thirty two,

03:00 because I tried. I was very conscientious of it. But that was a test that was done, it was I mean, you’re doing night flying and [for] certain parts of the service, low flying at night, very important to have good night vision if you could. If you had it, it was great. If you had it, you did a better job and you probably lived more,

03:30 lived longer. So that was just one of the many tests that we did. I’m not sure what we did, but I do recall that one specifically at the holding depot before we were posted off to training stations and no doubt that went on our medical records and followed us around.

So tell us about

04:00 **being posted?**

Being?

Posted off to the next stage.

Well the next stage was AFT [Advanced Flying Training] I think it was called. I don’t recall for sure, but it was the next, it was the stage, how do I explain it? I guess it was the next step up from what we’d done or I think it was probably

04:30 copying what we’d done in Australia, but much quicker. Instead of taking three months to do it, we took a week or something to cover and that was up in the Lakes District, in Cheshire is it up there I think? [RAF Millom, Cumbria]. That comes to my mind, but we did that, which was only, I don’t know, maybe a month, three weeks, a month and

05:00 then we went to another station where we did, oh that’s where we caught up with the crew, and we then did a bit of training as a crew, a month, three weeks, or something like that and then we were posted to a squadron. And our training was not of any great consequence. It was probably reviewing what we already

05:30 knew, except for the thing that we couldn’t ever be taught and that was the communication between the crew, between the crew when something was happening, that we would talk, have our say. And that you learnt with experience as a crew. And the training, as a crew,

06:00 was quite little before you were posted to a squadron. Then of course, each trip you did you gained knowledge and became better, as a crew. In the early stages, if you were going to get the 'chop', you'd probably get it in the first ten trips. There'd be more 'get the chop' in the first ten trips, than would be in the next twenty, to do the thirty for the tour. Once

06:30 you were in there you had a pretty fair idea of what was going on and as such, avoided a lot of the problems.

Tell us about your crew?

Vickholt, Norwegian probably, Vic must have been in his, I would guess, mid thirties, had done a tour of 'ops'. I think Vic did a tour as a navigator and then learnt to be a pilot,

07:00 Norwegian Air Force, not the RAF, I think the Norwegian Air Force. And I think, yes, yes, Vic had done a tour as a navigator, I think, and then he was trained to fly, to be a pilot and we were his crew, Vic was the skipper.

What was he like?

Oh lovely fella, good fella, very, very calm,

07:30 you didn't ruffle old Vic and he wasn't [one to] stand over you, if you did something stupid and by that I mean, go out and get drunk or something like that. Vic wasn't, Vic was a good guy. The other Norwegian, Fermastat, was an arrogant pig and he was arrogant to everyone. I heard Vic sometimes intervene

08:00 and said something in Norwegian, which we didn't understand and no doubt, it was to tell Fermastat to break it down.

How would he be arrogant, in what way?

Oh, just appearance, huh, this sort of thing, I don't recall, but we all hated him.

Did he think his role?

He thought he was Jesus Christ and

08:30 and we were all stupid young boys.

Was there a form of hierarchy within the plane?

There normally wouldn't have been, there certainly was with that crew. Vic, of course the skipper. Always, the skipper was the leader. He, except on very rare occasions, I'll tell you about one of them with Ray Forbes, but the skipper was the leader,

09:00 but everyone, everyone was the leader. We were all leaders in our area and that way you became a good crew, but when you had a disruptive situation like Fermastat, the attitude almost was, if we were navigating, if we were flying something and we got a, we could see a lake that we recognised or something, we didn't tell him nothing,

09:30 which was not good for everyone. It was the worst thing that could have happened, but just because of his arrogance and attitude and the fact that we were 'young stupid boys' and he was a 'great guy' and.

Would this affect the safety of the crew?

Oh yes, yeah, definitely, there was nothing more, nothing better than crew feeling for one another and

10:00 for everything, and if you were happy, you do things better.

How did you manage to form this crew, as it was at this stage?

Oh, it happened when we got to the training station. You did about a week and at the end of the week someone invited you to join them. Vic invited me to join him and I looked at him and he looked at me and we talked for a little while, "Yeah alright and is there anyone you recommend?" and that's when I. Dick Cantwell I

10:30 knew, and I'd been on a couple of, I don't know. Dick, I don't remember if he went over on the boat with us but I know I'd been at a previous station with him and Dick I knew, and I suggested Dick should be our radio op and Vic said, "Oh" and Vic talked to him and said, "Alright" and that's how we formed a crew. We had two Irish gunners, Paddy Peden was the rear and

11:00 I forget the other fellas name, he was the mid upper and then we had a, we had an engineer and I forget his name. But anyway we were.

Was it unusual to have a mix of nationalities in a crew?

No, not really. In that crew well there were,

11:30 look there weren't many, there were a fair number of Polish, there weren't many Norwegians. I don't

think, oh yeah, I saw one Frenchman but in the [Free] French Air Force, the (UNCLEAR) but not much. Predominately either RAF and the RAF

12:00 had some strange nationalities in it but RAF or RCAF, [Royal Canadian Air Force] the Canadian RAF, the Australian or New Zealand or South African but in the main, no. But there was a, usually like I mentioned before 'Binbrook 460', that was an Aussie squadron. There were a few Poms but not many.

12:30 Predominately the crew of, what was there? One, two, three, four, five, six, there was a crew of six, at least fifty percent of them would be six Aussies and fifty percent might have one 'Pom' in it or something but only two or three squadrons were Australian squadrons but all other squadrons there'd be a few Aussies, a few Canadians,

13:00 a few of this, a few strays. There was no resentment except this one, of our situation, where we had an arrogant, damn, Norwegian that we didn't like and who didn't like us.

So tell us about your very first flight, your first mission?

First mission was to Stuttgart, as I said earlier.

13:30 Normally, and this was one of my major problems as far as I was concerned, and more so me than any of the other crew members. The navigator and the bomb aimer, the 'Box Basher' we used to call them, the 'Box Basher' was the one who did the, who used the 'fish pond' [Targeting Navigation Screen] and 'fish pond' for aircraft attack and H2S for navigational purposes

14:00 and naturally you worked a lot with your navigator. You sat side by side. You had a table in front of you and he'd be there and you'd be here and you'd have your H2S here and he'd have his things, and he had the 'astro-dome' up here and he'd go and take astro-shots from time to time and you'd work together. And when you had two fellows who hated each others guts, it wasn't good.

14:30 Which was unusual. We should have got the 'chop' because we had, we didn't have a good functioning crew because of Fermastat.

How would it manifest itself say in the air, this kind of tension?

Well I don't know but it was there. Anyway you asked me about the first trip?

15:00 **Yeah the first trip?**

Okay, I was behind the curtain working with the navigator for the first probably the first three hours, probably a six hour trip or something like that over to Stuttgart and two and a half, three hours on there with him and then the skipper says, "Righto Sharky get down the front". And I then would go down the front and I'd lay on my belly and I would, through our bomb sight that we had,

15:30 I would then direct the skipper to what I thought was the aiming point, the point we were aiming at and then we'd get there and then I'd release the bombs and then we'd get of there quick. And that trip, so I come out of a totally enclosed area and I get down the

16:00 front and I'm in a Perspex acrylic bubble, where you could see the whole world and 'holy cow', all I could see was searchlights and ack-ack fire, ack-ack shells bursting and my reaction was "'holy shit', what am I doing here?" But as you got closer, the aircraft, the searchlights got

16:30 further apart but from fifty mile out it just looked like one solid mass, which it wasn't of course. But it was not a pretty [sight], I got a bit of a shock.

What was that feeling like?

I don't know, I just, I was scared, no doubt about that but at the

17:00 same time I didn't, there was no hysteria or anything of that nature and I think I might have dropped the bombs to the best of my ability at that stage, I don't know. But I do definitely recall it and I did for oh, I don't think I have for ten or twenty years now, but at one stage I used to dream a bit and Stuttgart was one of those dreams.

17:30 **What would those dreams be about?**

Oh 'shitting' myself, with bloody mass of searchlight there that we're flying towards and fellows shooting at us. And naturally in your mind, in my mind anyway I thought, "We'll be that lit up and all the night fighters will get us", which we couldn't see from afar, only saw the shells bursting and the searchlights.

18:00 But the thought was, "They'll just light us up and we'll just be sitting ducks for the night fighters", which was not the case. But it made for giving you a bit of something to think about at the time.

Describe the sounds that are going on when you're in this kind of a situation?

Oh

18:30 not much. You had earphones on and a leather cap with earphones built into it and a microphone in front of you and sucking your oxygen through the same area here, so you were covered up, your face, your nose was in it, yeah, that's right. Your mask would come down there like that, and you didn't hear much except what we talked on the intercom.

19:00 **And what's it look like going through ack-ack and shells bursting?**

Scary, initially didn't have a clue what was going on, but after a few trips and particularly in my case with Vic, I'd get down there and Vic would say, "'Sharky', see them predicting us there on the port" and his voice would go up and you'd see it.

19:30 Maybe half a mile away, you'd see a shell burst and the next thing it's a bit closer, and a bit this way, and a bit that way, and you could see this box coming towards you and you knew you were being 'predicted' then [by enemy ground fire]. And you'd just get to a certain stage, you'd watch it, get to a certain stage and you'd tell your skipper, "Get out of here" and he'd dive and turn. You'd say,

20:00 "Dive starboard, dive port" whichever was the right way to go. Well you learnt that, and the only place you learnt that was over Germany. You used to hear about it, and the instructors would talk about it, but you didn't have a bloody clue what it was, until you saw it, until it happened. So and that's what I said, you'll hear me say it often, that more experience you get and the more

20:30 experience you get of six people together, the better you became and you became bloody hard to shoot down then.

As you mentioned before with the problem with the navigator, did this manifest itself in situations like this, or was it okay?

Oh yes and no. Yes and no.

21:00 We got, on one trip we had an aircraft above us drop bombs on us and we were both at the 'nav' table [navigation table],

21:30 and, no we weren't, Jan was at the 'nav' table and I was down the front and we got a bomb dropped on us and knocked the side out of the aircraft and came through and put a bloody big hole in the nav table and that was that. And I remember thinking, "Oh it happened to bloody Fermastat",

22:00 even though it must have been very traumatic to be sitting there and there's a bloody big hole and the table's smashed in front of you. But I got up, yeah it was over the target this happened, had to, because that was when they'd be dropping the bombs, yeah it was and I was down the front. And I went back. Yeah it affected me but not nearly as much as if it affected me when Eddie was

22:30 our navigator in the next crew with Tom, different story. It would have been, that was quite a thing to, that happened, we had a bloody windy trip back, very cold and bloody gale blowing through this bloody great hole, anyway when we got back near England, radioed

23:00 that we had damage and so forth. They bought us in, then said, "Go over there" somewhere, not our usual parking place, and that was fine, we got off, no-one had got hurt. And I think it was the next morning, the next morning Vic came to us and he said, "We were lucky last night, that was an incendiary that didn't go off."

23:30 And he said, "It was one of their twenty five pounders they drop, that will burn through three stories of concrete floor." A 'Phosphorus' [Phosphorus explosive] I think it was, anyway it was an incendiary that could have just burnt the bloody aircraft if, but it didn't go off.

How do you feel about this on reflection?

Oh it was all over before we knew about it.

24:00 If we knew we were sitting on an unexploded bomb, it was lodged in the bomb bays, down near the bomb bays, under the floor of the aircraft, in the bomb bays, in the side of the bomb bays sort of thing, and if we'd known it was there on the way back, I think we'd have bailed out. Very probable we'd have got somewhere and the skipper would have said, "Let's get out of here.".

24:30 But we didn't know it was there. We thought it had just gone straight through and apparently there was a big panic when they found it was a bloody bomb there, and when they realised which bomb it was. They got in the bomb squad, I don't know, anyway.

What was the feeling like when you returned from a mission?

Oh good. You'd get a nip of rum, big double headed over-proof rum

25:00 and then you'd tell a good story then, mainly at de-briefing. Half the time you were 'half full of ink' [drunk].

What were the de-briefing sessions like?

Oh you told your story, if anything had happened, you told. Each one of us, if we had anything to say

we'd say, if not the skipper would just say. It was conversation between intelligence. I don't know what the hell the terminology was

25:30 for them, but there'd be, you'd probably no more than two, three, five minutes each crew and there'd be half a dozen, four or five I think, at least, I recall. And you'd come in and the first thing you'd get a glass of rum and if there was a vacant table you'd go straight to that table, if not, you'd wait your turn or something, but

26:00 normally it was pretty quick and you'd just tell your story. If anything happened in your field that you should report, you would.

And would they give you a feed or?

Oh yeah and then a meal, always eggs before you went and eggs when you got back. Oh yeah, a feed before and a feed after and it always had eggs in it and that was the only time you got eggs, except dried ones as scrambled eggs, but I'm talking about a nice fried egg.

26:30 **And what would you do next? Would you go to sleep or?**

Oh it depends on [the time], if it's four o'clock in the morning and you'd been up all night, you'd sleep pretty well, head straight for the cot. Yeah, we did predominately night flying and as a result you'd get back in the night, sometime between eleven and three in the morning or something.

Would you ever get leave after a mission or was it?

Oh you got leave regularly.

27:00 Every six weeks we'd get a week off, head for London, head for the 'Strand Palace', get into a bit of fun and games.

What's the 'Strand Palace'?

It was a hotel on the Strand. We always stayed there, Ray and I stayed there, always. You could get a room with a shower, or a bathroom and a bedroom each side of it,

27:30 so we actually had two bedrooms and shared a bathroom. For some reason or other that was their design at the Strand Palace, and we liked it.

What would you get up to?

Ah?

What would you get up to in London?

The reason we had, Ray and I liked the shower was, you got the Pommy bird to have a shower before you got into the

28:00 cot with her because she probably had a week's BO [Body Odour] under her armpit otherwise, truly. That's why Ray and I, Ray Forbes and I, on the first station, '166', we, our crew and Ray's crew got their, their six week's was up at the same rotation and as a result, Ray and I were always together and we'd head straight for London.

28:30 And Ray, and we liked a fresh armpit and some of the stories we had to tell to get them in the shower before the cot. It was fun.

What would you tell?

Anything, I don't know. Nine

29:00 times out of ten both the bird and you, you'd be both full of drink, you'd be 'well charged' and Ray had a problem. If Ray had more than four or five beers, he had a fifty-fifty chance of pissing the bed and one night we got in late and

29:30 you might edit this probably, we got in late because the bloody buzz bombs [V1 'flying' Bomb] were coming in and they stopped the trains outside London for two or three hours. And we got to the Strand Palace and they'd let our room because you had to be in by, I forget, eight o'clock or something but they did have one room. Every room there had a shower, had a bath,

30:00 and anyway we got to the room, we went straight downstairs, we didn't go to the Codger's Hotel [which] was our main pub in the area, but it was closed by then. Anyway, went down the lounge and we had a bit of luck and anyway, we get upstairs and we had a shower and got into the cot and turned the light out and after a little bit of a 'rumpus' fell off to

30:30 sleep at probably one or two o'clock in the morning. And next thing the light's on and the, Ray's bird, Ray's sitting up there, "Ooooh", and the bird's saying, "You dirty fucker, you pissed on me". She'd woke up and Ray was peeing the bed and if she didn't 'blow' and I started to laugh, so they both got up and left.

31:00 Oh God, I'll never forget that.

How did you meet these girls?

Oh picked them up in the lounge.

How would you pick them up?

Go and say, "Hello mate." Oh no, you know, I don't know, "Want to have a drink with me?" Have a drink and if it looked like compatible, if not you moved on.

Any

31:30 **lines you used or?**

Oh mate, I don't know, I don't recall, I don't think so. No set, I don't know.

Did the uniform help at all?

Oh yes, oh God yes, the uniform and wings and oh God yes. It was very helpful.

What was the Air Force's image out there?

Excellent, wonderful,

32:00 oh wonderful and then, I mean that was with Ray. Ray and I, I was lucky because Ray was older and experienced as a result. You had more victories if you were with Ray, than if you weren't with Ray. Anyway and we were really good mates

32:30 and I didn't give a stuff what he did. I never got upset, if he peed the bed, he peed the bed. We went once to Dorset, showed a lot of promise and the guy owned a pub and the place was full of Land Army [Womans Land Army] girls and we were there and got in late afternoon or something and showed a lot of promise. The next morning Ray said to me, "We'd better go back to London." I said, "Why? Have you pissed the bed?" He said "yeah."

33:00 So we went back to London and but he was a great guy. Ray, I came back on the boat with him. He was on the Strath Eden on our way back and Ray got off in Perth because his mother had a pub in Kalgoorlie and Ray had plenty of money. You were never short

33:30 of money if Ray was with you. If you'd run out, he'd always find a fiver somewhere in one of his pockets. And when I started to tell you earlier about when the Poseidon boom was on and we headed, and as soon as I got over there, the first trip, I got to Perth, I rung all the Forbes in the phone book. I first of all tried

34:00 the pubs in Kalgoorlie and they remembered Mrs Forbes but she was gone. I rang around all the Forbes in the phone book and I said, "I'm looking for Ray Forbes who was in the Air Force during the war over in England". She said, "Yes, who are you?" I said, "I'm Max Thompson." She said, "Sharky?" I said, "Yeah, I'm Sharky." She said, "Dad talked about you a lot." I said, "I want to see him."

34:30 She said, "He died last year of a heart attack." So I missed him by about a year. But he was a good guy, Ray was. We had one experience, Ray, on '166'. We weren't flying this night and Ray was. We were in the mess and I decided I was going to town but I had no money, going into Ramsey, which

35:00 was the local small town. Anyway 'Forbesy' he's had his bacon and eggs and he's headed out to the truck to get in to go out to the aircraft and I ran out after him and said, "Ray I need a fiver, lend me a fiver mate?" "Oh Jesus, it's too bloody hard, I can't get in. I've got all my flying.." and he carried on but I got my fiver. And anyway that was fine and I went in,

35:30 went to the local town and anyway, the usual practice. This might have been about four o'clock in the afternoon or something and they'd be back about midnight and you'd get the word come through Forbesy's crews gone and my first reaction was

36:00 "shit, I owe him a fiver." It was my first thought, not, 'the poor bastards dead' or anything, 'I owe him a fiver'. The next day the word comes that the crew was in Belgium. They'd jumped out there and next thing, a day or so later, the crew get back to the station but no Forbesy. They said he got out

36:30 but everyone's back but Forbesy. Anyway about four or five days after the crew getting back I'm in the mess one afternoon and in walks Forbesy. I said, "Where the hell have you been?" And he said, "Mate, I was in bloody Belgium" and he said, "I wasn't coming back till I got to Paris." And he said, "the Yanks had trucks on the road and I went tin the right direction."

37:00 And he said, "I've had two and a half days in Paris, then I thought 'oh shit, Mum will be getting worried, I'd better report". So he said, "I've been to Paris". And I said, "Oh my God, tell us about it, how was it?" Because everyone wanted, I wanted to, I always said, "I'd love to do a jump". I'd love to jump out and do a parachute. I said, "What was it like mate?"

37:30 He said "well I", he said, "George said get, go for our life." He said, "Our starboard wing was on fire, the engine was on fire and he was doing the right thing in telling us to get out." And he said, "And I

headed." In the nose of the aircraft in the floor was a hatch that you pulled up and you sort of jumped through that. And he said, "The engineer, a big Pommy" he said, "He got jammed in the bloody hole and I put

38:00 my foot on his head and pushed" and he said, "He went out like a cork out of a bottle." And then he said, "I went through and then I counted one Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi and I pulled the cord and the parachute opened and I thought, 'that bloody Sharky hasn't got my fiver'." That was what Ray said to me in that mess that day and I said, "Mate, the first thought I had, 'shit I owe him a

38:30 fiver." We both thought of this five pound note, absolutely incredible but it was totally true.

Did you give him his fiver?

He got his fiver, he always got his fiver, otherwise he wouldn't bloody let you [alone] anymore. Well mostly, oh yeah.

I think we're going to change tapes here, so that was a good story.

Tape 6

00:35 **First question I have, is the nickname Sharky?**

Yes I meant to tell you about that. First station, no, at the ITS, not when I was taught arms and that sort of thing then go to the guard duty in Canberra, when I was transferred to the ITS. There was a fellow called Gainey,

01:00 Trevor Gainey, who was on the course and everything you said, if you put anything over or said anything, "Oh you bloody shark", was his response. And I called him Sharky and he called me Sharky and that's everywhere I went. Someone knew me from a previous, and I was Sharky, I was Sharky Thompson. And I saw Trevor, oh God,

01:30 I don't know when, years later and I yelled out, "Hey Sharky". And he turned around and said, "It's you?" And I said, "Yeah" and he said, "First time I've been called Sharky since we left bloody Kingaroy." It stuck with me but it didn't with him. So everyone knew me as Sharky, I was Sharky Thompson.

Did say when you met people like say girls or something would?

Oh yes, "This is Sharky, his name's Max but

02:00 we call him Sharky." That was in the crew and everything, I was Sharky. And I didn't, I think I enjoyed it, I think I encouraged it perhaps, I don't know, it was different. Probably drew attention to me, I don't know, ego, I don't know, but I certainly didn't mind it, but that's how I got it. Everything was "oh you bloody shark" he'd say,

02:30 and that was that but it stuck with me and not with him. And everyone in the airforce knew me as Sharkey Thompson and flying after too. Because I went with Qantas. there were guys I'd flown with and that I knew and so forth. that I knew in flying and were there and "Sharky". And then when I was with BCPA there were guys that did what I did, resigned and when we were out of a job. BCPA gave us a job, "Sharky" , until

03:00 I got married and we left flying. So that's how I got Sharky.

You were talking earlier about your first mission and this is a question just regarding missions in general, can you walk me through the process that you go through before takeoff I guess, when you'd get the news that you were going?

On a flight yeah, we would usually I recall, if you were going to be on that night

03:30 you'd know by at the very latest three o'clock, probably eleven or twelve o'clock, you'd know you're on that night. Around about three or four o'clock you'd be told you're not on that night, definitely not, so then you could say, "Alright I'm going down the local, overnight leave". You had a leave pass that got you off the station and back in the station, eleven o'clock at night I think it was you had to be in by, and

04:00 anytime after four o'clock you could go out. So if you weren't flying, that was the procedure but if you were flying, usually I'd say yes, before lunch you'd know probably ninety percent of the time, 'you're on tonight'. And that afternoon you might have a kip for an hour or two, read a book or lie on the bed and sometimes have a sleep, I don't know. Sometimes that would happen, other times you'd

04:30 go down the mess and play cards or something. We played a hell of a lot of Bridge, and there were quite a few of us became reasonable Bridge players through the, that was on main force, on Pathfinders, no. On Pathfinders if you weren't flying, you'd be up in the air doing things. And anyway, alright you'd have a four o'clock briefing,

05:00 take off at five, something like that. You'd go and have your meal first, no you wouldn't, you'd do your

briefing. And the intelligence officer would get up and there'd be a map there, and 'here's your flight', and you also had a map of where you were going and your flight plan and you'd go from A to B to C sort of thing. And

05:30 the height you were to fly at, the time you were due at each place and tell us why you were going there.

Can you give me some examples of some of the places that you were going to?

Oh, we went to everywhere.

Oh I mean specifically?

Oh Duisberg,

But I mean what the targets there were and so forth ?

Oh targets would be a spot in the town,

06:00 it would be there, that would be your aiming point.

And would they tell you what that is, what that was?

They wouldn't bother because you knew you wouldn't hit it anyway, but you'd hit somewhere within a mile, or two, or three of it and that was fair enough. Five hundred aircraft dropping, I don't know, ten bombs each, ten one thousand pounders and five hundred,

06:30 you've got what five thousand, five thousand bombs. If they all fell in the one spot it would be bloody useless, be wasted, so just the spread.

I guess would you know if it was like a munitions factory or a mine or a?

No, you couldn't be bothered. It wasn't a munitions factory, of course there'll be fifty munitions factories in Cologne,

07:00 but you're going to Cologne. The aiming point, the bridge that goes over the river at Cologne and if you got within three mile of there, five mile of there, that's it, you hit it. Because, I know, we went to Cologne one night [30th May, 1942] and the Cologne cathedral, which is only a short distance from the bridge, I aimed at the cathedral, knowing damn well I wouldn't hit it. If I had thought I was going to hit it, I certainly

07:30 wouldn't have aimed at it and that night the bridge got demolished but the Cologne cathedral never got a scratch, it was incredible.

Did you ever have any sort of qualms about, for example

No.

the Cologne cathedral? Would you?

No, you wouldn't, you didn't think about, you didn't. You didn't think of what you were doing. If you went there and you dropped ten, one thousand pound bombs or something and if you started worrying

08:00 about the fact, 'I wonder how many bombs, how many people were killed by that bomb, each bomb we dropped', that sort of thing, no. If you did, you wouldn't like it.

How did you stop yourself from thinking about that?

You didn't, you thought about the girl you were going to have sex with tomorrow night. That was the attitude, the attitude was 'play', not the drama of what we were doing or the consequence of what we were doing.

08:30 Yes, we, one thing I know, yes, occasionally, I'm wrong when I said that before. Peenemunde, [Peenemunde, Oderbucht] or yeah I think it was Peenemunde, that's how it's pronounced, it was a factory, a very large factory [V2 rocket facility and research plant] up on the Baltic and we

09:00 went there three nights in a row [August 17-19, 1943] and the third night we went, going to the same place and it was a bloody 'hot' [dangerous] place too it was, they had fighters, they had search lights and they had guns, everything, there and the intelligence officer said, "We're going there every night until we get it" and we got it on the fourth night, in a row, and the whole of bloody Germany knew we were coming and they were there waiting for us,

09:30 but it was the 'heavy water', uranium, atomic energy that 'jerry' was working on and anyway, they blew it out of the sky, blew it out of the ground. And it was then, after it was don,e we were told, once we started it until we were absolutely sure it was gone, they didn't want him to have the opportunity to

10:00 move it to another area, or parts of it to another area. But we carried nothing but, I think it was, thousand pounder, armour piercing bombs for that, everyone did.

What was it like knowing that as you were going back and back to try and get that. Like you

said, all of Germany was there waiting for you?

Oh you didn't like it.

How did you deal with that?

You didn't, you

10:30 went there and did your best to get back and you did get back. No, we didn't sort of calculate our chances or anything of that nature. You didn't think that train of thought, just you've got to go there, you've got to do your best to get there. Lots of fellows turned around and didn't go, sort of thing. This was Ray Forbes, Ray and George was his skipper, a Pom, a little fat fella, and in their

11:00 first [few trips], Ray and I got to the squadron at the same time and I forget the figures but I think, in the first five 'ops' they did, they came back twice or three times before they got there, and then an engine, didn't get there, got to the French coast or something. And an engine was going to blow up or something, 'we're going back' and they aborted, and Ray took over and Ray told George, "You bloody go back, I'm telling them

11:30 there's nothing wrong, you yellow bastard, blah, blah, blah" and Ray did that for a full tour, thirty trips and he stood over George. And I'll never forget, Ray said, Getting back one night, "'gee' we had some drama tonight. We had some bugger was over the top of us and he dropped his bombs" and the 'Cookie' [the bomb] was a four thousand pounder, it was like a forty four gallon drum, or two hundred litre drum you'd call

12:00 it, about that shape and size. And Ray said, "George is looking for any excuse to turn around and some bugger upstairs dropped it and you could see it, it was only about twenty or thirty feet in front of us, this bloody great big thing, fell in front of us" and George said, 'look a Cookie" and Ray said, "George didn't know but I pissed myself

12:30 laughing with the way he came out with it, 'look a Cookie". But it wouldn't have been a pretty sight to see one of them next to you, anyway they didn't have any problem with it. So no, you didn't calculate your chances. If you did, there'd have been a lot more like George I guess, who wanted to come back

13:00 every trip and not get there, only go halfway and say, 'that's enough'. There was see, a heck [of a lot of spare time], and that's where we didn't spend much time flying. I mean what you'd do, God I don't know, two trips a week

13:30 I suppose, two trips a week. Well they were say on average six or seven hours long, so you worked for fourteen hours a week and you played for the rest of the time. Well you did your damnest to, and as a result we probably spent more time planning our play than we did. The flying was routine on 'main force' particularly, on main force I mean,

14:00 the flying was routine, okay your briefing at four o'clock, you're told all about it, you've got your flying clothes on. You go and have your feed, you get in a truck and it takes you out to your aircraft and you're at your aircraft fifteen minutes before you're ready, before take off time and that was that.

14:30 And so that you didn't dwell on flying, it was something you had to do but the main objective was, 'what am I going to do tomorrow night? What's her name?' And that was the attitude of a big percentage, it was certainly my attitude and

15:00 my life.

So after the briefing was that when you'd go and get into your flight?

No, after briefing you'd go and have your egg and your toast and your bacon, your farewell feed, and then you'd get into a truck. There'd be trucks outside the mess.

And what were you wearing at this stage?

Oh flying clothes which was, oh my God, big thick woolly

15:30 socks, an under suit, you had no heating in the aircraft and it was minus twenty or something like that outside, centigrade. The under flying suit was a quilted, like a doona, quite thick and then the outer flying suit was a coarse,

16:00 like tarpaulin, lightweight tarpaulin sort of thing and that was, and that was an 'overall' and flying boots, which were wool lined flying boots and your helmet which was a leather helmet and earphones and your oxygen mask and your microphone in front of you, so there was just that much of you sort of showing.

16:30 And gloves, so you were well 'rigged up'.

And was there any sort of typical topic of conversation while you were having that farewell meal or anything that was different?

Oh, you'd probably talk about the mission, where you were going and anything that may have been

relevant. You'd talk about the target but not,

17:00 I don't think serious stuff.

Was there any sorts of, I guess, a routine or a ritual, something your crew would do every time before you went out?

No, oh yes, I had a little 'gollywog' [doll] thing that I got from a girl at Toowoomba, at Fairholme [Fairholme, Girls Grammar School] when I was eleven, twelve years of age. This little 'gollywog' somehow

17:30 or other she gave it to me. I think we were pitching one another for ten minutes and I don't know and I took it with me and I had it hanging off me flying suit.

Why?

Don't know, just because I had it. I think some other people had different things.

What sort of things?

Oh I don't know. Maybe a, I don't know, maybe a rabbit's foot or a, some

18:00 'meaningless' but meaningful thing.

Did anyone in your crew have any superstitions or lucky charms?

Me, that gollywog. I don't know, I don't remember but it was no big deal.

What about superstitions as in that you don't this today?

Today's the thirteenth or something. You talked about that a little bit, occasionally. Black Friday was Friday the thirteenth of, I forget what year or what month, but they

18:30 got back from, we weren't on it, they got back from the trip and the bloody entire country was fogged in, they couldn't land. And hundreds, not hundreds, a hundred or more got over England and they were just about out of fuel and they said "right, jump" and headed her out to sea. Just pointed 'her' [the plane] in the right direction so she wouldn't land in England and parachuted out.

19:00 That was Friday the thirteenth. But we still flew on other Friday the thirteenths.

How about, I've heard from guy's, about how you wouldn't make an appointment with someone just before you went out because if you did you wouldn't be back to keep it, was there anything like?

I didn't think that way. I expected to be back every time.

19:30 The only time that I had any doubts about going back was when I first saw Stuttgart and twenty minutes later when we were through and done it, I was getting back. But the only time I think, I had any doubts about getting back was, oh, sometimes momentary ones when you're under attack or something like that, maybe this is it. We got,

20:00 when Paddy, in the first crew Paddy Peden our rear gunner, Paddy got the chop. We were attacked by a fighter one night and Paddy, they knocked his head off. They just took all this out of him.

Can you take me through what happened when you realised that you were under attack and something had happened to Paddy? Can you walk me

20:30 **through that night?**

Oh it was quick, it was all over before it all started. Paddy saw it, and he yelled to the skipper, "Dive" or whatever. If you got under attack from a night fighter you'd just throw your aircraft around every direction you could. Just yell at the skipper, 'dive' or 'fighter', if you could recognise it, you'd say what it was,

21:00 but Tom would just put the stick over and down and then he'd twist, and he turn, he'd corkscrew, what we called corkscrew and hopefully loose the bloody thing. And if there was a cloud anywhere you'd head straight for the cloud to get into it because when you got into it, they couldn't see you. But mostly, if you got under, if they got, as they did this night,

21:30 Paddy was dead five seconds, two seconds after he saw the bloody thing, I suppose, very quickly. It just happened that the back end of the aircraft, there were other areas of the aircraft had shots through them but no-one except just the rear turret, they got Paddy. And when we got out of it the skipper said to me, to go back and see if Paddy was alright and I got back there and I never saw so much

22:00 blood in my life as was in that turret. I used to kill [lambs on the farm], I remember thinking at the time, 'so much blood'. I couldn't believe there was so much blood. When we were at home on the farm we lived on lambs. It was a fat lamb and wheat farm, and we lived on lambs and I used to kill the lambs and that was part of my job, from the time I was about twelve or thirteen or something and

22:30 cut the throat of the lamb and the blood would spurt and that sort of thing, but my God, it's not as much as a human being or it didn't look it anyway.

What was your reaction to seeing this?

Well I said to the skipper, well I came back, and I said to the skipper, "Paddy's gone, they've knocked his head off, he's dead" and Vic

23:00 said, "That's alright, now get down the front there and do something". I don't know. There was no drama, no real, you might easily think there might be hysteria or something, there was none of that.

What was it like flying back knowing that there was a body in the plane?

I don't know, we had to fly back, we flew back. I don't know that there was anything, I do know that when we got on the ground we

23:30 didn't go to our normal parking place. We were sent to an area and as soon as we stopped the door was opened and the CO came aboard and we were all, maybe five, three minutes after we got there, he was in and he said, "Who saw Paddy?" or ,"Who went and found Paddy?" And I said, "I did" and he said, "Right, you stop here with me, we'll get him out."

24:00 And to the rest of the crew he said, "You get off" and they got all left the aircraft, got on the bus and went back to the mess, or back to de-briefing.

Why did he ask you to stay?

Well I'd seen it, so no need for the others to see it. It was only a matter of two or three minutes, five minutes I suppose it took us to get him out of the thing and put him in a bag and ambulance come and got him.

24:30 Today it would be bio-medics and all that sort of thing, whose job it was, but it wasn't in those days.

Did you go out on that plane after that?

Oh yeah, it was our plane. They patched it up, put a new turret and the holes. You sometimes got shots, holes through the aircraft and they patched them up.

Did you look at that rear turret differently after that?

25:00 No, I don't think so, I don't think so. It was quite soon after then that we split up as a crew.

I guess being a close knit group like a crew has to be, how does a death within the crew affect the dynamics?

Well our crew, not so much as most, because of the dissention that was in the crew, it was not 'six fellows bonded together' like there was

25:30 with Tom, Tom Grant. There was Fermastat, [he] was a destroyer of that bond and this happened only one or two trips before Vic had done his twenty.

Aside from the immediate process, was there any sort of immediate process that followed Paddy having died, like the crew

26:00 **being spoken to or?**

No, never saw anyone, no, no, no, that's it, it's finished.

Did you ever talk about him?

Not much, a little bit, not much, as I recall not much. And fortunately a week or two later we were headed off in different directions but it was not, there was no communal grieving or anything

26:30 of that nature.

Why do you think that was?

Best you didn't do it.

Why was that?

You might not want to fly again. You've got a job to do tomorrow night. I don't know, I think that was it. And there was no sort of [memorial ?], and from time to time you lost crew members, everyone lost crew members, oh not everyone, but occasionally people lost

27:00 crew members and the 'Yanks' particularly. This is an aside. When we were at Upwood [RAF Upwood], that was in southern England, or central southern, in Huntingdonshire and the main force was up north, northern England, but Pathfinders were down in the central southern and we were surrounded by the

27:30 American squadrons. There were probably within ten miles of us there were probably five squadrons of

‘Yanks’ and ‘gee’ you should see them getting back. They’d have the bloody tail shot off them, they’d have the, oh they would come back like a colander and everyone of us would say’ “Look at those poor bastards, we’re pleased we don’t have to do that.” And I got home here

28:00 and the next thing I’m hearing people say, “Oh the bloody ‘Yanks’, they were yellow, they’d run, they’d do this”. And I’d say, “The bloody Yanks, not in England, they didn’t run”. I’m just very happy we didn’t have to do what they did. They’d go in and they’d fight for hours. They’d be attacked by fighters for hours and they would fight for two or three hours in, and two or three hours out, and a lot of

28:30 blood and guts they bought back with them. Oh no, the Yanks didn’t do it easy, those flying Fortresses [B-17 medium bomber] and Liberators [B-24, heavy bomber] they came back with plenty of holes in them, frequently.

For you personally, did the experience of losing Paddy, make you, I guess think about your own mortality at all?

29:00 No, no. I don’t think so.

Why do you think that is?

I don’t think so. Look, I’m not sure, because, realise it’s sixty years ago and my feelings then, I recall them to a point but I’m probably ninety five percent of what I’m telling you is true and the other five percent probably my re-recognition, I don’t know, reconstruction.

29:30 I don’t know, truly Naomi… It’s something. I know I didn’t dwell on things like that, because you had people going missing all the time and you knew them. I had a Bridge partner, a bloody good Bridge partner, he and I were very difficult to beat and he got the ‘chop’ and I went on playing Bridge.

30:00 I didn’t have a ‘wake’ or anything and not say the next day, “my partner’s not here, I’m not going to play.” You didn’t do those things.

Was there ever any, I guess really any small effect, like if you’d had a ‘close run’ on a trip the night before or something would you maybe, party a little bit harder?

Oh very probably, yeah. And also there was a reasonable, I think, I’m not sure of this, but I think there were times that once or twice we got sent on leave before we thought

30:30 we’d be going on leave. And thinking back, I think maybe we’d had a couple of rough ones and that was in Pathfinders particularly. [In] Pathfinders they tried very hard to keep you alive. They really did, there’s no doubt about it, we were very valuable people

31:00 because of our training and experience and knowledge and everything else. It was a wonderful concept, whoever put up the concept of Pathfinders and main force and the way they [worked], the programme of bombing, it was a very successful programme.

Just on that, where you said you might have

31:30 **Say been sent on leave a little earlier or something could you make any kind of comparison, do you think that the way say if you’d been out on a mission the night before or two nights before or something and it’d been a bit rough and you’d go out and have a drink or out for the night, can you make any comparisons to the way that you’d sort of behave on that night compared to if you were back in Australia after the war and going out for the night? Was there a?**

Oh, totally different world.

32:00 **Oh I guess, how would it affect your behaviour, that’s all?**

Oh Mum would have gone ‘crook’ if I’d have done it at Brookstead, what I was doing in London.

Well maybe post- war when you were?

Yeah, it was much more subdued, although I was in the environment of still flying. I mean we used to get to the Seaview at

32:30 Singapore and you’d open the hanger doors, you’d talk about it and then even years later, under the banyan tree in Honolulu at the Moana Hotel. You’d get there and have a few beers and the next thing something would come up and we’d talk about it,

33:00 talk about our experiences, a fair bit. But in civilian life, you wouldn’t have done that, in the normal civilian life. You got back on the farm and you just stand there on the tractor and it would have been a different situation. So I’m not [sure], probably my immediate post-war was quite different to what it would have been if

33:30 I hadn’t flown.

When you go out for the evening if you didn’t have to fly or something like that during the

war, or if you were on leave, would you socialise predominately with your crew?

Yeah a lot. When we were on Pathfinders with Tom Grant, Tom had a wife in Slowe, which was not far out of London, a couple of hours I suppose, an

34:00 hour, and Tom would spend at least half the leave in London with the crew and we used to party on all together. Tom, he was a larrikin like the rest of us, but Tom was a [memorable fellow]. I'll never forget one night we were on leave and we were outside Admiralty House and anyway Tom, as we walked past,

34:30 this strange looking motor car was there. And the next thing he looked and the keys were in it. He said, "Come on, let's go for a run". So I said, "Alright" and I jumped in and Tom got behind the wheel and it had no damn gear lever. And Tom didn't know about this and he's got the blasted thing running. There's no gears, there's no gear stick and the next thing there's a little WRAN [Women's Royal Australian Naval Service] , she was the driver of the

35:00 car, she's at Tom's window, saying, "Excuse me sir, what are you doing in this car?" And Tom said, "I'm looking for the bloody gear lever" and she said, "It's there under the wheel." We'd never seen it before, this gear lever under the wheel. He said, "I was just looking." And anyway

35:30 he got out and he gave her the keys and he said, "You want to be careful, someone will steal it if you're not lucky, if you leave the keys in it." If Tom had found the gears, if he'd have known where the gears were, we'd have been two mile down the road by the time that silly little bird had come out and her car would have been missing and we'd have abandoned it somewhere, at some pub or somewhere.

Was it 'clicky' in between crews,

36:00 **hard to break in, to socialise with another crew?**

I don't think so, but I think maybe a little bit. Your own crew were 'your crew' but I don't think so. I think you'd mix with anyone. Just because they weren't in your crew, poor buggers

36:30 it was unlucky for them but still had [to], the poor buggers. You'd have a drink with them or do what there was to be done with them. No, I think no.

And during the time I guess, before you went to the Pathfinders, just as an example, were there any girlfriends that were a bit more steady than the others?

Oh a little bit, yeah. Oh what was her name? Vi, Violet,

37:00 Vi worked in the parachute department on our squadron and Vi and I used to 'get off' more often than I got off with anyone else but it was, when I left the Squadron that was it, bye, bye Vi.

How hard was it to form relationships under the kind of pressure that?

When you say relationships, casual, one night stand, piece of cake.

37:30 The relationship if it happened, it happened. Vi and I were pretty good mates and good friends for a month or so. I don't really, not sure I know the answer to that but we made out. But

38:00 there were all sorts of things we got up to. Money was always a problem. You could always spend more than you got and we were quite well paid.

Did you have any little entrepreneurial enterprises?

I was just about to tell you about one. Every month you had a ration of cigarettes or you had a tobacco ration and I forget what it was,

38:30 I think it was four cartons a months which you got for two shillings a carton or something like that, at unreasonably low cost, probably ten percent of what it cost you in the mess. And you'd go to Australia House, you had a little card, and you got your, what else did you get? Oh you got a tin of peaches, I

39:00 think, a tin of peaches and your tobacco and I think it was something else. No, it I think it was just a tin of peaches, anyway, which was a rarity in England at that time and anyway, the word got around and the next thing I wouldn't get cigarettes, [I got] Corona, Corona cigars and straight down to the Savoy Hotel and there was a barman there who would buy them off me and you made

39:30 a good profit because you couldn't get cigars in England. Some of those old Pommies, those rich old Pommies at the Savoy, they would.

And where did you get the cigars from?

That was part of your [allowance], you could have cigarettes or cigars, these Corona, Corona cigars, bloody big cigars this long, top of the [line], top line cigars, somehow or other, I don't know someone in

40:00 Australia House must have got onto it, anyway that was a little perk and that was good.

What did you do for cigarettes then?

Oh you could go and buy them at the mess, but the cigars you couldn't buy them at the mess but 'gee', you could sell them at the Savoy and I forget the figures, but they were good. I think you could have a good week in London for what you'd get for a box

40:30 or two boxes, a box a month I think it was. I forget how much but anyway, it was gold.

We'll just change tapes there.

Tape 7

00:35 **Okay we'll just talk about the specifics of the bombing.**

Yeah see, we were trained, not as navigators or bomb aimers, we were trained as observers. It was the terminology. On our wing [uniform arm] was an 'O' meaning an observer. Now that combined the two functions and they were both totally different functions. I mean bomb aimer, well

01:00 you get a bomb site and you get the target in the cross and you press the button and you drop the bombs and you blow the target up, that's the theory of it and the navigator side of it, totally different, until we got to Pathfinders. So the two jobs were combined and you could time it, looking through a bomb site.

01:30 Till you dropped your bombs was probably no more than two or three or four minutes, well you flew for six hours, well the role of assistant navigator or navigator and on the Lancaster's and the Halifax's at the time I flew, we all had H2S, which was this

02:00 radar type of thing that had the revolving transmitter, the bottom of the aircraft was like a big washtub under the fuselage of the 'Lanc' and that was a rotating transmitter. It would reflect, it would transmit a beam and that would be reflected depending on what the beam hit. If the

02:30 beam hit water, it was absorbed and there'd be no reflection. And you'd see a river, it would stand out like, you couldn't mistake it and lakes and that sort of thing were very visible as a black patch on your screen. The screen was probably a foot in diameter and starting in the middle you'd have your aircraft,

03:00 and the middle was where you were, where your aircraft was and you'd have the arm of light going around all the time and you would see countryside, a bit of reflection, not much, a little bit of green grass on the screen. You'd get to a factory or a heap of houses, urban, and you get a lot of reflection from the

03:30 roofs, so that would stand out as a much brighter green. It was all green and probably about that colour and that role was ninety percent of my job on both, as main force and Pathfinders, was the 'box bashing'

04:00 as we called it. We were all known as 'box bashers' and that's where we spent our time, ninety percent of it. And depending on, under certain circumstances you'd be in the nose and in the nose where the bomb sight was you'd have a nice big cone of Perspex. You could see up, down, north, west, north, south, east

04:30 and west, every direction. It was quite good there but that was basically the setup of our job.

Well take us through the other five or ten percent of the job where you would?

Oh the other five percent was when you, if you were visually, looking to drop your bombs visually then

05:00 you'd go down to the nose and you would identify, hopefully, rough round figure of where your [target was], I'm talking main force now, rough round figure of where your target was, you'd have your master bomber, you'd hear him, Tom would have the radio on and the master bomber would say, "Right the green flares as you're coming in, overshoot it by three seconds, overshoot it by ten seconds or keep well to the left of it". And you'd just, with the

05:30 bomb sight was a mirror or a piece of glass which was gyroscopically kept level. As your aircraft turned, it would stay level and they had a light on it with a cross and you'd look through and you'd be able to see through the glass but you had this light superimposed

06:00 on it and hopefully you'd get the aiming point, what you decided was the aiming point, either through your visual recognition of where you were or through the master bomber saying, "The green flares, hit them" or "Miss them by three seconds or five seconds" or something. And you'd just take your skipper along, "Left, left, left, right, right, right, okay,

06:30 steady, steady, bombs away, let's get out of here." And that was basically our role.

And how accurate was your bombing?

Visual bombing, you should be able to get within a couple of hundred yards. See all sorts of things came in, all sorts of things, the trajectory of the bomb,

07:00 airspeed came into it, the speed you were flying at the time of release, and the direction of the aircraft, if it was five degrees, the bomb would go that direction in the way that the aircraft was faced at the time. It was a heck of a lot of, hit and miss mate. Although when

07:30 I say that, when they were sending the 'buzz' bombs across, they were a piece of cake, they were good trips to get. Except, and I'm not sure of this, I'll tell you something, shortly, about the master bomber. They were pads of concrete that jerry constructed. I don't know, probably a football field

08:00 size, oh no, half that, half that probably, and they launched their 'V2' we called them, which was basically a rocket. And they'd point them up and the rocket would go up and come down on London and that was nearly all around the Calais area, Belgium and along that coast

08:30 and they'd sent us across and they were always daylight trips. You'd get there and there'd be a fair bit of Ack-ack, sometimes and it was just a matter of drop your bombs on them, blow up the piece of concrete. They needed concrete or something to launch the blasted things, I don't know, but very few casualties on them. They were

09:00 nice ones and I saw a documentary about the 'Dam Busters', which by the way [was] the best war film ever produced. If you ever hear of it, get hold of it and send me a copy if you can. It was produced in probably the fifties,

09:30 1950 something, but it was very, very good and it was the story of Wallace, Wallace what's his name? I forget and he invented the bomb which busted many dams in the Ruhr [industrial region] and on the Rhine [river] and caused one hell of a lot of damage, big dams

10:00 and they got the bomb to skip along. It was like a forty four gallon drum and they had them rotating and they went in low, sixty metres I think it was, sixty metres from the water and she'd be rolling and it would, with it released a certain time before the weir it would be just at the point of ready to sink, lost it's

10:30 forward velocity, sink down and then it, sixty metres down or something, had a pressure thing on it and it blew up and then it exploded. It blew, oh the first night they went I think they did three dams and there was a huge wall of water went down and washed houses and factories and Germans every' bloody' where.

11:00 **What did you hear of this at the time?**

We knew it had happened. I think we knew about it.

What were you doing at this time?

Oh I don't remember mate. I wasn't involved, I don't know but it was a wonderful thing.

So tell us a bit more about changing

11:30 **from, splitting up the crew that you originally had with Norwegians, tell us what happened to you from this stage?**

Well I think I told you didn't I? About going to 460 and Perko Paeke being there and?

You did briefly but in more detail yeah?

Well fortunately Maxwell was the key to it, Squadron Leader Maxwell, the guy who had trained us to do the mining trip and he knew our, I think he had a rough

12:00 idea [of who] we were, he had pretty good idea of what we were up to and pointed in the right direction in our thinking and everything else and I just said, "I am not flying as a spare, get me a crew, I'll fly forever, but I will not fly as a spare because I know I'll get the bloody 'chop' or I've got a much bigger chance of getting the 'chop'."

How did you feel about them threatening court martial and?

12:30 I don't know. I told him to get 'stuffed'. He could court martial me, do what he wanted to do. I knew damn well, I think I knew in my mind they'd never do it. I was Vickholt's crew, we were a good crew and then when I found out from Maxwell that we were the only one of the four that got back and we got the bloody Tirpitz, those type of , well I didn't have

13:00 to.

Did it make you angry at all?

I was very angry, particularly when it was Perko and if it had been someone else and he'd said, "We'll court martial you, this is what might happen to you", I would have thought, "Oh shit", but when it was Perko telling me that and I'd done his, all his work for him at Mount Gambier, well all I did was want to spit in his eye and told him. And in no mean

13:30 terms when he said, "We'll court martial you". "Go and get so and so-ed"

Was the accusation of lack of moral fibre bandied about too freely?

No, it didn't happen mate. Not much, very, very little, odd crews like George with Ray Forbes, odd fellows like that, they'd go out and get as far as France and something would happen. Their bloody starboard motor wouldn't work

14:00 properly and they'd turn around and come back, not much though.

What would happen with that story?

In that case?

Yeah.

Ray threatened him. Ray said, "Turn back you" and that's how Ray told me he used to talk to him, "George you yellow bastard, keep going, there's nothing wrong with the engine" and George did. And Ray led that crew

14:30 and did a fantastic job because he had a skipper that didn't want to fly but gradually George got, well he did, it was just in the initial [stage], I don't know.

Was there much understanding for people who had maybe reached this point, that they did have fear?

You never heard of it. I think when it happened, I'm not sure. It must have happened but you never heard of it. They sort of just grabbed them and got them out, it might have

15:00 became fashionable so the sensible thing was not to, I never heard of it. George was the only 'lack of moral fibre', that I ever heard of, and yet it must have happened. Thinking back now, it was impossible not to, you'd reckon but I never heard of it, except George, and Ray fixed him.

Did they accuse you of this when you refused to be just a spare or?

Oh this is what bloody Perko said to me. Oh this was only a

15:30 two hour job mate. Within a couple of hours I was up to see Maxwell and as, and we didn't talk about my problem and 'hey Sharky', and we talked and it was then I found the other three didn't get back. Then I said. "Oh shit, it must have been dangerous" but then I said,

16:00 "Oh look, I've got a problem, it's bloody Perko Paeke." And I told him, I said, "Perko should have been scrubbed", I said, "the first time he got off the ground at Mount Gambier, because all he did every time was throw up". And I said, "The bastard's got through and he got a commission, of course." He was very, he topped the course in theory and everything. Everything was perfect, except he used to spew.

16:30 And I said to him, "The bastards down there and he never did a trip. When he got to England they grounded him because of his airsickness." I said, "He had bloody airsickness back in Mount Gambier and I was the one that did his work for him."

So what made a good commanding officer in your view?

You mean a good skipper?

A good skipper, or no, a commanding officer like Maxwell?

17:00 Oh well Maxwell had done a lot of trips and he had a lot of knowledge and, I don't know, special jobs he was involved in mainly, and there were a lot of people [doing] special jobs. That if an unusual set of circumstances was there, they'd be there and tell you what to do, and how to do and why to do it and so forth and you got your knowledge from them.

17:30 But when I told Maxwell about it he said, "Well you'd better take a couple of days leave, I'll straighten it out". When I got back he said, "Well there's a crew over at so and so, just down the road here". He said, "A fellow named Tom Grant and he's got a bomb aimer who's out of commission now. Go over and see Tom, see if you like him and if not, okay come back and we'll

18:00 find another one for you." Then I met Tom and we just clicked, the whole damn lot of us did.

What was the thing that made you click?

I don't know, good guy, drank booze, chased women and said he could fly, that was the reason, and his crew said he could fly too.

Take us through the various levels of the Pathfinders please?

18:30 When you first went to Pathfinders, firstly you trained all the time. If you weren't flying you were up in the air, probably twice, two or three hours at a time. You'd do five or six hours flying a day when you were not on 'op's, whereas on main force, you'd just be playing Bridge. And

19:00 the lowest of the low on Pathfinders, was the 'Illuminators' and you'd go in early and you'd drop parachute flares that lit up the entire area, so the master bomber could see where it was and the

visuals, then the visual markers would go in and they would drop

19:30 markers which hit the ground and burnt as a colour, green, red, yellow. Mostly greens and reds as I remember and then they were the primary visual markers and then you'd have the secondary visual markers, who were the level above the illuminator. They would come in and they would back up.

20:00 After five minutes or something they would back up the, they would drop green markers on green markers or go as close as they could get, which was probably no more than two or three or four hundred metres away and that was visual. Then there was the blind marker and the blind marker you'd drop it on your radar,

20:30 your H2S and that one was always there, on every trip. Many trips you'd go and you wouldn't drop a thing because it was a visual target, but if it was in doubt or nearly always, whether it was forecast that there may be low cloud or not, there was always blind markers there, in case you got five hundred aircraft over in the middle of Germany

21:00 and fog came in or some meteorological circumstance came in that you couldn't see a damn thing, well they weren't going to tell those fellows to bring their bombs home. And so they had the Wonganui flares which were a coloured flare on a parachute and the primary, the blind markers would do it on radar

21:30 on our H2S.

How would that work?

Well you'd, let's face it, if this is the ground and that is the aircraft, if you release here, your bomb, oh you're bomb, will go behind you like that and it will hit the target here. Well all you've got to do is work out when he's three thousand feet from the ground

22:00 where will the bomb be, to hit there, and it's a mathematical problem and so if you drop a flare at that point three thousand feet from ground level, that is where the bomb should be to hit the target there, all you've got to do is put a flare there and that was all. We didn't have a damn clue. You'd get your aiming point

22:30 and you'd be told at a certain time before the aiming point, 'drop your flare', your flares, the Wonganui flare, and that was on a parachute and that would burn for three minutes or something and back up again, back up again, and in the meantime main force coming in, they just aimed at that flare. And the flare was three thousand, could be three thousand feet off the ground with cloud under it, but

23:00 they'd just saw the coloured flare and that's what they'd aim at.

What if in the circumstances of the Pathfinders being shot down? What were their?

Oh they got shot down but.

What was the Squadron meant to do if?

Oh there was always backup. There wasn't one of you doing it, even the master bomber there'd be two of them and then your next step after primary blind, was master bomber and a master

23:30 bomber he could do everything. We never made master bomber, we were primary blind when the war ended. Not long and we'd have been master bombers but we weren't. But it was a very good system they'd worked out and it worked and it

24:00 wrecked Germany. The Air Force, Germany was bloody gone before D Day [6th June 1944] in my book, but he'd have never given up, should have given up before D Day. His cities were wrecked, his cities were burnt, the people were killed there and it was just getting worse. We were getting bigger and better, well more aircraft.

24:30 And it was terrible that a nation should continue under a set of circumstances [like that]. The bombing of England was nothing, nothing. And I think I, I don't know whether I told you before, did I? At the end of the war they said to us, "alright here's a [plane], fill your aircraft with gas and go and have a look".

25:00 And we went to towns, oh God, and I'll never forget Hamburg, coming into Hamburg, we flew low, three or four thousand feet to get a decent look at it and coming into Hamburg, on the way in, Tom said, "Look there's one, we bloody missed it" but when you got over the top, all buildings but no guts, no roof and all burnt out. And when I say all burnt out, the entire

25:30 ten miles of devastation. Just think of Sydney with the start of the Harbour Bridge and go out as far as Bankstown and up as far as Pymble and totally wreck it and that was German cities.

How did you feel seeing this yourself?

I didn't give a stuff, did a good job, no I didn't.

26:00 **Did it affect you?**

Now I do, now I say it was bloody awful what we did.

How does it affect you now?

Well it doesn't, you can't, I'm a great believer [in] 'post mortems achieve nothing', the future is what achieves. What's going to happen tomorrow, not what happened yesterday. You can't change what happened yesterday, it happened, it's over.

26:30 It happened, you can not change it. You can change tomorrow. So you just didn't think about it and our attitude was, 'you bastards', serve them right, they shot at me, bloody near killed me once, maybe". That was it, you didn't think, you didn't think.

What kind of

27:00 **noticeable differences apart from the role, but what did you notice being quite different in the Pathfinders as opposed to the Lancaster's for you?**

As opposed to main force? Lancaster's were Pathfinders, same aircraft but well main force, all you did was, well a little bit but not much training and 'ops', was all you did. You played Bridge

27:30 and flew over Germany whereas Pathfinders every time as long as the aerodrome was open and you could land ,"You're not on 'ops' tonight, okay you can get two or three hours this morning, two or three hours this afternoon, get up there and do something". And you'd go up there and as a crew you'd work out what you were going to do. Might do bombing runs on towns, or blind bombing, or may get up there and

28:00 suddenly the rear gunner goes, "Messerschmitt up our arse, go Tom" and Tom would throw her down and if you were standing up or something and you fell arse over head, that was your problem, and we as a result, we were very competent people and that's why Pathfinders didn't lose many, percentage wise. The amount of trips that were

28:30 done but yet the thinking before you got there, 'Oh Jesus, you're going, you're there ten minutes before the rest of the bloody crew get there [main force], the rest of the aircraft get there, you're on your own, you'll get the shit shot out of you' but that wasn't case. My concept before I went there was, "Oh well, we're doing a more dangerous job, but what the hell. If Tom and the crew want to go there, well I'll

29:00 go". That was my attitude and once we got there and realised and became involved in it, we were told, "get up there and learn this and do it and you are bloody good flyer's and they won't hit you" and they didn't. It was brain washed and 'we'll make you flight lieut, mate.' I was pilot officer,

29:30 acting flight lieutenant, 'gee' I would have lost half my pay if I stopped flying and because if you stopped flying you knew that you'd automatically loose your acting rank and as soon as you stopped, and that was one encouragement not to. Oh you were

30:00 taught to think you were important.

Was this quite intense though, always having to train? How was that for you mentally?

We liked it, it was good fun and Tom taught me to fly. I mean I used to do quite a bit and I could throw the old 'Lanc' around too. That was part of our [training], someone,

30:30 it was usually the engineer or the bomb aimer, the skipper would, we were trained by the skipper to take over when, if, he got shot, he got killed or he got hurt and one of the, either the engineer or the bomb aimer, would take over and fly her back. And I'll never forget, this is the same thing, when we were flying with BCPA, Eric

31:00 Holloway used to be a good fellow, old 'Egghead'. And I used to get up there and fly a bit and Eric was the only one that would let me land and these DC6 that we were flying then and our route was Sydney to Nandi to Canton Island, we'd refuel there and then we'd go onto Honolulu. Anyway Eric let me land at Canton Island

31:30 and I dropped her in a bit but they had an earthquake in Honolulu the same time as I landed on Canton Island and everyone was told, "Oh yeah Sharky landed the bloody thing at Canton and caused an earthquake in Honolulu."

How attached to your plane do you become? Does it develop a character?

Oh yeah, oh yeah, you liked your own plane.

32:00 And they were different, this motor's a bit of a dog and for the skipper more than anyone else, I'd say. But yeah, you like your own aircraft. We had 'Y', 'Y' for yoke, was our 'Lanc' [call sign?] on [Pathfinders] and on main force it was, shit I forget,

32:30 it was 'Y' for yoke I know on Pathfinders. And not many and almost never did anyone fly your aircraft. It was your aircraft and that was that.

What was special about 'Y' for yoke?

It was ours. It was probably no different to any other but to us, it was different, to us it was good. Probably we didn't think it was any better to the others but we knew

33:00 it. It was like our crew, we knew each other. And aircraft are different, I mean one motor might run a bit rough, that would worry you on some aircraft, but if it always runs rough, well what the hell, it's okay. So you got to know your own aircraft and you got to like your own aircraft.

Did you have any lucky charms or?

Well I had my 'gollywog'

33:30 that I told you about before. I don't remember any of the other crew, but you'd see other fellows, they'd have a shoe hanging off their collar or something, I don't know, but I used to have this 'gollywog'. And I had it right through, from the time I, I don't know why. Mum might have given it to me or something when I was on leave but I think I had it, I did, I had it right through my training and

34:00 it was my [charm]. If it was not available I would not go into any big panic and say, "I've got to get my 'gollywog' before I can get flying". It was just one of those things.

Were there any missions that were particularly dangerous? That stick in your mind, apart from the one's you've mentioned?

Perrimooda was rough, we got the shit shot out of us one night

34:30 there but and things were over quickly, but I suppose on one occasion I had a very traumatic problem. I was laying down the front and we were

35:00 getting predicted flak and I missed it apparently, I think, and the next thing we had an explosion quite close to the aircraft and I got hit and I thought, I was lying on my belly and I got hit in the balls and I crumbled up like, curled up like a [ball],

35:30 anyway the skipper could always release the bombs. He released and he told the engineer, "Get down and see what's the matter with Sharky". And he got down there, the engineer, and I didn't want to straighten out and he said, "Come on" and anyway I took my hands off and there was no blood and he gradually straightened me out and the skipper said,

36:00 "What's the matter with him?" "He thinks he got hit in the balls but there's nothing happened." We found a tiny bit, about as big as a pea, in my inner flying suit, of bloody shrapnel. It had gone through the aircraft, the skin of the aircraft and hit me right there and I thought I'd lost them. But I hadn't. I was sore for a day or

36:30 two.

What goes through your mind when you have this feeling?

I don't know, I just curled up and said, "Oh shit". I don't know what I said, but I know I curled up and I know Phil was trying to get me straightened out and I wouldn't straighten out because I thought, I think, if I got my hands off them, they might fall off.

Did you see your future running through your

37:00 **mind?**

I didn't know about the future. I was too worried about my [health?], and it hurt too, it hurt. A decent kick in the 'knackers' [testicles] is not a nice thing mate, and anyway we straightened me out and we eventually found there was nothing wrong with them. Phil's giving a ball to ball description and we opened my flying suits out, and there was no blood. We were looking for

37:30 blood and I said, "it's a (UNCLEAR)" I knew something because we had a lot of sheep, and our lambs we used to always mark them. You'd pull poor little lambs 'knackers' out, so you were reasonably familiar with that part of the anatomy. Oh yeah, anyway.

How lucky did you feel?

I'm not sure whether I felt lucky or what the, I don't

38:00 know.

Did they crack any jokes or?

Oh, forever and oh yeah, they didn't forget it.

What would they say?

I forget, something about, the next thing you'd be in a bar and you're making passes at a little bird and the next thing, "Oh he's got no nuts, he'll be no good to you love, you'd better get off with me."

38:30 I know I got plenty from the crew, but anyway.

What was one of your best leaves that you've ever had?

Oh mate, I don't know, they were all good, particularly when Tom was in the crew. The first lot used to be predominately just

39:00 Ray Forbes and I, but when the whole gang of us with Tom it was, oh the navigator, Eddie, he was a Frenchman, French/Englishman sort of thing. Eddie had a wife and Eddie used to go home to his wife, but Ron and Geoff

39:30 Lester, who was the (UNCLEAR)? I can't remember his name now, can see his face, but anyway we used to always go as five people. We'd go on leave and Tom would always come and spend at least half the time with us. If we had ten days, Tom would be with us for five or six or seven days, home with Joan for a couple.

40:00 And it was nearly always London. And it was, oh a good life and many times I remember Dad, on my final leave, Dad told me, he said, "You'll be going into houses and people that you'd never ever have a chance of ever meeting, but respect

40:30 it, don't abuse it" and he was right.

Better save that for the next tape, sorry.

Tape 8

00:40 I think it was , oh yeah, it was on main force, and we did a daylight on, oh one of the towns, Duisberg, I don't know,

01:00 don't remember which town but I know it was on the Ruhr and it was a daylight trip and at that stage we were doing, the RAF was doing quite a lot of daylight flights because there were no air defences, because Germany had not many more ack-ack aircraft, guns left and no aircraft and petrol to run them, and this sort of thing, so we did some daylights too. And this day

01:30 not while we were over target, I saw at least, I don't remember now, I think it might have been a dozen, aircraft just explode and I thought "Holy Christ, they've got a new one". There was talk then of a jet engine that Jerry had developed and he had too [Junkers 'comet'], but he

02:00 had no petrol to fly it and or no oil, or whatever they ran it on. And when I got back we reported it, "that there's something, he's got a new weapon, that aircraft are just exploding. Not hit and dropped, they hit and just disintegrate and oh within a day

02:30 we were told, "Hey, no, he's sending up 'scarecrows'" and it was a bomb that he'd developed, an ack-ack he'd developed and it just exploded with a big piece of smoke and a result he was shooting them up in the air and if you weren't, well you'd see one and, "Holy shit, an aircraft has just blown to pieces".

03:00 It was scary. We called them 'scarecrows' and there on in occasionally a 'scarecrow' would go up and you'd see it and once you got to know it, it was a different look and an aircraft didn't explode. An aircraft would get hit and might almost disintegrate but you'd see it still as an aircraft but with this, it was just an explosion and there was black smoke and that was all that was left of the aircraft.

03:30 It was very scary.

Just in amongst your uniform or your flight suit that you wore were there any particular things that everyone had to carry with them?

Oh yeah, you carried an escape kit which was..

What was in them?

Oh a little package which had some money in it, had Gilders [Dutch currency] or Deutschmarks [Reichmark, German currency] or whatever they had and that was given to you at

04:00 briefing. I think it had different money for wherever you were going. If you going into France you'd have Francs or something and if it was Germany you'd have whatever they had and a map, a map of, basically, Europe on a silk, folded up to

04:30 nothing and a few tablets that were supposed to keep you alive for a day or two. So that if you got shot down and you parachuted, they reckoned the worst thing you did was to move. Get under a hedge and just lay there for a day and by then they're looking for parachutes that had been observed, the looking for the people had

05:00 stopped and you moved after a day, so for a day you'd lay under a hedge or in a gully or whatever and you wouldn't move from there for however long. Fortunately I never had that decision to make and but

yes, we had an escape kit which we picked up at briefing

05:30 and we handed it in at de-briefing.

Would you carry a picture of yourself?

No, no, no and you, well a picture, I wouldn't know why, you wouldn't want to look at yourself, would you?

A man just told us that you'd carry a picture in case you were shot down and they could put it in a

06:00 **fake passport for you, like a fake identification.**

No, no. They had all the equipment to do that. They'd take a photo of you, the Underground was pretty damn good, particularly in France. France you had a good chance if you could get back to France and just sooner than later they'd see you and they'd know you and they'd,

06:30 oh yeah, there was a lot of people got out through France and they'd take them over to Spain. Get into Spain and then you've got a trip home, send an aircraft to get you.

And was there anything particular about your uniform that might have helped you if you were shot down, to navigate or anything?

No, the last thing you wanted was anything that looked like a bloody uniform.

07:00 No, but at the same time, no your uniform was not unique, it was what you wore. There was no thought of that, you'd steal things off a [line], I don't know. It wasn't something, we didn't get

07:30 much information or training, we got no training on it, much information, we didn't get. Occasionally you'd hear stories, "Oh that's sounds a good idea". You'd nick a shirt of a clothesline or something and put that on, be a red shirt instead of your uniform blue shirt, but no we didn't. There wasn't much thought about that aspect.

And we talked a little bit about this before but

08:00 **with such a huge, well percentage of crews that didn't make it back, how did this impact? I guess not impact, we've talked about impact, how aware were you, of this attrition rate I guess?**

Oh you were quite aware of it.

08:30 There'd be crews not getting back regularly. Every week or two, some would get the 'chop' and that just happened.

Was it ever addressed or bought up or mentioned by CO or anything?

No, no. No, it was not in 42

09:00 thirteen percent of crews that started a tour completed it, completed a tour and that came out in Winston Churchill's memoirs. That's where I read it. I had no knowledge of that previously, what the attrition rate was, but I saw that in Winston Churchill's memoirs, that in '42, thirteen percent of bomber crews did a tour,

09:30 the other eighty percent did something, ended up POW's, dead or walked back or something.

How keenly were you waiting for the end of your tour?

We didn't intend to end. We had no intention of stopping flying. When we were Pathfinders, we were just going to keep on flying.

What about when you were with the main force?

10:00 The main force? We were fairly unique in so far as, probably before we were half way through, which would have been a normal tour, before we'd done fifteen trips, we knew Vic was not going to do the thirty and we knew why. Vic knew the dissention, Vic

10:30 felt it, Vic knew it and yet he was taking Fermastat with him when he went to 'Mosquitoes', he took Fermastat with him. He was a pretty good navigator but he was an arrogant bastard, that you couldn't put up with. But we didn't sort of have the objective. We were half way there,

11:00 we've done fifteen trips and we've only got another fifteen to go. At fifteen we knew that Vic was finishing at twenty and then it would be a new ball game for us, we weren't sure. There was always this cloud of being a spare hanging over your head and then when we got to Pathfinders, very quickly you weren't going to stop at thirty

11:30 or fifty.

Why?

No, because it was good fun and we were important and we were needed. Oh they brainwashed us. They told us how bloody good we were and so did, and we had the Pathfinder little eagle there and everyone knew you were a Pathfinder, 'holy cow man'. The whole thing as I recall,

12:00 as I now realise, at the time you didn't realise that, you didn't have a clue that you were being brainwashed with 'bullshit' to keep you flying.

What's the comparison with danger levels with being with the main force and Pathfinders?

Oh we were far less, our probability of getting the 'chop' was much less than main force.

12:30 We were just good crews and we knew what we were doing. We knew everything that was going to happen up there and we knew how to beat it. Oh no, our attrition rate was much lower and to the outsiders you'd say, "Oh Christ, they go in first, they're on their own, the night fighters must get hold [of them], oh God, no, Pathfinders" but once you became involved with it and also the fact

13:00 that you trained, you're up there, 'Get up there and do something'. When we were told, "Go up there for a couple of hours and train, you've got two hours flying you can do", we weren't told what to do. We'd get up there and we'd do all sorts of things. We'd be attacked by fighters suddenly in the middle of a bombing run and all these things and as a result it was second nature to us. And when it happened over Germany we'd done it twenty times back over England,

13:30 and so you did the right thing. And after you'd did it anytime over England, you'd say, "Now what else could we have done?"

Why do you think this level of training or practice I guess existed within Pathfinders and not within the main force.

Couldn't afford it, oh God, you couldn't fly aircraft at the rate we flew them.

Why not?

Too much gasoline, it was too expensive and oh no.

14:00 **Surely it's expensive for someone to be killed and to be replaced?**

No, crews were dispensable and they were available. No, I'm wrong when I say those things. Oh you couldn't have, first of all the skies wouldn't have held it. And if you'd put a, there was probably two thousand aircraft

14:30 in bomber command and alright it's going to be fog over Germany for two or three days, two thousand aircraft up there flying over England, there would have been more 'prangs' from people running into people than you could poke a stick at, but when there was forty or fifty okay, there's plenty of air space.

I guess I'm asking why the Pathfinders were given priority?

Because we were, Pathfinders

15:00 we were told, oh soon after, well when you went there. I mean you were interviewed as a crew before you could apply to go to Pathfinders, and you'd do a couple of interviews at least before, 'Yes, okay, you've got a posting, you're going to 156 Squadron', which is Pathfinders squadron. You'd be told, 'by the time you'd done thirty trips, you'd just about know what you were up to, and then you become valuable.

15:30 Up to then you're a bloody 'rookie', but at thirty trips you're pretty good and you're valuable to us, and we want you to keep on flying.' And then you'd realise by the time you'd done thirty trips you've got two ranks of 'acting' and if you stopped flying you'd loose half your pay and you enjoyed it, it was good

16:00 and you liked to be 'king of the castle' and I don't give a damn who it is, everyone likes to be the number one. And we were, we were the number one of bomber command and we were told it and we realised and we knew it wasn't 'bullshit'. We knew it was true. We were a very, very valuable part of the structure of a bombing raid,

16:30 and I started to tell before and I got misled, I forgot or diverted, I think and I'm not sure on this yet, and I haven't been able to check it. The other night they had this documentary on the Dam Busters and we were doing a trip near Calais,

17:00 a daylight trip and Guy Gibson who was the CO of the Dam Busters, of the Squadron [617 Squadron] that was created to do the dams, and Guy was a very decorated, he'd been there since the Battle of Britain, he was a top guy and he was the master bomber on one of these stupid easy targets, easy trips.

17:30 And we heard Guy say, "I've bought it, take over" out of the sky and he was a top, top pilot and they just fluked it. And I heard him say, "Red Head Fox" was the master bombers, that day was their, "Red Head Fox Two come in, I've got it" and no

18:00 more and he was one of the top guys of the RAF and it was the craziest, stupidest, easiest target you

ever saw and they [caught?] Guy out. I'm sure it was Guy. So it was [just how] things happened,

18:30 but you didn't dwell on it. Maybe of a night, you'd go down to the pub and there'd be a good looking bird there and that was the attitude. We didn't think too much about the business, the business of 'number one', what we were doing. We thought about how to do it and not get the chop, but we didn't

19:00 sort of think about lots of things. Just as well, when I think back, I mean today and the other day, when I was speaking to Serena [AAWFA researcher], is it from Canberra, when I was talking with her on the phone for an hour I said things, and it brought back things. This last week I've remembered a lot of things, and been through a lot again, that I haven't for thirty or forty years thought about.

19:30 And the morality of it was totally shocking, what the RAF did in the last year of the war was bloody awful, but I guess we had to do it. It did, no doubt it shorten the war, but we didn't have to hit a lot of towns that we hit.

20:00 **Do you think about that a lot now?**

Not a lot. In the last week or to and I have from time to time, yes, but not much though, but the last week I've thought a lot about a lot of things, but it was, and at the time, we didn't ever think about it. There was no thought about it.

Were you ever in London or any cities when there was a German bombing

20:30 **raid?**

Oh yeah, with the 'buzz' bombs particularly.

Or any other?

Not with [massed ordinance], 'Jerry' had given up trying to bomb England by the time I got there. 1942 I would say Germany was finished as far as bombing England. We were just too damn well defended and I would think there was a fair bit over Russia way.

21:00 I think he did a fair bit of bombing there, but the German bomber command I would say, finished in 43. They had no bomber command, from then on it was fighters to defend the country. But as far as aggression by bombing, not much.

And what were the 'buzz' bomb attacks in London like?

Oh you'd

21:30 hear the thing and then you'd hear it stop and then you'd think, "oh shit, it's going to land somewhere here" and I saw a few hundred yards from me one dropped one day, but that was the only one that I ever saw the explosion caused by it.

Did you ever make any kind of comparison between, like in a situation like that, what you were doing and what was happening?

No, no.

22:00 We weren't doing [that], that was nothing.

But even in you being at the receiving end?

What we were doing was a thousand times, to anything I experienced on the ground.

Did that thought come into your mind?

I knew it, poor stupid bastards, let's go and do it well. There was never any thought of making a decision that

22:30 'really I shouldn't be bombing this', Cologne or wherever it was. There was no thought of that. You go there and you did the best you could do, always. You never thought of not doing your very best. But there must have been, anyway, I don't know, no doubt it did shorten the war to a certain extent.

23:00 But I reckon they could have stopped bombing Germany a year before the war ended and then it might have lasted eighteen months, instead of a year. So guys on the ground would have been killed I suppose, so it was the right thing. The same as dropping the atomic bombs, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, [August, 1945] that was, but it shortened the war.

What sort of news were you hearing of the situation in Australia?

23:30 Not much.

Were you concerned with the threat of the Japanese?

Actually the major threat of the Japanese had almost passed by the time I left Australia. See the Coral Sea was see, 1941 [May, 1942]. I think it was December 41, [December 7th, 1941] Japan came into the war

24:00 and I wasn't in uniform until May 42 and by then they'd captured Singapore and then for six or nine months, or something, I was training there. They were starting to be rolled back by the 'Yanks'. The battle of the Coral Sea had happened,

24:30 I'm sure before I left and that was the turning point as far as the Japanese advance towards Australia. But yes there was news, war news at all the cinemas and all that thing. We had a fair idea of what was going on.

Was there ever any worry amongst any of the Australian guys in bomber

25:00 **command about being in England while Australia was under threat?**

No, I don't know. I didn't hear it and I didn't experience it, for the simple reason it didn't matter a 'stuff' where you were. You were in uniform and we had to beat the enemy and the enemy was Japan and Germany and Italy and if I happened to be in Germany killing bloody Germans, well that was bloody good. With a bit of luck someone would be over there killing Japs

25:30 and between us, hopefully, we'll achieve. No, I don't think there was any apprehensive much about, and, no.

You mentioned before, a while ago, that you had to pick up POW's and bring them home?

Yeah, at the end.

Yeah, can you take me through that?

Oh, I don't know, just at the end of the war and a couple of days after

But where did you go, where did you get them from, what condition were they in?

26:00 Oh I don't know. We'd just be told, "Go here, there's an aerodrome there and the Army has got a bunch of POW's" and we'd send twenty, thirty, fifty aircraft over. It might be one or two squadrons and a squadron would be told, "How many can you muster?" "Oh alright, we can put twenty aircraft in the air" or, "Alright you do your twenty and you do your twenty and we've got sixty aircraft

26:30 and you put fifteen people in each one and that's a thousand people and there's a thousand guys over there, go get them". And it was great, some of those poor bastards had been locked up since Greece [April, 1941] and Crete [May, 1941] and quite a few Aussies mixed up in that and they were

27:00 reasonable, in reasonable condition. 'Jerry' treated prisoners of war reasonably, provided they didn't play up too much. If they escaped and that sort of thing, he'd give them a good bloody 'caning' for it, but in the main Jerry treated prisoners of war quite well, quite reasonably.

Would you talk to them at all as you bought them home?

Oh of course.

What would you talk to them about?

Oh I don't know.

27:30 They'd say, "Yes we saw you guys, going over to bomb bloody Berlin" or, "To bomb near where we were" or so forth and, "We used to listen to you and say 'go to it'" and they would almost without exception, when they saw the White Cliffs of Dover they'd cry, "Yes, home". Particularly the 'Poms', not so much the Aussies

28:00 but the 'Poms' particularly, the White Cliffs of Dover was a big sight for them, but we did if for maybe only a week, or something like that. Went everyday for a week and did one or two trips each day until it was finished.

Heading into Germany that soon after the war did you witness anything to do with concentration camps and atrocities or that sort of thing?

No, no, no we never.

28:30 The only times we got on the ground were the POW's, picking up the POW's. Oh we did, Tom yeah, we did a bit of a, what was it? Oh yeah, we gone over and the POW's were all [gone], there was no-one to bring home, so Tom said, "We'd better go to

29:00 Paris" and we didn't get to Paris. I forget, there was a aerodrome in France somewhere, that any time you were hit, you'd head for that one and this was after, during when most of Europe was occupied, and Tom said, "We'd better stop and have a look at, see if

29:30 we can get close to Paris. Maybe we can get to Paris and let's have a look at the 'Frogs' [The French]", so he just revved an engine until it burnt out, and then we were in trouble and we had to land. So we landed at this, I forget the name of this damn place, but there was only a French village near it and the next thing, they flew a blasted aircraft over, with a spare engine, and in a couple of days we were back in England. We didn't achieve but

30:00 we had a little vote of the crew, “Oh yes, let’s burn one out and set it on fire, and put it out and land,” which we did. The thing I remember most about that, down in the village there was a French guy, I forget, he was with the Australian Light Horse, I think, during the First War [World War I], and anyway he could speak quite a bit of English

30:30 and when it was ‘Aussies’ oh, ‘Aussies’ he kissed us all, this old fellow that had the local café and he went out and dug up some wine out of the back yard that he had hidden and really put it on for us. And out the back he had, it was like a forty four gallon drum with a fire burning under it. And everything was thrown into that,

31:00 the potato peelings, the peelings of vegetables, and the bones off the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK , the stuff that was left off the plate, everything went in there. It was damn good soup. It was a forty four gallon drum of it and a bucket full of water and the scraps left over on the plates, and bones, and all that sort of thing, all went in there. I forget how often he said he used to clean it out, every month or something like that and start a new brew, and it was a good

31:30 brew. I’ll never forget that fellow.

We talked a little bit about VE Day?

VE Day, yeah.

When you climbed up Eros?

Well you went a bit more stupid that day , that period, those two or three or four days, than you did normally.

Can you just tell me about hearing the news that the war was over? Where were you?

Oh we were on the Squadron [the station] when the [news came in],

32:00 and oh, we knew for a couple of weeks before, that it had to be over, it had to be finished tomorrow, today, in the next day or two and it wasn’t any surprise when the word came out that.

How did they tell you?

I don’t remember. On the radio of course and on the Squadron immediately I know the

32:30 word went out, ‘get to the briefing room’ or ‘the assembly room’ and the announcement was made, “Germany had called it quits”.

And how would you describe that atmosphere in London?

I don’t know, oh in London? Everyone was a bit drunker than usual and a bit freer than usual. It was just, everyone was crazy. It was, well the poor buggers had had six years,

33:00 five years, of.

Any particular differences like in people’s behaviour, like the women or anything?

Oh just a bit more, a bit more than it was a month before, and of course there was, yeah a bit more but it was the same. And from our point of view it was the same, because we used to do that

33:30 for the previous year or two, as long as we’d been there. We played up every time we went away, every time we hit there, it was the greatest ‘play up’ town in the world and to us, I suppose there was little, as I said a bit more, did a few more things, as I said, climb up the Eros, get on top of bloody Eros which was crazy.

What were your feelings about the fact that you

34:00 **would be going home?**

Yes, wanted it, it was wonderful to write the aerogram that we used to write, one page on flimsy paper that we could write. It was good, but they knew of course and we knew, that they’d know, but the urgency of getting home was not there, not with me.

34:30 I was very happy in England, I nearly stayed there. I did, I was like this, on taking a discharge in England, great people, great country but I didn’t do it. I missed a couple of boats and eventually Swanie, who was the CO of 460, and Swanie got hold of me and he said, “Next time, I’ll bloody court

35:00 martial you.”

What did you want to go home to?

What did I want to go home to? The farm, family. Like I mean we had a good, prosperous property, and we weren’t filthy rich, but we had plenty. The Darling Downs is a very,

35:30 very, good soil and Dad was a good farmer and we’d bred a good flock of whole ewes, about a thousand

of them and we had a prosperous farm and the life was fine but it wasn't quite like [flying], particularly when I got to driving this bloody old Bulldog tractor, a lot different to flying.

36:00 Four mile an hour, oh no, it was difficult, difficult for me to settle back down, I never did. But anyway we survived, life went on and I always enjoyed life to the fullest.

When you immediately arrived back in Australia, what did people

36:30 **ask you about your Wartime?**

Oh, Dad never talked much about his experiences, which were bad. Bloody trench warfare was animals lived like it but.

But did he ask you about your war?

Not much,

37:00 a bit, and I talked a bit, but not much. I got my DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] after I got home. My DFC came through, after I got home.

Tell me about that?

Oh I was down in Brisbane and I was overdue and I was supposed to be back on the weekend or something and it was probably the middle of the week or something. I got as far as Toowoomba and I met an old girlfriend there and we were going to stop another day or two, and I thought, "Oh Jesus I'd better ring Mum and tell her" and I

37:30 rang there and there was no blast of, 'where the hell are you? You said you'd come back and plough the bottom sixty'. None of that. "Hey, you've got a DFC" and Mum started to cry and.

What did you do?

"Oh 'geez', I'll be home next week, I'll stop another day or two." Well we knew we would have got it.

Why is that?

38:00 Oh we were due for it, you eventually, you got it, we were due for it and then the war ended on us, so we shrugged the shoulders and said, "Oh well, we missed that, that's nothing". But Tom and I both, the skipper and I both got it, in our crew, we got the DFC. And that was, and as I say that came through in November,

38:30 and it's here in the box and the telegram they sent Mum, congratulating her 'your son has got the DFC'. It was great.

Did people ask questions then? Did your Mum ask, "What did you get this for?"

Yeah, a bit, I said I didn't get it for anything special, I didn't do anything special, that I got this for, we did a lot of flying, we were a good crew and we did a lot.

How hard was it to explain to people what you'd been doing?

39:00 Well you didn't, I didn't unless they knew what you were up to.

Why didn't you?

Cause they didn't know what it was. You could tell them how Pathfinders did this and that and they wouldn't have a damn clue what you were talking about.

How hard was it to have experienced something which meant a lot to you and not to be able to explain it to anyone?

It was fine with fellas, with someone who'd flown and been there. We often, as we said 'opened the hangar doors.' [Talked about it]

But I mean with family?

To family

39:30 or something, no, they didn't know what it was, they didn't know what we did and it was useless trying to tell them.

Did you want to make them understand?

I'm not sure, I don't' know, but I know there was little, little detailed discussion. 'Oh yes I did forty seven trips and blah, blah, blah', this sort of thing, but as far as any of the detail, like some of the detail that we've gone into today,

40:00 never discussed that with them, I don't think probably with anyone until today and many of the things we've said today, I don't think I've ever said them before. Well Marita what you've heard today dear and what you've heard in the last two years and I've talked a little about the war occasionally but nothing to

what today.

40:30 And Marita, to her, Marita's been in the country now, nearly thirty years. Come over as a bride, married a guy here, and come over here as a bride and she has a daughter and she and her husband split about ten years ago and

41:00 we met and we married a couple of years ago now. Nearly two years it's lasted and my God, it's going alright. But I've always heard Marita say, "You're a veteran, my husband's a veteran" and the shoulders go back a little more. She's proud of the fact that I'm a veteran, I don't know why.

We'll just stop there for one second. We've just got the end of.

Tape 9

00:39 **We were just talking a little bit before about talking about your experience and that sort of thing, and you mentioned that when you flew again with Qantas or**

BCPA

That's the one, that you would talk about it more?

Oh yeah, because the guys had flown too, they were ex-war, I

01:00 mean Qantas and BCPA in that era, thats five years after the war, it was wonderful to be with those crews. Totally different to what Qantas is now, or I guess, before the war.

I guess what would you talk about, regarding the war?

We were all bloody fliers, all servicemen.

I guess I'm interested in what are the sorts of stories that all fliers want to compare and talk about?

01:30 Oh I suppose 'ops' came into it a bit.

What aspects of them?

Oh I don't know. I probably told the story of Ray Forbes and the night in Strand Palace and we found those couple of birds and that always went over well. Told that story many times.

Did you hear any stories of where you went, "Oh, I didn't experience anything like that"?

Oh I guess so.

02:00 **What sort of things?**

Oh I don't know, yes, but there was, and this was over a beer. We'd sit for an hour and you'd drink beer and someone would talk about something and someone else would talk about something. and there was a fair bit of it, you'd open the 'hangar doors' and you'd talk 'flying'. And flying was as far as we were concerned at that stage,

02:30 was war, and immediate post-war. And the post-war period with Qantas, God it was the best smuggling organisation in the world.

What were you smuggling?

We used to take gold from Sydney to Karachi and pick up diamonds and bring them back. You could make a thousand quid in a trip.

Would you?

Yes. Until Bill Shirley, this is another part of it. Bill Shirley was a …,

03:00 he was supposed to pick up diamonds in Singapore, bring his money back from Karachi, and in Singapore pick up diamonds and bring them in. And I'd go away with a belt around me and I'd have two hundred ounces of gold, in the belt, in little slabs and in Karachi sometimes, and other times Singapore, pick up diamonds and bring them back. Wouldn't bring back money

03:30 and normally, if you didn't have diamonds to bring back you'd give the money to someone. I forget who, you'd give the money to someone, and anyway Bill Shirley, I think he got boozed and didn't pick up his diamonds and he's got a 'Karachi basket', which we used to call them. It was a straw basket full of money, and he's the radio op [operator] on a 'Lancastrian', yeah, stopped at Darwin

04:00 to refuel and Bill hid the money in a cabinet that was under his seat, the 'Karachi basket' with probably, I don't know, ten thousand pounds or five thousand pounds or something in it, probably in, I don't know,

and anyway some bloody cleaner found it. Bill left it there and left it under, and he didn't stay on the aircraft and he went off the aircraft and

04:30 the bloody cleaner found it. And the next thing, everything hit the fan in Sydney, and Bill was sacked, and Bill mentioned a couple of names I think, and they got the bullet and it finished the gold racket. And I'd only down about three or four trips and each time I earned about a thousand pounds or something, which was a hell of a lot of money, buy a house on a thousand pounds in those days.

05:00 **What was your, how did you get rid of the gold in Karachi?**

Oh you'd take it to a place you were told to go to.

What place?

Oh no, it was all organised.

What kind of a place?

Could be a jeweller or a shopkeeper or something. It was a business, it wasn't a 'slap-dash' thing. It was all organised. Greg Hanlon, a guy

05:30 I got my gold from, Greg. Greg had a source in Kalgoorlie and it was all illegal, but there was no chance of getting caught and everyone else, who wasn't carrying gold, you used to take watch bands from Singapore to Karachi and you'd bring watches back from Karachi to Singapore and you'd make quite a few quid, not a lot. It was nothing like gold and diamonds. But watchbands and

06:00 everyone did it. I forget one of them, Harry, Harry, I forget his name. There was a big stir up in Qantas when Bill got caught, and quite a few resignations. I think they got into bank accounts and found money and this sort of thing and there was no, and anyway one of

06:30 those guys joined BCPA. We were under the banyon tree one day and Harry, Harry, I forget his name. And he started talking about why he left Qantas and blah, blah, blah. I knew why Harry left bloody Qantas, he was told to resign, but we didn't talk about that. But Bill Shirley, he blew the gold racket,

07:00 however and we were that type of people. Never gave it a thought the fact that we were doing something criminal, I don't know whether it was criminal, but illegal and everyone was doing it. Everyone was doing some form of smuggling, every, maybe the chief pilot didn't or something, but everyone. We were all ex Air Force crew, people and

07:30 as such, we were young, we were stupid, we'd done this, been there, done that and never gave a thought to it. And that was the error and then it gradually wore off and it ended up, that it got as Qantas was pre-war. 'Salute the skipper' almost, and call him 'sir', that sort of 'crap', but those five years after

08:00 the war were great. Everyone was ex Air Force.

Obviously it was important to you to be ex Air Force then, and as the years went by, what does it mean to you to be a veteran now?

I don't know. I've always been proud of the fact that I did what I did, very proud of it. I'm a very loyal Australian, I'm a patriot, a patriotic person and

08:30 Australia's a lucky country and I'm a lucky guy, to be an Australian. And the fact that I participated in beating Germany, Italy and Japan, it was good.

Do you feel part of the Anzac tradition?

Not very much. The 'old Digger' bit to me, I don't know,

09:00 something I didn't sort of participate. I don't march on Anzac Day.

Why is that?

I don't know. Never did. I suppose probably because a few years after the war, flying, you were everywhere and anywhere, on Anzac Day. I don't know, just didn't and I still don't.

Do you think about anything particular on Anzac Day?

Oh yes,

09:30 because it's on television.

What kind of memories or thoughts does it bring up?

Oh I don't know, oh yes, Anzac Day is a little different, it's different, yes of course. It reminds you, but I don't know about, but as far as going to the marching and wearing your medals and all that sort of thing, no.

Why is that?

Don’t know, just I have never participated in it and to me it’s

10:00 something I can do without that. Don’t know why but.

What are the, I don’t know if ‘lessons’ is the right word, but what are the lasting, I’ll use lessons, of the war for you?

Oh it was great.

But what does it taught you or what did it change about you?

10:30 Oh it changed me.

How?

I was a ‘hick’, a country bumpkin, and I learnt to do other things and it changed my life, no doubt in the world. I would have been a very prosperous, young farmer, sure. Always thought a little about politics, so would have probably ended up in politics, which I didn’t because of my diverse, from then on in, I’ve very little stability

11:00 in my life. Started a lot of things, many of them, very, very rewarding; always good at making money, but never good at keeping it. I could spend it as quick as I’d make it, or I could have a big heap of dollars now and three months later have to borrow ten grand off someone to do something I wanted to do, this sort of thing, it’s been my life.

11:30 **And how do you think the war has influenced you or what effects has it left on you as a person?**

Well as a person it taught me how to live other than drive a Bulldog tractor and grow a paddock of wheat. I remember Audrey, a ‘lass’ in Brisbane that I was on with,

12:00 I don’t know, thirty years ago, I used to say to Audrey, “If I died tomorrow, I’ve lived more than other people, I’ve lived more in my fifty years than anyone else gets to, I’ve had a great time.” And I have.

What’s made you live more?

I don’t know, it bought out a character in me I suppose that, there’s no doubt about it, I would have been a prosperous, young farmer and

12:30 I would have been still on, ‘Lone Pine’, if it wasn’t for the war. The war taught me there was something else in the world that I liked better. I got used to it, oh no, totally changed my life, I have no doubt what so ever, we wouldn’t be, oh well, except for the fact, if the war hadn’t been [won], you wouldn’t be here and that sort of thing. But I mean, I would never have done what I did with my life

13:00 and I’ve had a very diverse life. As I was saying before, now I’m getting to the part I want to tell you about. ‘Bungie’.

Okay tell me about ‘Bungi’.

When Amiko went back to Japan, to look after Mum and we split, I went to London and I stayed there for a week or two and I hated the bloody place.

13:30 **What were the changes just as out of interest?**

Oh, different city, totally different country, different city. The Nigerians and the West Indians and the… Britain was a country, I used to criticise, it’s probably not good, but I used to say Britain raped, robbed and pillaged the world for centuries,

14:00 the British Empire, India, Africa the whole damn thing. They lost America because the ‘Yanks’ fought them, had to fight them, to loose it too and then we have a war which we were supposed to have won and we open the doors and say, “’Come on in’ little West Indians, and ‘come on the Nigerian’s’” and now there’s a huge racial problem in Europe, in England,

14:30 and it is. Today England is a totally different country, it’s a racial country.

Racist or?

Oh yeah, a lot of racism in England. And no wonder, I mean God, there wasn’t a black face in Europe, in England, until 1945 when they won the war and then Churchill and Roosevelt had done a deal that

15:00 Britain would divest itself of it’s Empire and Churchill stuck to it. He should have told Roosevelt to ‘get stuffed’ after the war. That was part of the deal of Lend Lease with England during the war, “You’ll diverse yourself of your colonies” but it was good to diverse yourself of them, but not bring them to England. They got there, different culture,

15:30 different attitude and different and then you get to Suttich [Shoreditch-?], you go out there and it was a total Pakistani town and it’s a suburb of London, and in many areas there was a lot of racism and beatings and those sort of things that were not England, until England won the war and they said,

16:00 “come on my little ‘black beauties’, live with us.” That Irishman, what’s his name? Presley, I think Priestley [Rev. Ian Paisley, Ulster Unionist] or some name like that, he used to get up in Parliament and say, “Send them all back to the bloody West Indies, where they belong.” I more or less agree with him, but anyway.

So Bungie, sorry?

Anyway, yes, it was December,

16:30 and I didn’t know whether I was going to stay in England for a month, three months or six months, but I got there and after a week or two I think I said, “Bugger this”. And I thought, “Oh God, Christmas time, I’ve been away for fifteen, sixteen years and oh ‘gee’ I don’t know, whether my wife’s remarried or divorced me or what, I’ve just not been in contact with her and that’s that.”

You hadn’t seen her for fifteen years?

17:00 No, and I thought, “She’s probably divorced me, she’s crazy if she didn’t.” And anyway I thought, “Oh Christmas, not the right time to get home, so I’ll stop off in New Zealand.” And I got to New Zealand in probably, the middle of December and I bought a boat, and bought a car, and headed for the Bay of Islands and went fishing. And after about a month of fishing, I caught a big heap of fish, I never did catch

17:30 the Marlin that broke a line, ten years before on me, or twenty, fifteen years before. Anyway went out with Fuller’s, on a boat trip to the Hole in the Wall because there was a reef, and they had a glass bottom section in the boat and there was a reef I wanted to look at. But on the way out there was a very attractive, young Chinese girl there and I said hello to her and we talked

18:00 and she was actually a student and her father was with her, a student from Singapore and going to uni at, I don’t know, anyway going to uni, I know she was. And in the conversation I said, “What’s there to do?” because I was thinking about tourism. A mate of mine in Vancouver used to bring out about forty Japanese,

18:30 predominantly students, young people, teenagers, this sort of thing, charge like a ‘wounded bull’ and he’d give them a bus trip up to the Rocky Mountains, and take them across on the ferry and about two weeks, a bus tour trip and he used to make a lot of money, get about eight grand from each one. Get thirty or forty

19:00 on the, bus load. Anyway I thought New Zealand might be right for that, but it wasn’t, because of the time of school holidays and anyway I was looking for ideas. And I said to this young bird, I said, “What’s there to do in New Zealand? What’s good in New Zealand?” “Bungie jumping”. I said, “Bungie jumping, what’s that?” Oh, out came the photos and I looked at this and it’s the stupidest thing I’d ever seen

19:30 and anyway that night in the Swordfish Club I said to the boys, “What’s this Bungie jumping?” “Oh don’t you know about bungie?” and all the Kiwi’s started to tell me about bloody ‘Bungie’ and I thought, “uh” and the lady spoke enthusiastically and I just couldn’t get it out of my mind and a couple of days later I was on an aircraft and I went down to Queenstown.

20:00 And I got there in the late afternoon or something and the next morning ten o’clock, I was out on the bank of the river watching the bungie.

Did you do it?

And within an hour or might have taken two hours before the total commitment and I said, “Canada needs this, desperately”.

Did you jump?

And later that day, about two o’clock,

20:30 I’d been there about four hours sitting there watching them and the decision had been taken, “I’m not going to bloody Australia, I’m headed back to Canada and I’m taking Bungie with me.” And I thought, “If I’m going to take it back, I’d better do it” and I did it and I stood on the railway track, Hackett’s got a railway bridge that he does it off. And I looked down and thought, “Oh shit, what are you doing here Max?

21:00 You bloody idiot.” And I nearly said no, but I didn’t. I did it and jumped off and I nearly wet myself I think, but it was a great experience. And I did it again and that time I said, “Put me in the water” and they dipped my head in the water, oh it was great, it was a magnificent thing. And there and then I said, “I’m going back, I’m taking

21:30 Bungie back to Canada.” Well I tried to get some of the Hackett boys to, I stayed there a couple of days talking to them about, “You join Max Thompson and let’s get back to Canada” and, “The Capililani Bridge, it would be great off there, in Vancouver” and “Oh, ohh” and they said “Every second person we talk to, want’s to do this sort of crap” and I got nowhere with the Hackett boys,

22:00 and anyway, I got to the Bay of Islands and someone said, “There’s a bungie at Freeman’s Bay in

Auckland" and this was mid January, I suppose and I went straight, jumped in the car and went straight down to Auckland, and found it and Vicki Thornton, an English girl had started it. And she jumped Wally Lewis, the footballer, off the parapet, off the

22:30 roof at the Commonwealth Games in Auckland in 1990, which was over the December/January period and Vicki was famous because she jumped Wally Lewis and also she'd, I think she did the jump and she went down and nearly, with the Duke of

23:00 something was there, the Duke of Kent or something was there, to open the Games and she nearly took his hat off as she went down and Vicki was quite famous. And anyway, [she?] was also talking about going to Australia and very quickly Vicki and I did a deal and I bought Freeman's Bay, and spent a year, because I knew the danger of North America. Break a bone there and

23:30 it couldcost you a million bucks. So anyway I learnt all there was to know about Bungie jumping. We tossed hundreds of barrels, we did it ourselves, we could bring a person, ourselves we could get within a foot, if that was the level of the water we could put our head to there and we wouldn't be more than six inches wrong, that was ourselves. And the way you left the cage was the variation, but even customers we reckoned

24:00 two feet was maximum. If we were going to land them there, we could get somewhere in that two foot range and when we knew all the, and I also had an electronic thing that stopped you from opening the gate, if you hadn't done all the checks and have all the right gear on. It was impossible for us to make a mistake unless we did it intentionally and anyway, it took me a year and I'd trained people as jumpmasters

24:30 and all that sort of thing, Kiwis, and we went back to, we went over first to LA, we opened one, set one up there and then up to Calgary. And at the Calgary where they'd had the ski Olympics a couple of years before they were crying for something to do, and I put Bungie in there and

25:00 Bernie, Bernie my partner screwed me and anyway we parted, which was the best thing that ever happened and I went over to Toronto. I heard that the CNE, Canadian National Exhibition, was on in late August every year and I went there and did a deal and Ron Pauke, the guy in charge there. Ron said, "Max, if you make a mistake I'll lose my job.

25:30 You're not going to hurt anyone are you, this Bungie?" And anyway, I satisfied him we wouldn't and CNE was twenty days, two million people. They reckoned their survey showed, that seventy percent of the people spent more than I think it was ten minutes, or twenty minutes, I'm not sure which, watching Bungie and some of them watched for two or three hours.

26:00 It was absolute congestion around the Bungie site and at seven o'clock at night, we had to close at ten, at seven o'clock at night, we could do thirty an hour and at seven o'clock at night we'd go out and give out ninety tickets. When those ninety had gone it would be ten o'clock and we'd shut the doors. And other than that we'd open at eight o'clock and by eight thirty we'd have a queue and there'd be a queue all day. We took four hundred and, we counted four hundred

26:30 and twenty thousand, in the twenty days and it was seventy percent profit. It wasn't a bad three weeks work and from there on in I said, "Holy cow, I'm going to be rich." And from there on in, went down then to Orlando, got a block of dirt near 'Wet and Wild', just across the road from 'Wet and Wild' in Orlando, just

27:00 down from Universal Studios and then every time I got a hundred grand, I'd go and open another site and we were at Daytona Beach for spring break and bike week, just a quick six weeks I think we were there, just for that period, and in that time MTV [Music Television]

27:30 were there, and most nights I'd get into the drink with the guy who was running the MTV show. They had a band and all this sort of crap, and a month or so later he rang me up and he said, "Max, I'm coming to talk to you." And I said, "What about?" He said, "we want to buy 'World Bungie'" and I said, "Oh that's interesting". So he said, "Where do we meet?" and I said, "Well let's meet at my headquarters" which was Atlanta.

28:00 And he came there and he said, "Well first of all, we want fifty one percent." I said, "Well let's go and get boozed, no-one gets fifty one percent, unless you get the lot" but I said, "I don't want to sell" and anyway twenty four hours later we'd done a deal, oh he'd made an offer, and it was that they'd give me back, I'd spent about a million and a bit

28:30 setting up sights. He said, "We'll give you back all you've spent and we'll give you five hundred thousand dollars and we want a contract with you for five years, and you can name your price if you want it. Anything within reason, anything under a million is alright." He said, "We want forty nine percent".

29:00 And I said, "I'll think about it, I'll talk to Amy" who was my lass who'd I'd teamed up with in New Zealand, and came over there with me, and I rang my accountant, who was looking after things for me, and set up my business in the Cayman Islands so I wouldn't pay tax and this sort of thing. And he said to me, "Let me think about it, I'll ring you tomorrow." He rang me the next

29:30 morning and he said “Max, please yourself.” He said, “Now I believe they’re going to give you half a million, they’re going to pay for all the sites you’ve set up and you’re going to give them forty nine percent, and you’re going to get a big salary, and fifty one percent of the profits.” I said, “Yes” and he said, “Well we did a forecast eight months ago and you’ve already passed what we said you’d do

30:00 in twelve months. You’ve established more than we planned you would do in a year.” He said, “I believe in the next year you’re going to take somewhere between twenty five and thirty million dollars.” He said, “More than half of that is profit” and he said, “It’s all yours.” He said, “If you want to sell half of that for five hundred grand, go for your life.” And I said, “Yeah, that’s the way I thought too.” So I said,” No” and we were going to do

30:30 a tour with them. They wanted to do colleges and we would take Bungie there for a week and another college the next week, all through the summer and maybe a month later the cowboys had got a foothold and they started killing them. They killed a couple up near Michigan and near Detroit, a couple in California. I think they killed five in eight days or something like that

31:00 and every state in America said, “Bungie, finished.” And I’ve got ten sites costing me about ten grand a week to keep the doors open and making a fortune every week, ten sites all (demonstrates) and it was a big ‘blow up’ and that was that.

31:30 So I lost about three hundred grand on the exercise because money was no object. As I said every time I got a hundred thousand, I was able to open a site and I had ten sites open. I had a deal with Buffalo Council, to bungie people into the Bridle Falls at Niagara and we’d have build a tower.

32:00 They said, “Just get your engineers to make sure that we don’t drop anyone into the Falls and there’s a piece of land there the Council owns”, Buffalo City Council, “We’ll lease the land to you and put one there and we’ll show these bloody Canadians about the Niagara Falls” and that was all, that was in the drawing board, on the drawing board and would have happened three or

32:30 four months later, but it was banned. And I walked out with huge loss. So that was Bungie, but it was worth doing, it was worth doing. It was the greatest thing since sliced bread and we never bled a nose. I don’t know, we did, I don’t know, probably approaching a hundred thousand jumps.

33:00 We jumped a Harley, with a fellow on it, bungied him at the Daytona in bike week. I’ll never forget that fellow and we knew how to do it. We used to bungie fellows in wheelchairs and it was great, they got a great thrill out of it. And anyway when bike week and one of these hillbillies said to me, “Can you bungie jump a Harley?” and I said “no problem”.

33:30 I just talked to Andy and Andy said, “Yeah, no problem” and it was scheduled for a certain time that day and we were going to have CNN [Cable News Network] over there and it would have been on American news that night, the bungie of and anyway they got their wires mixed and they had it programmed for the next day and we were due to do it today, so it never did get on national television there, not that occasion.

34:00 And anyway the fellow said to me, I went up with Andy, Andy and I went up, and we had him strapped in and I think about four Bungies I think, we attached to the bike and before we, he said, “Now boys”, he said, “If you kill me, me little lady might get you for a little bit” but he said, “She’s not a bad poor soul.” But he said, “If you scratch my bike,

34:30 I’m a bad bastard. Kill me, but don’t hurt me bike.” He was incredible. We said, “Do you still want to?” I said, “Yes, we won’t scratch your bloody bike” and we didn’t. Oh God they were great memories, different things then.

Just before we run out of time on this tape, just to make sure we have it, is there any sort of final word that you’d like to sum up the whole interview or the whole day?

35:00 Well I’m very thrilled to be part of this. The fact that my name may be there a hundred years from now in my wonderful Australia, it’s a terrific honour and I’m so thrilled to be here. My life has totally changed. I’ve been for,

35:30 I don’t know, probably from when I was thirty years of age, until I was seventy five, it was forty five years, I was wealthy, I had money, always had money, dripping out of me and when I came home, I came off the aircraft in a wheelchair because my knees were stuffed and I had this replaced. I should have

36:00 had them replaced years before but I didn’t, because Michael Cruise, a mate of mine, Taiwan, different story. It killed Michael, getting his knee replaced. And I was just about, took about a year, I was just about getting back on my feet and perhaps into business and I had a remote speed camera that I was developing. And then I got bowel cancer

36:30 and that put me on my back for, I had a bad infection after I,t and that more or less, I said, “That’s it, I haven’t got the energy or the knowledge”. And also I think one of my operations I said to my surgeon and we were talking and I said, “Mate once upon

37:00 a time I used to think that I was half smart, now I know I’m half bloody stupid” and my memory is not what it was and I’m aware of my restrictions. I’m very, very lucky. I have a wonderful lady, my darling

Marita. She and I, without

37:30 her it would be not a very good life for me, but with her, the fact that we're broke but we're happy, as simple as that. But it's been a good run, wouldn't swap it for quids.

38:00 When Marita and I were deciding to get together or not get together, she said to me, "Well you're twenty years older than I am and I don't want to be a widow very quickly, so you must start on 'Noni' juice" and I said "What's that?" So she produced it. She'd been five years before diagnosed with diabetes, and someone told her Noni juice and it had done wonderful things for her and I said, I looked at it and said, "Another jungle

38:30 juice but what the hell, she's worth it." So I said, "Yes". The first week that I took it, after the first night I, after two days, the second night, I sat on the edge of the bed and I coughed about six times during the night and got up, dreadful congestion, typical bed flu congestion. And the next morning I said, "I'm going over to see Wheeler", the doctor. She said, "What for?"

39:00 I said "I've got the bloody flu" and she said, "Oh yeah, got a temperature?" "No." "Sore throat?" "No." And she laughed and she said, "Noni juice is cleaning you out, you're lungs are full of rubbish, full of crap". That went on for four or five days. Now it's two years ago and I've never ever gone a winter without flu, two or three times, at least a couple of times. Mum's always said, "Max is a bronchial kid".

39:30 All my life I've been subject to flu's and cold and I haven't had one now for two years and it's all this stuff, Noni juice. It's nutrition, it's nutritional, I'm taking, we're taking, we live on it, every day we have our dose of 'Noni' and we're getting nutrition that is no longer in that we eat. The food we eat now is grown on chemicals, grown on herbicides, grown on insecticides, all

40:00 that rubbish which we didn't evolve on. That's my theory and I know I'm right. And so this is the reason why I've got good health and why I'm going to continue with good health and with, and if I'd found it ten years ago I think there's a good, big chance I wouldn't be, have a bag hanging off me today, I reckon it's a big chance, but we'll never know that. But all I know is that

40:30 Noni is good stuff and it's having a big influence on this our life, Noni juice and so I recommend it to you if you want to stay young and be beautiful and fit and healthy and it's nothing more than a juice, a fruit juice from a product, a plant known as 'Noni'.

41:00 So I'll give you some literature on it and if you decide to live a good healthy life I'd be happy to help you.