



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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Description	Francis William Dixon, Flight Lieutenant, Halifax Bomber pilot of 467 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), interviewed by Susan Green for the Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939-1945 Discusses enlistment; RAAF; Royal Air Force (RAF); No. 467 Squadron; casualties; training; navigators; Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS); leisure; stress; survival rates; morality of war; bombing raids; aircraft Manchester, Lancaster. Mentions Rostock, Duisburg, Ruhr, Germany; Somers, VIC; Mascot, NSW.

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TAPE IDENTIFICATION: THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK DIXON OF THE 467 SQUADRON. END OF IDENT.

First of all, could you tell us a little bit about your background...Where you came from? Your schooling? What your parents' occupation?

Yes, I was the son of a labouring man, working class people, who worked on the land or for farmers or for local shire councils in the central-west of NSW. Went to an ordinary public school at Eugowia. Later to Orange High School, but left school at the age of fourteen years in the 1930's depression because I was the eldest of six children and the exigencies of living meant that I had to go to work.

What did you go to work at then?

First of all, labouring for farmers around the district and later on spent a period working on a station out at Nyngan...sheep station, large area country.

One of many boys in the family or..?

Four boys and two girls of which I am the eldest. And they come in that order four boys first and two girls tailing the field.

Why did you chose to enlist in the RAAF?

A very good question! I've often wondered about it and other people have asked me. I think a latent deep down ambition to fly...a completely mysterious thing to me but also, a great reader through my youth and a little bit horrified by first world war stories about things little bayonets and what not, which I didn't want to be confronted with.

You'd read quite about the 'trench warfare '?

Oh yes, yes a lot of the history. Probably detail more than most.

What did you think that the RAAF was going to offer in contrast to that?

Well the RAAF offered as I said, a chance to participate in the unique sort of aspect of flying, which attracted me and secondly, it seemed to me to... not to be exposed, you had plenty of exposure to all sorts of danger perhaps but not that 'man to man, face to face, knee deep in mud confrontation with cold steel' which horrified me.

What age were you when you enlisted?

Twenty one, rather old by some people's standards.

And when did that take place?

In 1941. I was member of the CMF Light Horse Unit which I joined just before the war in 1938 and we had done a little bit of training after the beginning of the war, that trained became a bit more concentrated and we did things like ninety day camps at Wallgrove training still on horseback...still with horses. And I moved out from there and joined the air force in April 1941.

And on enlistment, did you see yourself as a pilot or...?

Oh yes, everybody in this man's air force was going to be a pilot and probably a fighter pilot and probably an air ace but it didn't quite work out that way of course.

But it did...well, you did become a pilot?

I had some confrontation with a categorization board. Your introduction to air crew training takes place on what's the ITS course numbers – which we are being identified at this re-union which we are holding at the moment – refer to the intake course where you were taken in as potential air crew. After two months of school room type activity there, you are categorized then as pilots, navigators, bomb aimers, air gunners. When you move from there to pilot training after two months again of pilot training, you are then re-categorized as a pilot for multi-engined operation, which is going to lead to bombers and flying boats and that type of thing or pilot for single engine operation which would lead mainly to fighter pilot.

(5.00) Can we move back to the initial categorization and what happen when you went through that selection process?

A board of five senior officers stand you up there and they ask a number of questions and of course they have the papers, the markings of your examination papers from your ground study in front of them, so I suppose they have some preconceived ideas about what they might be going to do with you. They ask a number of pertinent questions and I personally was very fearful that I could see myself being made a navigator. I was a top-line mathematics bloke and I'd done exceptionally well in the ground studies, in spite of the fact that I had very little schooling – I didn't have an intermediate certificate but I had studied for the job. I had applied to enlist initially and been rejected because an officer, a flight lieutenant whom fortunately – I don't remember his name because it would be embarrassing if I did – but he laughed at me and said, that he admired my spirit but I should go home and join the army or something, because I just didn't have what it took to make air crew.

What was that *thing* that he was inferring it took?

Well at least and intermediate high school certificate, at least some background in some sort of science subject, not labouring on the land, not being a top class horseman and such things which rumours said made the top-line pilots, anybody who was a good horseman was bound to be a good pilot and of course they...with the public service attitude, I call it, which reigns in the this world today, they had parameters which they used and depending on the personality of the people you were dealing with, they exercised them stringently or used a bit of discretion. But that fellow was very stringent and fortunately for me he laughed at me and just said facetiously kind of, that he admired by spirit, but he was afraid that I would be only disappointing myself and wasting the Air Force's time, so maybe I should go and think of getting into the war effort in some other way. But he did give me a little correspondence course which the air force had for people who wanted to 'bone up a bit' and I went home and I studied that. And I went to a private tutor and had him...and a couple friend of other friends of mine in a similar situation, had him school us as well and I went back in eighteen months which brings me up to the period I first mentioned, this all took place away back in 1940, very early in the war, but by April of 1941 I was back at Bradfield Park again, never went near that particular officer, but I went through the days routine and when the signature was on the dotted line and everything was done and the papers were being issued about my on going procession to Initial Training School, I went down the corridor and I found that bloke and I

went into his office and I told him that he was wrong and his judgement was crook because here I was and I had made it. And he was quite a decent bloke as it turned out because he got up from behind his desk and came and shook hands with me and congratulated me.
But, what I'm trying to tell you is that if that man hadn't laughed at me in the first place, I might never have made it...but you know, he didn't know me but I just happened to be that sort of bloke.

There must've been a fair amount of competition, did you consider that strongly when you went into the interview with people?

Yes. And coming back to your question about the category board. I thought that I could observe that they were tending towards possibly listing me as a navigator, and of course I was, as I've said earlier, I was one of many who thought that we were going to all be pilots and when they'd finished asking a lot questions, the senior officer said, "Now Dixon, is there anything else before you leave the room?" and I said, "Yes Sir there is, I've been reading the other day in the *Reader's Digest*, that any man in this world makes a much better job of something he really wants to do, than something that he's required to do" and he very sternly said, "That'll be all Dixon, thank you very much" and I went out the door thinking that I'd probably blown it and I'd be a navigator anyway, but next day when the list went up I was on the pilot's list...so I have no way of knowing to this day whether I threw them psychologically or whether I fluked them or not?...It doesn't matter, I made it.

What happened then? Where did you go for training?

I went from...that ITS course was at Somers in Victoria, down in the Mornington Peninsular, the whole course that'd gone down there had been sent down from NSW because they had the numbers in excess of their facilities, but I went back then to NSW and did my Elementary Flying Course on Tiger Moths at Mascot aerodrome, which was in those days a grass field.

How long were you at that?

I was at Mascot just about ready to graduate, we'd done our two month of initial training – which is just to get you airborne and self sufficient to fly yourself around in the simplest aeroplane that exists – when the Japanese entered the war in December 1941 and because of the confusion that that threw into the postings and planning we were required to do an extra month at Mascot. Now we idled away that month pretty largely, we did a few hours flying to keep ourselves up to whatever standard we'd reached. But, you must understand that the new course had arrived in and they were using the aeroplanes so, it became an overload situation and part of our extra war effort was taken up by filling sand bags on Brighton Beach to bomb proof the control tower at Mascot aerodrome you know, to keep us out of mischief mainly but...

(10.00) Not what you expected as a pilot?

Quite So...

Did it occur to you in this period when you were desperately trying to become accepted as a pilot, did you think about the fatalities and the mortality rate of pilots?

Not in any informed sense, no. Because number one; the information wasn't really available, such as we had later with percentage figures and things like that, nobody knew it. Secondly; I

think, I only suspect, that they would be unlikely to publish any unfavorable aspect of the figures anyway while they were busy trying to recruit people. And thirdly; because when you're twenty one...twenty and twenty one years of age, you don't worry a great deal about those sorts of things anyway. You know, it happens...it's no different to today...those sort of things happen to other people, you know...generally.

Well, switching back to Brighton and filling sand bags, what happened then? I mean, where did you go when you finished your month there?

Mascot. The intention at that stage was to send us to Canada for the next stage, Service Flying Training School in the Empire Air Training Scheme, but the Japanese war had created confusion in Pacific transport and during the extra month we were there, the plans had to be re-vamped and I was sent up to Bundaberg in Queensland to do four months up there on Avro Ansons which is the Service Flying Training Course after two months of which, you qualified for your wings, you actually become a pilot two months through that four months course.

During that training, did many accidents occur?

Yes, some. There were accidents all the time. We were fairly fortunate on the courses that I was on. But, I remember one fatal accident in Tiger Moths at Mascot and two fatal ones and a third one where the pilot was fortunate and got out quite unscathed in Anson's at Bundaberg, over the period of four months.

How did those accidents effect you?

Not at all as I remember it, except perhaps to teach a lesson in regard to whatever the error may have been considered to be and therefore we got a bit of extra instruction on it, so it was inclined more to give you an extra bit of confidence that you had the knowledge of overcoming at least one or two of the things that might be likely to happen to you if you hadn't been there. But there's no tendency to think that this is a dreadful situation or whatnot it's, as I said a while ago – it's accepted by people of that age in a war situation that, that's going to happen anyway.

And at that time, do you become very close with the people that you were going through the course with?

Pilot trainees and I imagine trainees in other categories are very much individuals in their actual work. There's no team spirit at that time developing, except perhaps a little bit between you and your instructor who is developing the same relationship with half a dozen other people on the same course. But there's not...you make friendships, in an ordinary casual sort of way, some of which have survived right through to this day, but there's not any building of teams because everyone training on that course was training to be an individual pilot and they knew they weren't going to be working together. Not the same as you run into later on when you make teams of men who are fighting together, there's an entirely different thing that happens later on.

Were you confident with the ability of your instructors there?

Oh very much so. You quickly come to admire you instructor and I don't know many cases...I know one or two cases, where people have claimed that their instructor was a bit ham-fisted and wasn't quite doing the right thing by them, but in most cases we evaluated that as some ham-fisted bloke looking for somebody to blame because he wasn't as good as he'd like to be

anyway. You very quickly came to admire your instructor because they did have capabilities which you didn't have and you couldn't but work to achieve some kind sort of equality with them.

And when you graduated, what did you graduate as? What was you rank?

You did all the training I've mentioned thus far as an LAC, you go into that ITS course as an AC2, which was the lowest form of life in any man's air force, aircraftsman second class. When we left Somers, we went to Mascot and we became leading aircraftsmen which is the equivalent to the first class private, which are generally understood by people, but when we got our wings and graduated from our Service Flying Training, we graduated as sergeant pilots in the most case, I think out of fifty of us at Bundaberg, six trainees were selected and received immediate commissions, they became pilot officers straight away...but just a sprinkling.

Were they people quite outstanding in the course?

They were chosen believe, I'm not sure that I...

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....I'm not sure that I know exactly what criterion might have been used to select the people for commissions, because you have to remember that, all the pilot trainees were destined, especially multi-engine pilot trainees were destined one day to be crew leaders anyway, but they might've been chosen for a little bit more than average ability of leadership or the possibility of directing and guiding men or groups of people similar to themselves. Probably behavioural patterns, manners and address and so on might've come into it and you know, the son of a labouring man from the bush might not have been due for consideration anyway. But again later in the war we might've confounded them on that one.

Was there any feeling about that? That this mixture of people that were there all being trained for the same purpose, but that some people might be selected for their better speech?

There were a few people, as there always are, who said, "Ah, well there's bound to be a few 'silver tails' amongst the mob anyway and they'll probably get the commission". But, I don't believe that the air force above any service was quite based on that. I think that they looked more level headed ahead for the critical situations that might arise and it was ability that was their main concern. I never had any jealousy about the blokes who were ordered immediate commissions, I think they probably deserved them and certainly, we thought well maybe it contained a bit more responsibility so it gave us a bit more time to settle in.

What were you qualified as? What type pilot did you qualify as?

Well the category in that stage, which I've mentioned already was multi-engined, now that gave you an open sort of book, you might've been sent on to a Hudson, you might've been sent on to things like Beaufighter you might've flown Whitley or Beaufort Bombers but ultimately it grew with the growth of aircraft in the war to the big four engined types like Sunderlands, which they had at that time and Stirlings, Halifaxes and Lancasters which came along progressively during the war so that the multi-engine pilot ultimately, lead to those big four engined heavy bombers that worked hard in Europe.

And the commissioned officers of that group, were they streamed more perhaps to the single engine planes?

No. no. The catagorization that I mentioned earlier, took place at your Elementary Flying School. All of the trainees at that Service Flying Training School were destined for multi-engined service. The single engined people had broken off and gone to a separate school where single engined operation was being taught, we were already in training for multi-engined operation.

Was there a certain ranking, in terms of the status, of what type of pilot you came out as or that you were sent in to be trained as? Was it preferable to be a bomber pilot or a fighter pilot or a transport pilot?

Transport pilots weren't generally to my knowledge classified anyway, they were taken out of the pool of multi-engined trainees. There was a general desire, which I think I've mentioned already, for everybody who was classified as a pilot to want to be a fighter pilot, but once he'd faced his second category board and he knew he was destined for multi-engined operation, that was it, you accepted your fate.
There was a tendency I think, for people to perhaps think that the fighter pilot was a slightly more glamorous occupation, an independent character doing his own thing, but the war established, as time progressed that each had its place in the business and it would be very hard for anybody to make in comparison as to the relative importance or glamour associated with either.

(20.00) On graduation from that course, where were you posted to?

Overseas service. Posted to Bradfield Park in Sydney which was an embarkation depot and spent about a month there twiddling our thumbs, waiting for a ship and ultimately went through New Zealand on the *Cape Town Castle* and through the Panama Canal to England. Solo shipping all around the Pacific and through the Panama Canal and up to Halifax in Nova Scotia where we fell into a big wartime convoy that took eight days to go across the Atlantic in a group of about forty odd ships, I believe.

How were you feeling about the whole process of this? I mean, as you were getting closer and closer to the war-zone did you feel some trepidation about what you were heading into? Or were you still looking forward to it, excited?

I think always looking forward to it. I'm not sure that there was a lot of excitement. There was a keenness to get there and to get into it but there was still a certain amount on uncertainty as to what sort of aircraft you might ultimately get onto, and a natural desire to try and get onto the bigger and better ones, but trepidation, I don't think so, in very very few cases perhaps, but no...nobody thought of the risk involved very much, or if they thought about it, they accepted it as such.

Where were you taken to when you arrived in the UK?

We were taken to Bournemouth, which is a holiday resort and billeted in large blocks of flats there, just for a shakedown period of just a few days and then we went to...being at that stage about seven to nine weeks out of the air, we went and did what was called 'refresher courses'. The English air force, the RAF did not have in service for training command the Avro Lancaster which we'd used at Bundaberg so they put us onto SB-Docksons, which were a little twin engined training aeroplane as near to corresponding to the Anson, just to do a quick

'refresher course'.
I went to a place near Bristol in south-west England with the name which a lot of English places have which used to amaze us and intrigue us, a place called Lollsgate Bottom and just did that few weeks there and then was posted right up to Kinloss in the north of Scotland, Moray Shire right up where the step is in the Scottish continent, in I think, October of 1942, just when the winter was settling in and there of course was one of the key points of development of our operation, because it was at Operational Training Unit – OTU – where you became, not just all single pilots training, but you started to form a crew at the start of five men, a navigator, a bomb aimer, a wireless operator and a rear gunner and a pilot. Now, you put yourselves together as much as possible, during a period of about ten days of ground school classroom type study that you did there before you started to fly. Anybody who had not got themselves together into a crew by volunteer processes, would then have the odd and sods detailed at the end to round the crews out.

What did you go looking for when went scouting for a crew?

I'm not sure that a lot of clear thought was given to it except that everybody wanted the best navigator they could find and everybody wanted the best bomb aimer they could find and so on. But it didn't quite happen like that, I had a very very good navigator, and I'm very grateful for the fact. But, that navigator and I teamed up and formed the nucleus of our ultimate crew, by the shear circumstances of the fact that we were namesakes, he a member of the RAF and me a member of the RAAF, his name spelt differently to mine. But the roll call procedure in such courses was that your name would called and the last three numbers of your serial number would be called, you were require to take a place forward on the calling of your name and being smart and keen and trying to put on a show I suppose, we both stepped out with about five men between us, when the name was called and then when the last three digits of the number was called I had to step back, but then I was the very next one who had to step out anyway so, during this process we had a good look at each other and he'd seen wings on my chest and I saw a navigator's breve on his chest, so when the parade was finished, we went and introduced ourselves and that was the foundation of how we decided a crew up. Now that process spreads, because during his navigation training, and during my pilot training we had formed friendships with fellows of our own, so it's not very long before I'm introducing him to my pilot friend in the course and it's not very long then, before he's introducing his navigator friend from his course to my pilot friend and we formed two crews there, out of the ten people concerned, eight of them were four pairs of mates from training courses and only the two rear gunners were chaps who didn't know each other before the formation of those crews, so we became a 'twin' sort of pair of crews, if you know what I mean?

(25.00) The crews usually started the nucleus of the pilot and the navigator?

No. No, that happened just by that circumstance that I talked about, there might of been somebody else in those...there were fifty of each of those categories posted to that base, all unknown to each other. There might just as easily been two namesakes that had the same experience that I had and one of them might have been a rear gunner and a pilot and they might've started from that nucleus...that was just pure circumstance.

But the pilot had the edge in terms of approach

Well the pilot was going to be the crew leader and the pilot was generally recruiting. The other fellows were sort of available for selection, if you'd like to put it that way, they weren't

restricted to that, there were plenty of navigators who boned a likely looking bloke and said, "Have you got a navigator, because I'm looking for a pilot?" But, the process I think, was a little bit instigated or loaded a bit heavily in favour of pilot instigation because he was going to be crew captain.

What type of nationalities did you have included in your crew?

All of my crew, those four that I talked about there and two later ones that I got when I got into bigger and multi-engined aircraft were all RAF Englishmen.

You were the only Australian?

I was the only Australian in the crew.

What about the...at that station how many nationalities were there? Was there a big mixture?

Quite a mixture, but the mixture would be generally, roughly in proportion I suppose, to the overall mixture and I would think that more than half of the people at that posting of two hundred and fifty people would've been RAF...English people. Thirty two I think, were Australians out of two hundred and fifty and I think, that there would've been forty or fifty or sixty Canadians a few South Africans, a couple of Rhodesians, one or two West Indians...a general mix of people...one Indian, I remember in that group. And I suppose those percentages would be general throughout the whole of the Empire Air Training Scheme. The only thing that does stand out and goes right through the war is that, of those Australians on that course, the majority of them were pilots, so that a lot of Australians finished up as crew captains of Canadian or particularly RAF, English crew members.

How did you find it for yourself, being away from home in a very multi-cultural sor of set up? Did you find that difficult to cope with?

Not really and I was very fortunate in my background you see, I told you already I think, that I went to work at the age of fourteen years in the bush and I worked on properties amongst gangs of men. I was away from home from the age of fifteen, working away from home and going back to that second categorization that I mentioned a while ago about whether you were going to be...you were categorized as a pilot but there was still a debate as to whether your were going to be a single-engined or a multi-engined pilot. I remember being very irate with the officer who suggested that I was naturally going to be a multi-engined pilot and I tried to be a single-engined pilot but he talked me out of it and he was reasonable, because he said, "Look, you've been working for seven years in the work force, you're used to mixing with men and whatnot and your going to be the captain of a crew of five of six or seven or eight men and we want somebody who has some experience of this world, both in a working life and mixing with people". And I thought afterwards, "Well, that old bloke knew what he was talking about" But at the time he wasn't popular with me because, I still wanted to be a fighter pilot. And in the process he told me I was too old at twenty one anyway, for fighters and I thought it was a terrible thing to be too old for anything at twenty one.

Having got your crew together, where did you go from there?

We spent some time there in what's called Operational Training and then we were posted to Waddington in the Midlands where we were listed to go on to Lancasters.

Could I just interrupt, and I'll just go back there a moment, In training with your crew members, how much training did you get as a crew?

At our Operational Training Unit, altogether I think, just about seven weeks of flying, we were there something over eight weeks altogether and as I said, there was a period of classroom things...about seven weeks of actual flying. I can't remember the hours but I'd imagine...seventy hours probably.

Was there a distinct progression from getting up there together and being a motley group and then actually working as a team? Did you see that coming together in that seven weeks?

Yes, there's a little bit of shaking down in the first case because you don't know what you've got. But I learned on my very first trip that I had...I was fortunate to have, a very very good navigator and that was the first thing that we had to learn anyway because up to that point we weren't interested in dropping bombs physically on the enemy and we weren't interested in defending ourselves against enemy action, so the other crew members weren't at that stage being

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BEGIN TAPE 1 SIDE B

...We weren't interested in defending ourselves against enemy action, so the other crew members weren't at that stage being assessed, with the slight exception probably of the wireless operator who's a communications expert anyway and he proved to be very good at his job so I was entirely happy at that point, with a good navigator and an efficient and good wireless operator.

REEL THREE OF AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK DIXON OF 467 SQUADRON. END OF IDENT.

Where were you posted to then?

We were posted to Waddington, which was down in 5 Group Bomber Command in the Midlands of England but unfortunately at this stage, the Training Command had got ahead of the supply of aeroplanes and there was a delay period, so we were re-posted out back to another OTU detachment which was based at St Eval, down on Land's End, and we spent a month down there in old Whitley?? Bombers, twin-engined, slow old bombers that had long been taken out of active service against the enemy, doing ten hour day trips in the Bay of Biscay looking for submarines, we never found any but, we believed that a useful purpose service was being served by at lest keeping them under the water and slowing them down. We were serving there alongside of American Liberator squadrons doing the same job. We then went back and still waiting a couple of weeks for an aircraft we were sent to a 'battle course' it was called, it was the sort of thing that they put on periodically for...to boost and lift the physical fitness of the people who'd been kicking around for a couple of years at that stage in the service and some of them had got a bit slack and so on so we went and did these things called a 'battle course', which was a great sort of physical toning up...just for a fortnight. And then I was posted, first of all to 1661 Conversion Unit which was at Newark?? in the Midlands where I flew first of all Manchesters, which was an early twin-engined aeroplane similar to the Lancaster, which a Lancaster had been based on, built by the same company and designed by the same designer. It was used purely and simply as a

progression...a step of progression from twin engine aircraft, to the four-engined Lancaster because it had the size and weight similar to the Lancaster so you learned to handle that bulk before you then went through the process of learning to handle four motors instead of two, which had been your previous experience.

Now this was all non-operational?

All non-operational. Sometimes, you did useful things in training. Search light batteries in the defence forces around England sometimes had to co-ordinate and calibrate their instruments, so we would go out and do a night cross-country exercise into the North Sea and come back and pretend to be enemy aircraft raiding England, so that the search lights could get training and practice and anti-aircraft people could get training and practice. But we had no actual contact with the enemy, except the few cases where attacking aircraft invaded England and had one or two strafing incidences you know, on the bases where we were but never any direct enemy action in which we were involved as flying personnel.

At this point, did you know of any loses among the people that been on the course with you? Had any of these gone into action and been killed?

Yes, we knew of some. We knew a few of our mates who'd moved just a little bit more smartly through the system and especially some of the 'singles' people, people who'd been classified off that initial course that I mentioned and categorized for single-engined operation, because of the more concentrated effort of their training and the fact that they didn't have bombing and gunnery and turret gunnery to learn, they progressed through the system more quickly and some of those were in action and there were some losses amongst...and the word used to pass that...you know, ..."Charlie Jones bought it the other day" you know, and that went around but that was I think, by and large an accepted part of the system. We understood by then that that was going to happen anyway and...but it wasn't...it was only going to happen to 'Charlie Jones' it wasn't going to happen to us, you know...that attitude still prevailed, I think.

Was it particularly frustrating though, that you were still in a training set up in terms of moving from one plane to another and you weren't out there in the action?

I don't think particularly frustrating, there may have been some frustrations but in the multi-engined case, it meant, number one; that the slower we moved through system the better aeroplanes we were going to get and everybody and his dog knew that Lancasters were...they were flat out building as many as they could but they weren't keeping up with the demand. So if we'd got through too quickly we were going finish up on something which wasn't the top of the pack. Secondly; you are so busy and there's such a mass of material in which you are undergoing study and training and whatnot, that you are plenty busy enough and you can't sort of think of doing it that much quicker anyway, because the one thing that you have I believe, is no tendency, very very rare would it be a tendency for anybody to be a 'slacker', because he knew that he had to do this job thoroughly if he was going to do it at all and survive, so the training was a serious business although it wasn't active service and it was chock-a-block full of detail and hard work and therefore I don't think there was any boredom or frustration, really.

How did you spend your leaves?

Oh! Kicking up our heels. I look back on the world that I travelled around at the expense of the taxpayer and think about the places that I might've gone and the things that I might've seen but we were too busy. You see, went to the pub and you had a few beers, you talked about flying on your days off and you went to dance hall were there were beautiful young English lasses and you danced with them and you shot a line of bull and so on. And only years later when somebody asked what you thought of such and such a portion of St Pauls Cathedral, you have to admit that you didn't bother to go see and it...but that's a fact of life,I think. As a matter of fact we thought that one or two people who were far more sensible than us and went to the trouble to do that, we thought they were 'squares'.

Did you find that you integrated fairly well into the say, local English life, that you met local families?

Yes. yes very well. Well,I was fortunate because I've already told you, I had a full English crew and therefore I had an entry and I became 'a family member' of the home of my navigator and another home of his aunt who had a little country pub in a village called Nettlebird in Oxfordshire and there we used to go for leaves and kick up our heels, but I was a member of the family and it was great!
I would think that there were some cases where people had a little bit of difficulty with integration and I would think that happened perhaps more with the single-engined blokes because you didn't have the cross-connections.

What about girls? Did the men tend to get serious in their relationships, or was it very much 'a one night stand'?

There was a general belief I think, that this was no time to be forming any sort of permanent relationships. But, it's the sort of thing that people don't control anyway and it did happen. But no, I think it was a general desire to keep it as casual and I think the girls were very intelligent because they understood that..."Your going to be posted out tomorrow and I'm going to be still here".

So there was a reticence or...?

Ohhh... a feeling of temporary..."Now is when we live, but don't let's get too involved". But you know, there were variations of that of course.

When did you go into operations then?

I did that battle course which I referred to a while ago and the conversion unit and then I was sent to 467 Squadron at Botterford near Nottingham in the Midlands and started flying I think, somewhere about the end of March, to Germany. First trip to Germany...

That is where you joined the Squadron...?

467... "Now you're finished with training command and now you've got to earn your pay". That's what they told us. And they also told us about the thousands and thousands of pounds sterling that had been spent on our training and we'd better justify it you know, that sort of 'pep talk'.

(10.00) And did you hear about the thousands of people that were being killed in the air force... hundreds however many? Was that there as well?

You heard about it all the time but as I said, fortunately two things, you were young and inclined to ignore it and you were inclined to think it wasn't going to happen to you anyway plus the fact that you were fortunately kept very busy and didn't have time to dwell on it. It wasn't a major concern, it was certainly no...there was no weakness in morale...morale I think, got higher and higher and higher the closer you got to the war. There was no set back or trepidation creeping in.

I'm sorry I interrupted you a moment ago and you were going to talk about your first flight...first operational flight?

You've done Operational Training Unit you've done flights, simulated bombing raids where you went up to the Shetland Islands and played around and whatnot but you knew nobody was going to shoot at you. So that the pilot being the commander of the thing, they found it expedient to put him as a supernumerary, extra bod in another operational crew that was experienced and let him do one trip as an observer of what goes on. Occasionally they did that with other members of the crew but only as perhaps a navigator might be sick or something in the crew over there, so while I was doing my introductory flight, they might use my navigator to fill out that crew for the night, but with the pilot, who was sort crew captain, they made it a regular, standard procedure. And I did one trip way up in the Baltic to a place called Stettin, with another crew where I was purely and simply an observer. And I just thought, that there was no way that you could possibly fly an aeroplane through all that stuff that you could see bursting out there and there was no way in all that darkness that the best navigator in the world was ever going to find the target and you begin to wonder what you were really there for. But again that only comes into your mind, or I think it came into my mind, for the simple reason that you're sitting there doing nothing, the moment that you get back to the normal operation, where everybody is fully occupied with his job, all that sort of thinking disappears...goes right out.

What was it like? I mean, what were you going through? What was the mission on that particular trip?

I don't remember what the target was, in detail as to what we were setting to destroy but it was probably at Rostock, I think it was probably an attack on shipping...German shipping or a harbourside installation of some kind. And what goes on of course is that, as you cross the coast of Denmark in and out back into the Baltic Sea and across the Baltic Sea you've got little ships belonging to the Germans with all sorts of guns on them that their throwing all sorts of stuff at you and when you get close to the target area, which is a very well defended area, they a hell of a lot of stuff at you and it's very much in the lap of the Gods, whether they hit you or not. And at that stage in 1943 that was the beginning March and April 1943, I think was the beginning of what we call the 'six percent loss period' six percent of the aeroplanes that flew to Germany were going to be shot down on an average, sometimes it was only three percent but sometimes it was eight percent or nine percent. So, that was the odds and everybody accepted it and didn't worry too much about it.

Your tour of operations was going to be thirty trips and you didn't have to be a fancy mathematician to work at that if you lost six percent every night for thirty nights, that you had about two to one against your chance of surviving. But you built your attitude on the fact that, a terrible lot of crews went in the first few trips and terrible lot of crews finished the thirty trips, so you knew which group you wanted to belong to and you didn't worry about that too much either.

Was it a particularly risky squadron to be in, in terms of those particular figures. I mean the six percent I guess was for all...overall?

Overall average of Bomber Command and I would like to think, and I've never seen it broken up, but I would like to think that 5 Group and I would like to think that the Lancaster Squadron particularly would be on the lower side of the percentage. Number one; we still had Wellington Bombers flying at around 16, 17, 18,000 feet, we had Sterlings at about the same height or a little bit higher, four engined aeroplanes, we had Halifaxes around 20,000 to 22,000 feet and we had Lancasters at about 23,000 or 24,000 feet, all of those levels that I've mentioned can be varied from raid to raid and circumstance to circumstance, but that was just a general idea of what they did. So that fighters to come up and intercept you, had to come through a lot of other people to get up to Lancasters. Gunners on the ground are naturally going to shoot at the closest and probably what they think are the easiest targets,so I would believe, I've never seen it analysed but I would believe that the Lancasters particularly and perhaps Halifaxes as well, would be below the average of losses in percentage.

THIS IS REEL 4 OF AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK DIXON OF THE 467 SQUADRON. END OF IDENT.

(15.00) Did that trip, that you took as an observer pilot, make you particularly nervous on your first flight on your own?

I don't recollect it as having done so. I was particularly tense throughout that particular flight but as I've said already I think, mainly because I had no occupation. The moment that you set off on your first actual operational flight, you've not only got your routine job to do, which you are checking and double checking that you do everything right, because it is your first but you've got the supervisory sort of responsibility of the rest of your crew and it's their first effort more so than yours, because most of them haven't had the advantage of that observation trip. So you are very very busy contacting and checking with them and making sure that they are aware of what they should be doing and make sure that they are doing it and if they have any queries and problems that you are hearing about them.

And what was that first trip for you, when you were piloting your own craft? Where did you go?

I went to Duisburg in the Ruhre, which is the very big industrial complex on the west of Germany on the Rhine River a short trip compared with the other one but, very very heavily defended area.

Could you describe that trip? How many planes went with you? And what sort of fighter...what sort of protection did you have? Could you just give us an outline of how that whole trip took place?

I can't be precise about the number of aircraft engaged from memory but I would suggest it would be in the order of five or six hundred. The defences are very heavy but you have been well briefed and you know all about them and as I've said, because of your level of `busyness' you are not really concerned, you don't have time to be shaking in your shoes or fiddling around worrying about what you should be doing, you're too busy doing the best you can. Fortunately in my case everything went according to plan, I think that a bit of panic might've ensued if you found yourself getting off course in the early stages or something, but we were fortunate and we didn't do so. And we did a very good job and we bombed the target and...you see, your aeroplane is equipped with a camera which takes a photograph twenty odd

seconds after you drop the bombs which roughly photographs the point of impact and we bombed our target and that was sort of satisfactory. As regards defences or what's attacking you, you are very largely protected and that was the nature of our operation by the darkness, we did all those operations in darkness. We were the British bombers, the heavy bombers carried large loads of bombs, they didn't carry large loads of ammunition and for that reason they had to fly in darkness to get what level of protection they could. The Germans for the same reasons put up stacks of search lights, but they had to find you, they had to focus on you and then they had to hit you after they'd found you so, darkness was our best protection.

You felt pretty confident about that? That you were able to evade those spot lights?

Well you can't do a lot about evading. You take evasive action and if you're quick when the first one hits you, you can't get out of it fairly quickly because he's got to wait until you move before he knows which way you're going and so on, but you've got a stream of aircraft coming in great concentration so you can't go running around in circles and that sort of thing, because you run into your mates. So what you do is slide off to the right or left or you go up a bit or down a bit, but you keep your general direction and your general activity.
We had a process which was called weaving, we went about fifteen degrees to the left and you climbed a bit and the you rolled over to the right and you went about fifteen degrees to right and you descended as you went there, but you kept doing that in some equal balance, not in a regular equal balance because then the smart bloke would predict your mean, that you did thirty seconds to the left this time and forty five seconds to the right and then forty five seconds to the left and then thirty seconds to the right and roughly maintain a balance, but not in any regular pattern.

But you were flying in formation, so how?

Not in formation. All the night bombers flew to the target's independently, but they had the same points of navigation and so on, so they became a large loose tube of aeroplanes proceeding through the air, but not flying in any formal formation such as you understand, it' s just not achievable in those circumstance. No lights showing, you couldn't possibly do it.

What was the scene, when you'd get there?

The scene at the Ruhr was a crescent of search lights and gun flashes around the western side of the whole Ruhr which slowly comes into activity. The search lights come up and build almost a wall against from the ground up to 20,000 or 25,000 feet and then when the bombing starts, the flashes, the bomb-bursts start going off and the whole thing becomes illuminated, very bright, you've seen pictures no doubt..everybody has seen pictures of what it looks like and they are generally pretty representative. But as I've said already, you're not really evaluating that I mean, you might be saying, "Boy! She's a big burn tonight, and we seem to be spot on, because we've created a big fire" but you don't really have a great concept of the enormity of the thing, you get that afterwards when it's evaluated and analyzed and so on but you don't get it at the time, except that it's just a huge mass of fire. One of the lasting impressions that I have, is that when you look ahead at your own level you see from 2,000 or 3,000 feet below to 2,000 or 3,000 feet above, you see the little smoke puffs which are the bursting anti-aircraft shells and they seem to form a layer in the sky and you think, "Well, there's not many gaps there and I wonder how the hell I'm going to get through it". But of course what you realize very quickly is that they're foreshortened by distance so the ones that

you're seeing side by side are not necessarily that, so there are some gaps. Actually there were gaps for as I said, for about ninety four percent of the number.

(20.00) What about the noise? What was the noise that you'd hear?

You don't hear bombs exploding. You hear the noise only of your own aeroplane, you've got 5,000 horse power in four big Merlins there screaming at you and you don't hear much else except anti-aircraft shells when they get close to you. And when they get close enough to hear, it's time to do something about it because they're pretty close. You only hear them on times when you probably get a few holes and what not because they have to be that close before you can hear them in the air.

When would be the times where tension would rise? Was it just before you go in to drop the bombs?

The target. Right on the target. Because the weaving that I mentioned, whether it protected you or not, you felt as though it was protecting you. But for the bomb aimer to correctly drop his bombs when the target got in front of his bomb site you had to settle down and fly a steady, straight, level course, not deviating left or right, until the target came down through the parallel wires of his bomb sight to where he had a red line which said "press the button" and let them go. Now for that period which might be anything up to twenty five to thirty second, you felt as though you were a sitting duck in mid air because you're sitting still and the moment that the bombs are gone you violently break that up, so that you confuse anybody who might have been sighting. As soon as you've dropped the bombs you fly into evasive action because you've been straight and level for so long, to confuse anybody who might be taking sight on you, but you must again get back to that straight and level condition and pointing in exactly the same direction, twenty five seconds or so later because your camera is going to flash and you need to be in that correct position to take the picture, you don't want to be banked over to the right and shooting the camera taking a shot away out to the left which is not going to have the target in it at all, but you make that quick evasive action.

And then its just...get home as fast as you can?

Oh no, you have patterns exit, the same as you had pattern...you don't fly from England direct to a target in Germany and drop bombs on it, you go in until the very last minute you're probably trying to pretend that you're going to Berlin , when you're going to the Ruhr then you suddenly turn and fly south and a whole lot of defences up there ahead of you have wasted a lot of manpower and effort to get up there and meet you in the sky where you're not going to go. Now you do the same sort of thing on the way home, you continue south of the target for a while so that you don't turn around and run into incoming aeroplanes and you go out over the coastline and through known defended areas at the best known, least defended sort of concentration, so that you've got the greatest chance of making it safely.

What was the atmosphere like inside that aircraft as you went out to the target? Not just before, but as you left...from the time you left England? Was it a feeling of just setting to and getting down to business or was there joking going on?

No. No activity. No jocular activity at all in most cases. I know a few people who indulged in it but, it really only was demonstrating an excess of nervousness in some cases. But the fact is, you don't want a bloke telling a story on the intercom unit at the very time when your front gunner bombs up and said, "He's a Jerry kite coming in on a starboard bow" That airway

needs to be clear so that no extraneous talking and so on was generally indulged in. Only essential communication and that gives you a quietness which I think enhances the total feeling of tension, expectation, you know. Everybody is up very tight but a little bit of conversation occasionally if a gunner is having trouble with a turret or with a gun, he might want to explain, that he's got this problem and he might want permission to fire a short burst to keep his gun warm or something like that.

(25.00) Can you remember what you thought about at those times? Did you think about home? Or life back in England?

You don't imagine that you're on a holiday cruise, you've four engines there you're looking at oil temperature, oil pressure gauges, you're watching your air speed, you're watching your compass, as I've said before in relation to training, you are pretty fully occupied within the capabilities of a man, you don't have time for cogitating, certainly not thinking of home and you know, any idle thought.

Did you reflect at all on what was happening at the target? There must've been at time when you were set to bomb civilian areas, did that effect you?

Not in any sense that it inhibited you, but there was a consciousness. There was a consciousness that you might be dropping those bombs and they might be landing on a machine shop or they might be landing on a dock or they might be landing on a suburban street. That consciousness existed but it was sort of looked upon as the risk of war, the exigencies of war and the luck of the game.

We had an English RAF officer who was an intelligence officer, who used to brief us and de-brief us on collecting intelligence from what reports we could give him. And he seemed, he inherited the nick name of 'Blood and Guts' because he asked a lot of questions about these sorts of things and we thought that he showed rather too much interest in that sort of thing and on one occasion, he is on record as having said in the briefing room that, "That is your target boys and it's a river valley and it's a highly industrialized area"...and this is a place called Mulheim in the Ruhr, where we copped quite a lot of damage but, he said in the briefing room that, "That is your flying direction and that's the target, the main target but should you find yourself off to the left a little bit or to the right a little bit maintain that same heading, because you will still do a useful job for the war, because 500,000 workers live on the slopes of that valley, left and right of the industrial centre". So you were fighting a war to defeat the Germans, and if you couldn't destroy their workshop, you sort of thought well, second best was to destroy the engineer that might operate that workshop tomorrow, you know.

What was the reaction in the briefing or the briefing room when that chap said that?

None that I remember particularly, except that I think that's where his nickname was born.

It didn't...it wasn't a case of people suddenly being bought to face the seriousness of it and what was happening down there?

Oh no, you were generally aware of the potential for that sort of thing anyway and no, I don't remember any particular reaction, but I really think that was the birth of his nickname and you know, people have talked about it afterwards...people who were present and sort of said, well you know, "It's a pity but..."

You mentioned the statistic 6% who would be eliminated, who would be shot out...

Six percent of aeroplanes would be eliminated in the attack. Now I'm one of those myself who was ultimately a victim but, I don't know again what percentage, but a large percentage of the personnel in those aircraft parachuted and became prisoners of war, they weren't eliminated in a 'wipe out' sense.

Was there any thought at that time, that the lives of these young men were being used rather extravagantly in this war? That they were being sent out and it was inevitable in a sense if you stayed there and went up often enough that you were probably going to get shot down?

Yes it was accepted but there was no great thought about it. Because it was already accepted mentally by the population of not only ourselves but the countries as a whole, that that was the price we were paying for a war that we believed in. I mean, you can moralize and get into the political discussions about whether or not the war was ever justified, whether or not it ever achieved anything anyway but...at that time that wasn't a matter under consideration, the decision was made by people beyond our control and we were doing what we saw as our bit of it. I've never suffered as a matter of fact any great sort of personal recrimination about that fact, because I just look on it as having been beyond my control anyway.

Was there a sense though, that perhaps the Australian government was not taking a big enough part in what was happening to their countrymen fighting overseas under a foreign command?

Again it's politics and there was very little sense. We took note of the time of the battles that went on between Australian leaders and people like Winston Churchill about the..

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...there was very little sense, we took note of the time of the battles that went on between Australian leaders and people like Winston Churchill about the allocation of Australian servicemen in overseas situations. And there may have been some validity in some of the objections that were raised. But in the case of the air force there was very little validity because Australia didn't have the equipment to employ people like ourselves in any useful way if we weren't working under the umbrella of the the RAF anyway, so that it never really exercised our minds much at all. I know it exercised the minds of some of our army people because they could have just as well have been fighting at home as overseas or closer to home or where the threat was foreseen. But, they have to remember there also that that threat wasn't foreseen at the time that they were committed in the Middle East, it only happened afterwards and you know...but that's politics and philosophizing and a lot of people can be very clever with a bit of hindsight. (car noise) But the planning had to be done from the front.

Could you say that again because of that car? "The planning..."

The planning had to be done from the front. I think that you can be much wiser...

THIS IS REEL 5 OF AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK DIXON OF 467 SQUADRON. END OF IDENT.

Were there any thoughts about the effectiveness of what you were doing? Whether you were actually doing anything that was helping the war to end?

We were pretty well briefed on the aims and objects of what we were about and for instance, trips to the Ruher which we did a lot of, were aim at the big machine shops there and they were aimed at component parts of submarines they were aimed at component parts of tanks and the general conception of the whole idea was that you were destroying manufacturing potential and maintenance potential so that you were reducing the apposing war effort. Effectiveness in that sense, yes. As to how effective it was, of course...we'll never know.

I suppose the effectiveness there though might be tied up with also the corresponding loss of life of the pilots that were being sent up and who were being shot down and whether things were moving along fast enough, whether you questioned that at all?

I don't think anybody ran even a mental balance sheet. I think that again, it was left to the planning authorities to consider whether value was being received for the sacrifice or not but it wasn't our concern and we didn't worry greatly about it.

Did you see among your fellow pilots and fellow crew members, a development of stress that got worse as they made more and more flights?

Not generally observable. There were one or two cases of people who became observably up a bit too tight. I know of one case where a man was taken off the operation because it was getting to his nerves. But it was very scarcely evident, you know you didn't observe a lot of it. We had a pact in our own crew that we would come forward if we thought we could observe that in one another and we never had to live that pact out we never had the occasion.

You actually agreed among yourselves?

We *talked* about it you see and we said, "What happens if one of us is not man enough to take it when something particular happens? What do we do about it?" My navigator was a very intelligent man, was the man who said, "Well we ought to be able to look and if one of us is getting up too tight we ought to be able to taught about it in advance, perhaps as a warning to him or an appreciation of it by the rest of us" and we had that pact but we never used it.

Did you see cases where crew members distrusted their pilots? It obviously was a very strong thing that there was this inter-dependence of crew members.

Not really...not really, the way to get your nose bloodied was to criticize some other fellows pilot because he would sort of probably maintain the right to criticize him himself but you couldn't do it. So generally I think that crews were pretty cohesive and pretty faithful to their own group and particularly to their leadership. Because it must be understood all the crew very largely were known by the pilot's name.

(5.00) You referred to one person that you knew who was taken off duty because of signs of stress, what was the general feeling among other men about that chap? Was it sympathy or...?

Sympathetic, but it didn't get much attention. I mean, the man was gone from the base before we knew what had happened until somebody said, "What happened to so and so?" and they said, "Oh, he was cracking up and they've taken him off" He was gone, nobody had

knowledge that 'Joe Brown ' is going to be leaving tomorrow because "he's cracking up" he was gone and suddenly people wondered where he was and they said, "Oh no, he's been replaced". Now we know no more about it than that and he didn't become a ratbag or anything else because he got home in good order and whatnot , he could be here at this reunion we're having in Perth at the moment I don't know, but I don't even remember the man's name but I only remember the one case of a man being taken off.

Your aeroplane was that in a fairly good mechanical condition?

Oh, top-line most of the time. The Lancaster aeroplane would absorb a colossal amount of damage and I've flown one from Italy back to England on only two engines because two engines were knocked out. I flew one home from the Ruhr where my engineer was wounded and we were coned in search lights and copped I wouldn't know how many shells, fortunately we had four engines that survived and were going like birds all the way home. But they parked the aeroplane outside the flight the next day so that all the people could look at it to get an appreciation of how much damage a Lancaster would absorb.

What did it look like?

It looked like a sieve. There were 347 holes in that Lancaster, three of which you or I could've got in and out of the fuselage without opening a door. But it flew like a bird it gave no management problem whatever, it was a bit drafty and a bit uncomfortable because there was a lot of exterior skin and perspex blown in, but none of the instrumentation and none of the major working parts were effected. The hydraulics were wrecked and we put our under-carriage down on return to England with an emergency system of compressed air which you carried for the purpose, but a beautiful aeroplane and could take a lot of damage.

Sitting inside, was it uncomfortable?

Oh yes, you didn't know where the next one was going to be. But again,I consider myself personally, fortunate to have been a pilot because at that time you are the busiest little bee that you have ever been in your life and you don't have time to be afraid you don't have time to consider the consequences. And I take my cap off in great admiration for all the rest of the members of the crew because they had to sit there and watch what was going on and rely entirely on me, and two of them had to sit behind blackout curtains because the wireless operator and the navigator had to work in a lighted situation which they had to seal, now they couldn't even see what was going on, but they still had to endure it. And I've always considered myself very lucky to have been the pilot where at that moment, the busiest time, the worst time, I was at my busiest anyway. So there was no time to worry what was happening , you were too dammed busy what you were supposed to do about it.

The last flight that you made, when you were shot down, could you describe that?

Yes, we were fortunate in having completed our bombing and we were shot down on the way out of the target. But it's been looked upon historically as a fairly important raid. We had Bomber Command put six hundred aeroplanes over a place called Peenemunde which is up on the Baltic, north of Berlin in Germany at a level for accuracy, because it was considered to be a very important target, they brought us down to a level were we should not miss and we had 200 aircraft drop their bombs at 7,000 feet, 200 dropped them at 6,000 feet, and 200 dropped them at 5,000 feet which was about less than a third in some cases and less than a quarter in other cases of the height that we would normally be working at. And from the first

to the last bomb was a period of eleven minutes...a highly concentrated attack, happening in a great hurry and that was a very big fire and it was a very successful raid. it is generally conceded by the historians that it probably delayed by more than a year the onset of the V1 and V2 rocket attack which ultimately took place on London.

(10.00) Was there a big loss on that particular run?

Forty two I believe it was, Including myself unfortunately.

Would you just say? "Forty two were shot down", rather than.."

Forty two planes were shot down, unfortunately. I think, I'm not certain of that figure but it's about that area. Which was much higher than the percentages that we've talked about earlier but, you must remember that I've already said it was a high concentration and it was at a much lower level so that the defences were able to get a much more accurate attack on us.

But we were shot down leaving the target, and that was the end of my war. I'd done twenty eight trips outwards and only twenty seven homewards and...I suppose that was half a trip.

What happened when you were shot? How as it around you then?

Pretty active, because of the concentration that I've already mentioned, the whole place was a sea of anti-aircraft fire and there was still a few German fighters trying to intrude into the stream even amongst their own anti-aircraft fire, but they weren't very successful because at that low level and with the amount of anti-aircraft fire that there was, they didn't I don't think, achieve very great success but..it was pretty hot!

We were hit crossing the coast going back into the Baltic, flying out of the target in a north-westerly direction and we were instantly on fire from front to rear so there that was no question of making any decision, but to bail the boys out. I held them for a little while although it was dangerous, but we were crossing the coast out, so I had to make 180 degree turn to sort of point the aircraft back over land to get them out and they all evacuated the aircraft successfully, but we lost two. My wireless operator was wounded when we were hit, but not badly because my navigator examined him and checked his parachute before he went out, but then had the job the next day of identifying his body for the Germans and the tie-downs on his parachute were not broken, which means, that he went out of the aeroplane and failed to pull his rip-cord, now we think, that perhaps he passed out with shock.

The second member who we lost, was our engineer who landed in the wide mouth of the Elb River and allowed the parachute apparently to settle over the top of him and he drowned in the cords.

The rest of us parachuted and became prisoners of war where we spent twenty two months in the hands of gallant foes...the Jerrys.

In hindsight, looking back at that particular raid and at the low altitudes that you were flying, was it necessary to send people in at those lower altitudes to achieve the task that you had at hand?

Again I couldn't possibly answer your question, but we *believe* that the planners, who knew more about the job than anybody at the time, and they did explain their approach to this particular problem. Somebody who had escaped from Germany into Sweden had brought

information on the location of this research station and what it was doing. It was generally believed by the Germans that we didn't know about it, therefore they put on the highly concentrated low level raid because they said the moment we attack it once, we're not going to get a second chance because if it's what we believe it is, they will heavily defend it therefore, we've got to go to this low level to get absolute accuracy. The defences as we believe, are not as heavy as they will ultimately become and therefore an increased loss rate will be acceptable rather than putting on say, three or four raids ultimately when the crew loss rate would've been greater anyway and with the advantages of surprise and the fact that they believed that we did not know it was there, such a loss rate would be acceptable and I think it works out that way statistically. If you look at other targets that were attacked three or four times you 'll find that if you put those three or four raids together, the loss rate would exceed this one.

(15,00) Of the course that you trained through, how many of those people survived?

I can't really answer the question with accuracy. I can give you an example which will probably average out to some sort of an answer anyway.
Nineteen course Initial Training School intakes would be a very large number of people I don't even know how many, but they were the people who were concerned in that and did most of their operational work in that year where I've mentioned that the loss rate was around six percent on average, so I'd have to assume that they might fit somewhere in that average. The worst of the Battle of Britain pressure over the United Kingdom had eased by that time therefore, people who flew singles might be expected to have got into a lower than average loss rate in that period whatever percentage that may be of the thing. But I can give you a concrete example of fifty pilots who went to that service flying training school that I mentioned at Bundaberg and as far as we are aware, comparing notes one or two of us, up until about three years ago we believed that there were only eleven alive and recently we found two more, so we know that there are thirteen and assume that there might be a few more but there are probably less than twenty of that fifty, surviving to this day. Because they were all pilots who hit Europe at that time of the heavy loss that I mentioned and the therefore the attrition rate was pretty grim.

THAT'S THE END OF REEL 5 OF THE INTERVIEW WITH FRANK DIXON.

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