



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE A.

Identification: this is Ed Stokes with Paul Farquharson, Evacuees, tape one, side one.

Paul, could we just begin with your date and place of birth?

I was born just outside Glasgow on 9th February 1928.

You grew up, or were evacuated from London. When did you move from Glasgow down to the south of England?

1937.

Well, let's just talk a little bit then about the period in Glasgow. Perhaps, could you tell us what your father was doing there?

My father worked for a company that imported fruit on a large scale. They used to import sort of shiploads of it. And he was a senior salesman with that organisation. Then he went into the public service, the Department of the Army, and we moved south to a village near London - Ashford, Middlesex.

But up until '37 you were living in Glasgow.

Just outside.

You have, I think, one older brother and two younger brothers, is that correct?

Yes. I had an elder brother, six years older than me, Robert, and a younger brother two years younger than me and one eight years younger than me.

And the one two years younger was Reg, I think.

Reginald, that's right. He came to Australia with me.

Right. We'll come to that later. The period in Glasgow, could you describe the kind of environment that you remember growing up in, the sort of neighbourhood where you lived?

Right. Well, Glasgow is basically a sort of tenement type buildings everywhere, even in the suburbs. We lived at Dennistown which was quite a pleasant suburb, some miles from the centre of the city, and we went to an ordinary state school there but we had sportsgrounds near us, so it wasn't the sort of industrial, crammed up type of place that generally Glasgow is described as. It was quite a pleasant place to live.

Let's move on, if we can, Paul, to the period when you moved down to London, because, of course, it's there that you were evacuated from. Your father was now in the public service. The area where you lived then, could you paint a picture for us?

Yes, it was a village. Ashford was a village about two miles from Staines. It was on a tributary to the Thames, called the Ash, and it was very much a country area then, with farmlands and farms around it and a common between Ashford and Staines. Very much more open than the area I'd lived in in Scotland. And very much a countrified type of life though in fact we were only seventeen miles from London.

And your father was working in London?

He was working, firstly at Feltham, which was a township going towards London, and later further south, south of Staines.

Do you remember the house you lived in there? Could you describe, not so much its actual physical shape, but more its characteristic as your parents made it a home?

Yes. Well, of course, I remember it because when I went back from Australia we were still living in the same house. It was a detached bungalow, two bedrooms, lounge, kitchen, bathroom, toilet, and a separate garage outside. It had a small front garden and a large back garden. I suppose by Australian standards it was pretty close to a quarter acre block, which is much bigger than, of course, the place we had in Scotland.

Were there any special places to you in that house, or perhaps the garden, or the immediate locality, for you as a boy?

(5.00) There was a swimming pool there which was an open air swimming pool at the bottom of our street, which was the village pool, and was surrounded by an area called the shrublands which had open parkland in it which was a football ground and cricket ground. And our school was nearby and it had open sports grounds around it. And the village cricket side, the club premises and grounds were within fifty yards of our house.

I think sports, and also singing and scouts, or cubs at this stage, were part of your childhood.

Yes, very much so. A strange mixture, but I used to sing in the choir and also as a soloist. I played cricket and soccer and of course I was in the Scout Association as a cub and then as a scout, which I stayed in till I was sixteen.

Did you sing in the local churches?

Yes, I sang in .... We were Presbyterians but they didn't have such a thing down in Ashford so we were a member of the Methodist church and I sang in the local choir there at Ashford.

The family life, as you remember it, perhaps just to finish with, how do you remember that? Were you a particularly close family, or a more distant family? How much did you do together? How much did you talk together?

We talked together a lot, and we were generally together after dinner at night. We were slightly different to the other children, in that we all had broad Scottish accents, so we were a bit peculiar to them down that way. My elder brother and my father would be home at night and so after tea it was the first time we were all together because they left in the morning for

work before we went to school. We didn't do a lot together on weekends, except my brother and I used to go bike riding a lot. He was a very keen cyclist, touring cyclist, and I used to go with him on the weekends to places like Runnymede and Staines and Bushy Park and that sort of thing.

Those family evenings together, what did you do together? Did you sing together, for instance?

Yes, I suppose we did really. We had sort of concerts, and we had a piano. My mother and my brother both played. Reg, my younger brother, he played a violin very badly and we sang a lot. And we played cards and talked a lot. My father was a great raconteur, and of course we were raised on stories of the first world war. I don't think we were much different to any other family.

It sounds a fairly warm, really quite close family in some ways.

A fairly warm relationship, I think, especially between my elder brother, myself and my younger brother. We were always very close.

And with your parents, who were you closest to?

Probably my mother I think, because my father did spend a lot of time away from home.

If I asked you to answer in this just one question, what did home life mean to you in those days, what would you say?

I suppose it was the community, family living together, talking of things we knew, of relatives in Scotland and how they were, because we were sort of divorced from all of our family which was still in Scotland - my father's family, my mother's family - and we had been a very close-knit group. I think we did miss that in the early days in England.

I was going to ask you that, whether you did miss Scotland and the family connections?

Yes, very much, we did miss Scotland and the family connections a lot.

Let's move on, Paul. The period building up to war, I know you have some recollections, but I think you were saying there's an interesting story pre- and post-Munich about the trenches. Tell us about those.

Well, there's a shrublands area, which was the area round the swimming pool at Ashford, during the Munich crisis, at that period in '38, they dug slit trenches in the park, right across our football field actually. As a cub in those days I helped with the sandbags. We filled them occasionally but we got them out of the piles and opened them up for the council workers who virtually dug the trenches. After Chamberlain came back from Munich they filled them all in again. I think it was about two seasons before the ground was fit to play football on again.

(10.00) Do you have any other memories of the period leading up to the declaration of war? Was it much talked about in the family, round the wireless for example?

Yes, the nine o'clock news, if we weren't in bed and we generally weren't till after that was over, there had to be complete silence while that was on. And my father and my elder brother, in particular, discussed the matter at great length. But we were expecting war, I think everybody was expecting war from Munich onwards.

The declaration of war itself, there's a recollection here, I think.

Yes, Bob, my elder brother, he was away on a cycling tour. He was actually in the Hebrides when war broke out. We were round the radio and listening to the Chamberlain broadcast when he made the announcement that war was declared. I think about half an hour, or three-quarters of an hour later, when we were still in the front room listening to the wireless and the air raid alarm went off. It turned out to be only an unidentified aircraft over the Channel, but we all thought there was something we ought to do, so we all went out and stuck our - well, the boys - we went out and stuck our gas masks on. And holding on to the side of it, we were blowing out the side, making ghastly noises which my mother objected to.

Could you synchronise the noises?

Yes.

What would it sound like?

A rather rude, blurting noise, coming from the side. If you held on to the rubber at the side and blew like parchment - bblurrp, like that, down the side, which of course we did at school when we did gas mask drill at school. And then we'd get chastised for doing that.

That's a lovely memory. Going on though, more seriously, once war had been declared and you were aware of it as a boy, did that invoke, do you think, in you feelings of excitement or apprehension or both?

Well, it certainly invoked patriotism, great feelings of patriotism, because a lot of people were going into uniform. Conscription had come before the war, and people that we knew and my elder brother's contemporaries were going into the army and the air force and the navy.

I think your older brother joined the Merchant Navy - volunteered - how did that affect the family, or you perhaps?

Well, we were very proud of him. My mother was apprehensive. But that didn't stop her, he had to have parental permission because he was under twenty-one, of course. They signed, but it was a bit of trauma for my mother. She wasn't happy about it, but he did. He didn't actually depart by ship until after we left. We left before him.

And sadly I think you never saw him again?

No, he was killed in 1941 and he was nineteen.

Do you remember how that affected you when you heard in Australia?

Mm, yeah.

Right. We're just going on. The period of the 'phoney war', Paul, you have some interesting memories, I think, of being a scout and working in with the ARP, later the Home Guard.

Yes, when the war broke out they asked for messengers, et cetera, from the scouts and I had only just reached the age where I went up from the cubs to the scouts, so I was an ARP messenger in the first few weeks of the war because we didn't go back to school for about three months. And I was a messenger down at the swimming pool where the ARP headquarters were for our area, for the first month or so until the Home Guard was formed, and then we switched our allegiance to the Home Guard.

There was an interesting story, I think, about the pine rifles finally being replaced by veterans from some previous war.

They drilled initially out on the Ashford cricket ground and they had cut out rifles made of pine. I never saw anybody with the long spears and so forth, but we certainly had the pine rifles and they drilled with those. Several of our schoolteachers who were veterans of the first world war were NCOs and leaders of the push. Later they were issued with Ross rifles which came packed in big wooden boxes from Canada. They were packed solid in grease, and they were pre-first world war rifles, and they had bayonets which were at least a foot longer to me than anything I'd seen before. Coming home on the bus from Staines one day, two of our teachers were in the back with these dirty, greasy beasts there, and we were most intrigued. I didn't want to say too much to them in case we had to clean them because they had to actually push the grease out with a rod to get it. It came out solidly. And they virtually boiled things in baths to get the grease out of it.

Incredible. Other memories of the period, blackouts and so on, I guess that was also part of the picture for you?

(15.00) Yes, blackouts were a hundred per cent. Cars, such as they were, and there weren't many cars in our area, had blinkers on the front. They had a hood over the front with three slots in them that pointed down to the ground. Traffic wasn't a problem in Ashford because there weren't many cars around anyway.

I think you also remember the period of April/May '40 when of course the war suddenly became much more intense - Belgium, Holland, Dunkirk, et cetera. What do you remember of that period, and perhaps particularly of the mood within the family, your parents' views?

Well, Dunkirk I remember vividly because we were called to an assembly in the morning at school and the headmaster addressed us and gave us all a Churchillian-type speech, and how we all had to pull together and so forth. But we, as children, we'd never looked on it as anything more than a minor setback, in that we had such absolute faith in the army and the Royal Navy that it was impossible that anybody could have stood against them anyway, so we weren't as perturbed about Dunkirk as our parents were. But we certainly discussed it at home.

How perturbed were your parents, and what was their discussion about?

Well, evacuation because we were pretty close to London and we had barrage balloons around us, and the raids, when they did start, we were catching the outside of those at first. And we had some children evacuated from London schools to our village but, of course we soon had to get evacuated elsewhere.

Do you remember the bombers going over to London, that sort of thing?

Yes, I remember that we saw bombers going over. We also saw them going the other way. In particular, Hanworth was near us and I remember while the Blenheim bombers and the Fairey Battle bombers going over, I remember seventy-five going over the top of our place at once, which was a massive number for those days.

Did you have an air raid shelter at home?

Yes, everybody had air raid shelters. Some people had built their own as early as 1938, after the Munich crisis. We didn't. Reg and I dug a lot of holes in the yard but we never got down more than about a foot. But the council actually came and dug in Anderson air raid shelters. They dug in about three feet, put the frame down, put the Anderson shelter, which was a corrugated iron, hoop-shaped device, and the earth they took out at the beginning they threw that all over the top. This was supposedly a blast shelter. And it was a great playhouse. It had an emergency exit at the back so that if you couldn't get out the front you could pull a bit off the back. If there were six in the family you got such-and-such a size. If there were only four in the family it would be a bit smaller. If you had ten in the family then you got a rather long one, like a corridor.

That's most interesting, Paul. Let's move on to CORB itself. I think your first memory, you were saying, was of quite open discussion in the family.

Yes, when overseas evacuation was discussed, and I didn't realise it at the time, but it was discussed because wealthier families were evacuating privately, and when it began to be discussed we talked about it at home. We, Reg and I, we were very keen to go to Australia. We never had any intention of going, or volunteering to go anywhere else.

Australia - there was a family connection, of course.

My mother's brother was there, and he lived in Kalgoorlie in WA. And that was where, if we were going anyway, that's where we wanted to go. Not only was he there but Don Bradman was there and he was our hero.

For you then was it an opportunity to be safe, or an opportunity to have an adventure?

I don't think we ever considered safety. As far as we were concerned it was an adventure.

And what about your parents? What were the pros and cons that they put around?

Well, though they didn't discuss their feelings with us they were obviously happy that we felt that way. I know that my mother, because we've talked of it since, that she thought invasion was imminent and that she should get us away. For safety reasons, no other reason.

And that was the key issue?

Yes, I believe so.

The final decision, I think, was made - was there a final joint decision, or just a kind of process of family osmosis?

Yes, I think so. It was just, once it had been discussed and we were all in agreement, my mother obviously filled in the necessary forms and then we were told to report to Staines for a medical. Staines being about two miles from us.

Was there ever any talk of the period which might elapse before you returned?

(20.00) No, well, not in that we were all, in those days, the children at any rate saying it'd be all over by Christmas. That would be Christmas 1940. I don't know that my mother subscribed to that school of thought but we certainly thought it would be a six months' to twelve months' holiday.

And I guess from what you said you didn't realise how far away Australia was. Could you have placed it on a map?

I knew where it was on the map, and I knew it was 12,000 miles away but the 12,000 miles, that didn't register as to how far away that was.

I think secrecy was quite an aspect during those days. What do you remember of that?

Yes, certainly we were told that we weren't supposed to talk about it or tell anybody, especially once we'd completed the medical. And I, being on my scout's honour, sort of thing, I didn't talk about it to any of my friends. I did mention it to a schoolteacher 'cause I had to draw my five bob out of my post office account and was most perturbed one day when she said, 'Farquharson, if you are going to go to Australia, you'll have to develop a more responsible attitude than you're currently showing'. And I thought, 'My God, loose lips cost lives and ships will be sunk and all sorts of things will happen', and of course I had to answer various questions in the playground about this Australian adventure and I was most disturbed at her wide mouth.

Irresponsibility of adults. One final question, it's a hard one to ask but I'm just asking everybody. Was there any point in all this, Paul, any feeling at all that in some way you were being rejected by your parents?

No, never. Never entered my mind. I never saw anything about it, or gave it any thought until last year when I started to read books and letters from other evacuees at this fiftieth anniversary year, it had never occurred to me that my parents had done it for any other reason than safety.

Right. Going on, the final preparations to go, I know you were saying your mother went off to buy clothes in London. I think there were a few little gifts given to you before you left.

I had a diary that I didn't keep very well. And ...

An autograph book?

Yeah, an autograph book which I kept for years. I think just about every kid on the *Batory* had signed it for one reason or another. I also still had it in Kalgoorlie for years afterwards but I don't know where it's gone now.

They were quite a thing of the times - collecting autographs.

Everybody had their little ditties in them.

Do you remember any particular ditty?

Yes, I remember a girl who came to Western Australia and she'd written this rather flowery verse in there about:

This world is like a garden
In which we all sow seeds.
I sow the seed forget-me-not,
Please keep it free from weeds.

And that was on the first page of my book. And I met her brother the other day and I told him about that and he said, 'Yes, I think she put it every bloody autograph book on the *Batory*'. She wasn't lusting after me in particular.

So much for love. The farewell, do you remember the last night at home, and do you remember your father or mother saying any words to you about what you should or should not do?

My father told me in no uncertain manner that I was to look after my younger brother, to make sure he was safe because I was the eldest and he charged me with that. Something that I didn't take that seriously I must say, and there are times I think I could have done better. I don't remember the last night before we left. I remember distinctly my mother taking us to the assembly point at Twickenham, and saying goodbye to me there. She had my youngest brother who was four, Ian, and Reg and I departed for Liverpool with a group of about six or eight other children.

That final farewell with your mother, that happens to be a long time before you saw. Was that easy or difficult? How much were her [inaudible] ...?

[Inaudible] difficult for her, and she did look rather forlorn standing on the platform. From memory, she was the only mother that was there, and that the other children had said goodbye to their parents before we arrived at Twickenham. For Reg and I, I don't think that it was any more than as if we'd been going to Scotland for a holiday. That's as close as I could get to it really.

I guess it's always easier too, for people going away on journeys, than for people who are left behind really.

Yes, it was an adventure for us.

You'd said goodbye to your father before, somewhere?

Yes, my father spent quite a lot of time away from home but he'd said goodbye to us at home that morning, but it wasn't traumatic or anything like that.

(25.00) That's an interesting point, that your father, because of his work, was often away from home, therefore you were used to not having a father round day to day.

I was used to him not being at home all the time. So though he was away, it was only two or three days at a time. A couple of times he was away for a couple of weeks.

Let's move on, Paul, going on to Liverpool. We might just skate over this, except there is a rather amusing recollection, I think, of the quality of your singing in air raids.

We were having about two air raids a night at Liverpool and they always, the people used to make us get undressed and into our pyjamas and go into bed, which was a palliasse lying on the floor of a school. And then the air raid would go and we'd get up and put on a dressing gown, if you had one, which I didn't, and go downstairs to the air raid shelter, which was above ground, it was a blast shelter really. And then we used to sing and carry on - made quite a lot of noise. On one particular night, I think the second or third night we were there, some of the wardens brought in a group of children, carrying them in, there was nothing wrong with them, they were just wrapped up in blankets and some of them walking in in their slippers. And they came, we were told, because they thought we were having a better time than they were. But in fact their shelter had been blast-affected by a bomb and they came in. We were making that much noise we didn't hear the air raid overhead at the time, so we might not have had much quality but we had a lot of volume.

I do know that Mr Shakespeare, one of the CORB administrators, did visit Liverpool at the time and made certain speeches. Do you ever remember that?

I don't remember Shakespeare himself coming. I do remember the BBC coming because they came to a group I was in. We all got about six words in quickly on the BBC program, and I know that it was heard by my parents, that they did hear both Reg and I say something. I can't remember what we said. It wouldn't have been very much because there were dozens of us round there and they just shoved the microphone around.

Well, Paul going on to the period on the *Batory*, I think your escort, Eleanor Pearson, I think, met you just before you got on the ship. I think there was a degree of confusion, you were saying, on embarking.

Yes, the hand over between the escorts who were on shore and the travel escorts from the train, to the shipboard escorts evidently wasn't straightforward, and some got aboard the ship without ever finding their escorts and Eleanor actually met us before we got on and we actually went straight to our cabins which she had already sussed out, or she knew her way around. So we were fortunate that way, that she had the whole group around her and we went on board as a group, after about two and a half hours wait, I might add.

Just for the record, your brother, Reg, was there. Also Tony Smith, already recorded for the War Memorial, and I think a Reg Loft, was it?

Reg Loft, from Melbourne, was also with us.

Was that the entire complement of the cabin?

No, there were six of us in our cabin, but I think there was probably twelve or fourteen in our group - Q Section - of which Eleanor was the escort in charge.

Just to talk about your escort for a moment, Eleanor. What did she do with you, and how much was she able to fill the role, when needed, of mother for children who were homesick?

Well, we did have younger children. We had at least one boy who was only five, and another two who were round about seven or eight, and she certainly looked after those very well, including things like bedwetting problems and pants and making sure they changed their clothes, et cetera, et cetera. I don't think we caused her much trouble, not in that way. We might have by getting out of line from time to time, but she didn't really have to be a mother to us. Reg Loft was fourteen, Tony was thirteen, I was twelve, Reg was ten, and I don't think we gave her any sort of motherhood type problems, or mothering type problems. But certainly she had quite a job with the other ones.

You were mentioning bedwetting with the other little children, was that, as you remember it, a regular thing, and how homesick do you think they were, as you saw it as a twelve-year old?

Well, I wouldn't have thought it was caused by trauma, or anything like that. I just think it's the natural type of thing you get from a child of that age, having gone through some of my own children and grandchildren, you tend to get that problem round about that age, and I don't think it was anything traumatic. I think it was just a natural thing with young children of that ...

END TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B

Identification: this is Ed Stokes with Paul Farquharson, Evacuees, tape one, side two.

Just for the record, Paul was saying his escort was a court reporter for a daily, I think ...

Yes.

... in London and she also escorted Reg, Paul's brother, back at the end of the war. Going on to the *Batory*, Paul. Do you remember the early days at sea, the sea, the convoy surrounding you?

Yes, well, it was very exciting. In the early days we had three regiments of new troops on board. And in the first week or so we were all mixed up, that is, the soldiers were and the evacuees were all together and we had the run [of] two promenade decks, a fore deck and an aft deck. We were in a convoy of about twenty-five ships, or possibly more, and we used to lean over the top of a lifeboat in the morning and look at the compass to find out which direction we were heading, et cetera.

> Let's talk about that in some detail. I was going to ask you whether during the voyage you knew where you were and you kept this daily check, I think.

We kept a check till we got warned off for climbing over the rail to lean over into the lifeboat. The lifeboats were slung level with the promenade decks so that they were out of the davits, and they were restrained against the side but there was some movement there so to get to the compass you had to climb up on the rail, lean across probably eighteen inches, and then over the top of the lifeboat, sort of balance your stomach on the rail and then we could pull the floating - a compass that would float in the water, it had a big bowl at the bottom - and we could check out the direction we were going. Not that it did us much good, the only map we had was somebody had a map of the world in the front of his diary which was about six inches by two inches, I suppose.

But we worked out, since we were heading due west, that we were going to go into the South Atlantic and then through the Panama Canal. But we woke up one morning and we were heading due south, most of the convoy had left, and we were heading by then towards Africa. We thought we were probably going to the Canary Islands. We were all great geographers, we thought. But we in fact went to Freetown.

> As a scout, how aware were you of the position of the sun in the sky, and as you went south, how its noon position was higher in the sky?

We did note that because we talked about it because we formed a scout troop on board, and the matters of that sort of geography were discussed in some detail. Some of the kids were in their leaving, matric, year at school and there was a lot of very serious discussion, we thought at the time, on where we were going and when we were going to pass the Tropic of Cancer, et cetera. Oh, it was all very exciting.

> Just going back to some .... Well, actually let's go back to the scouts, it was next on the line. I think a troop was formed fairly early in the voyage, could you tell us about that, and about the activities you indulged in?

Yes. Well, they formed the troop fairly early on. One of the escorts, one of the female escorts, had been a relative, a close relative, of Ralph Raider who was one of the originators of the Boy Scout Gang Show in the UK, so she had a long tradition of scouting behind her, and she was the leader of the push. We had at least one boy on board who was a King's Scout, and he became the troop leader, and the crew of the *Batory* actually made our flag from materials that they found on board.

(5.00) What sort of things did you do as a troop?

Normal scouting activities: you know, tying knots and doing the tests for the second class proficiency badges and those sorts of things. We carried on very much as you would in a

scout troop if you'd been on dry land actually, except of course we couldn't hike very far. But the normal activities that you did in scouting we continued to do on board.

Did you have your uniform with you?

Yes. That was the one item we were allowed to take that wasn't on the list of clothing that you must take.

There was also the newspaper, the *Albatross* newspaper, which was produced largely by the evacuees, I think. Now, there was a contribution of yours here.

Yes. I assisted a girl who was quite a poet to write a poem for the magazine, which was called 'Freetown' - the poem was called 'Freetown' - and we won the prize which was five shillings. I felt very sorry about it later because I'm sure her contribution was worth about four and ninepence and mine was only worth about threepence. I met her a month or so ago and we discussed it. And she said if I was going to pay her back she thought there was a fair amount of interest by this time. But yes, we produced a poem for the magazine and ...

Do you remember the first verse or two?

No, I can remember the Freetown bit which was really Verna's which said:

The hills that range the harbour round are beautiful to
see
And here and there a stream runs down and into the
emerald sea

I can remember that bit, and I can't remember another damn thing about it. I saw it the other day in the magazine and I remembered then that I hadn't a great deal of contribution to that great work of art.

And there is a gentleman, I think, in Victoria who - or, sorry, Tasmania - who actually produced the newspaper?

Yes, I think there's .... His name was Doughty, that is D-0-U-G-H-T-Y. I can't remember his christian name. And Bobbie Barton was the girl, the associate editor. They would have been two of the older children on board. They would have been fifteen, which was the maximum age.

Well, another thing you were involved, of course, was singing. You were telling us about your soprano singing, I think, in England. When do you remember singing beginning on the *Batory*? How soon after you left Liverpool, and in what directions did it go?

I would have thought it probably started the second day out when Meta Maclean, who was one of the escorts - an Australian who was a composer and teacher - she found a piano in the second class dining room and she started to play it and a group of children gathered round her and started to sing, and I don't think we ever stopped. Well, I didn't stop till we got to Fremantle.

How much of the singing was just fun group singing? How much of it was pitched at a more serious level?

I think it was pretty therapeutic in many ways. She in fact, and another escort called Osborne, wrote a song for the ship called 'The Call', and we all learnt to sing that. And it was a song that they wrote on the *Batory* for evacuees about the evacuation. You know -

We heard your voices across the sea
And we're proud to answer the call

are the first two lines. And we used to beef that out any time there was an assembly. And she also had written at least two other songs, one of whom the Australian baritone, Peter Dawson, had sung in Australia, and we all learnt that also.

Do you remember the songs you sung? Were they to do with Britain, or were they to do with Australia, or both?

Both. Bill Oats and several of the Australian Escorts taught everybody 'Waltzing Matilda', and 'The Road to Gundagai'. But they sang, 'There'll Always be an England' which caused a considerable amount of trouble because they couldn't hear the England bit come out because the Scottish contingent was singing Scotland at that stage. So they settled for singing, 'There'll always be a Britain', and that's how we sang it on the way out. It was of that era, you know, 'The White Cliffs of Dover', 'There'll Always be an England', et cetera, and 'Roll Out the Barrel', were the big songs of the day. Added to that of course we sang all the Scottish airs like, 'Loch Lomond' and 'Ye Banks and Brae' and that type of thing. The Scots may have been smaller in number but they were very vocal.

(10.00) (Laughs) I'm going to ask you about the Glaswegians in a minute. I think you also, yourself, sang for some concerts for the first class passengers.

Yes. There was about eighty first class passengers on board and of course that was supplemented by the officer corps from the three regiments. We had our singing and concerts and does mostly in the afternoon and the early evening. They had some entertainment possibly once a week in the first class dining room and I was occasionally called on to sing there. And that was good because you could stay up after nine o'clock and you got a pretty good feed afterwards - not that we starved on the boat.

Yes, I'm sure there would have been perks. I was just going to ask you about food. I know that generally it was good but at some point I know there was a bit of a complaint. How did this begin and who took the initiative?

Well, the children, probably the older ones - I've got an idea Doughty might have had a hand in it - we were all allowed to attend. Well, provided we were twelve or over, you could attend the meeting. And Bill Oats and Kilby - Mr Kilby was the chief escort - they listened to our complaints. I think it was probably the Polish diet - it was a Polish ship - and some of them were finding that a bit difficult to handle. And they did in fact modify the - it was a bit heavy, I suppose.

This meeting, was it fun or was it serious ...

[Inaudible]. We really thought we were being very grown up and mutinous at the time. But it was all fixed up in about half an hour.

> Mr Kilby and Bill Oats, who were the senior people on board vis-à-vis CORB, how evident were they in your day-to-day life? Or were they background figures who very - or Kilby at least - who very rarely appeared?

Oh no, they appeared on a daily basis. Well known figures. Bill probably more than Kilby because he was the sort of exec. and he was the one who fined everybody and punished everybody for not - I used the word loosely - carrying their lifebelt with them at all times. And lifebelts would be found without a child hanging onto it, so that would cause words to be said at midday meal, which was the day when all the complaints came out from the escorts, and also anything about programs for the day. So Bill was very much in evidence. And Kilby, of course, was quite obviously the senior man. He wasn't remote but he certainly wasn't as approachable as Bill Oats.

> I was going to ask you about meals. Was it lunchtime that was the focus of community life in terms of announcements, sanctions and that sort of thing? Could you tell us a bit about that?

Yeah, well, lunchtime was when the announcements were made, the programs for the afternoon, or what was going to happen the next morning, if there was anything going that night, that all came out at lunchtime. And also, when I say punishments, what I mean is that they would go crook at a few kids who'd left their lifebelts behind, which was the normal thing, or the younger ones for hanging around the dining room to get extra food, because the Polish stewards were very kind. And I think quite a lot of the younger ones used to take advantage of that, and the escorts used to frown on that.

> I've heard about this: fiddlesticks outside the dining area. This was to gain an early entreé, I think.

Yes, that's right.

> More seriously, just for a moment. The sanctions on board and the discipline on board, what were they, and were there, to your knowledge, ever any really serious problems besides the obvious ...?

Not really. I've got an idea Kilby might have had to go and discipline a couple of kids. I'm not certain what that means. I tried to talk to Bill Oats about it over at York the other day but he couldn't remember, or he wasn't saying. But they were normally okay. There were a couple of scraps on board, a couple of boys and so forth. But normally we didn't have the sort of fights problem because the army and one of our escorts, a Presbyterian minister, Phillips, an army man called Andy Anderson, they organised boxing downstairs in what had been the ship's gym and swimming pool. And so we were able to vent our feelings on each other with big bulky gloves that didn't do anybody any harm. It was very good fun.

> I was going to ask you about this. I know you were involved. Boxing and the gym downstairs, do you remember any other details of that?

It was organised on a voluntary basis. You didn't have to do it if you didn't want to. And there were some quite accomplished boxers among the army, from regular army men. And they gave classes and that sort of thing. I can remember a rather well-built Scottish boy who - he was a good boxer - older than I was and much heavier, and he'd fallen out with Andy

Anderson over something and he asked me if I would like to appear in the ring with him for a while so that he could knock me around for a bit to show Andy that he still had what it takes. I declined with thanks, as a matter of fact, because he must have been about three stone heavier than me.

(15.00) Sounds a bit of a one-sided offer. Just for a moment, the Glaswegians on board were a distinct group, I think, both by accent and perhaps social background. What do you remember of that?

Yeah, there was a big Glasgow and Edinburgh contingent on board, and they had very broad lowland accents.

Did they rule the roost a bit?

No, they tended to stick to themselves. There were no mixed groups of Scottish and English evacuees. There was the Scottish groups and there was the English group. I had access to both being a Scotsman who was with an English group. They tended to do more of the risky things and get into more scrapes than the English group, I think. You'd find them hanging out of portholes with a bit of string and a safety pin trying to catch fish when we were in port and that sort of thing - and doing it occasionally. [Interruption.]

You were just saying about the Glaswegians and their escapades.

Yes. They were better scroungers of food round the kitchens than the others. They tended to go in for the more robust sports, like most of the boys from, say, twelve to fourteen were all at the boxing group. But they didn't mix that much. Though all the cabins were all around each other, but the Scots tended to stick to their own kinds.

Scots are Scots.

That's right.

Just a related issue in terms of mixing, I think you were suggesting that boys and girls tended to be in groups rather than individuals. You don't remember too many boy-girl friendships?

No, I was in a group that probably had four or five boys and maybe five or six girls, but we weren't paired off. It was more of a friendly group. There wasn't a great deal of it. At one stage they separated the troops. After about a week at sea, they separated the troops out from the evacuees and they crowded the three regiments on to the forward, and part of an aft deck, and we were confined to two promenade decks only, that's one on either side of the ship. We could get through midships to go from one deck to the other. They stopped the troops mixing with the children because the escorts and the officer corps all thought that these fifteen-year-old girls were a bit too much of a problem to have around and that the soldiers might be lusting after them so they separated us out.

Although I think, and other people do say, in the later part of the voyage there were still some friendships, more with individual soldiers seen around. Do you remember that, or not?

Only I do remember one of the older girls having a friendship. I don't think it was any more than that with a soldier because she would have been fifteen, I suppose. And quite a few of the soldiers were only eighteen, anyway.

> Yes, of course. Just for the record, too, Paul was saying that laundry was done for them. Boat drill, life jackets, what do you remember of that? And do you remember any periods when there was real anxiety that the ship might be threatened?

Yeah. We had boat drills nearly every day, and we carried our lifebelts with us all the time, including meal times. You sat on it on deck. There was no deck chairs, or anything, not for 500 kids, so you leant against the bulkheads and you sat on your life jacket which was a kapok device. We certainly stood to boat stations frequently. On three occasions, I remember danger, not that it worried us particularly. On one occasion we were bumped in the night with depth charges, the first week out, when in fact there was a submarine lurking near the convoy and the escorting ships depth charged fairly thoroughly and we were shaken up, but strangely enough we weren't called to lifeboat stations - it was in the middle of the night. Another time, going into the South Atlantic we were supposedly attacked - or there was an attacker near us. We considered it was just a normal boat drill, and later in the voyage, I think possibly after Singapore, we were on our way south, there was action on the horizon, which was a German raider, and we were told that it was practice, which nobody believed, and we were standing at lifeboat stations then. But they were the only three occasions.

(20.00) You're suggesting at that time, for yourself at least, that it wasn't so much fear as excitement that was the predominant feeling?

Yes, there was nobody virtually running around crying, or panicking, or anything like that. I sort of remember at one stage an escort being concerned, not for herself but more for her charges, but there was certainly no panic. But of course, nothing had really happened apart from the last item. But it was excitement more than anything else.

> Just finally on shipboard activities, Paul, you were saying that of course prior to reaching Cape Town there wasn't much in the way of equipment and much was provided at Cape Town. I think after that there was a little voluntary school that you were involved in.

Yes, the escorts had decided we should have some schooling if we wanted it. We had missed a lot of school because for some three or four months after war started we didn't go to school at all. Then we went back to school, but we had missed a lot. And the escorts started a school and you could go voluntarily and you could go to whatever classes you wished. I attended, with one of our escorts who was an Oxford graduate, an MA from Oxford, and she introduced me to geometry which of course I hadn't previously had any experience of.

> Well, you certainly had a fine flat line in the horizon surrounding you each day. As you sailed south into the tropics, do you remember the changes in the climate and so on?

Not really, not till we got to Cape Town which was the most tropical thing I could ever imagine. There was fine sunny days on the ship but we were on a - the sun was overhead - we were on a deck three down, and it was open, but of course we couldn't see the sun because we

were in a promenade deck that wasn't open to the sky. So we did have one thing that we all used to hate, that is, the doctor decided that Freetown, where we were going, though we didn't know, is a centre for malaria. So we all had to take quinine every day, and we got it at lunchtime and they put a shovelful of quinine into a glass and filled it with water which you were supposed to stir till the crystals dissolved then drink it, and it was vile stuff.

We had a table which was close to a long window which led onto the promenade deck and the thing to do was, as soon as an escort's back was turned, you hulked the whole lot straight through the window over your shoulder and that got rid of the crystals and the water and everything else and you didn't have to drink it. However we got caught up with in the end because somebody threw theirs all over a passing escort outside the window and they came in and we were then - they stood over us while we drank the vile muck. When we got to Freetown the local medical officer at Freetown for the Royal Air Force, which had a station near there at Takoradi, said, 'What a ridiculous thing. There's been no malaria here for fifteen years', and so it was all in vain. We'd all taken this vile muck for nothing for at least two weeks before arriving at Freetown.

That's an interesting story. Going on to the other ports, we might skate over Freetown and Cape Town, because, as I've said, other people have said a lot about it. But Colombo, I think, was quite a highlight for you.

Yes. The ladies of Colombo, which was still on a sort of peacetime footing as far as I could see, they collected us in cars and took us to the zoo and other places. But they also took us to their homes, about four or five to a car, and fed us like fighting cocks and took us around the markets. There were these beautiful airy bungalows with black servants running around, and it was quite exciting. When we left from Colombo we all got back to the - we were alighted onto the ship - so we all got on to the boats to go back out the *Batory* and as we left we all sang on the way out, 'The Call' of course, which was the standard song. And that must have sounded quite good floating across the - Colombo harbour is very beautiful - and I can remember a beautiful sunset and us going out to the *Batory* and all these crowds of ladies, whose husbands were mostly away at the war, waving to us from the quayside.

At all the ports, Paul, Freetown, Cape Town, and so on, do you remember much of a feeling that you were British children visiting, calling in if you like, at the ports of the Empire? Was that ever spelt out to you?

(25.00)We weren't allowed off at Freetown because they were so frightened of us all catching malaria, so we never got ashore at Freetown.

But I mean, just being there - that you were British children, in a sense, visiting Britain's outposts?

I don't know that I thought of it that way, but I certainly was surprised at the way we were treated. In Cape Town, for instance, we were all given badges with 'Freedom of the City of Cape Town'. I had mine for years - a little oval, blue badge - and it worked. I mean you could go into shops and people didn't want to take any money off you, for lollies and all that sort of thing.

Was there much exploitation of the system?

I don't really think so. I remember Tony Smith and I, at Cape Town, when somebody said we could have anything in the shop. And I was a bit embarrassed because I didn't know whether the girl who was offering this could afford it. I think it was only a Woolworths or something, so it probably wouldn't have broke her. But I don't think anybody exploited it, really. We were too naive.

Coming on to Australia. Beyond Singapore, there was an interesting thing, I think you took over guard duty.

Yeah, after we left Singapore, the troops had all got off there and we said a fond farewell because they were very, very good to us - the soldiers - and we were then asked to take over the guard duties, which meant standing by various bulkheads and bulkhead doors below decks. And if something happened you had to close the doors and report various things. I think it was a good idea to keep people amused and out of the way, because we changed guard every couple of hours, and we were allowed to stay up till nine o'clock at night on this duty - it was great. We were issued with a torch each. And of course girls weren't allowed to do it, so they used to sort of chiack us, as it were, as we went to take up guard and save the world for democracy, and all that sort of thing.

Sounds like a powerful [inaudible].

We took it very seriously.

Coming on to Australia, Paul, and perhaps I might just put in here a few things just for the record. The family you were to come to had only heard, I think you were saying, about the time you reached Singapore that you were going to them.

If they wished to have us. There was no compulsion, but they immediately said yes, but they didn't know that we were on our way, that we were coming, or anything else, or that they'd been nominated till in fact we were about Singapore.

But of course, I assume you didn't know that yourself at the time, so as you steamed to Australia, you weren't certain that you would be going to your family. Is that correct?

I thought we would. I thought given the chance to have the two Farquharson boys anybody would swing at the chance. But no, I was quite confident that's where we were going.

So as you approached Australia, the feeling was, I would guess from that then one of excitement and optimism, not of apprehension.

Yes, I don't think we were apprehensive at any time during the voyage really, apart from the knowing you were at sea, there was a war on, and they were warships that were escorting you and so forth.

But there wasn't apprehension about your period in Australia?

No.

> Arriving in Fremantle, you stayed for a few days in a hostel where you were joined by about fourteen children from the *Nestor* who'd come out first class. And also, for the record, some children who were landed at Fremantle were then sent off to Tasmania. Those few days in Fremantle, do you have any particularly strong impressions of Australia, of your first impressions of Australia?

Yes, well were at Cottesloe, which is a good surfing beach. Well, none of us had any experience of surf. And the people who were looking after us at Cottesloe were basically the trainee teachers from the Claremont Teachers' Training College, and they took me surfing - body surfing of course. I wasn't quite certain what you had to do but we soon got the idea. It was a great thrill and the few Australians who were on the beach in the middle of the week, because they were working, they thought it might have been a bit cold to be surfing but after the UK we thought it was pretty hot actually. I remember a fellow working on the beach, he was doing something to a boat. He was an older chap and he enquired about our accents, et cetera, and we told him where we came from. I was particularly interested to know if he was an ANZAC. He said, 'Yes, as a matter of fact I am', because I thought Australia was stuffed full of ANZACs and cricketers - that's all that came from here.

> Yes, 'cause you were saying there was a connection with a family before.

END TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A

> Identification: this is Ed Stokes with Paul Farquharson, Evacuees, tape two, side one.

> Paul, I know you were escorted to Kalgoorlie. You went out there by train. Just tell us briefly about the train journey - the impressions of this very different land.

We went up on the Westland, the West Australian. There's the trans-Australia train and the Westland, which is the local device, and we went up on that. It was a sixteen hour journey, overnight. We left in the afternoon and the further we got from Perth - it was a pretty slow business by British train standards - the further we got the smaller the townships became. When we got up on to the sort of tableland area, we were following the pipeline which goes to Kalgoorlie from Perth. That's the pipeline, and the places got smaller and smaller. And when we woke up in the morning of course it was pretty arid, especially once you get east of Southern Cross. I remember well when we were standing in the corridor, my brother and I looking out, and we stopped at a place momentarily about seven miles from Kalgoorlie at a place called Kurrawang. And I think it only had four houses, and there wasn't even a pub. And I thought, and Reg thought, that we'd made a dreadful mistake but then we arrived at Kalgoorlie which was so refreshing, it was marvellous. A big town as far as we were concerned because we'd lived in a village, and all was well. But I had some thoughts that maybe we were going into some outback shanty town at the time, but that wasn't the case.

> That's interesting. Of course it is remarkable arriving in those big outback communities after the great distance. It's almost hard to believe they're there.

> The family you were coming to, perhaps if you could just give us the name and relationship to your family.

My uncle was my mother's brother. She was the eldest in the family and he was number two. He had come out to Australia after the Mesopotamia campaign just after the first world war. So he'd been in Australia from about 1923, or thereabouts. He was a goldminer. My aunt and he had married sort of late in life. They had no children of their own and they had been prospecting at one stage in an area south of Coolgardie called Randells, and had their own mining show there for a while. Her name was Giles. She was a relative of the explorer some generations back.

> Your first impressions of them, what were they? Do you remember that? Do you remember the meeting?

Yeah. On the station at Kalgoorlie she walked straight up, saw two boys hanging out the window, and she just said, 'Are you the Farquharson boys?'. We said, 'Yes'. And she said, 'Well, I'm your Aunt Amy'. She was older than I expected. Of course I should have known that she wasn't a young bride or anything like that, even though they'd only been married about four years. She collected us and our baggage which gave her a great surprise because they weren't much bigger than attaché cases, in that we were limited in what we were allowed to bring and my mother stuck strictly to the list. I actually, on weekends, going to Canberra these days, if I go up there for work, I carry more gear in my case going to Canberra than we carried all the way out from the UK to Australia.

> That's very interesting. Yes, it was quite a sparse list. What was your uncle's name?

Taylor, Harold Taylor. And he was a shift boss on the Northend mine in Kalgoorlie.

> During the time that you spent with them, which was really all the war except, I know, for an interlude during it, how easy was it to fit into the family? How much did you become a part of the family?

(5.00) From the day we arrived. There was no trauma. We had no problems whatsoever. We were accepted, not only by my uncle and aunt but all their friends and the children. We had no abuse either verbal or manual sort of thing. Nobody laid a hand on us. Frequently, I in particular, had got into some scrapes and so forth and I'm pretty certain I'd have copped a hiding at home but my uncle, who was known everywhere as Jock Taylor, he dressed me down a couple of times but he never thought it was necessary to do any more than that.

> So the discipline at the home, if you had to put it between relaxed, as strict to severe, would be relaxed?

Pretty relaxed, yeah.

> Were you at this stage, and during the war, missing your family, and if so how much could your uncle and aunt fill that emotional gap?

Well, my aunt was very caring but without being sort of cloying type, and I guess my mother was much the same, so there wasn't much of a change for me. Jock, my uncle, was very masculine, outdoors type of chap, but you always felt he was there if you needed him.

Could you talk openly about things that troubled you, if they did?

Yes, I could to Jock in particular. And Reg certainly, though he had a bit of trouble that way. I remember he had a boil in a rather delicate part of his anatomy and he just wouldn't tell anybody and he suffered. He told me and I found out in the end. I got Jock to sort of sort it out for him, but he was too embarrassed. But I don't think he would have been any different at home, so it wasn't really because of that.

That was his nature, not the situation. You were saying he was a bit homesick and, to a certain extent, rebelled.

He used to throw the odd tantrum - Reg. But whether - I mean, he had been known to do that at home, so I don't know, I'm not sure, but if there was any homesickness or problems with it, it would have been with him rather than me.

But the general pattern was that you were accepted easily and you got on well. During the period at Kalgoorlie and later in Perth were you ever visited by representatives of CORB to check on your welfare, or not?

No. I know that they sent questionnaires to the school to find out if we were properly dressed and that sort of thing - if we had shoes on - the usual things that these social workers tend to do. But no social worker, as such, ever visited me, or Reg, but we did ...

Do you know if they ever visited your aunt and uncle and spoke to them privately?

The chairman of CORB and her assistant in Perth lived near us in Subiaco and so we knew the assistant on a personal basis in that she lived near us. So I guess there was no need to sort of worry about us. There were a couple of others in the same situation who lived in the same suburb as were in. They knew where we were and how we were going, anyway. But no, we didn't have any official visits that I was aware of, and certainly my Aunt Amy would have told me if there had been.

Thanks for that. Let's talk a little bit, Paul, about some of the aspects of living, if you like, looking at the period in Kalgoorlie - of course a very different area to Britain. How did you see the difference as, for example, the kind of house you lived in?

We lived in a detached house in Britain before we left and we lived in a more colonial detached house in Kalgoorlie. It had no sewerage of course, which I hadn't really seen before, so you had to parade about sixty yards down the backyard any hour of the day and night you wished to visit. I found that the milk was delivered by a bloke with a horse and cart, which wasn't unusual in our village, except he delivered bottles. In Kalgoorlie he delivered it and you had to leave your billycan out and he put half a pint of milk out of a measure. And it wasn't unusual to find a bit of chaff floating on the top as well, so that was different.

Was water short? With the pipeline, did people still have to be careful, or not?

No, except my memories are - that stayed with me all my life. I've always turned taps off and I've always replaced washers when they were leaking. We weren't short of water and it wasn't rationed to that extent, though there weren't that many gardens but then Kalgoorlie's a pretty arid area. We had a lawn.

(10.00) Are you suggesting because of the aridity of the climate that people were very conscious of not wasting water?

Well, I guess there was probably a ration, but I wasn't aware of it. And it certainly there was no times when they'd say they'd turn the water off for so many hours at a time.

Where did you sleep? Did you have a bedroom?

No, that was the strangest thing for Reg and I, in that we slept on the verandah in beds. We were offered mosquito nets but we never used them and we were never worried by mozzies. We had a room where we could have slept inside if we'd have wished but after the first week we never wished. But we did find that ...

Because of the comfort, or the novelty of it?

Well, it was the novelty at first. I thought it was a bit like camping when you could see the stars just by looking at an angle of about forty-five degrees, you could see out underneath. But after we got over that I never wanted to go inside anyway, because there was no rain to speak of. The first year I was in Kalgoorlie I think I only saw two showers.

Flies and the summer heat, and of course you really were coming into the summer, do you remember that? Did that affect you much, or not?

The bush flies I found a bit of a nuisance but no more than the Australians did. The summer heat I found very pleasant actually because Kalgoorlie's very dry, there's no humidity to speak of. And we were blessed by having the only Olympic swimming pool in Western Australia - was in Kalgoorlie. There wasn't one in Perth at that time. And we became members of the Kalgoorlie Swimming Club and our friends opposite from Elder Smith, he used to give Reg and I a season ticket to the pool for Christmas each year. So we spent a terrific amount of time in the swimming pool.

That's an interesting memory, the neighbour giving you a season ticket for Christmas. What are the other Christmas memories? I mean, obviously it was so different to winter Christmas in England.

Well, the first Christmas was a bit traumatic actually because my aunt thought that she ought to try and do the same for us at Christmas as we would have at home so we wouldn't feel homesick. So we finished up with a hot dinner with roast chook and the pudding and all the bits and pieces and crackers and inside and it was 105 or 106 degrees on the old scale. And for ever afterwards we were less traditional and more comfortable. But I remember the first one, she thought this was the right way to do it for these lads from the old country.

Kalgoorlie, of course, was a great goldmining town, I think, you were saying some of your boyhood memories were of involved in exploring the gold areas.

We lived in Lamington on the outside of Kalgoorlie and they did a lot of diggings all around and there were still several prospectors who used to get the prospectors' allowance which my memory of is about thirty bob a week in those days. And they were still prospecting - digging, crushing and using a dry blower to reduce the gold.

Where did they live?

They lived mostly in sort of humpies and shacks on the diggings where they were - a deserted sort of a spot, but it was all ...

Were they integrated with the main Kalgoorlie population or were they rather outsiders?

No, I think they sort of came in on pension days and had a few beers at the hundreds of pubs that were around Kalgoorlie.

Do you remember the drinking in Kalgoorlie?

Yes. It was different. I don't mean that I remember that I remember scads of drunkards but because of the mines and the hours they worked in Boulder, in particular, mines had to be open when the fellows came off shifts so they were open at eleven o'clock and twelve o'clock at night when people came off.

You said 'mines had to be open', you meant pubs.

The pubs had to be open when the miners came off shift. We had tramcars in those days in Kalgoorlie and for miners going on shift in the early morning, they came in from Lamington we left into Kalgoorlie centre and then from Hammond Street going out to Boulder the train would tow three bogies behind with miners on board out to the Boulder block where the mines are. The 'golden mile' was out at Boulder rather than in Kalgoorlie, and so I remember those aspects of it. Of course the trams are all gone now.

I think the mullock heaps were something of a playground?

(15.00) Yeah, the mullock heaps, once the cyanide and the water had sort of drained off and evaporated, they were where we played on pushbikes and I was introduced to this form of rough riding by, I remember two friends, Bill Pope and Ron Hopkins, took me out to show my stuff on a pushbike on the mullock heaps around the Northend mine in Kalgoorlie. Quite exciting because frequently you came down the slope at a rate of knots and the one going up was only two yards away so that that bike almost bent double to get up the next time, and if you didn't rise in the saddle you got a terrible jolt straight up your backbone.

Did you have bikes with back pedal brakes, or handbrakes?

Back pedal brakes.

They weren't known in England?

I hadn't never seen one till I got to Kalgoorlie. I had a Malvern Star which I got as a Christmas present for the first year we were there, and it was a Malvern Star, with back pedal brake.

You got that for your first Christmas. That was a present from your ...

Aunt and uncle.

It would seem they were very generous.

Yes, and a much more expensive present than I would have ever had in my life before.

Pocket money? Did you work for that, or what?

Well, we were rostered on to the drying up every alternate night. Aunt Amy used to do the washing and Reg and I used to take it in turns to do the drying up. It was always my turn I felt but I'm sure he probably worked it right. And we got sixpence a week in my first year, and a shilling a week after that, and we had chores to do. The cooking was by a wood fire and wood was delivered in bush lots which had to be cut with an axe.

Was this timber or mallee stumps?

Timber. There were some mallee roots but they were actually much sought after but we got logs and probably sawn in twelve to fourteen inch circles and you split that with an axe. And sometimes if it was tough you used a wedge, and the back of the axe as a sledge hammer to do it.

So that was the main chores were washing up and ...

Washing up, firewood, tidy your room, make sure your shoes were cleaned.

But it was never beyond the level of just ordinary household work?

No.

Paul, there were some interesting explorations of old mine workings and one particular journey down a shaft.

I remember my particular cobber, Bill Pope, and I going out and we found a shaft with a manhole cover over and we lifted the manhole cover and it had a ladder going down that should have warned us that it was probably active. So we went down and I suppose we were down about a hundred feet and he actually had reached the level and a face appeared at the top and voice yelled out, 'Is there anybody down there?'. We said, 'Yes'. He said, 'Well, get up here quick', so we came up and it was actually a vent shaft from the Northend mine and he was the safety officer going around to make sure all the vents were clear before they started blasting. So he wasn't nasty but he told us in no uncertain manner to leave. And of course I heard all about it that night because my guardian, my Uncle Jock, he was a shift boss in that mine and the safety officer - with an accent like mine, I couldn't tell a lie that I was somebody

else - and he told Jock and I was dressed down quite severely and given a lesson on safety, but that was as far as it went.

> That's an interesting story, about the mine and the family atmosphere. Paul, perhaps just to pass over it briefly: you were at school at Kalgoorlie and I think you were saying sport was quite good in cricket and football and running, but there was Aussie Rules to contend with.

Yes, well of course that was the biggest changeover for me was when the football season started. Instead of being a competent player as I had been at home, I was definitely a new boy with an odd shaped football, and I had to learn how to drop kick, et cetera, and mark. Cricket, I had been a reasonably competent player at home and I made the Junior XI at Kalgoorlie High School in my first year. I had some success on the track. I won the handicap mile at the school sports in '41 and I think I finished third in the 400 metres - 440 yards it was then. And it was a terrific amount of training and we were supposed to diet but we never did, we always had two helpings of sweets, and I think when you're skinny as a rake dieting is a bit stupid.

> I think you were saying that basically you were very much accepted at the school except for a bit of light-hearted banter.

A bit of banter with the accent because it was quite pronounced in those days. There was never any ...

> You were never ostracised [inaudible]?

No. As a matter of fact what I didn't understand is that people would keep calling me English and I would continue to tell them that I wasn't English. As far as we were concerned the English were the old enemies sort of thing, and that I was Scottish. But there was a certain amount of antipathy towards some English people in Kalgoorlie. I think it was sort of the early 'whingeing Pom' syndrome, but it never affected me and certainly I never had any bad times because of my origins or because of my accent. It was more of a joke really, that they couldn't understand what I was saying.

(20.00) Well, just going back to England for a moment, Paul, and perhaps just thinking not only about the Kalgoorlie period but later in Perth during the war. How much did your family remain in your thoughts, or did they fade a little?

No, we wrote regularly, sometimes with a bit of persuasion, once a week or once a fortnight home. First in letters then later on those airgraphs they had during the war, that were reduced photographically. And we received letters back on a pretty regular basis. And then we were allowed to send a cable once a month. They were pre-written things. You had to choose the message you wanted to send from a list of about thirty, and we did that religiously all through the years.

> Besides that letter writing were you perhaps at a deeper level conscious of your family and how much they still mattered to you, or was this other family taking their place?

No, though my thoughts of uncle and aunt were very close, I never ever forgot my own family. And also my uncle and aunt wouldn't have let it happen. We saved regularly for

Christmas presents to send home, and birthdays. We sometimes missed birthdays but we never missed Christmas presents to send home, which was a tricky job during the war actually because you had to get them away about three months ahead - shipping was pretty hopeless.

> The news of the progress of the war in Europe, in particular Britain, and the bombing Britain endured and so on, were you very conscious of that, or not? And if you were how did it affect you?

I can't say that I was particularly worried about it after the Battle of Britain phase. Because once that was over really I thought that my people were not in immediate danger anyway and your thoughts were more turned towards Africa and later on, of course, to New Guinea. But no, I didn't see great dangers for my parents and of course my brother had already been killed so I knew we had nobody at sea then.

> Well, going on beyond Kalgoorlie. There was this period, beginning of '42, when the family went down to Perth and as an interim thing you went to this other family on a farm for six months. Could you just tell us the connection and name?

Yes, well, they were very close friends of my aunt. The name were Mr and Mrs Leak[?], Harry Leak and Janet Leak. She in fact was a Scot who'd come out to Australia before the first world war and married immediately after the first world war, a returning digger. And they had, I suppose, been a soldier settlement block in Kununoppin in the wheat belt of Western Australia. They had three daughters who were all older than me. I think Peg was sixteen and Jan eighteen, and Cynthia was probably about twenty-two. There was only one at home while I was on the farm for the six months, though the others came and went. And I also spent holidays there at other times. And it was a very exciting time for me in that they were extremely kind.

> Just to keep that perhaps brief, the general pattern, I think you were suggesting was that here again you met a family who fully accepted you and gave you all the caring one could ask for.

Yes, I was just absorbed straight into the family and I shared in the chores. Peg taught me to ride. While I was there I learnt to groom horses and get them - we didn't have a tractor - and Harry worked an eight-horse team, and we had to get the horses ready for their work in the morning which meant feeding them, putting on the collar and reins, bridles, et cetera. And I had to help with the chooks, feeding those and feeding the pigs and chopping wood.

(25.00) Were they chooks to you, or chickens?

By then they were chooks (laughs). I have troubles when I'm occasionally back in the UK because I still speak of chooks and chickens to me are little ones (laughs).

> Just to pause for a moment and go back because it's something I should clarify. With the previous family - your aunt and uncle - they had no children, I think that's correct?

Correct, yes.

So in a sense it must have been a pleasure for them to have you, but you were saying they never trespassed on your original family loyalty, that must have been a wonderful thing that they could this.

Yes, I think so, when I think of it later, how caring and responsible they were.

It was just something I think we should put in to round the record off. Well, going back to the farm, Paul, what sort of a house was this? What sort of facilities did this farmhouse have?

It was a pretty big farmhouse. It was built by Harry, probably with help. It was stone, had an iron roof, verandahs all the way round. Little rooms in the corners of the verandah, one of which I had, and it had running water in that he'd plumbed in a dam from higher up on the farm right down so that we actually had running water in the bathroom, that was from the dam. If the dam was dry, we had a well outside in the garden which we pulled water by the bucketful.

What were the toilet arrangements?

Same as Kalgoorlie, about fifty yards down the back. Also, the other thing, of course there was no electricity.

None at all?

None at all. They didn't even have a generator. There might have been a couple of farms around the place that did have but certainly we never had one.

So how did you get by for light?

We had kerosene lamps. There were a couple of very good models with mantels which were in the dining room and the lounge, but the others we had ordinary kerosene lamps in the bedrooms and a hurricane lamp on the back verandah which you took with you when you had to go down the backyard. It was turned down low at night and it was just hanging on there, just glimmering. And if you had to go outside during the night you could turn up the wick and walk down the backyard.

While you were there I think you were doing correspondence lessons. How did that go, and did you have any other help?

Yeah, I did correspondence from the Correspondence School at Claremont in Perth, a suburb of Perth. Generally speaking I could get help from the lady of the house, Mrs Leak, with respect to say English, history, geography and so forth, but for the maths side - I was at second year high school by that time - I used to cycle into Kununoppin on the Saturday and I could get help from the schoolteacher there. It was a one teacher school. And at one stage I could go in there and sit down in the classroom for a while but that wouldn't help you very much because there were five classes in the one classroom with one teacher so correspondence was a better bet really.

The one teacher school teacher, was that something of a chore or did he welcome your visits?

No, he was quite happy to do it. He said it got him out of doing any chores around the house and he was happy. Of course, the other thing about the farm was our means of travel was by sulky. We had a car, an old roadster, but petrol was rationed and it was only used really if Mrs Leak was going to go into town. If it was just Peg and I, or even Mr Leak and Peg and I, we generally went in the sulky.

> Could you picture the scene for us - the family and the sulky? It was on I'd assume some sort of a dirt road or a track. Could you picture the details of the scene, perhaps even the smell?

The wheat belt is pretty dry and the farms are large compared with, say, some of the eastern states, and certainly the UK. From memories, the Leak farm was eleven hundred to twelve hundred acres. We had a track from the house to the front gate which had a grille, you know a cattle grille over it. And then it was an unsealed road with gum trees, high gum trees on the side all the way in. There were a couple of turns in it before we got to Kununoppin ...

END TAPE 2, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B

> Identification: this is Ed Stokes on Evacuees, Paul Farquharson, tape two, side two.
>
> Well, just ending this journey on the sulky.

You frequently had quite a lot of birds on the way there were crows, of course, occasionally the parrots, [inaudible], they're ring necks - green parrots with a black band around the throat - and the odd pink and grey galah, and very occasionally white cockatoos, but that was the bird life [inaudible].

> What happened in the sulky on the way in, would you have been talking, or singing, what sort of mood was there?

Peg and I generally sang, whether we were doing the washing up or whether we were in the sulky. Talked a lot. They used to buy music books, not with the music in it, just the words of all the songs and we knew the words of all the popular songs of the day by heart. Especially when we were washing up at night, which of course we did every night, we used to sing.

> It sounds lovely. The pictures came to town, I think, once a month or so.

Yes, as was common in WA in those days, the picture man came once a month, I guess it was probably, and he backed his truck up to the hall and he showed .... He had a couple of slots in the back of the hall there and he showed his film through the two apertures. And it was a single unit so that there was an interval every time he changed the reel, and he couldn't switch from one to the other. Quite frequently you'd have a breakdown and when there was a breakdown he'd flash a slide on the screen which would say, 'Bombs on powerhouse, short intermission', and then he repaired the film or changed the reel, whatever the case was. And the other item of interest before that was that, whether by arrangement with him or not, it was

the one day in town when you could buy a pie. And so at the pictures we always had a hot pie.

What was the sort of mood amongst the people, do you remember that?

For the kids in particular it was the social event of the month. The only other entertainment really was a dance, to which everybody used to go, kids and all. I used to go to the dance in short pants with Peg and sometimes with Mr Leak but we frequently went in the sulky and removed ...

This was in the town?

The same hall. The picture house, the main hall and the lesser hall was all the one hall.

So often would dances have been held?

I think probably every two or three months there would be a dance. A three piece band, local people playing drums and a piano and sometimes an instrument.

And this was a real gathering of the community?

Yes, and you didn't have to have a partner to go. It's, everybody went. Just because you were only fourteen they'd dance with you. They'd dance with anybody, there weren't that many blokes around really. And Peg taught me to dance on the back verandah. I might add that the fact that the back verandah we learnt on didn't have any floorboards, it was cobbles. And Western Australia's a bit behind the rest of the places and we were still doing old time dances like the Maxina, and the Gay Gordons, and the barn dance, et cetera. And I learnt all of those. And to keep time we either sang or whistled while we learnt to dance.

That's a lovely memory. Peg, just for the record, I think was the sixteen-year-old daughter.

Yes.

(5.00) Just briefly perhaps, pedlars, I think, called at the house.
nknk, called at the house.

We had one pedlar which was the first time I'd ever seen one, and he wasnk, called at the house.

We had one pedlar which was the first time I'd ever seen one, and he was probably the last of his brnk, called at the house.

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We had one pedlar which was the first time I'd ever seennk Just finally about harvesting, what do you remember of harvesting on the farm? I know you were there for a holiday, too, when the harvest was on. What's your strongesou remember of harvesti Well, first of all, it was a horse team and my memories are that I could go round sitting next to Mr Leak on the harvester and I think probably about two circuits would fill the hopper. Then he would get out and bag that. That's run the wheat out of the hopper into bags which were dumped at one end of the paddock we were harvesting. Then I think we stitched the top of the bag and then moved that on to a dray and took it down to a central collecting point. Then somebody came in ahed the top of the bag and then moved that on to a dray and took it down to a central collecting point.

> You were talking about burning off after the harvest. What do you remember of that of the colours, the picture of it, if you like, and perhaps the smells.

The burning off - it was just burning off stubble, which was the recognised farming practice in those days. We got a tin of kerosene and a stick with a bit of rag round it, set alight to it then walked along on the down wind side and let it off and let it go. It had to be a calm day, the wind had to be in a certain direction, and you came in afterwards all your clothes smelling of smoke and burnt chaff and bits all over you and so forth. I had no idea that it was going to happen and I didn't realise that that was part of farming practice of those days.

> This is just to summarise some later events. After the six months' period on the farm Paul went, and the family - his aunt and uncle - were now in Perth at Subiaco where they lived till the end of the war. Scouts, cricket, football, singing were all activities and Paul went to Perth Boys' High School. And in 1943 left school, I think you'd got an exam ....

Yeah, it was the Junior Certificate - that's the Intermediate Certificate in the eastern states - I successfully completed that in '43.

> And that led to a job as a university lab. assistant and then later Paul went on to become an apprentice with Airlines of WA Limited, and also attending night school. What was the actual apprenticeship?

Aircraft maintenance engineer.

> That was aircraft maintenance engineer, just for the volume. During this period, Paul, I think scouting was a big part of your life.

Yes, well, of course it was really the only outlet, apart from sport, it was the only outlet for boys. There weren't the myriad of clubs that there are today. And a lot of kids were involved in scouting. And I belonged a top troop in Western Australia and it was a large part of our life and we had our own campsite in the Darling Ranges, at Walliston.

> How often did you go camping, and what do you remember of camping in Australia?

(10.00) Well, with our troop we probably camped, corresponding with the school holidays - we had camps for everyone of them - plus long weekend camps also. So we maybe camped as often as once every three months. And with special intent, in that we were scouting competitions that were involved: the Cowan Cup and the Sir Harry Barron Star, which was a hiking competition, and so a lot of our camping activities were centred on the competitions that would come during the year.

> Going on to the end of the war, Paul. I gather there was never any confusion or conflict in your mind as to who your real parents were.

No.

> But it also seems clear that you - well, you certainly came back to Australia - wanted to make a life in Australia. Is that correct?

I didn't know. The only thing - I didn't want to go home in '45 because I wanted to finish the apprenticeship first and I had no problem getting approval to do that, both from my parents, the CORB and my guardians here. But after that it was my intention to go home.

> To go home to England and to stay in England?

Well, to go home. I wasn't certain what I was going to do, but I always intended that I would return home.

> Right. Your brother left, I think, soon after the war ended, or the war in Europe, do you remember that farewell, and how was he?

Yes, Reg would have been about fifteen at the time, and I was down there to see him off on the ship, and the same escort who had brought us out, Eleanor Pearson, was his escort on the way back. She was married and I can't think of her married name. And her husband was the

other escort who looked after them. And I saw Reg off there, and of course I knew a lot of the West Australian kids who joined the ship there because a lot of us lived in Perth. In fact two or three of us were at Perth Boys at the same time. And that's the last time I saw any of the evacuees until last year, apart from my brother. I never saw another single one.

That's quite remarkable. Just going back to your own decision, you wanted to complete the apprenticeship. Your parents were fully behind that, were they?

They were quite happy with that, yes.

Well, you did, after you finished your apprenticeship, I think, go to India.

Yes I went as a flight engineer. We were freighting aircraft up to India and I worked in India for about six months or so as a flight engineer with an airline company there. When I finished that I couldn't get a passage back because the shipping had all been diverted off the Indian coast because of the Palestine problems and I worked my passage back on a Dutch ship from Calcutta, actually, which is pretty difficult because it's on the wrong side, so we had to come down the Ganges, the Hooghly River, and right down, Colombo and then up to Aden and through the canal. And I went back to Rotterdam and from then I went to London and then home to my parents.

And I think you reached home in, is it '48?

Yeah, I reached home on 1st June 1948 which is my youngest brother, Ian's, birthday. He was fourteen by that time, I think - twelve or fourteen by that time.

Before you went home, or in that period, were you still able to clearly visualise things such as your parents' home, your parents themselves, what they looked like?

Well, I thought I did. I was quite certain that I would recognise my parents. I didn't think I'd recognise my younger brother because he was four when I left, but I didn't think I'd have any problems with my mother and father. As it happened I never had any problem recognising my father who was bald anyway and hadn't changed in that length of time, but I did not recognise my mother. And it was only the fact that she was the last one left on the station at Ashford that I knew it was her. And I pretended but I didn't, no.

And that was what, you just simply did not know.

I just did not recognise her. She had dark hair when I left, and I realised now that when I left I was forty years of age [sic] and she was almost white when I got back. There are good reasons for that, I guess. She'd lost her son, she had two boys overseas, she'd had to cope with my younger brother growing up when she was directed to labour. She'd been a receptionist at the Middlesex District Hospital for all those years. And my father was frequently away for long periods so she had a very harrowing time. And certainly I didn't recognise her at all.

(15.00) Beyond those physical differences, you went home and of course were there for only nineteen or so days before you were called up which you, I think, had not realised. In that time were you able to regain the closeness of the family that you'd had before, or not?

My father was still away when I got back. Ian, my youngest brother, was a complete stranger and he, of course, is the only member of the family who doesn't have a Scottish accent, or didn't at that time, because he was only about two when we left Scotlanber of the family who doesn't have a Scottish accent, or didn't at that time, because he was only about two when we left Scotlanber of the family who doesn't have a Scottish accent, or didn't at that time, because he was only about two when we left Scotlanber of

And it wasn't hard for her to accept that you had grown up?

No, I don't think so, because I was about the same age as Bob had been when he left. So, to some extent ...

You filled that gap a bit.

Yes, though Reg, of course, had been home for three years - two or three years.

And how about with your father? Did you again have the kind of relationship you'd had before?

Yes, more or less. He was a very open, gregarious type of chap, a wonderful raconteur, a bit of a bull artist at times, you know. But he was very pleasant.

And were they interested to hear your stories of Australia?

Yes, and they wanted to know all about Hal, as they called him, who was Uncle Jock, and Amy. I had them both out in Australia years later. They did all meet.

You had your parents out?

Mm.

Well, it sounds from what you're saying, of this brief period before you were in the national service, and I guess the two years in England you saw them intermittently?

Yes.

That the basic family structures, relationships, had survived the separation?

Yes, I think ours survived it okay. My mother was a much more independent person after the war than she ever had before, because she, as people did in pre-war days, when she got married she stopped working, which would have been about 1922, I guess, or thereabouts. And she never worked again, apart from housework of course, until the war years when everybody had to do something, and she went back .... Well, they said, 'What did you do when you last worked?'. She said, 'I was a receptionist at the Grosvenor Hotel in Glasgow'. And they said, 'Well, there's a job for a receptionist at the Middlesex General Hospital', and she went straight to that. And she stayed there for the whole time and continued to work on afterwards. In fact she worked for the Middlesex General Hospital for twenty years.

And that gave her a new independence.

She was a much more independent person than she ever had been before. I think, looking back, she tended to be sort of submissive before but she certainly was her own woman after the war.

> And was your mother ever able to tell you of the heartache she suffered during the war, during your absence, if she had suffered it?

Yes, I think, she was able to tell me some of it, though she still got upset about my brother and so do I.

> Just about the *City of Benares*, Paul, had that been an issue with your mother?

Yes, it had because we were at sea and she knew we were at sea when the *City of Benares* was sunk. She didn't know which ship we were on and she probably, if there'd been anybody at home, they would have worked out since it was sunk in the North Atlantic - they knew that much - that we should have got past the North Atlantic by that stage. But you know, when you're children are at sea in that situation you don't sort of stop and analyse the situation. But she was worried. She was advised that we weren't on it. But of course we were still at sea and she knew that because she'd had no word that we'd arrived in Australia so [inaudible] ...

> And I guess it took some time for parents to be advised.

Yes, I mean, they didn't advise them straight away, I'm sure of that. In fact in many ways I thought the British government and CORB were pretty tardy about advising about anything really. But that certainly worried her a great deal, and of course, despite things that were said in various books I've read, we didn't know when we were at sea that the *City of Benares* had been sunk. I was in Australia.

> That's an interesting point because Beryl Daley, the escort, tells me that she took down the message, she used to dictate .... But she maintains that the children never knew. So you did not know.

(20.00)I was into everything on board, like most of the kids and I'm pretty sure if that had been known, that we would have known - our group. And I've talked to Beryl about it since and I said, 'Well, look, Beryl, I'm sure I didn't know till I got to Kalgoorlie that the *City of Benares* had sunk', because my aunt told me. Of course it had long since passed the newspapers, but she told me about that, and then of course my mother mentioned it in writing. But I certainly didn't know on the way out. And I would be surprised if many of the children did.

> Just one quick thing, something you said prompted the thought. Letters, we talked about them before. In your letters to England and the letters from home, could you be quite open in your feelings and news and all the rest of it?

Yes. Censorship was still in but my mother told me that there was seldom, if anything, chopped out of our letters. But we frequently got letters from her that had chunks cut out of them - they'd cut the piece out. They didn't black it out, they cut it out.

> Quite large pieces?

No, mostly place names, things like that, I guess.

Where she was passing on news of the war?

She was passing on news of either our relatives or where they were. But I had several relatives in the forces, of course. If she'd have said, Robert's at Aldershot, of course this would have helped Hitler no end, you know (laughs).

It really is quite bizarre [inaudible].

It is bizarre really. He was a private in the Guards Division, and I'm sure the fact that he was at Aldershot was no secret to anybody who wished to find out.

Unbelievable. Did that annoy you at the time?

I thought it was very .... It didn't annoy me. It tended to bring the war home to me that though I was far away from any problems whatsoever in Australia, that things were still very much cloak and dagger and there was this secrecy that we only saw on films in Australia.

Right. That's most interesting. Going back to Britain, looking at it at a different level, the country itself, Paul. How did Britain strike you as it was when you got back there? How did you react to the country?

Well, the journey down, my parents were still living in the same house in Ashford, Middlesex. I always tend to say Ashford, Middlesex, because the big town of Ashford is in Kent, and if you don't put Middlesex on the letters they always went to Kent. So we frequently got letters from Scotland that would say, 'Not known Kent, try Middlesex', so we went back to Ashford, Middlesex. You go from Waterloo station and the way out through Vauxhall and all the way down it was sort of a bomb site on either side of the line and there were still bits of buildings standing with the mantlepieces still up, all the way three storeys with ornaments still on the mantlepiece three storeys up with no walls around them.

This is in 1948?

Yes, and for some years afterwards, before they really cleared a lot of that up. And there were large, vacant spots with had been cleared which had been bomb sites. There was still plenty of that around. There was no rubble on the streets because that was all gone but the buildings themselves - whole streets and so forth - there was still a lot of devastation.

What about the general mood of the country? The mood of the people?

I found the mood rather apathetic, rationing was still on, people were looking for a good time. They were finding it difficult to have a good time because the wherewithal wasn't available and I thought, there's not much get up and go among them. But then I hadn't suffered four years of the privation that they had. Though rationing was in before I left and I certainly knew what it was all about. It was still in when I got back, albeit it was a bit easier, but I found the mood of the people in general rather apathetic and just couldn't care less, type of attitude.

Were there any other good or bad points about the country?

Yes, I thought it was nice to get back and see that they still played sport and so forth. I was a bit apprehensive about their chances in the 1948 Test Series because they looked pretty pathetic to me (laughs). But it was good to see that they were still prepared to get up and try, even though they weren't really in a state of readiness to play international - I didn't think they were really in a state of readiness for international competition, even at that stage.

How much was Australia a part of your thoughts? And as the two years in the national service wore on, how much were you thinking of Australia?

(25.00)Well, after I'd been back for about six months and I'd contacted the people I knew and the friends I had and so forth, I really thought, this isn't for me. I'd like to get home, and I didn't mean Scotland by that time, I meant Perth. I told my mother on one leave that I think I'll go back as soon as I can, which in fact I did.

What were the specific reasons? Or were there any specific reasons, or just this general sense that by that stage Perth was home?

Yeah, well, Perth was home. I'd grown up there. My friends were there. My ties were there. I didn't have any sort of romantic .... I'd had a girlfriend and so forth just before I left but it was nothing serious. But I felt that the open life and I thought there was more opportunity in Australia than there was in the UK, and I just wanted to get back to where I knew I could fit straight in. I don't mean I was a square peg in a round hole over there. I was accepted back into the cricket club and the hockey club and all that sort of thing.

Was there ever any feeling that you'd been away? You'd had an easy war?

I don't know about that, but I remember somebody saying after I'd been away for all these years, he more or less said, 'Oh well, you're back then', that was about all there was to it. I went back to the same church as I had belonged to before and they welcomed me back with open arms.

Was there much curiosity about your time in Australia, or not?

Certainly there was a certain amount of it, but more or less they didn't want to dwell on it. Once you'd got over the first week or so, you were more or less expected to get back into the swing of things and to get into your niche that ...

You were back in Britain.

You're back in Britain and get on with it.

And this is where they didn't ...

It didn't worry me particularly. I didn't want to start talking about kangaroos and gum trees all the time, or anything, but it did seem a rather mundane, drab sort of atmosphere. I found the weather a bit rough, too.

How did your family react, perhaps particularly your mother?

Well, I wouldn't exactly say she took it in her stride, but she was quite supportive. And she said, 'Oh well, if that's what you want to do, you should go ahead and do it'. And she said, 'I certainly wouldn't stand in your way'. At that time I was about twenty-two anyway, but no, she understood, was very understanding about it all.

Reg later came out and lived in Perth. Did he come out before you, or later?

Afterwards. After. He also did two years' national service in the army but he'd been home. As a matter of fact he completed his national service before I did because he was called up at eighteen. I was older when I got back.

Just for the record, Paul. You later worked in civil aviation in different aspects. Did Australia, as you came back to it in 1950-51 and into the '50s, did it match your hopes and expectations?

Yes, I think so. There had been some changes - the Holden motorcar, for instance. And certainly more traffic on the roads and there were more things in the shops. They did have rationing during the war in Australia, not that it was anywhere near the thing we had in the UK, but there was plenty of everything. I found it much as I expected it to be and the improvements that you would expect after a war and the shortages and the privations were over and it was going along as expected.

So in the decision to come to Australia, to make it your home, there was no regret later on?

No, never regretted, at all.

Your parents, you said, you brought out here once. Did you go back to England much?

Yes, well, after I got back I went back to the airline company I'd been with before. We were later merged with a larger company, McRobertson Miller, and around about 1948 I finished up as a station engineer in Darwin ...

Did you say '48?

Sorry, '58, excuse me. And I joined the Department of Aviation from there as an airworthiness surveyor. I was stationed in various parts of Australia and New Guinea and I finished up in Sydney at one stage and I was in charge of a group that looked after QANTAS and we did surveillance on QANTAS all around the world which meant travelling. And I got back and forwards to UK three or four times.

Right. Incidentally, do you think CORB had any affect on you in terms of ...

END TAPE 2, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE A

Identification: this is Ed Stokes, Paul Farquharson, Evacuees, tape three, side one.

Paul, the CORB experience, did that make it easier to travel later, or to want to travel?

Yes, I guess so, because I'd had the experience very young of foreign climes, et cetera. There was no mystery in the far east as far as I was concerned. I'd worked in India. Of course, I'd married and my wife was only too happy to up stumps and go wherever I happened to be posted. She never complained once. And we've been posted to just about every state in Australia, plus a couple of years overseas. I was seconded to the International Civil Aviation Organisation for two years in Lebanon and she loved it.

Are you now a Scot living in Australia, or are you an Australia?

I'm a bit ambivalent about the subject. When I'm in Scotland I feel very much at home when I meet the few relatives I have left, but this is home as far as I'm concerned. I have grown up, married children here and grandchildren and I wouldn't expect to live anywhere else, nor wish to.

Just some final questions about CORB. Had CORB changed you, and if so for the better or the worse?

Well, it certainly gave me opportunities I doubt if I would ever have had if I'd have stayed in the UK. I've tried to come to grips with what I would have done if I had've stayed at school in the UK, and I don't really know which way I would have gone. There was a war on. I would have probably come out of school and probably gone straight into one of the forces. But I can't really come to grips with what I would have done by way of working in the workforce.

Did it help mature you? Did it change you in that way, do you think?

Yes, I think you matured quicker in that you were on your own. You knew you were in a different country. You knew you were without your parents even though you had all the support around the place, but you always knew deep down that this wasn't your own country, at least at that time. So I think you're more self reliant. I think the time on the farm helped to increase one's maturity. And I certainly think that the Boy Scouts, of the days I was in that - I don't know about nowadays - but we certainly didn't have the parents doing everything for us in our day. I doubt if my parents even would have known where our campsites were. Whereas I've seen my kids, or grandchildren, going off to camp and the parents have to go and set the damn tents up. Well, that would be unheard of in my day. So I think all those things did make us more mature at an earlier date.

If you'd known the duration of the war, would you have wanted to have gone?

I don't think, once the die was cast, that I would ever have turned back.

Even if you'd known war would be four or five years?

Even then I don't think, if it'd have made any difference. We were sure it would be the adventure of our life and that was it.

> As a parent yourself - you've been one - if you had a child of your age when you left - this quite a hoary question - and in a similar situation, how would you have reacted?

I thought of it. I don't know and I would have found it extremely difficult to do what my mother did, but then I doubt if you'd ever be in such a position again, as they were, in the modern warfare type of situation. But in the situation she was in, knowing what they did, with the grave European situation with invasion was thought to be imminent, and it certainly, the invasion force was assembled, I think she made the right decision.

(5.00) Do you see CORB being at fault in any way at all?

Yes. I didn't realise it at the time but I couldn't think of anything more stupid than sending children out on a troopship, which made it a legitimate military target, and I would have thought that it would have been a much more sensible situation to have sent children out in a non-military type ship with appropriate markings, either Red Cross or hospital. I know in later days in the war those things may have not been respected but all my readings of things in 1940 I think it would probably have been a reasonable precaution to have taken. But to have sent children out on military ships, or ships with military on it, I think was rather stupid.

> That's most interesting. Besides that, I know you did make the point about CORB being rather tardy in communicating and so on, is there any other point you would make either for or against the CORB organisation?

No. Talking to other people and even escorts that looked after us - Bill Oats, Beryl Daley, those sort of people - I rather think that the success was due to the individuals who looked after the children, rather than the overall CORB umbrella. I think they did a marvellous job in London culling the things but the actual organisation of getting kids on to boats and so forth, there was a terrific amount of improvisation and they were lucky in the people they got: the Oats and the Kilbys and Eleanor Pearsons and the Beryl Daleys. These were the people who made CORB.

> That's a most interesting point. Just finally, the reunions. You've been to one - no, I think to both here, and I think to the one in England, too. Have they affected you in any way, either good or bad - besides obviously seeing people?

Their fiftieth anniversary, and I don't know what I expected to see when I got to York. I suppose I had ideas that I'd recognise somebody but the five-year-olds were now fifty-five and the fifteen-year olds were sixty-five, so there were no children, and obviously I didn't recognise anybody, and it all seemed such a long time ago. But the thing that did affect me very much was the comradeship that was quite spontaneous when we got together again.

> It's obviously still a very deep memory.

Mm.

> Paul, is there any other last thing you would like to say, that you feel has not been said?

No, I think I've covered most of the ground that we discussed. Certainly it's been a great thrill for me to meet so many of the children after all these years. And I've re-formed friendships with people I haven't seen since 1940, and I've met my fellow poet again, when I was at Wollongong. I'll return her four and ninepence at some stage. It's been great to see that we still have this feeling of affection.

> Yes, that's very, very evident in all the people I've met, Paul - extremely. On behalf of the War Memorial, thank you very much, especially on this day of a Test cricket game, for making the time to make it, thank you.

A pleasure.

END OF INTERVIEW