ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

TITLE: JACK JONES - 460 SQUADRON RAAF

INTERVIEWEE: JACK JONES

INTERVIEWER: LAURIE FIELD

SUMMARY: RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS SERVICE IN 460 SQUADRON RAAF IN BRITAIN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR .

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

> Just to fill out your personality a bit, Jack, your character. I just don't want to say, Jack Jones was Merve Stafford's staff sergeant, I want to sort of say a few things about Jack Jones. The first question ...

You ask the question.

> So could you give us some rough idea of your pre-war life? what you did, where you came from originally, what you did.

I originally came from Rockhampton in 19 ... I was originally born in Bundaberg and my family shifted to Rockhampton, and I did most of my youth days and schooling in Rockhampton, served an apprenticeship on cycles and motorcycles, and during the depression of '39 I was retrenched with a lot of other people. I battled on my own and started my own business. I went back on wages again for a company by the name of Burn Motors, and from there I went to Brisbane. And about '32 left Rockhampton for Brisbane, working just in garages and round the place down there. This show of the war came along and enlisted in the air force.

> Pretty early in the piece, was it?

Yes, I think it was early in 1940 - nineteen hundred and forty - we were allowed to do a trade test and get through Manpower, get away in those days.

> What, you had to get a release from Manpower?

Yes, yes. We did our rookies at Richmond - that's what you want to get on to?

> Yes.

Rookies at Richmond and from Richmond we went to Sydney Technical College and did a course there - I don't know whether you would term it fitting or an engineer - not exactly an engineer, of course, but more to do with the fitting trade. And from there we had examinations there, and from there we went to Ascot Vale in Melbourne. I was with Number 1 Engineering School, in Australia at that time - had numerous examinations from there. And from there we were posted back to our own state actually - I went to Amberley in those days, which was only one hanger in those days - it's a much bigger place today - and we had Wirraways and Ansens. And from there they called us, anybody that wished to go overseas would they go over and see them - they were nearly killed in the rush then (laughs).

From there I went to Sydney Technical College and then to engineering school, and from engineering school - I'm coving myself twice there.

> You're right, I'll sort it out.

I went there from Amberley and I was posted overseas.

> How long were you at Amberley, roughly, before you got your posting?

Oh, not very long, not much more than - I was in England in 1941 and I enlisted in '40, and I

suppose the rookie course wouldn't have been much more than about twelve months, the whole [skate] between.

Did you go in as a trainee or as a tradesman?

As a tradesman. Everybody did the course as well. And when we arrived in England we were posted to different English units to get experience, and I went to 25 OTU at Finningly which comprised quite a mixed crew and very mixed aircrew, pretty well every aircraft that they were flying in those days. That would be in a little - we left Australia in July in 1941, we did quite a round trip. We crossed New Zealand, Canada, Halifax, on to Iceland, from Iceland to xxx Scotland, and then down to Bournemouth. So it was quite a fair hike there. And from Bournemouth we were transported to Finningly, and I think it was early in 1942, practically the beginning of the year that we were posted to Breeton.

We'll skip there - we'll leave out 460 and pick you up. When you left 460 where did you go to? What happened from then to now?

I came home.

When did you leave 460?

It would be round about in December because we were on the water Christmas Day ...

December '45?

... near enough, November, December somewhere on '44 - D Day was finished. They gave us, we chappies, the opportunity of coming home, so we asked to be relieved - not relieved, but they accepted - and then I came back to Oakey.

Is this the one near Toowoomba?

Yes, Toowoomba. And I was only there about six months and I got my discharge.

And what did you do after that?

Well, I came back to Maryborough to see my family and my brother at this particular time was in Maryborough - I was going to go to Qantas and he wanted me to stay here and go in to business with him in the garage game. I don't know whether I was wise or unwise, I went in to business with him and we bought a garage and we had about fifteen years, going on quite reasonably well. We had the Morris franchise - Morris and Wolseley - and he goes to Brisbane one weekend and he didn't come back, or he came back in a box.

So I held on for - I think it must have been oh, eighteen months or two years - I sold up - I was the junior partner, of course. I didn't know what to do then. I bought a bit of a show there and I was making fishing sinkers and nails, quite a different ...

Different combination.

... complex than aeroplanes. Anyway, my neighbour on the other side here, Andrew Dunn from Dunn Newspaper, a provincial newspaper, they owned the Rockhampton Bulletin round here

and they owned Toowoomba, and they wanted somebody to look after their press. So I [waited] xxx whether I would stay what I was doing or try and get somebody else to worry for me (laughs). So I went to the Chronicle and I looked after their press, in charge of the printing room and the press for nearly thirteen years. Now I've retired.

You retired from there?

Retired from there, when I was sixty-five. I've been on the wool's back ever since, I get a slight disability pension, and next Sunday I'm eighty.

Eighty? I don't believe it, Jack. That's incredible.

That's true.

It's just incredible.

(Incidental conversation)

What did Edna do all the time you were away at the war?

She went to - in Rockhampton she became connected with the Americans. There was a big contingent of Americans in Rockhampton, that was one of their depots - what would you call it, a depot? - they took over the showgrounds there, there were thousands of Americans, I understand, there at the time. And she was working in the office, wherever it was, with the Red Cross they called themselves, or American Cross. And then she went to Brisbane, and then from Brisbane on to Sydney. She came to Melbourne, she was in Melbourne with me when I was in engineering school down there - and I'm not too sure whether she was - I don't think she was [working] then. She came back to Sydney and she curled up with the Yanks again, and she was still working for them when I came home. We've been living here for just on thirty years.

Nice quiet spot too - good climate.

Yes, we like it very much.

Now, to get back to the Squadron. When did you go to Breeton, roughly?

Breeton; that would be early in 1942 - Hubbard was the commanding officer - CO.

When they moved to Binbrook you came with them to Binbrook?

Yes. They flew over by - I didn't fly over - they had a machine in the hanger and Jimmy Sharp came back and flew it, flew it back from there. A lot of them went over by glider from Breeton.

xxx the way to go.

Their Home on Spalding Moore was the mother station from Breeton - see, we were a satellite of Home on Spalding Moore.

Your duties as a ground crew sergeant, Jack; what were you responsible for? everything, of course.

Well, you were given an aircraft and that was your responsibility you were given. If you were a fitter 2E, which is an engine fitter, or a 2A, you'd normally have a corporal rigger with you, or vice versa, or a [corporal airframe] and you would be - most of the crews that we had on the Squadron were mostly Australian - a big majority of them Australian NCOs and the rest were English, a mixture of English xxx. And that was your sole responsibility ...

That one aircraft.

For that only one aircraft, unless you stood in for somebody when they were away - you might get a sergeant that is on leave, you might stand in there, but normally it was only one aircraft and that was quite sufficient to look after.

That's right. Okay, you were a fitter 2A, were you?

2E.

2E. So you would have had an airframe man, corporal.

Airframe,yeah - corporal - I forget his name - I should remember, but I forget it now.

Did you have any other staff permanently attached to you for that aircraft?

They stayed with me - he stayed with you all the time, and then I had a bit of a mixture. I had an Irishman xxx if I remember xxx xxx - I can't think of him, he should have been - he'd have made a better cook than xxx (laughs) - he probably was a flight mech, I think they called themselves - then had a Taffy, and I had another Irishman - that was four - and the airframe fitter - that was six. Well, big responsibility fell on yourself and your corporal. If you had a good corporal and yourself, well, you could cope, you could do most of the urgent stuff and them do the labouring side of it, you see - inspections to do, daily inspections to do each day after each operation. And then when - I forget what the hour was up now - was it forty or fifty hour xxx - so the inspections that you were grounded till that inspection, well, you did that too.

You'd have done that on the dispersal?

On the dispersal, yes. Towards the latter stages of the Squadron they developed an echelon and they used to go in to the hanger fairly late in the Squadron when the inspection would come up. They'd call for it and it would go in to the hanger, and you'd bring it back or service it - they wouldn't have that responsibility. During the early days of the Squadron you were responsible before ...

For the major services too.

Prior to the Wellington - prior to the Halifaxes we had Wellingtons - Wellingtons were the first aircraft the Squadron had there at Breeton.

You didn't have the Halies for long, did you?

No, and the Halies never went - we didn't have many on the Squadron and they didn't - I don't think they ever went operational.

Alec Wales said the pilots refused to fly them, the Halies.

Mostly - I think it might have been a training [strip]. There was only a few of them [on there]. You met Alec Wales, did you?

Yeah, met Alec.

Yes, I remember him being on the Squadron.

I spent a couple of hours with Alec at Nambour - he lives up in the mountains behind.

Yes, xxx.

How many trades would you have had involved in those four blokes underneath you and your corporal? What trades would they have been? All 2As or 2Es?

Oh, I don't know - xxx like mechanics, I think, that's all they returned. I don't think they were - they may have done a small course of some description - xxx xxx several. One chap was a good clerk, well, they'd put him in as a cook, or vice versa. That's just how it finished up mostly with a lot of the xxx crews that you did. On the OTUs, the operational training unit that I was on, there was some pretty bright boys amongst the English crews, some of them were permanent air force, there weren't any slouchers at all.

These blokes would have been mechanics or maybe riggers?

They were just in - what would you call them? - conscripted in to it and 'righto, you'd make a good so-and-so' - they were all very willing, they were good boys, but a lot of them, as far as technical ability ...

Very limited.

Very limited, yes.

How about your radar/radio blokes, and armaments?

Now you are coming to the other side of it now, see, you were speaking mostly of the maintenance of the aircraft - that's the maintenance of the aircraft - well, then you had your electricians, you had your armourer, you had your instrument makers - the compass was swung at different times - in fact, there was another one and that was ... armourer ...

Could be radar.

Radar - wireless at least, that's another one - they used to go round the Squadron - I don't know how many of them there used to be - but they'd come round to your aircraft and they'd do their daily inspection and you'd see that they'd sign the xxx.

That was your part, your supervision of them was to see they signed that.

Apart from what you did yourself, that was your responsibility. Then the instrument bashers, the

electricians, whatever, they would do ... then mostly in the afternoon, the fuel load would come up, the amount of fuel that they were going to take, that was according to the bomb load, wherever it was going. If it was a long [stooge], less bombs, or long stooges, less petrol.

You'd have a rough idea what was going to happen.

Well, we normally gave the skipper a little bit extra in case he wanted to give it a little bit of extra boost, or a bit of extra throttle, which was not enough to create any damage, what we thought in our layman's way, but enough to say, well, you are a hundred over tonight, he'd know what petrol xxx - probably a hundred up his sleeve - and he would get that on the - check that yourself and when the skipper came out you would have either run the motors in the morning - and some of the skippers liked to run them themselves on the dispersals, others, if they had confidence in you, they'd say, 'Your run-up today, how was it?' - 'Good' - 'Righto' - and they'd just give a little bit of a burst on the runway just ...

Before take-off.

... just to clear the motors a little bit. Then, there is the other side - I don't know whether you were in any of those when we sprayed the aircraft at eleven o'clock at night, or ten o'clock at night, to keep the icing up. Were you ever in those?

No, I don't remember that.

Spraying them was pretty cold too some of the times.

This is before take-off?

Yes. They'd spray the whole aircraft with it. We were there when they used the spray, but it was with a pump and it went round all the aircraft.

And your crew was responsible for that?

You did it yourself, you or your flight rigger, or flight mech, I think. You went up - unless you were on leave you always saw your aircraft off at night and you - the skipper would examine the 700 to see that it was completed. That would be all signatures of all the different ancillaries. You would sign for that, they are completed, and the skipper would sign that he's happy about.

Was that the EE700, was it?

700, yes.

EE700.

Yes.

I remember, as a wireless operator, I used to have to sign that thing too.

Yeah, you probably would too, yeah.

Because I used to have to check the radio in the mornings.

That's right - what did you call the wireless operator?

Wireless operator.

They used to come out and run the machine over in the - run the wireless over in the morning, I remember that.

I remember signing the EE700. So it took a lot of people to keep an aircraft in the air, didn't it?

Yes, when you summed up the number of different trades that were connected with it, taking the whole lot right through, from your briefing on, and the transport.

A lot of people involved. Did you have to do the final check on the fuelling had been done, that they had been filled?

No, you did that - if you were quite satisfied then you did it yourself - it would depend on the fuel. You had your six tanks in [the middle], and the middle would always be used first, you'd fill those to capacity; the seconds would probably be filled to capacity, or a bit less than that; and the ends were nine times out of ten, on some of the smaller stooges, were empty.

But you did that?

Yes, you did that yourself - either that or your rigger would be on the other side. You see, they might have two hoses from the tanker, then you'd check with him what he'd put in. But mostly I did it myself.

But you wouldn't have had much to do with the bombing up, would you?

No, the armourers did that, they did the bombing up mostly in the afternoon, whatever the bomb load was - I don't know when the bomb load came out.

They'd have had to sign something though, wouldn't they?

Yeah; he signed your 700, and you'd countersign for him that you had seen him do it, or it was done.

Once again, you were the bloke holding the bogie?

Holding the bag, yes.

Did you meet the returning aircraft when they came back?

Quite frequently.

You weren't obliged to though?

Certain nights we were because we we'd be duty sergeant and you'd see each one back to his hanger and then lace - you'd have a crew with you and you'd lace the aircraft and put the chocks

under it, block the steering wheel.

So the duty crew did that?

Mm. If we didn't see them we'd either see them in the mess when they came back ...

Did you ever have crews fail to return with your aircraft?

Yes, unfortunately, yes. I think I lost a couple of Wellingtons. I'm not too sure about the Lancasters - Q Queenie was one - there was three we lost that I know - could have lost four, maybe five.

Altogether, Wellingtons and Lancs?

Wellingtons and Lancs.

That would have been a bit of an experience for you, wouldn't it?

Well, it was quite a shock to see a young crew going out, a little bit of [age] on them, and see a young crew going out, helping them aboard and trying to give them a little bit of encouragement, and then not to see them again.

That would have been very hard. I think you've answered this one: what part did aircrew play in checking the serviceability of an aircraft? I used to check the radio, and the pilot may have run the engines up in the morning but may have taken your word for it.

Quite frequently they didn't worry about running up at all, they wouldn't want to bash their motors more than necessary, and if he was satisfied - if you got a crew that were, as I say, had, or the skipper had confidence in you, he'd take your word for it. You'd run them up, give them a bit of a burst, as I said before, on the runway.

How did you find aircrew attitude to ground crew, in general? How did they get on together?

On the Squadron?

On the Squadron.

Quite good - too much frivolity at times (laughs).

That's right, too much frivolity. But the thing is, the aircrew knew jolly well that their aircraft was what stood between them and disaster. If it wasn't well serviced that was it.

I think that they'd be looking at it from that angle. As I say, if the crew, the whole crew, if they had confidence in you it gave them a bit of - I feel that it gave them a little bit of a kick too you, as an aircrew you'd have a bit of that idea yourself.

My word. We used to get our sergeant down to the Maquis of Cranby whenever we could.

(Laughs) - yeah, the old Maquis - what was the name?

Hang on, gee ...

Oh, dear, I can't think of it now.

Only talking about it the other day to Alec Wales.

That was a funny place. There was another one over from the corner of that, wasn't there? on the other side.

Yes.

I forget the name of that.

Not many people went there apparently.

No, mostly the Maquis was the main port of call. First you'd always have to dos in the mess.

Some of those sergeants' mess dos were pretty good.

(Laughs) Couldn't buy a case of beer and stack it up against the ... and save a bit the next day (laughs).

Have you got any opinions on those above you, Jack? Your engineering officer would have been your immediate superior, wouldn't he?

Yeah. We had George Champion, he was one of the chaps that went across with us and he got his commission, and he finished up our engineering officer - finished up a flight lieutenant - and a chap named Bert Newton - I don't know whether you've run across Bert Newton.

Somebody directed me to him; I believe he lives out west of Brisbane somewhere.

I think he's further south than that.

Is he?

Mm. I would have his address somewhere. He was a WO engineering officer.

That's right, he's out in New South Wales somewhere.

Yeah. Prior to that we had English engineering officers, but wanted to make it a full Australian squadron, I suppose, they infiltrated those that made the grade - engineering - we finished up with George Champion. He came back to Sydney and has since died I understand.

Yes. Now, I must get on ...

We got on very well with him xxx always with George.

Did he have regular meetings of the ground crew sergeants?

No, no.

Just informal contact?

He's just come round every afternoon to see whether any aircraft were ...

He did that, eh, every aircraft?

Yeah, every aircraft, he'd go round and say - as soon as you'd see him coming he'd put his hand up and wave to you and you'd wave back - always welcome - and he'd go right round the Squadron and make sure that on take-off that every aircraft would be ready to go.

He was conscientious then in his job.

Yeah. I can remember the night, one of those thousand-bomber raids - were you ...

No, I was never a thousand ...

Was that before you ...

That was before my time.

I saw, I think, thirty-two aircraft take off in thirty-three minutes there one night. You know where the top runway was, near the hangers? They came from each perimeter.

Each side of the runway.

From each side. As soon as he ...

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

Now, I only recall them coming from one - lined up in one direction.

That was mostly when they were - of course, they'd buzz round like flying foxes in the air. Once they'd set course, you know, xxx steered round.

Looking for height.

Quite a number of the aircrew that I - they've all passed on now - Stewie Woodruff - that's a B Flight sergeant - Stewie Woodruff, [Jock] Thompson, [Topley was posted], Harry Tickle died, Cess [Vale] is still on deck, Roy Howard, he's in Bega, New South Wales, I think, done very well for himself. I haven't contacted any of the others, I don't know where they ... Dorian was a corporal airframer, he was killed up in Darwin, he flew home with, I think, a corporal ... No, I had Peter Isaacson on one of my machines, on Q for Queenie, he did several operations my machine - well, they called it my machine, with me. He left the Squadron and he flew home Q for Queenie, but not the Q for Queenie that we were operating off the Squadron. I think xxx rode back in a new aircraft.

Did you have anything to do with flight commanders? You were B Flight, were you?

Yeah.

The B Flight commander, did you ever have anything to do with him? Did he address himself ...

[He got on my cuff once], got in to trouble in London (laughs) - we'd just xxx people as - they were all known by their Christian names, so that's how it was there.

There was a great - not companionship - a great comradeship between the aircrew and, from my experience, aircrew and officers, COs, right throughout the whole Squadron. We noticed quite a difference when I came back to [Lokie] and to get in some of the chappies there that had never been outside Australia, only in Australia was a different kettle of fish.

Like to assert their rank.

Yeah. Different kettle of fish altogether.

That's right. I noticed the comradeship, the camaraderie, between the ground and aircrews weakened a bit when you got away from the actual aircraft crews, when you got back on to clerical staff and whatnot. I recall a few little bits of niggling there between aircrew and ground staff - clerical staff, for example - but there was none of that at all with the actual crews, the ground crew and aircraft.

No, my experience - I was there for some forty - well, from early in '42, that's before we started to operate, until after D Day, and I can't recall having a row with any of the aircrew that I was associated with, and I think I can pretty well speak for the rest of ... there too.

How about COs - the COs in my time there - Frank Arthur, the navigator CO.

Yeah, Frank.

What did you think of him? - larrikin.

[Campling] was one, he was an Englishman and went to Breeton - I think he went across to Binbrook, or was he posted before that. He was killed on some training unit, he went through a hut - he could fly - he used to make Halifaxes - he could fly them very well, and I think he went down, overshot the runway and killed quite a number of the personnel in the xxx, I understand - Campling. I can't just remember the others, we had several others - of course, Chad Martin was the CO, he'd be CO at [Breeton], he went from Breeton up to Binbrook.

We had an Englishman, Group Captain Crummy, I think it was. Some of the A Flight commanders, I knew them then but I can't recall it's so long ago.

Do you recall Spike Marsh at all who took over from Frank Arthur?

Yes, Spike, yes.

How did you find him in comparison with Frank Arthur?

Different personalities - different personalities.

That's right.

Yes. I struck him when I came back - I was going round to Howard's to pick up a car and bring back to Maryborough, and I struck Spike, and he'd just come back from the north, he'd been posted up there, and I struck him just off Adelaide Street. When he came back I had a chat with him for a few minutes, but he was still the same old Spike, he hadn't altered very much.

I spent an afternoon with him. He lives on his own, his wife died two years ago, at Bilpin, which is above Currajong, which is above Richmond. He was CO of Richmond in the permanent RAAF. He lives up there on his own - he's got a couple of saddle horses which he rides, he's got a five-acre block. He'd taken up with horse racing, he goes down to every Hawkesbury meeting, and apart from that he leads a very quiet life, on his own.

That's one of those unfortunate happenings in life, it's inevitable for sure, isn't it?

Has to come. Yes, he and his wife, when they were at Richmond, they bought this block and they virtually built their own house out of cement blocks. He's got about fifty cats there, never seen so many cats in all my life. His wife collected them before she died and poor old Spike has got to look after them.

Still got them (laughs).

And Hughie Edwards: have you got any recollections of Hughie?

Yes. Told us to be good boys, Harry Tickle and I, one night.

Did he?

We went down to the Maquis and we were having a [stand-down] - having a few ales - and the army at that time were carrying bombs up to the bomb dump - the army had these big trucks - so we loaded them up and brought them in to the mess - I think it's written up, they are mentioned, not in that strike and return about the piano, but that actually happened in the airmens' mess, it happened the night that we were there. We filled it up with [irks] - WAAFS - and brought them back to our mess and dug Ben out - remember Brilliantine Benning, the barman at Binbrook?

I don't remember him.

In the bar. We were there till about three o'clock in the morning and somebody brought the piano in from the mess dinging room, and caught in the doorway and one of the legs came off (laughs). So they propped it up on a beer case and, unfortunately for us, the adjutant used to just live straight above, had quarters just above the anteroom - we were up in the other corner. I came in from the Squadron one afternoon, from the Flight at least, and Tickle said to me, 'Hey, Hughie wants to see us'. I said, 'What does Hughie want to see us for?' He said, 'What would you bloody well think' (laughs). So off we go, we shuttle off up to headquarters to meet Hughie. He was very decent about this. He said, 'You fellows, why did you do it?' - he stood on the

window like this - he said - put his hand on his head - 'Why did you do it?' He said, 'Unless I get the coordination of my officers and non-commissioned officers in this xxx, I'm responsible to the air commodore, and I can't make it click,' he said, 'unless I've got the cooperation.' He said, 'Why did you do this?' He said, 'Do you know what you did last night? That's a court martial offence,' He said, 'Promise me that you wont do it again' (laughs). I remember him going out; he said to Harry Tickle, 'I'm arranging for you to fly home in G for George'.

Did you share a room with Harry?

Yeah.

I thought you did. Now, once again, that story again. You had a bit of a party in the airmens' mess? Which mess was it in?

The sergeants' mess.

In the sergeants' mess. Okay, and you went to move the piano.

Yes, it was moved out in to the anteroom and it got caught, and the xxx leg came off, and they propped it up on beer cases too - it was running round with it on his shoulder (laughs).

And that was your main offence, was it, busting the piano?

Oh, bringing it in to the mess, kicking up a din till three o'clock in the morning I suppose (laughs).

And you brought WAAFs and airmen in to that mess?

Yes, the whole affair - it was just a mixture of who wanted to jump on the truck and be in it (laughs).

So you went round with a truck gathering them up, did you?

No, they were all at the Maquis.

Oh, they came from the Maquis in the truck?

The Maquis was all well primed before we got there (laughs).

Any other memories of Hughie?

Other than he used to call round to the flight at different times to see how you were going and how the aircraft was. Quite frequently he did that, come round on to each dispersal - I don't know whether he picked one or two dispersals out on each day that he would come - he didn't do it every day. That was the only time I ran foul of him, and that wasn't foul, he just treated us like two larrikins.

Two bad little boys.

(Laughs)

> And you would have had very little do to with Air Commodore Ray - Hoppie Ray as they called him?

Only when they'd come in to the mess. He used to fly - he'd take off occasionally in some of the aircraft. I don't know whether he flew mine or not, I just forget now, but the boys used to hate him flying their aircraft.

> I went up with him once; there was only a flight engineer, and myself and him. He wanted to go over to one of the - he was going to [Ludford Magna], I think. Well, fair dinkum, he pointed her up the runway but he took off on the grass, he scared me, and he landed up Ludford Magna, you know, up and down. I thought, well, next time somebody suggests I go with you, mate, I'll find a quick excuse.

Yes, he was going to fly and they were going to fly on - whichever kite they were going to fly - the boys weren't very happy about it.

> Have you got any other funny stories, Jack?

Oh, I think there was lots of funny stories but I can't recall them now. In our pushbike days we used to go riding round the different [properties - there was a stand-down]. The one - I think it was at Breeton - that would be before your time there - there was a lot of pushbikes going off - there is rather a funny little story that it got that bad that somebody called the police in. So one day, up at the mess, just on mess time, this detective came along with a big bobby with his big hat - you know the English police with his big hat? - plain-clothed D - and they put their bikes up on the side of the mess and somebody invited them in for a drink and a bit of lunch. It came over that there was a stand-down just before or just after that during the lunch, while they were drinking there - and you couldn't leave your bike in a place if there was a stand-down because an aircrew that wanted to get to the station, they'd just swipe it and you'd see it in about five days' time or four days' time (laughs).

These two coppers were there and this stand-down was on, there was just one hell of a rush, everybody out of the place, and their bikes went off too (laughs).

> That was Breeton?

Yes, that was at Breeton, oh, yes - funny days there.

Another one at Breeton there - the Seven Sisters - it's a little pub down at the back of the drome.

> They had another name for that - now, who told me that?

Somebody had pinched a goose there one night (laughs), one of the aircrew.

(Voice) It wasn't you? Didn't you tell a story like that?

> No, I never pinched a goose. I pinched a horse and rode around the paddock. I wanted to show them I was a bush boy.

They pinched it - it was a bit hot, so I think they pinched - somebody had left their gloves in

there and one of the lads had these gloves on to keep his hands warm, so they pinched his gloves so they could handle the goose. I wasn't in the actual stealing of it, but I've got an idea of where it went to.

> Looking back after all these years, Jack, what are the things that stick in your mind about those days, those Squadron days?

I enjoyed them, but I always think of the number of personnel that was lost, some of the cream of Australia, in the early days. As you know, they had two pilots and they were pretty bright boys. I remember, I lost a chap named Jones, and I forget who his copilot was - he was a university lecturer or student - I don't' know if he was my first loss. I always think of those when it comes to Anzac Day, or we have a minute's silence at Legacy meetings.

> Their faces pass before your eyes.

Always seem to come back to you. And the happy times and the sad times, it was indescribable; they always come back to you now, I don't think you ever forget. I dream sometimes that I'm back on the Squadron again.

> You sometimes dream, do you?

Yeah. It was one of those things - see, you don't stay with people for nearly four years, in a close, hooked-up room, and not forget them easily.

> You've been terribly helpful, thanks, Jack, you really have. You have enlightened me on part of the Squadron I only had very hazy ideas of.

Which part is that.

> Your part, your side of it, the maintenance side. I only had very hazy ideas of how that all was put together, but I can see now that you were the linchpin and things revolved around you.

Yes. You were responsible for that particular aircraft, you couldn't handle two, it would be impossible for you to handle two. See, if you were an engine fitter - [rear engine man] - you had four motors that you did nearly all that checking yourself, and you'd always watch your oil, you see - each motor took, to my knowledge, I think it was nearly either thirty-five or forty gallons of oil they carried up, in behind the bulkhead. Even on take-off of a night you always primed the motors yourself because you knew how much to give the oil xxx - the skipper being a newie you might have been on site on the wireless, but you see a great bunch of flame going up ... and that was just through over-priming. You always did that yourself. I think that outside and inside of an aircraft in cases that had been corporals in charge of aircraft, I think they did a job to the best of their ability. I think it was honest what they did.

> For sure.

We worked in some crook conditions.

> It must have been cold out there sometimes, Jack, miserably cold.

(Incidental conversation)

And what was your opinion of the Lancaster?

Oh, it was a good aircraft - the motors varied from the early days - yes, I think they were all Merlin 20s up to probably 75s - that was the two-stage blower - the 20s and up to that there were only single-stage - two-stage blowers - and then, of course, we were teeing up ...

The Packard.

Yes, we had there the American Packard came in - you could get either one of the English Rolls-Royce or the Packard towards the finish.

Much difference in those two motors?

Not very much, I think they were built under licence - very similar motor. Some of the aircrew seemed to like them better than the Rolls-Royce. Whether they performed better in the air though, I'm not too sure.

We were teeing up for Lincolns just before I came home.

That was the one that was going out to the far east?

No, they were going to operate from there - the operations that they were doing when I left there was just across on daylights, a lot of them, to just soften up for D Day to go across. I came home after that. xxx teemed up for Lincolns. Some of them came out to Australia here, they got them up in Townsville.

We were going to operate from Okinawa, a thing they called Tiger Force, and what they did, they took the mid-upper turret out of a Lanc and they were going to put another petrol tank in there. We trained but the war finished before we left for the far east, but we were due to go to India in a couple of weeks for acclimatisation, but we never made it.

That never eventuated, yeah.

(Incidental conversation)

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B - END OF INTERVIEW

10/00