

**S04262 Victor Wakley Cahill as a Wireless / Air Gunner, RAAF, 1943-1946, interviewed by Michael Nelmes.**

Transcript provided courtesy of the RAAF History Unit.

**Interviewer:** Right, so this is an interview with Victor Cahill, or Cahill, is the correct pronunciation, conducted by Michael Nelmes on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2007 at the Australian War Memorial and the topics covered will be his experiences as a wireless air gunner and in instructor at various Air Force units relating to wireless, primarily, in Australia 1943 to '45.

Victor Cahill was born in Bendigo on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 1925 and was educated at Bendigo High School. His significant postings were – and these are the ones I have for you but you can ... feel free to add any that come to mind – No. 2 Wireless Air Gunnery School, 1943; General Reconnaissance School at Bairnsdale; Radio School at Maryborough, which was run by the Americans; No. 7 Operational Training Unit, which was at Tocumwal, New South Wales; No. 200 Flight Liberators, briefly.

**Interviewee:** Oh that was Transit ... RAAF Transit at Amberley, at the time.

**Interviewer:** Amberley? Okay.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** And then finally, No. 102 Squadron, which was in Queensland.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, at Cecil Plains.

**Interviewer:** Cecil Plains?

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** May 1945. And Mr Cahill is retired. Well, perhaps if we start at the beginning and ...

**Interviewee:** One year at the No. 1 Initial Training School at Somers, Victoria.

**Interviewer:** Yep, so that was prior to No. 2 Wireless Air Gunnery School?

**Interviewee:** That, that's correct, yeah. Sorry about that, Mike, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Somers? Yep.

**Interviewee:** No. 1 ITS, initials.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Well perhaps if we start with the early childhood and talk about some of the major influences that may have influenced your decision to join the Air Force, or whether that came later or were ... for example, did you have an interest in aircraft when you were a child or ...?

**Interviewee:** Well, strange as you may say, I suppose as the crow flies, less than half a mile from where I was born and lived for, say, the first 18 years, Gipsy Moths and Tiger Moths used to land in a not so very substantial sized paddock. And I don't know the

amount of money involved, because it would have been mega-bucks as far as I was concerned, but at least they took people up for so many shillings for 15 minutes or 30 minutes for joy flights.

**Interviewer:** So that would have been some Barnstormers flying around the countryside?

**Interviewee:** They'd be Barnstormers, yeah. And I think in 1936, when I would have been about 11 or 12, an autogyro landed. Well that was something; that was a surprise to everybody, man woman and child and animals alike because I think although we'd heard of them, we'd never seen one but it was a front propeller on a, a rotor. Rather a massive one-man machine. I think it was only one-man machine. And although it did take a passenger ... there must have been room because it did take people up and that. I think it was a fairly substantial feel compared with travelling in a Tiger Moth.

**Interviewer:** You'd have to be brave.

**Interviewee:** The wheel has gone round, after many, many years, 1936. So for ... til 2006, well that's what, 70 years. There's a gentleman at Bendigo Airport now who has just finished putting together a gyrocopter. It's ... fellow by the name of Mike Bellamy. He's a fully qualified pilot and engineer, aircraft engineer, and he's spent, I think, the last six or seven years restoring it. And I did have the pleasure of helping him push it out the first time he started it up. It hasn't gone up in the air yet.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** But it is a pusher type as opposed to the first one I saw 70, 70 years ago. It, it is a one-man machine and I, I think all the ... yeah, the engineering aspects of it have all been completed and whoever the authorities are – the call them the Civil Aviation – they are in process of blessing the event, which isn't done in five minutes, but I would think that will be flying around Bendigo very, very shortly. Yeah, that will be stabled there and it will probably become quite famous. It's a ... virtually a one-off.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And you didn't have any flights yourself as a child, before you joined the Air Force?

**Interviewee:** No, no. I don't think it influenced me. The, the influence came when ... I think early in the war. When the Air Training Corps was formed, they did their lessons and lectures at the Bendigo High School at night and they did their, their drills and their various sports at the high school facilities, so that probably had quite a lot to do with it. And some of the boys, a little older than myself, went into the Air Corps when, you know, they reached the eligible age, and subsequently into aircrew and I just joined the line, I think.

**Interviewer:** So what was the age to join the Air Training Corps, do you know? It would have been maybe 14 or something or ...?

**Interviewee:** I think it was more than that, and I would have been ... I was in it for I think four or five months, so I would have been ...

**Interviewer:** Here's a picture of you in your uniform.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, yeah, I would have been 17, 17 and a half.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** I was in it about four months then I went into ... you know, as a ...

**Interviewer:** Straight into the Air Force?

**Interviewee:** ... trainee, yeah. So that, that possibly is the main influence. Then I, I did the same thing as, as some of my elder friends were doing. We ... I was working then, but I'd go back to the high school at night for meteorological lectures and maths and Morse, Morse training.

**Interviewer:** Sorry, while you were in the Air Training Corps or ...?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yes, okay.

**Interviewee:** And we, we had parade and drills and sports and things on that ... on the Saturdays and we had intercity competitions between Ballarat Seven and Bendigo, so ... we travelled by fairly primitive buses.

**Interviewer:** They didn't fly you around?

**Interviewee:** Nothing like that.

**Interviewer:** Did you get any flights when you were in the Air Training Corps?

**Interviewee:** No, no, no we didn't. We weren't even taken to, say, an operational base like maybe Point Cook or Ballarat, which would have been a, a wireless training then.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, Ballarat was a training school.

**Interviewee:** No, that didn't come into it. It was purely lectures at night and a bit of sport on the weekend. We had a ... we got a bit of a building in Bendigo, it's the original Town Hall, and it was just being restored on a, restored on a multi-million dollar basis and it is attracting a lot of people. But I think it was the only time in the history of Bendigo it had ever happened, but there was an inter-competition ... intercity competition between Bendigo, Ballarat and Shepparton, and because I had done some boxing at the Bendigo High School, I found myself in the ... a bit of a boxing squad, which ... I was lined up against a fellow from Shepparton who'd been a Bendigo bloke. I'd known him years ago. So we'd arranged to do a circuit of (8:25) for half an hour and entertain everybody, without really getting hurt. And they put a boxing ring up in the Bendigo Town Hall. I don't think there was ever one before then, and hasn't certainly been one since so ... he of course got the flu or something like that about three days before and they sent a substitute who was a very nuggetty red-headed fellow who wanted to take my head back with him to Shepparton so ... I think I've still got the rope burns on my back where I was travelling backwards for five rounds. That was, that was one Air Training Corps experience I didn't forget.

But no, it didn't ever occur to me, but now I think of it, it was a surprise that we didn't get anywhere near a station or a, or an aircraft. I think it, I think it is entirely different today, as I read, the Air Training Corps, they do, they do get taken to active RAAF bases ...

**Interviewer:** Yeah, they do.

**Interviewee:** ... and they do get, they do get, I think, some flights and things like that, yeah.

**Interviewer:** So did, did most of your fellow trainees in the, in the Air Force, have Air Training Corps experience beforehand? Did they go from (9:40)?

**Interviewee:** Well Melbourne would have had a lot of flights, I think, as they called them, a lot of trainees. Ballarat, Bendigo and Shepparton, they're the major cities in Victoria ... I don't know about Geelong, we weren't linked there. They'd obviously have Air Training Corps there. But we only had actually one, one flight in each of those cities and two, two others ... the age factor, of course, separated you. As you reached 18, well the Air Force (10:21) you're in. Well the three of us went in together and we had subsequent enlistment numbers. Whereas if there'd been perhaps 20 or 30 people involved altogether ... I, I can't really say what happened to the others. I think ...

**Interviewer:** I would assume Air Training Corps students were ... would be given preference in applying for the Air Force.

**Interviewee:** Well you were on aircrew reserve in the first place.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** It wasn't, it wasn't in any way discrimination. It wasn't ground staff versus ... you'd obviously ... in ground staff, you had a trade and you wouldn't be interested in maths or, or meteorology or anything like that. You were on engines or frames or electricians or things like that. But we were trained on, on the basis that we would become radio operators or wireless air gunners, navigators, pilots, or what they called straight air gunners. And when you finish your initial time ... you did, you did eight weeks at an initial training school. Well they had ... there was one at Somers, there was one at Bradfield Park in Sydney, there was one at ... Victor Harbour, I think, catered for South Australia. And I think it was Southport for Queensland, something like that. And all your Air Training Corps subjects and the whole attitude was to, to, to help with your running in ... help run you into the initial training course.

After that, on the basis that you passed all the necessary tests and contingent on just how many of the different categories they were short of at the time ... in other words, if they wanted ... badly wanted navigators and wireless air gunners, well too bad if you wanted to be a pilot.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay.

**Interviewee:** Other times, if they were looking for some pilots ... and you had to have pretty good qualifications to make it. But the pilots, of course, were in the ... overall, were in the minority in numbers compared with the number of radio operators, which was mostly ... even a, even a twin-engine bomber probably had two radio operators and gunners. In a plane like the Liberator, well we had wireless, wireless operator, air gunner and two signallers, they were called then. They were trained in both radio and radar. They ...

**Interviewer:** So did ...?

**Interviewee:** So from, from ITS Somers, they ... I've still got a very good friend in Bendigo. He's a year older than I am. And he was, he was a PT and Drill Instructor at

Somers. And we made the, the, the other two gentlemen I mentioned before, our consecutive enlistment numbers ... we arrived at Somers and this fellow was a ... almost untouchable, he was a Corporal.

And he wanted to know if there was anyone there from Bendigo. Like fools, we admitted we were. Well he bloody near killed us in eight weeks but he turned out a pretty good product in the end. So he had to get us fit, that was his job. We had to learn discipline and the rest came from the lecturers.

And Air Training helped you because you had done ... you did maths at high school anyway, well you continued doing it. And that was a subject you ran into at ITS. Meteorology was very important, well we knew a bit about that. And we knew the basics of the Morse system, having, having learnt that so ... none of it was aimed specifically at pointing you at pilot or, or radio operator or navigator or anything. You had to do it all, then they categorised you.

**Interviewer:** Based on your marks?

**Interviewee:** That had a lot to do with it and contingent on just what they were shopping for in the way of cannon, cannon fodder at that time. Because you were part of the Empire Air Training Scheme and they were turning them out at ... in quite a few different countries in the world. And where they might be pushing it at our time, perhaps ... 'cause there were very few pilots went off our course. They were all radio, wireless air gunners and, and navigators and a few gunners. But Canada or South Africa might have put out new waves of pilots just at the time. You don't know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So you'd assume at the time you were at ITS, they had enough pilots already, as a pool, and ...

**Interviewee:** Well that's right. That word "pool", they even had a pool at Somers, because if you, if you failed your course or you got an illness that ... even for a few days, you missed enough lectures and (15:42) they'd drop you back to the next course, which meant you'd, you'd wait in the pool and join the next course. But, as I say, I could, I couldn't explain ... possibly eight weeks after I left, that a lot of pilots might have come out of Somers and, and Ontario in Canada might have been pushing out wireless air gunners by the 100 and so and so, and so and so.

So you could, if you opted – if you were in a hurry to get to the War – if you wanted to do ... become what they called a straight air gunner, you could do that eight weeks Initial Training School and you could go straight to West Sale and do a six weeks Gunnery School and then they'd send you straight to England.

**Interviewer:** Oh really?

**Interviewee:** And you'd never be heard of again, but that's how it worked, definitely. If you wanted to be a straight air gunner, you ... in 14 weeks, you'd come out as a Sergeant and on commission, Sergeant straight gunner AG, no, no radio. They had no navigation, nothing else. You were a straight air gunner and you went straight to (16:53) RAF. You either survived or you didn't but ...

**Interviewer:** My understanding ...

**Interviewee:** ... after the word came back it killed a lot of them, they ...

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay.

**Interviewee:** ... they'd rather stick around and become navigators as well as air gunners and, and (17:06) because ... where they could, where they could go to the war in 14 weeks, the best ... the other way would go, after your first eight weeks, you did, I think, four or five months radio, and then you did another six weeks gunnery. So it would be, you know, six, seven months, almost, after these other fellows went off to be gunners before you'd qualify. And Navigation Course was much the same. Pilots were a bit longer because they had to do a bit of basic radio, quite a lot on navigation and then learn to fly.

**Interviewer:** So after ITS, you went to Wireless Air Gunnery School at Parkes, New South Wales.

**Interviewee:** Yes, that was No. 2, Parkes, New South Wales.

**Interviewer:** Nineteen forty-three we're talking, aren't we?

**Interviewee:** Yeah. And the surprising part about that, it was almost the last week or so of the course before you actually got in an aeroplane and flew.

**Interviewer:** Wow, okay.

**Interviewee:** I could never work that one out. They ... you'd finished your training, virtually, before you did airborne exercises.

**Interviewer:** And how long was that course?

**Interviewee:** Just trying to think, sixteen weeks, I think.

**Interviewer:** Was it? So quite a long one, so four months.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, yeah, mmm.

**Interviewer:** And ...

**Interviewee:** That, that was purely radio.

**Interviewer:** Was it?

**Interviewee:** You did radio theory, theory and practical and that embraced what they called Aldis lamp or Aldis signalling, which was done on the ground, long-range across, you know, across paddocks and at night.

**Interviewer:** Using Morse signals?

**Interviewee:** Morse signals on a lamp with a, a fair few 12 volt batteries clamped together to give you a power source.

**Interviewer:** So you didn't start any gunnery training at, at that school?

**Interviewee:** No, no, that was purely a ... purely theory and ... mainly theory for probably half of it and then practical, which would be pulling the bits and assembling transmitters and receivers and, you know, learning the guts of them.

It was certainly, I think, where brainwashing was invented because you just did Morse code, the tapes were wire tapes, they were big spools with masses of them and they unwound slowly on the ... and they fed through to ... you had earphones and, and a single plug into a socket. The instructor just (19:52) out on the desk but you would do hours a day, receiving and sending Morse code. Well I can still ... if I hear Morse code, I can still take it down.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So when you say “receiving,” you’d have earphones on?

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** You’d hear the Morse code and you’d be writing the translation of it?

**Interviewee:** You’d be writing it all down.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. You’d do that for hours a day. Mainly it was in blocks or groups of letters, which all reports were done anyway; particularly weather reports, were all done in groups of, of letters and numbers and then deciphered. Later on, you got into what they called PN, plain language, and you’d, you’d be spending hours ... well it would just be passages from books or anything.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** It would be coming over, through your earphones, and you’re writing it all down.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So that, that ...

**Interviewee:** Then in return, in another lecture hut, you would ... you’d get around the transmission side of it.

**Interviewer:** You must have got pretty sick of Morse, after a while, because you’d been doing it since Air Training Corps and ...

**Interviewee:** Well it, it was ... the word “brainwashing” wasn’t invented, but that’s, that’s what it was, Mike. Took, took me til recently to work that out but it never, never leaves your system.

**Interviewer:** No, no.

**Interviewee:** And you went from, you know, a stuttering novice up to ... you had to ... I think it was 16, 18 words a minute that you had to do to, to pass out. And then when you actually got into an operating field, you, you probably got up to about 25 words a minutes, you know, to keep up with what was going on.

**Interviewer:** Now that was Parkes in 1943?

**Interviewee:** Three, yeah.

**Interviewer:** I think they had an Operational Training Unit there at they stage, did they?

**Interviewee:** It ...

**Interviewer:** Spitfires or Wirraways, perhaps. So anyway, you had aircraft ...

**Interviewee:** No all, all they had there was Wackett trainers ...

**Interviewer:** Did they?

**Interviewee:** ... and they had a couple of Airspeed Oxfords, which weren't radio equipped. They just used those for sort of a bit of pilot training. But there ... it wasn't very, wasn't very active. About the time we left, it became ... they transferred it from Nhill Victoria and it became 1ANS, Air Navigation School.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** And it, it got ... the, the Wackett trainers split up. Some went to Ballarat and some went to Mareeba in Queensland and it was all Ansons but I lost track of it there.

**Interviewer:** So what was ...?

**Interviewee:** I don't, I don't think Parkes was, was ever an OTU.

**Interviewer:** It may, may have been after you were there.

**Interviewee:** Bairnsdale, Bairnsdale was.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** Bairnsdale was. But there again ... I mean, New South Wales was a foreign country when I was, when I was a gunner. I wouldn't know what was there, til you got there. One thing Parkes had that I've never seen anywhere else and it ... even though it was in the middle of the Midwest and sort of desert country, when I was there in 1943, they had a magnificent Olympic pool. We didn't get one in Bendigo til 1957 so ... so much for civilisation.

**Interviewer:** It's very flat country.

**Interviewee:** I mentioned a while ago, the interesting part was, almost at the end of our course, and it was only two or three flights ... it was almost the end of the course that you actually go in an aircraft.

**Interviewer:** And what was that aircraft?

**Interviewee:** It was a Wackett trainer, which had a ... it was built as a, a dual pilot ... pilot and instructor. They put a little ... they put a ... they call them jeep sets, a receiver and a transmitter in the back and you jammed yourself in there, and away you went.

**Interviewer:** What sort of set did they have, do you know? What sort of ...?

**Interviewee:** They were, they were, they were an English set. They were called R10-1082, which is R for receiver and T1083 was the transmitter. They were quite efficient over small range.

**Interviewer:** And that was the set you trained on there, was it?



**Interviewee:** They're the set you train on and it just had a fixed ... the Wackett trainer wasn't a very big aircraft and it just had a fixed aerial, which wasn't very long. So you went far away from Parkes and you're finding it very hard to, to hear anything.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** They had a couple of ... the Havilland DH84s.

**Interviewer:** Yep, the Dragon.

**Interviewee:** The Dragon, yes. A couple of Gypsy Moth or Tiger Moth engines in it and the wings folded back. They'd wheel them out of the hangar and you'd pull the wings around. There were two leather straps with the metal clips, which they'd secure ...

**Interviewer:** Clip the wings on, bit of a worry.

**Interviewee:** ... to stop the wings blowing back where they came from.

**Interviewer:** Oh gee.

**Interviewee:** They were called Percolators. They had ... bit hard to see ... immediately behind the pilot, which would be between the two wings, was a high frequency receiver and transmitter and a little stool, seat for the operator. And that was about the centre of gravity of the aircraft. Wasn't bad ... plus no matter what was going on, you weren't doing much. Right down, halfway down between the door into the plane and the, and the tail assembly, and you, you were bent almost double to fit in. It was a low frequency receiver and transmitter.

And why they called them Pukolator, they'd be sitting in the sun for hours, the pilot would get in and two trainees and two instructors would get ... or one instructor. He'd be moving backwards and forwards between the high ... 'cause you'd an hour on one set and then you'd change places. Well on hot days with thermals, just about every second bloke who went up them puked. Not, not behind the ... not up in the high frequency because as I said, no matter what the plane was doing ...

**Interviewer:** You were pretty stationary.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, you were certainly stationary. But down here, you were ... and I dry retched a couple of times, I was never sick. But you're up to your ankles in puke. It stunk and the plane's going up and down and it's going from side to side and it was very hard to do a very successful low frequency exercise, I can tell you. So the DH84, it's true name is a Peculator. Ooh, they stunk.

**Interviewer:** So ...

**Interviewee:** Anyone that was sick was supposed to clean it up. Nobody ever did. They bolted. But what surprised me ... I mentioned it before, and I keep coming back to it, there were two blokes out of quite ... a fairly big mob of us, who just couldn't leave the ground, virtually, stomach-wise and, and ... they weren't scared stiff or anything. But I could never work out why they didn't make you fly first, then train you, to see whether you could stand the altitude.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So would they have ...?

**Interviewee:** We did a compression test but that ... all that told you was at what height ... you know, how your body was to ... dealing with a lack of, lack of oxygen and if ... I mean if you did fine probably at below 12,000 feet you couldn't exist, well they didn't want you. But 12,000 to 18,000 feet was ... you know, you could ... I think around 12,000 you could hang around for a while. (28:00) after that, well depending on the individual, but you could pass that one. But these fellows actually, once they got off the ground ... and they ... it, it might sound funny, but they, they tried the medical side of it. They'd dose them up with all sorts of things. And this might fantastic, but it's a fact, they'd have a couple of fellows virtually standing on their guts and they were lacing them up in those old fashion women's corsets.

**Interviewer:** Corsets? Yeah.

**Interviewee:** Have you ever heard of that?

**Interviewer:** No, I haven't. Just to put pressure on the (28:32)?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, yeah. They had them in these old whalebone corsets. One fellow's standing on the bloke's guts and his mate's lacing him up. And if that didn't work, well that was it, they disappeared, they went, they went on to ...

**Interviewer:** Ground radio or something?

**Interviewee:** Well that's right. I mean they'd, they'd ... up til that stage, the government had spent a fair bit of money on them. That's what I could never figure out because at the end of, at the end of your gunnery training, at the end of your full training, the government, they'd spent about eight, eight or ten thousand on you. That's pounds.

**Interviewer:** Yep.

**Interviewee:** And it was at that point they found out some blokes couldn't fly, or couldn't stand altitude, which was a bit crazy, however ...

**Interviewer:** But you were not too badly affected, as far as air sickness?

**Interviewee:** No, altitude didn't worry me. I was all right on oxygen and, as I say, in the Peculator, I honked a couple of times, well that was a record. Most blokes, if it was a stinking hot day, they were crook. So I found out I didn't have a bad, bad guts.

**Interviewer:** So ...

**Interviewee:** Gunnery, a lot of fellows were stick at gunnery because of the fumes.

**Interviewer:** Oh yea.

**Interviewee:** You were in an open cockpit in a Fairey Battle.

**Interviewer:** Yep, that's the cordite smell, I suppose.

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** You were in an exposed cockpit behind the pilot with a, with a .303 ... Browning .303 on a swivel and ...

**Interviewer:** So was that your next training school?

**Interviewee:** That was, that was about ... yeah, that was at West Sale.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, West Sale, after Parkes.

**Interviewee:** At Fulham, Fulham West Sale, yeah. And then you graduated then as an NCO Wireless Operator Air Gunner, yeah.

**Interviewer:** So in the battles, were you firing at (30:17) targets mainly or ...?

**Interviewee:** You had air-to-ground and air-to-air. Air-to-ground, it was interesting, because it's ... I've illustrated to a few blokes but we learnt to see some of the fastest fellows in the world on foot you could find, because there were six ... I think there were 12 ... I don't know the size of the squares. They'd have to be very big. That might be so the square would be the size of a house. It was a sandpit with a border and there were 12 of them and they were numbered one to 12 and you were allocated, before you took off, targets one and seven. So your pilot flew around in a, in a steep bank and you would fire one and then there'd be a pause until you'd get there and then you'd fire at seven.

Well after you, after you'd exhausted your ammunition, you'd completed your exercise. They ... the markers used to go out and count the hits. They had a steel hat, some distance back from all these squares. They had two jobs: count the hits and phone them through. They'd phone them through back to West Sale, "Target number one and seven had none," or whatever the hits were; number two and eight, three and nine and so on.

And in between times, they had a, a big canvas balloon ... two balloons; one was yellow, one was black. And I still can't remember which is which. I think if the black one was up, you could fire. And if it was down and the yellow one was up, that would mean caution and you didn't fire. Well half the pilots didn't ... they just kept going, they, they loved it. They had a Fairey Battle on about (32:21). It had a Rolls Royce Merlin engine but it was all right hurrying around as a gunnery thing but it was no good as a fighter in England because ... they had a couple of squadrons and they lost them both before lunchtime in France so ... at any rate, the pilots would hair around on that angle. They enjoyed it. They'd just go round and round and round. And they'd have the cease firing yellow ball up and they would go out and count and rake the pits.

Well that was usually (32:54) someone to misunderstand the emblems and open up on the pits. Well these fellows would drop their rakes and they'd make that steel shin and so they'd, they'd make an athlete look like a cripple. Gee they could travel because there was (33:10) and all sorts of things harrying around their feet while they were on their way back from the sandpits to the, to the, the steel lined shed. And of course, they'd be cranking up the phone and reporting who ... which, which aircraft it was and blah-blah-blah but ...

You obviously got a certain number of hits and targets and, and satisfied the powers that be back, back at base, 'cause you qualified in what they called air-to-ground (33:40), which would be the basis of strafing.

Air-to-air was a drogue, a big canvas windsock-type thing and towed about three or four hundred yards behind a, another aircraft on a cable that would be let out on a ... from a drum and winch.

**Interviewer:** And on a Battle, Fairey Battle?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, another Battle, yeah. Your ammunition was dipped in paint before you got in your aircraft. In the air-to-ground, there was just one in four, I think. You had three round of ball and one in trace, so you could aim. Air-to-air it was just all ... you didn't have incendiary or, or trace or anything. But the nose, or the tips, of the bullets were dipped in a tray of paint so you would have, for instance, blue, Bill might have yellow, John had green, I had red. You, you're, you're identified by your paint colour you're issued so ...

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** ... I was red for the target. So there would be perhaps five ... there'd be six aircraft, all firing at the one target. But if your bullet passed through the cloth, which was pretty rare, it would leave a red mark or a blue mark.

**Interviewer:** Red paint ... right, okay.

**Interviewee:** And then at the end of the exercise, the pilot dropped the ... or the drogue operator, dropped the sock or the drogue and that fluttered down to the ground and the same thing, the markers, counted up the reds and the blues and the greens and the yellows and the blacks and phoned them through. So by the time you back to West Sale, you had your percentage hits.

The drogue operators were pretty good. They, they would come in at different angles and they would time and they would dive but usually about ... at the end of the exercise, just about the range you wanted – four or five hundred yards – they'd fly reasonably straight for a while to give you a fair chance of getting a few bits of paint on if you didn't have any, because it was pretty hard to ... even with, you know, machine guns, it was pretty hard to ... your battle was still, you know, subject to movements in the air and, and you were standing up in an open cockpit, hanging onto a ...

**Interviewer:** Oh, you were standing, were you?

**Interviewee:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** What, what altitude were you at normally? Varying or ...? I'm just wondering if the thermals were affecting the flight ...

**Interviewee:** Well it was high enough. You were probably two or three thousand feet for an air-to-air.

**Interviewer:** Oh okay, yep. So you could be affected by thermals?

**Interviewee:** Oh yeah. As I say, the Battle was a fairly stable aircraft, it was fairly heavy. But even so, it was ... the pilot wasn't deliberately throwing it around the sky but with the aircraft moving, you didn't have a really good platform.

**Interviewer:** Were they ever ...?

**Interviewee:** And even a Liberator and a turret, you were still all over the place, and that was a pretty heavy aircraft.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, sure.

**Interviewee:** There was an incident, it, it's been well-recorded in history, but the 90, 90 mile beach, which is from Lakes Entrance, back towards Wilsons Promontory. It's on the roadmap ... or it's on the map of Victoria. And there's an area called Sea Spray and that was closed in the ... I think ... I don't whether the ... I think Army uses the Air Force but it was ... it's where we did all the air, air-to-air gunnery, which meant that no one was in the area so you could ... once you entered the area, you could fire away happily and it was just too bad if anybody ever got hit, but they didn't.

But there was one incident, and it's ... they, they ... the newspapers trot it out every now and again. There was a bloke and his girlfriend wandering along the beach, of all places. And the drogue operator had dropped the, the drogue, which left the cable flying all over the sky while he's winding it in. It ... the aircraft was flying fairly low level above the beach and the cable whipped both her legs off and killed her. Do you remember that or heard something?

**Interviewer:** I have heard that.

**Interviewee:** That was a fact.

**Interviewer:** Killed them both or ...?

**Interviewee:** No, no, just the girl.

**Interviewer:** Just the girl?

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay.

**Interviewee:** Cut her legs off; cut her in half. And there was no facilities and there's ... nobody lived near the joint. It was, it was a prohibited area. They shouldn't have been there but they must have got there in a horse and cart or horseback or a bike or something. But that, that was, that was ...

**Interviewer:** Did that happen during your time there?

**Interviewee:** No, it was before, but it was well known. They used to talk about it, you know? That, that was air-to-ground and air-to-air gunnery.

**Interviewer:** And did you do night flying at all? Was it all day?

**Interviewee:** Not, not at that point. The rest of your gunnery was small arms, your .303 rifle and your .38 Smith and Wesson.

**Interviewer:** But in the aircraft you had a .303 Browning, did you?

**Interviewee:** A .303 Browning yeah. They were ...

**Interviewer:** Do you, do you think it would have been an advantage to start night flying early on or ... I don't suppose you did much operational night flying yourself but ...

**Interviewee:** Well ...

**Interviewer:** ... but for the guys going to Bomber Command, for example ...

**Interviewee:** ... well the only ones are ... gunners didn't do any night flying, well, for obvious reasons. Navigators and pilots had to do a lot of it so at the Navigation School there would be day and night flying. At, at Pilot Training School there'd be day and night flying. The greater percentage, by far, was of course in the day on the basis that most of the people ... didn't always happen, but most of the people, perhaps, that would train in Australia would be ... nominally be using the Pacific, where there was very little ... there was very little night warfare going on in the Pacific, whereas in the European theatre, it was the other way around.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. All right, so ...

**Interviewee:** I didn't do any night flying until I got to GRS at Bairnsdale.

**Interviewer:** And that was your next posting after ...?

**Interviewee:** That was the next posting ...

**Interviewer:** Yep.

**Interviewee:** ... as a, what they call a Staff Wireless Operator. There was no gunnery there. It was purely radio and you had a Staff Pilot and a Staff Radio Operator flying consistently as, say a crew of two, in an Anson, with two navigators, qualified navigators, doing advanced day and night navigation, well what they called a GR, General Reconnaissance Navigation School. Again, that was ... that involved them in probably more night navigation than they had done before. Shipping patrols and all the signalling, the navigators had to do that, as well as the radio operators.

**Interviewer:** So you did radio communication with the ships?

**Interviewee:** No, no, no, no.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** Only back to base, but the navigators had to do a certain amount of day Aldis signalling with ships as part of their course.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** And they'd have to do where they used to ... they learnt the infamous box patrol, where you flew like that to cover maximum amount of water in the minimum amount of distance so ... but it was a nightmare because they had to record all the changes of courses. They ... box patrols were, were ... they were bad news. And at night, they took a bit of doing and the pilot just ... he just flew where he was told. They gave him the course. And our job at the back was ... once they ran out of ideas and had no idea where they were, I'd have to tell them. And I kept a fair idea of where we were all the time because some of them are good and some of them are hopeless.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Well just explain how you did keep a track of where you were. I mean obviously on ... tuning into radio beacons.

**Interviewee:** Well you, you had the ... you could get radio 3TR, which was a commercial broadcasting station at Sale. You could pick that up nearly all the way to ... or halfway to Tasmania, and then you started picking up Burnie and Launceston, places like that. Flinders Island had a radio beacon on it. But you could get radio, you could get radio bearings, which are accurate enough. Gave you a rough idea where you were. You could get a bearing from Sale and one from, from Burnie and where they met lies about where you were. If ...

**Interviewer:** Yep, now this is using it for direction finding loop?

**Interviewee:** That's right, just the loop bearing.

**Interviewer:** Yep. And you'd manually turn that until the signal was strongest?

**Interviewee:** Yeah. You had a ... the trap is what they call the reciprocal, and that killed a lot of people. You'd ... every, every bearing has a, a 180 degree opposite, reciprocal, so if you were on 270, your reciprocal was 90. So once you picked up a signal, you would log at ... say at 90, and then you'd rotate the loop round to 270 and it would either be ... you could either hardly hear it at all or else it would be booming at you. Well obviously, that was the signal, the true, and the other fainter one that you'd got first was the reciprocal. The Yanks were hopeless like that. They used to time ... apparently they'd, they'd fly on reciprocals and get into a lot of trouble. Once they got a bearing, they thought, "This will do, here we go." And that ...

**Interviewer:** End up in the middle of the ocean or something.

**Interviewee:** Well that's exactly what happened. That ... an example of that is that B-24, the BP explosion mob found in the Sahara Desert. What's ... do you remember the name of it?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, *Lady Be Good*.

**Interviewee:** *Lady Be Good*. Well the Yanks were flying from ... flying a Liberator from, I think, England to Benghazi. They got a bearing from Benghazi, which they took to be the true bearing. Actually, at that stage they'd overflown Benghazi and they were working on the reciprocal. So they figured, "We've got to keep going." And that's exactly what they did.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, instead of turning back.

**Interviewee:** That's right. As far as they were concerned, they were nowhere near Benghazi, where in fact they'd overflown it an hour ... a couple of hours before. And then all they did was fly for a couple of more hours, run out of puff and crash in the Sahara. So ... but that, that, that's an extreme, but you, you usually ... in good weather conditions, it was very easy to distinguish a, a true from a reciprocal bearing. At times it was tricky and, and probably you had to ... you know, bit of experience helped. Or you'd try ... if, if you weren't too sure, if you couldn't make up your mind on, on the ... you'd, you'd go back to WT and get a, a direction (45:43) a bearing from a ground station.

In the case of Bairnsdale, you could get Laverton, Bairnsdale and Mallacoota, what they call a three-position fix. They, they had a group call sign. They'd respond to the one call sign. And then, in turn, they'd, they'd transmit back your bearing from their transmitter. So you'd log that, you'd log one from Bairnsdale and you'd log one from, from Mallacoota, and that's where you were.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** So that's ... so you did, you did the ... you wouldn't, you wouldn't disturb those fellows unless you actually had a request from the navigators. Everything else you did yourselves. You'd get your radio ... loop bearings. Well nobody knew that. It was okay to get a DF bearing from Bairnsdale. That just gave you a ... that gave you a line from Bairnsdale to where you were. You were someone on that line but your radio beacon, which you were working on, crossed it so you're quite happy and you knew that's about where you were.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** But it was a good training ground, Bass Strait, because it's the worst weather in the world, still is. You'd leave in moonlight at ... you did a lot of night flying. You'd leave in moonlight, half past seven or eight o'clock, and by about half past nine, it would be ... you'd be in the worst weather in the world for lightening and, and wind-speed and things like that, and rain.

**Interviewer:** So that was General Reconnaissance School Bairnsdale?

**Interviewee:** From that ... yeah.

**Interviewer:** And how long were you there altogether?

**Interviewee:** Oh, I did about, say three months as a Staff Wireless Operator and then they gave me a job as an Instructor and I had about another, say, about three months of that I think, four months, perhaps.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Are we into 1944 yet?

**Interviewee:** No, this is just coming up to about November ...

**Interviewer:** Forty-three?

**Interviewee:** Hang on. No, we're in '44 now, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** I left there in, I think, October '44. That's right, yeah.

**Interviewer:** So all up you might have spent six months at, at Bairnsdale?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, well four, three, seven; something like seven.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** And instructing was on the ... what we call the jeep sets, the ones I mentioned earlier that we did our basic training on. Some of the Ansons had those.



Some of the later model Ansons had English Marconi radio equipment in so my job was with other wireless operators coming either off-course or coming back from operations in the islands, to have a bit of a, a spell. The ones off-course had never seen Marconi equipment so I had to instruct them in that. And the fellows coming from the islands, no matter what aircraft they'd have been on, it would be using American equipment, in most cases, which would be Bendix or General Electrics and they hadn't seen Marconi or any of this other for years. So it was more a refresher for them.

**Interviewer:** So you were instructing on British sets?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, Marconi and, and ... well British sets, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** There's no American equipment.

**Interviewer:** So you wouldn't have seen American sets til you went on the Liberators?

**Interviewee:** (49:14). Didn't see a ... the early Liberators ... I think the D models had Bendix equipment. From, I think, J on, was all General Electrics.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** The radio, the, the command sets the pilots used, the navigational equipment, the Loran sets, the radar altimeter and the ASV radar, that was all General Electrics.

**Interviewer:** The Radio School at Maryborough, you said was run Americans. That intrigued me.

**Interviewee:** No, no, it was ... the Radar School was inbuilt. There's quite a story attached to that. It was inbuilt into, into No. 3 Wireless Air Gunners School at, at Maryborough and it consisted of, of a, a barbed wire compound, brand new. Brand new posts and brand new barbed wire, brand new fellows on the gates. And, and you went into that and you were isolated. You had your own ... you weren't part of RAAF. You weren't part of 3WAGS Maryborough. You were, were just Radar School.

**Interviewer:** Oh, so ...

**Interviewee:** It was all security.

**Interviewer:** Because of the secret equipment?

**Interviewee:** Yeah. We, we had airborne sets to practice on. The Americans were mainly ... they called them air mechanics, but they were ground radar. They, they were learning more on ground. They were radar operators but they were doing ... their course was mainly on ground radar. We shared the ... we shared living quarters and, and eating facilities and we had different lecture huts because we were all on different equipment. But it was just a barbed wire compound, dumped on the edge of the permanent RAAF base. And they keyword was security. Well hadn't really heard of radar til we got there. It was just a ... it was a word; didn't know that much about it.

**Interviewer:** They called it radar and not radio direction finding at that stage?

**Interviewee:** No well RDF was its first name and then they, and then they gave it a, they gave it a word, which was radio detection and ranging. RDF was a, was a direction, but it didn't give a range.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** Radar was radio R-A-D ... R-A for radio, D for detection, A-R was and ranging, so it gave you the direction and the range of the object. And after all the lectures on security blah-blah-blah ... I think we'd been there about a month ... we were the ... I think we were the first fellows to go through, 'cause it was a brand new facility.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** Must have been because the famous day ... we'd been there about a month, I think, and, yeah, we're given our first leave to go ... we had a good Sergeant's mess. We were quite happy but you still like to go into a town. Maryborough was about seven miles away so we were given leave to go to Maryborough but no ... under no circumstances discuss anything other than we were just radio operators, same as everyone else at, at 3WAGS so ... the, the Air Force truck ... we were about halfway into Maryborough and there was an old ... you know, typical Queensland pub, double-storey with a veranda and an iron roof. And we said to the truck driver, "This is near enough. There's no reason to go into Maryborough." So we, we piled into this old fashioned outback Queensland pub and the dear old soul behind the bar said, "Oh, you'd be the boys from the radar station. We've been waiting for you." And I thought, "Well so much for ..."

**Interviewer:** Secrecy.

**Interviewee:** "So much, so much for security."

## **End of Part 1**

**CD 2 of Interview with Victor Wakley Cahill (431286) Wireless Air Gunner RAAF, 1943-1946**

**Interviewed by Michael Nelmes 19 January 2007.**

## **Interview 2**

**Interviewer:** How did you get to (0:01) from Victoria, did you fly or?

**Victor:** Two trains, expensive suit - two trains and expensive suit, to (0:09) I think we had to change there because the gauges were different. And then you got a train from Central Station in Sydney to Woolloongabba or something up on the border. And you changed again because New South Wales and Queensland rails were different gauge. Oh, it was complicated, yeah. (0:37) and then another five trains from Roma Street in Brisbane to (0:43) and then buses up from there.

**Interviewer:** And how many on your corps?

**Victor:** I don't know, about 20 or 30, there wasn't a lot of us. There was a lot of Yanks, but there weren't many of us.

**Interviewer:** Okay so 20 or 30 Australians mixed in with a bigger (1:05).

**Victor:** As I say, we lived with the Yanks, we ate with them, and we had sleeping huts and everything the same.

**Interviewer:** The Instructors were American (1:12)?

**Victor:** No, we had our own equipment, our own Australian, they were all RAAF Instructors. The Yanks were all on all their equipment. I don't think we even saw it from memory, but it was all ground radar, which would be ground transmitting radars. That's what they were polishing up on.

**Interviewer:** Were you told what type of aircraft you were being trained up for at this stage?

**Victor:** No, we had no idea what was going on. As I saw, radar ... you'd get bulletins and reports, and at Bairnsdale they'd drift through in your crew hut, and you'd read the word or something, but it hadn't really become (2:07) in the Pacific. It wasn't til the ... it was fitted in Beaufort I think, late in their career.

**Interviewer:** That was ASV radar wasn't it, Air to Surface Vessel.

**Victor:** Yeah, ASV. The Liberator Squadrons didn't start operating until probably August or September 1944, wait on ...

**Interviewer:** Yeah that's right, August 1944.

**Victor:** That would be right, yeah well ... and they weren't ... I don't think they were on necessary radar equipment then, or equipped then, because the Yanks, it was their first experience of Americans, and there were some negroes.

They were terrific blokes, and there was one, I forget his Christian name but ... Henry, he was pretty ... he would have been a basket baller, he wasn't that heavy but he was tall and spoke in a delightful voice, and there was a conversation after beers late at night, we'd all be friendly. But sooner or later there was a swing around, they'd always want to know about the AIF and the militia, they could never work that out, but what do you explain what that meant, what we knew about it. Listed against government conscription, (3:30) voluntary enlistment against government conscription and ... they had the same thing, they had enlisted men and conscripted men I think they called them. I always remembered we asked Henry, you had to be very careful because the enlisted men didn't like the conscripts, (3:52) the AIR and the militia at times. I believe they had some areas of conflict, but that was a pretty touchy subject. But however, someone did ask Henry fairly late one night whether he was enlisted or conscripted. He said, "I was in the middle." he said. Four of them called for me in a truck. So we took it that ...

**Interviewer:** (4:19).

**Victor:** ... (4:20) enlisted he didn't want to go. Four of them called for him in a truck, so what do you call that (4:30).

**Interviewer:** They didn't want to take any chances with him.

**Victor:** They wanted to make sure they got him, and they found him.

**Interviewer:** And I guess those ... you said the Americans were all ground radar, so they would have been posted to ground radar units (4:45).

**Victor:** Yeah well they would have gone to radar counter measures, or ground radar somewhere, I don't know where they went. At this stage, you are probably about to ask the question, but we still hadn't heard the word Liberator, we didn't know it existed.

**Interviewer:** Because this is still what? Early 1944, or ... no late 1944.

**Victor:** Late 1944, yeah. While I was at Bairnsdale, I flew several times with a Commanding Officer who was the CO of 82 Wing, Derek Kingwall, who ... you had an acknowledgement in your book, or he wrote the ...

**Interviewer:** Yeah he wrote the foreword.

**Victor:** Yeah, well he was CO of DRS Bairnsdale for probably a couple of years, and he was promoted to Group Captain and disappeared. Well he went to one of the early Liberator training courses at (5:50) the Americans were doing, this was before (5:53) was invented. Tocumwal, but the 7OTU wasn't.

**Interviewer:** No, I think they had Beauforts or something at Tocumwal at that stage.

**Victor:** Probably. It was more a stores and repair depot, and when we got there of course it was pretty big, there was about 6000 people there. It was five miles by five miles; 25 square miles, and there was a minimum strength of 1000 in the Sergeant's mess, it was big. That came after (6:37), back to Tocumwal, that's the first time we'd heard of the word Liberator.

**Interviewer:** So when you got to Tocumwal the Liberators were already there when you got there?

**Victor:** Oh yeah, they'd been operating for quite some time, but even so we'd never heard the word, we didn't know what one looked like. The only Australian operational aircraft of course was a Beaufort, anything else was ... we had Pilots flying Mistels and Bostons, but they were imported aircraft.

**Interviewer:** If we start on the 7OTU now perhaps. So you got there in late 1944. Did you go for a flight early on (7:30) when you got there or?

**Victor:** No, it was back to old grind of lectures.

**Interviewer:** You've been an Instructor, so did you go to ...

**Victor:** Didn't give me any ... didn't help in any way, because I hadn't seen any of the equipment we were using. The gunnery we did, we were all a bit rusty, because there was no gunnery at CRS, so between GRS and (8:02) and everything they'd probably been (8:02) and even the first few weeks at Tocumwal, it might have been something like a year since I'd done anything to do with gunnery.

**Interviewer:** Just in the (8:10).

**Victor:** Yeah, and then of course although we're dealing with the (8:16) machine (8:17) it was point five, and it was power operated turrets, which we knew nothing about. So anybody (8:27) some fellows started of OTUs on Beauforts I think, and then they got transferred, well they had a bit of a start because at least they knew ... the radio equipment wasn't any good to them, because that was Australian built AWA, that didn't help. But if they'd been in Beauforts, and they'd started on OUT (8:45) well at least they'd been using what they call a frozen ash power turret, so it would help a bit I guess. We didn't do ... again, we didn't do much gunnery, I think we only did a couple of ... same thing again, air to ground. Because they didn't like low flying, Liberators, they weren't the sort of aircraft that you could throw around like a little Fairey Battle. So, but we did more air to air, than air to ground gunnery, I think, from memory. I think we only did one or two air to ground flights, and probably three or four air to air flights, again right at the end of the course. Most of it was lecture huts and the aircraft recognition was as well as your ... I was quite happy about Morse Code because that was ... I made my living at that, I didn't worry about the radio side of it. We didn't see the radio's still we got in the plane, we didn't have any ground instruction on radios.

**Interviewer:** You didn't do any flight or affiliation gunnery?

**Victor:** Oh yeah, yeah, we did that for the first time ... they used to send P-40 Key Hawks down from Mildura. And they were ...

**Interviewer:** And they would make mock attacks on (10:08).

**Victor:** They were pretty good, we'd do camera gunnery and they were (10:13).

**Interviewer:** So when you pulled the trigger a camera ... a mini camera started.

**Victor:** Yeah, not every turret has a camera, but a lot of it you were using a turret that wasn't going to be a turret, because I think only the nose turret and the tail turrets would have cameras then. When we got on the squadron we had different ... we were doing fighter affiliation with the P-51 Mustangs, and we had ... four of the turrets had cameras. But getting back to Tocumwal, the City Hawk Pilots were pretty good, they'd give you a good working over, and it was pretty hard to ... you might get a glimpse of an aircraft that came through on the film, and then everyone would argue who was on the turret when they got the result. But (11:00).

**Interviewer:** What sort of attacks were they making? Rear attacks, or side, or?

**Victor:** Oh head-ons and through ... you know, I think they'd fly through planes in formation, well they'd try to break up the formation and they'd come up below for the ... but most of the attacks were head on and back, because that's where the cameras were, it wasn't much good ... it was a non-purpose result to do overheads and come up from underneath because nobody could record it. The nose could to *that* angle, and so could the tail, but straight up or straight down ... but they were good at the end of the exercise, again they used to drift past at a convenient time and speed that you'd get a bit of a glimpse and that was your ... they were your P-40s. And then the same thing with ... they used to have (11:57) vengeance, dive bombers toeing the drogues for air to air gunnery. You know the (12:02) vengeance, the crank wing dive bombing. And they were pretty good, because at the end of the exercise they'd go past at a fairly stayed speed,

about 500 or 600 yards out, give you a chance of putting a few (12:18). Same thing, your ammunition was the same as it was ... it was colour coded that you were using, as I say you were using point fives instead of ... and you had a pair of them.

**Interviewer:** Did you find it easier to score hits from the turrets than in the battle with the free (12:34).

**Victor:** The result was much the same.

**Interviewer:** Was it?

**Victor:** Yeah. It looked a very miserable result, but apparently it was par for the course, or not much below it, or not much above it, but nobody ever riddled a ... even the Operator would come along and he'd come along, cut his speed back a bit, and he'd stay at the same height, and you would have the tail gun would start on him. The mid upper gun would be firing at him, the ball turret would be firing at him, one of the waste guns would be having a go at him, and then when he got far enough in front the nose turret would have a go at him.

There still wouldn't be much paint on it, because even then ... as I say, even though the Liberator was a fairly stable aircraft, the lighter ... the vengeance it was moving, which meant the tail was moving, and it was on the end of a cable, which meant it was moving around the sky. That was a fair test there, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Did anyone ever hit the toe plane by mistake?

**Victor:** Yes, not at Tocumwal, because you were presumed to know a fair bit more about gunner than early in the piece, but that incident at Seaspray, if my memory is correct, the actual drogue was severed from the cable I think, by bullets, that could happen, unintentionally, but ... the Drogue Operator quite often could see the flash of bullets ricocheting off the cable, it was pretty ... I didn't ever see the cable, but it was a fairly stout cable, it wasn't just a bit of wire or something. And it was possible to hit it with ... because the 303s spat out quite a few ... they used to spit out 1100 rounds a minute or something, and the Drogue Operator could see these ricochets starting at the drogue and coming up the cable towards him. Of course that's when he'd start yelling for the Pilot to ... and the Pilot I think would have radio contact with the Pilots in the ... the Drogue Pilot would have contact with the ... (14:57). But he'd be screaming at the Pilot to get the idiot out of the area before he killed the lot of us.

**Interviewer:** What was the school at West Sale again?

**Victor:** That was Air Gunnery School.

**Interviewer:** That came after Parks?

**Victor:** That's correct, yeah.

**Interviewer:** And before Bairnsdale?

**Victor:** That's correct, yeah.

**Interviewer:** I think I missed that out in the original introduction. West Sale Air Gunnery School.

**Victor:** Yeah, well that's where I was talking about the pits with the Markers that could run fast, and the air to air gunnery, yeah that's the number one AGS Air Gunnery School, FULHAM West Sale, Fairey Battles.

**Interviewer:** Back onto the Liberators, did you get a go in every turret and the free guns and ...

**Victor:** No, no, the mid upper Gunner, and the nose Gunner, and the tail Gunner were straight Air Gunners, they hadn't done radio, they hadn't done navigation, they hadn't done any, they came straight from training. Or if they'd been doing something else in the Air Force and re-mustered, which they could do aircrew, but most of them had done (16:23) they would do in a trainings course, initial training course, air gunner course such as West Sale, and then they'd go say to Tocumwal.

And they would be given the turret, one would be the nose ... he'd be assigned to an Instructor who was instructing on the nose turret. Another bunch of them would be given to the Instructor who was on (16:50) upper turret, and they had different lecturing because they became the fire controller (16:57) gunner. And then the tail gunner would be the same thing, he would be instructed by a fellow pure and simply on the (17:06) tail turret. Wireless Air Gunners, we had to do what they call WOP Wireless Op AG Air Gunners (17:18) Radar, we were. So we would have to do radio with Glen Martin ... sorry, the general electrics, we had to do general electrics radio, the ball turret and the AS3 radar.

**Interviewer:** Oh so the ball turret was ... the ball turret Gunner was a qualified Radio Wireless Operator as well?

**Victor:** Well they did, because they didn't spend that much time on the ball turret anyway.

**Interviewer:** Oh that's why they chose that position to ...

**Victor:** They got rid of the ball turret in most cases in the Pacific in the end, because it wasn't ... they didn't fly at high altitudes, there was nothing ... any Japanese left that were making fight attacks (18:14) all of them were above or at head to head, most of them were just passing through formations and they'd keep going. So they got rid of the ball turret, and they started carrying ... gave them a bit more fuel and ammunition they could carry than the others. The Engineer, in his spare time he would have one of the flexible point fives, and there were two hatches, port and (18:42) hatches down the back, past the (18:44) before you got to the tail planes, the hatches (18:48) in and hooked up, and the flexible point fives each side, they swung out. Well the Engineer would operate one of those, and the Signallers in turn they were ... although they were trained purely and simply in radar and radio, they did a bit of a crash course on the point five at Tocumwal, and they ... one Signaller, or the Signallers in turn would operate one hatch gun, and the Engineer would operate the other. That was a system. And the Wireless Operator Air Gunner radar would have a stretch on radar, stretch on the ball turret, and a stretch on radar. So there we had three radar operators.

**Interviewer:** I can understand why you wouldn't want to spend a long time in the ball turret because you were ...

**Victor:** We didn't want to spend any time in the ball turret.

**Interviewer:** So perhaps if you could briefly describe the ball turret and getting into it, and operating it.

**Victor:** Well you got into a ... initially they ... you learned the hard way, they put you in it, it was an electro hydraulic bit of equipment, and I think it was on three shafts, you got into it in the aircraft and they used to open the hydraulic valves and just let you go straight down, straight out underneath and hang under the aircraft, just descending fast in a lift. There was no impression of stopping until it hit the bottom with an awful thump, that was a ... it was a pretty crude (20:20) but it worked. After that you would let it down yourself, once they'd showed you how to do it, you would let it down yourself and open the hatch, climb in, (20:30) but it was down then.

**Interviewer:** Oh you got into when it was down?

**Victor:** Oh yeah, you still ... it was hanging down, but the hatch would be still inside the aircraft. You'd get in there and close the hatch and then you'd operate it. You'd start doing your swivelling from there.

**Interviewer:** But you could lower the turret while you were in it, or was it more of a ...

**Victor:** No, no, no, you could do it the hard way, when it was stowed right up in the aircraft you could get in it at walk in level, and get someone you trusted to let it down cautiously, but all they did was open the valves and let you go down like an express lift. So you only got to do it once on that. From then on you either had ... I mean the Engineer would do it properly for you, he'd let you down, or else you'd do it yourself once you were properly trained. But they were treacherous, once you got them down you had to lock them, because they were subject to the air stream. We'd get them and they had incidences very early when they ... in training where blokes got sawed in half or had their legs chopped off, because they'd step in and they'd half rotate, and the slipstream would do the rest, they hadn't secured them properly. They were nasty bastards.

**Interviewer:** But there was a mechanism to lock it in place while you were climbing in.

**Victor:** Climbing in. So you had to have a pretty thorough training in them, because they were ... you did most of it in ... you did a lot of it in the ... the Instructor would take you into a Liberator that was being serviced in the hanger, and they'd tack the back of it right up so that the turret could come down completely and be cleared of the hanger floor. And you'd be doing it the easy way, there was no ... the aircraft was absolutely locked and stable, and you'd climb in from the inside or it would be hanging down and you'd get in through the hatch anyway, and they'd close it behind you on the ground, and the Instructor would tell you what to do.

**Interviewer:** Now these are all Australian Instructors, they didn't have any Americans there?

**Victor:** No, these were all ... (22:43) was, I don't think at any stage did they have American Instructors. American Instructors instructed the first Pilots at an American base called Nadzab. And I think including Derek Kingwall, about 80 of them went up there. And they were taught to fly Liberators, and then they were taken out (23:11) Co-Pilots on so many missions, three or four missions, or six missions. And then they were put in the



left hand seat when they were qualified. Some of them came back to Tocumwal as Instructors, others became COs of the first Liberator Squadrons that were formed, et cetera. Derek Kingwall of course was promoted to Group Captain, he was ... he had a complete wing; he had 82 Wing, which was probably about six squadrons I think, or three at least.

**Interviewer:** The fighter affiliation you mentioned at Tocumwal, that you briefly did, you were in the ball turret then?

**Victor:** Yep.

**Interviewer:** What was it like to sight and track?

**Victor:** Well you had electronic sights, which they call emergency, a little ring and bead sight, which is this little (24:13) ball on it, about six inches in front of it was a ring with a cross in it. And it was a miniature of what was on the flexible guns at ... flexible single point fires that they had out the hatch. So they had a bead up the front of it with a little knob on it, and a ring at the back, (24:34) happily and if you could keep a fighter in the ring and the bead for so long and (24:41) you were guaranteed to hit it. I think in the European theatre of war they did away with the waste guns after so many months, because they used to take about two tons of ammunition. And of course all the authorities and everybody involved, they never ever hit anything. That's the (25:01) American Air Force, (25:07) see the Turret Gunners were the only Gunners that ever hit anything. Yet all the film footage you get ... the only reason you see these fellows (25:13) away out the hatch, the War Correspondents, they were the only Gunners they could really take photos of in operations.

**Interviewer:** You just couldn't fit the camera into a turret (25:22).

**Victor:** You couldn't fit the camera into the turret, so ... yes, the gun sights. I'd probably better mention, the Liberator at the time was a pretty sophisticated aircraft, they ... it was designed in 1941 I think, went into service say 1942, but it had then a (25:53) auto pilot, which is computerised. And not long after that, the front turret, which was an (26:01) turret, had a computerised gun sight. And the tail turret, which was a motors ... the nose was emerson, the tail was motors; it had a computerised gun sight. I didn't ever use them, but from the description, they were sort of a glass panel with four flooding diamonds in it, a bit like a poker machine. But with hand controls and foot controls, if you could get the four diamonds to form a diamond and fit an aircraft wing tip in the diamond, and fly it, you would hit it. It was computerised and compensated, so it was pretty accurate. The top turret and the ball turret had ... we had radicals, which were a horizontal (27:07)

.  
(Looking at something – maybe photos.)

**Victor:** That's an impression of your ring and bead manual, but when you switched on your gun sight in the turret, it lit up with a horizontal line and two verticals, one down and one up at each end of it. And you depressed two pedals with your feet, and that brought those two radicals into about ... I'm trying to give a ... that was about the size of the gun sight, a little electronic box. You'd press the pedals and bring the reticles into there. And an aircraft coming in, again, you would get its wing tips because of its distance away, so 800 yards, or a 1000, its wing tips would just be touching there. And you would have to ease both, like a brake pedal and a clutch or something, you'd have to (28:22) these

both feet off the pedals. And those reticles would spread out, keeping the wing tips between them.

**Interviewer:** (28:32).

**Victor:** As the plane approached it got bigger and you'd have to spread the reticles out. And again, like the front tail, if you could hold it at about the 600 yard ... if you could hold it for five seconds between the reticles and (28:46) you'd hit it, that's the theory.

**Interviewer:** So your foot pedals didn't control the turret, they just ...

**Victor:** No, the turret, it's like sitting in this chair, you had two wooden handles with buttons on top, and the handles came towards you and went away from you, and they went this way and that way. But once you got in the turret, you tipped yourself on your back, so the guns actually were parallel to your feet. It was like sitting in a chair and tipping it over and lying it on the floor, your feet are parallel to the guns, so where the guns are going, your feet are going. The handles controlled the complete rotation of the turret or the forward and backward movement, that way or that way. And your gun buttons were on the top of it. You had throat microphones, so you completely ... they were fairly revolutionary at the time, because you didn't need oxygen in the Pacific, so you didn't need a built in face mask. Every crew member had a throat ... and dependent where you were, you had a hand button or a foot button to press for start communication.

**Interviewer:** And because you weren't up at high altitudes you wouldn't have had a heated suit or anything as well?

**Victor:** No. That article I was quoted in, that (30:20) Tocumwal, we were supposed to be issued with (30:23) with a backpack. As you've seen on ordinary RAAF parachutes, you've got a leg and body harness with two big clips, and you clip on a chest type parachute, and out you go and pull a rip cord. There's no way you could fit that into the turret, there's no room, you occupy the turret, you were part of it. So you had to leave the parachute stowed somewhere else on the aeroplane, and hope someone gives you a hand out of the turret so you can go and get your parachute and get out. But by then I would figure everyone had gone so ... the Yanks had them and we were supposed to be issued, but they were thin, long parachute from head to toe, down the back. And they were padded and they were very comfortable, we saw them but we never got our hands on them. And you just (31:20) four pins and your big entry door fell away and you fell out underneath the aircraft, and I don't think that was a good way out, there's nothing to hit or anything. But that was a ... everybody fell for the trap, even at 7OTU, you figured with T-40s coming in and giving you fair sorts of shots at them, it was very hard to coordinate the pedals and get those ... so you're more inclined to switch off the gun sight and go your hardest with this and hope you got a result. I mean, all you had to do was pass the course.

**Interviewer:** So in practical use, you really didn't pay much attention to the reticles?

**Victor:** Not to that no.

I believe the ... well the Nose Gunners and the Tail Gunners always got pretty good results at ATU, and I understand in the actual operation theatres they were good, so long as the Nose Gunner was only good for head on attacks anyway, because the guns

stopped at about there or there. And the tail was the same, once it got to about there it couldn't fire, and once it got to about there it couldn't fire. So you had to have fighters coming in in ideally situated zones, but they were computerised and they were accurate. As I say, these were ... I think the ball turret was the hardest to fire out of it, because it was continually thrown all over the place by slipstream. You were hanging out under the aircraft and it was quite a big dome. It was a dome about twice the size of your (33:25) hanging down underneath, and that was ...

**Interviewer:** Being buffeted around (33:29).

**Victor:** It was being buffeted, that's the word. So as far as I was concerned, trying to get a result, this seemed to work quite well. And they are only *that* far apart, whereas in the point five out in the hatch, they'd be ... the bead would be ... the ring would be here and the bead would be way down the end of the barrel.

**Interviewer:** And you wouldn't want to be scared of heights I wouldn't imagine, looking down through that little window in the turret?

**Victor:** No it was ...

**Interviewer:** Or it didn't worry you?

**Victor:** Well, I think it was just a question of where discipline comes in. They said, "You're going to be a Wireless Operator Air Gunner." Radar Operators have got to do a ball turret course, so you just accepted it. You never forgot your first journey down, they trained you the hard way, but then you got your own back on several other people as months went by, because people wanting to try the ball turret, you'd certainly welcome the (34:37) you'd still hear the scream. I did it to the Pilot and he (34:42) "Don't you ever do anything like that to me again!" But even the ...

**Interviewer:** Did you do a swap? Did you get into the Pilot's seat or?

**Victor:** Oh yes, we all had rudimentary flying. I could sort of ... I could keep an aeroplane in the air I think, straight and level, I could go this way and I could go that way, but I didn't try anything else. But to a certain degree he wanted everyone to know everyone else's job on the plane, which ...

**Interviewer:** So did you get into the other turrets at all or?

**Victor:** No, not ... I travelled in them but I didn't use them. It was just to get a different view. The Nose Gunner was sick of being stuck out the front so he'd say (35:26) in time they could let the ball turret down themselves and use it. And the front turret and the tail turret were walk-ins anyway, they were easy.

**Interviewer:** And you did a little bit of air to ground gunnery in the Liberators you said?

**Victor:** Oh yeah, at Tocomwal, yeah. Not much, not much because ... it was strange, because in time ... you read the activities of all the different squadrons strafing. Although it wasn't authorised, they did a lot of it. Every time they'd go out and they'd ... say the oil fields in Borneo, or Celebes Islands, or anything like that, which is near to Indonesia ... they'd (36:15) American, something like Mitchells were coming in at sort of sea level bombing or skip bombing, and Liberators might be 3000 to 5000 feet or something. After

they'd bombed, nine times out of ten, "Okay let's go down and do a bit of strafing." Well it was never authorised, but most of them did it. And (36:39) in my experience they spent very little time training on the ... but still with the nose turret coming at an angle, the nose and the top turret and the ball turret, but the 6.5s could be firing at men or equipment on the ground or something, well that's a fair bit of fire.

**Interviewer:** Or shipping (37:00).

**Victor:** Or shipping, small ship, they'd clear the decks. And once they'd passed over well the ball turret could keep firing and then the tail turret would chip in. And if they tipped it on the side, one of the waste guns would have a go.

**Interviewer:** Well we might move onto your final postings, because we'll probably wind up in ten minutes or so. Now 200 flight you briefly went through, did you do any flying with them or?

**Victor:** Yeah, a couple of trips with 200 flight, we didn't know then what it was. As far as we could see we were in transit at Amberley, which meant they could sort of do (37:48) there was no regular crew or anything, you'd just be given an aircraft and a name, report to the transport point at a certain time of the morning and (38:00) into the truck, and often you'd get on an aircraft, but it was obviously what became 200 flight. And later on 200 flight used to ... they were based at Leyburn near Warwick. They would land at Cecil Plains, which was 102 Squadron's, and they'd pick up Operators from there, some Gunners or Wireless Operators. And quite often there would be some ... there were real characters, they were obviously, as I know now, by their facial structure they were Indonesians or they were East Indies – the islands were called then – because of their facial structure and colour, they were in very ill fitting army uniforms, which had obviously been put on in a hurry. They all needed a shave and a haircut, but they would be dropped, they'd be given a feed and a night's lodgings or something, say at 102 Squadron, and a 200 flight plane, which we got to know then would land and load them all on and cart them off.

**Interviewer:** So they were the special operatives that got dropped into Borneo?

**Victor:** They'd be parachuting, they would be natives or (39:17).

**Interviewer:** (39:18).

**Victor:** That's right, they knew the jungle, they'd lived there. They might have had family still there, I don't know, but as I say they obviously weren't Australian. They weren't in the Australian Army.

**Interviewer:** But you didn't go on an operational flight with 200 flight?

**Victor:** Well, I had two from Amberley, which would have been, but that was only ... as I say, I didn't know where I was, who I was with, and it was only what you call listening out procedure on the radio, so it was nothing very serious.

**Interviewer:** You didn't do any transmission?

**Victor:** No.

**Interviewer:** Were you on radio silence on those flights?

**Victor:** Yep. You were ... some of the plane had special equipment on. They had radio countermeasure (40:07) they were Wireless Air Gunners, Radar Operators who had done radar training to the (40:13) degree. And their job was to go by listening on different frequencies, pick up radar transmissions and locate radar ground stations. But they had interesting careers, but ... the Amberley, I will never forget. I think it's different now, but it obviously had two 8000 foot strips to accommodate Liberators. Prior to that they would have been a lot shorter, to accommodate all other twin engine aircraft. But in the extension of one of the 8000 foot strips there was a railway crossing with gates, have you heard this?

**Interviewer:** No, I haven't no.

**Victor:** It was ridiculous. It would be about seven eighths of the way down, and it was more fair enough in the taxiing area than in the ... but the train had right of way. There was an old snooze who used to close the gates, and if you were trying to get to the end of the strip to take off, you would wait till the train came.

**Interviewer:** That's amazing, I hadn't heard that.

**Victor:** It's a fact. The Engineers used to scream because they reckoned they'd shut the gates when the train was leaving Brisbane, which meant they'd be sitting there with the engines going forever and going nowhere. (41:48) Amberley is a bit like this, it could get fierce, fiercely hot on the right day. Well Engineers didn't like that, neither did the engines. So eventually the train would puff through and the old gent would open the gates and you'd crank up and get on your way again. But how no one ever ...

**Interviewer:** Recipe for disaster you'd think.

**Victor:** Oh it was (42:14) if anybody got it mixed up, or if the weather was bad taxiing would be bad enough, but taking off or landing and running into a train wouldn't do a Liberator a lot of good, or the train.

**Interviewer:** Wouldn't do the train much good either.

**Victor:** But that's ... I remember Amberley for that reason, but there again it was a bit like (42:35) transit was pretty rough, you weren't permanent, you weren't part of the permanent staff. You had the Sergeant's mess and sleeping quarters, and nobody wanted to have anything to do with you, you had a feed and a bed, and then they'd allocate you a plane or something the next day and that was it.

**Interviewer:** So you went on a couple of flights there, from Amberley with 200 flight.

**Victor:** Yeah and then more flights to initially medical supplies and bringing back wounded soldiers from Bougainville.

**Interviewer:** From Bougainville.

**Victor:** Bougainville, yeah. (43:14) was the bomber strip there.

**Interviewer:** Were you with 102 Squadron yet or was that still?

**Victor:** No, it's just before. I went from there, from pool – I suppose you'd call it a pool, they called it transit – I went to 102 Squadron about May or June or something. And then we started much the same thing, going to Bougainville and Finchhaven and some other places like that, bringing back soldiers who were being discharged on the point system. If they were married ... the highest points were if they were married, and the time they had been in, or had been out of Australia – they came back first. And then they gradually got down to married blokes who had been away half the time, and then they got down to single blokes who had been away a long time. And we used to bring back about 25 at a time I think, so.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember the POWs, and the sort of state they were in?

**Victor:** No, we didn't have any POWs, these are all Australian soldiers, active. You'd probably find in your books, you'll see some of the other squadrons did the POWs, 12 and 99 and ... I can't quote the ones that they flew up to Borneo ... I think they brought them back from Borneo or (44:49) places like that. But we were bringing back ... they were still fighting in Bougainville til about August 1945. There were still casualties, so we brought back some wounded blokes. We would take up a few tons of food in the bomb bays and then bring back ... and then once they ran out of ... once the war ... once they eased right off that, then they started to bring these army blokes back for discharge. And they were happy blokes because I think they'd taken about three weeks by ships, or luggers, or launchers, or something, to go from Brisbane or something to Bougainville. And we used to get them back in nine hours, so they were very happy to be home.

**Interviewer:** Just touching on the 200 flight operations you did, do you remember anything about the dropping of the stores, or the special operatives or anything?

**Victor:** No only what ... I was never involved in that, they used to have suits constructed for the back hatches, and some I think once they did away with the ball turrets they used to use that area to drop blokes through, and stores, and ammunition.

**Interviewer:** So the flights you did with 200 flight, they weren't actual operations out to ...

**Victor:** No, I wouldn't call them very serious, because they were marked aircraft, they weren't unmarked aircraft, I believe they were 200 flights. They used to just pull in and grab Gunners and whoever was in transit. If they wanted a Navigator, or Gunners, or Wireless Operators or something, you were just allocated. The 200 flight I think, as a true flight, did not have marked aircraft, 201 flight was the same, although they were ready to go to Darwin ... they were based at Laverton, but they were unmarked aircraft too. I sent you a photo of a low flying (47:00) did I, at that Laverton, with the Lancaster on the ground?

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's right.

**Victor:** Well that would have been, I assume a 201 flight plane, because there was no ... there weren't any markings on it. And the fact that it was Laverton, that's where they were based. But they were full of radio and radar gear for counter measure stuff, but (47:21).

**Interviewer:** You didn't get involved in that at all?

**Victor:** No.

**Interviewer:** 102 Squadron, where were you with them, at Cecil Plains?

**Victor:** That was at Cecil Plains, the CO was Squadron Leader J.E.S Dennett, who had been a Beaufighter Pilot in 31 Squadron. And he was a very experienced man, his first Liberator Squadron he flew on was the Black Swan Squadron in Perth, 25 Squadron, he formed that. And his next squadron he formed was 12 Squadron, and he handed that over, and then he formed 102. He went from ... I was his Wireless Operator from about November to February, November 1945 to February 1946, I flew with him. And I buzzed (48:16) I think February and March, (48:18) discharge, he wanted me to join the interim Air Force. You could join for two years, you didn't have to be permanent, you could join the RAAF for two years, and if you wanted to become permanent after that you could. And I nearly fell for it, because I thought if I could go with him, it would be all right. But he got suddenly posted to a (48:43) he had an interesting career, he got posted to a Staff Corps in England and got there, as soon as he arrived and they found out he was commanding a Liberator Squadron, they put him straight on the Berlin Airlifts, which was very, very hazardous. The stories about there were terrific. And then he finished up as a Group Captain as second in command at RAAF Butterworth, and he retired in 1962, so very interesting man.

**Interviewer:** So you flew as his Wireless Operator?

**Victor:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And what was 102 Squadron doing primarily, you were with them for (49:29).

**Victor:** They were formed for offensive operations in the southwest pacific area. Most of the training was formation flying, a lot of it, a lot of it.

**Interviewer:** But as it turned out you were doing mainly ...

**Victor:** They put them onto Fairey flight.

**Interviewer:** (49:49).

**Victor:** Fairey flights they called them, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Before those flights, did they reduce the weight of the aircraft by taking equipment out or anything? How many soldiers were you taking back at a time?

**Victor:** I think 28 was the limit, plus the ... they had one or two kit bags they chucked all the gear into the bomb bays and spread them. You had to have everyone up the front, as far as possible, to get a Liberator off the ground. You had to have all the weight in the nose, and the tail up in the air. Because all the weight restraints (50:24) in the tail. If you pulled up and didn't park it correctly it would just tip back. So they used to put the brakes on and rev it up, and get the ... gradually the nose and the engines would come down. Once they got them in that position they'd cut the power of the four engines. But they ... we'd load the soldiers as far as possible up the front, and then once you got airborne and got to whatever height they were travelling, you could cart them off and stick them

down the back. But the only thing, the only reduction that took place was they got rid of the ... all the Gunners, and guns, ammunition ... well there was obviously no ammunition loaded. The Gunners went, and the guns, the bomb ammo went. So from a crew of 11 you went down to five. You had two Pilots, a Navigator, an Engineer and a Wireless Operator; skeleton crew was the term.

**Interviewer:** So you were with them until early 1946 you said?

**Victor:** I got discharged early March 1946, I think, from memory.

**Interviewer:** And you were still based at Cecil Plains (51:47).

**Victor:** Yeah, yeah. There was practically no flying, it was only ...

**Interviewer:** All the soldiers were home by then and you'd done all the transport flights?

**Victor:** Yes they would have, because the aircraft either went to either squadrons, or either went down to Tocumwal for eventual destruction. We were just sitting around in the last few weeks, sitting in the Queensland sun (52:24) low bridges.

**Interviewer:** They didn't keep you doing flying training?

**Victor:** No. Oh that would have been only ... I think I was flying in February, and I was discharged in March, so it wasn't that big a gap. The last two fellows I saw when I got my discharge was a Psychiatrist at Royal Park in Melbourne, and I was scratching my head afterwards, I thought, "Well they are the fellows you should have seen on the way in, not on the way out." That's how the RAAF did it.

**Interviewer:** Well just to wrap up, is there anything major that we haven't covered that you think should be mentioned from your service?

**Victor:** No, I've just tried to tell it as it rolled along Mike. I've highlighted a few things that stood out, but you've asked the pertinent questions, I don't think you've overlooked anything. And you must have struck a few people like me that ... if I can fill any gaps, I'd be very happy.

**Interviewer:** Well thank you very much Victor for your time, we might wrap up there.

**End of Interview.**