

Allan Champion Oral History Interview

ALLAN CHAMPION: (inaudible) I radioed Port Moresby saying that I'd rescued them. And they radioed back, "Proceed to the wreck and salvage radio equipment, navigation equipment, bombsights, and wingtips." And I (inaudible) to Fred. He said, "Do you know anything about airplanes?" I said, "I had (inaudible) Tiger Moth in 1938 in England. That's the only thing I'd had."

INTERVIEWER: You had a what? You had a?

AC: Anyway he said, "I shot the wall up before I left the plane" and of course I didn't go in then.

INV: So you never actually -- you haven't seen the airplane?

AC: No, I've never actually seen it. I only saw it from the pictures of that book that --

INV: Glen [Speeth?]?

AC: Sent me.

INV: Glen is the one that contacted me when he found out I was coming over here and asked me to come by and see you. He is a wonderful fellow who's really behind the effort to get that airplane out of the swamp and he's the one that's doing the book on it.

AC: The only thing I'm a bit hazy about is when they went to Oro Bay to be taken to Port Moresby. The way they spoke was that they were going to go over the range. Under those circumstances would I have sent them over the range.

INV: I see. Now the range, you're talking about the Owen Stanley range?

AC: They ventured around Higaturu and Sangara. Sangara was on the way, but what I think it was happened (inaudible) to send them to Kokoda and that was where they'd be picked up by airplane from there.

INV: And how did you get word, by radio?

AC: Yes. And in the meantime they must have picked up the message on the way that said, "Proceed to Oro Bay" and they went to Oro Bay. If I'd walked over the Owen Stanley range it would be nine days and I was a healthy man.

INV: Were you walking from Moresby to Kokoda?

AC: I was walking from Buna to Port Moresby. It took me 11 days all together. That was after the Japs drove me out of Buna.

INV: I see. What was your capacity? Were you a resident magistrate?

AC: No, I was assistant resident magistrate. The resident magistrate, being over 45, he was evacuated and I was left in charge.

INV: How long had you -- and where were you actually located? At Buna?

AC: At Buna, yeah.

INV: You were assistant resident magistrate at Buna?

AC: At Buna.

INV: How long had you been there when the war broke out?

AC: I'd probably been there two or three months when they sent another man out, a senior man to me, and he decided to make his headquarters at Awala, Awala Rubber Plant. That was inland. And left me at Buna.

INV: As a resident magistrate were you part of the Australian civil service?

AC: Yes, I was in the civil service prior to the war and when the war broke out they said, "You cannot enlist because you're a special service." And then of course when the Japs came into it they said everybody's in the Army now.

INV: What was your job --

AC: I'd been commissioned and I just did the same work.

INV: What were your duties as resident magistrate?

AC: Looking after natives, listening to court cases, and all kinds of things. Very interesting as well. I've been doing it all my life actually.

INV: Was that your first posting? Was New Guinea your first posting?

AC: Oh, no. My first posting was at [Nagoylala?]. That was in 1936. It was right up in the mountains.

INV: That's in New Guinea also? Is that in Papua, New Guinea also?

AC: They were two different territories. There was Papua and separate territory, New Guinea. New Guinea was captured from the Germans in the 1914-18 war and they were two separate administrations. Papua was governed actually -- we had a lieutenant governor responsible to the minister for foreign affairs, I think it was, in Canberra and New Guinea had an administrator who was responsible to the League of Nations.

INV: I see. What had you been doing when the war broke out?
Were you already the --

AC: Already.

INV: You were already there?

AC: Of course --

INV: When I say the war broke out I guess I'm referring to Pearl Harbor and the Japanese attack.

AC: Yes, Pearl Harbor -- I was at Buna actually when the Japs landed then in June/July of '42. There were only five of us there so we had to abandon the place and --

INV: Were you also serving as a coast watcher?

AC: Yes.

INV: And reporting troop ship movements?

AC: We had to report all aircraft traveling over from Rabaul to Port Moresby because we were on the direct route.

INV: And you had a radio transmitter?

AC: Oh, yes.

INV: You'd call in by voice or would it be code communication?

AC: It was all done in code and we had a special code, but unfortunately the code name was altered every month and the Japs managed to get hold of the code out at [Mishima?] and they radioed me to abandon all code words and in future use the (inaudible) and the Christian names of your eldest brother.

INV: And the Japanese were telling you that?

AC: Couldn't get that at all, you see. They wouldn't know who my brother was or what his Christian name was. He was in the Navy.

INV: Can you tell me everything you remember about how you first heard of Fred Eaton's crew? How did that first come to your attention?

AC: I had a radio in Port Moresby saying, "Allied aircraft down your area, search for survivors."

INV: Who was the radio message from, do you recall?

AC: It came from Port Moresby.

INV: Was it Army headquarters or RAA --

AC: Army headquarters. And it was in code. I didn't have any kind of water transport. The Anglican mission at Gona, they had this little speedboat so I sent for them and I said, "I must take your boat for a few days, I've got to look for some downed aircraft."

INV: Did they give you any information as to more specifically where the plane was?

AC: No information where it was at all. And I said it wouldn't be between here and Gora. That's the Anglican mission. I just had to go south and I visited all the sort of villages on the coast and I never heard of any aircraft in trouble. And I went up a very large river which wasn't in my area, the Musa River. I went up as far as I could where the current got too strong for this little boat, so I turned around and went back and I found a branch off from this river and I branched off. I came to a village and he was (inaudible).

INV: And that's where Fred was, in this little village?

AC: That's where Fred was, right in the village.

INV: So when you came on the village, you didn't have any idea they were there?

AC: No idea whatever.

INV: You were just looking for them.

AC: I was going to call in and inquire, "Have you heard any aircraft, have you seen anybody at all, any white men around?"

INV: Do you remember what village this was or did it have a name?

AC: I don't remember the name of the place at all. Not me in my area, I don't remember. Anyway there were too many of them to take on this little boat so I got a very large canoe from the village and towed them back to Buna.

INV: Behind your motorboat? Towed them behind your motorboat?

AC: That's right.

INV: Can you tell me when you first saw them or what your first comments were from them or to them?

AC: No. It's very difficult to remember all those years. I remember them saying, "Oh, you're a white man." And they said, "We didn't know where we were, friendly territory or otherwise." And they were quite pleased when they saw who I was and what I was. See, I had the power to confiscate anything at all, you know. So I got this canoe, which I paid for after the war.

INV: Is that right?

AC: War damage, yeah. I put in a claim and they asked me was that true, I said yes, and I paid them for it.

INV: How much did the canoe cost after the war?

AC: Oh, I don't -- probably about 10 pounds, 15. That would be about \$20.

INV: What kind of shape were Fred and his crew in when you first saw them?

AC: They seemed to be fairly well. A couple of them had no shoes on, they'd lost their shoes. See, I think it took them three or four days to get from the wreck to this village.

INV: Took them four days, I think, to get out of the swamp, yes, sir.

AC: Of course they had food. They wouldn't look too well, but I don't actually remember, but my native cook -- I had a cook boy -- and he made a very large stew which they appreciated very much. (inaudible) stuff like that, vegetables.

INV: The cook was with you looking for them? Your cook had come with you?

AC: Oh, yes. I always went out with a native cook and a contingent of native police.

INV: Had you brought along some extra food in case you did find them?

AC: Oh, yes, I had some extra food, yes, in case I did find them because they didn't tell me what type of aircraft had crash landed, whether United States or Australian or who.

INV: So you didn't know if it was one crew member or 10 for that matter, did you?

AC: Right. So I brought as much food as I could to cover that contingency.

INV: Did you bring any medical supplies also?

AC: When I'd always gone for trail we always carried a box of medical supplies.

INV: Were any of them in need of medical attention, do you remember?

AC: I don't remember at the time. We'd call in at the Anglican mission and they had called in there over that, I'm not sure, to get a bit of -- because they had European news was there and they had breakfast there. But I don't remember what medical condition they were in at the time.

INV: Do you remember talking to Fred Eaton, the pilot of that crew, at the mission there?

AC: Oh, yes, I remember that. He introduced himself, as a matter of fact.

INV: Was he the first one that you had contact with?

AC: Yes. Funny thing, over the years I've often said to my wife, "I wonder what happened to Fred Eaton."

INV: He went ahead and completed his tour in the Pacific and then he went to the European theater and flew a full tour over there.

AC: He wrote to me and told me he did 102 missions, I understand.

INV: Unbelievable, isn't it? He is the nicest kind of guy you ever want to meet. He went on, after the war he became the head of the operation of I believe it was Sears Roebuck in Venezuela.

AC: It's a funny thing, I was a marine engineer before I went to New Guinea and I used to run on tankers between Aruba and Lake Maracaibo.

INV: Yes, sir?

AC: And we used to deal a lot with Sears Roebuck.

INV: Where were you born, Mr. Champion?

AC: I was born in New Guinea.

INV: Oh, you were?

AC: Yeah, Port Moresby.

INV: What were your parents doing there?

AC: My father was -- he went up there first of all into (inaudible), one of the big shipping companies. And then after a couple of years the administrator there asked him to join the government and he said, "What is the salary?" He told him and he said, "I'm getting more than that in [Burns Fuel?]." He said, "But look at the prestige in the government." My father said, "You can't eat that."

INV: You can't eat prestige.

AC: Anyway eventually he joined the Papua government in 1900, I think it was. And he eventually rose up and up until he became assistant lieutenant governor.

INV: When were you born, what year were you born?

AC: I was born in 1905, 83 years ago. I have a brother who's 14 months older than me, he's still alive. He lives in Canberra. He writes to -- what's that lady? Oh, I've forgotten. She's going to edit this book that Speeth's writing.

INV: I'm not acquainted with the lady. Oh, Patty Hall?

AC: Patty Hall.

INV: Patty Hall, sure, sure.

AC: So I've got involved with her now too.

INV: I hope we're all not troubling you too much, but there's so much interest in what you did and what Fred Eaton's crew did that we really think it will make a wonderful book someday.

AC: That is the only part I'm not sure of between how the -- I know they got to Oro Bay where I intended to send them originally, but how they went up that via Sangara and Higaturu I don't know. I can't remember that. That is on the direct road to Kokoda.

INV: Yes, sir. Back to the time where you picked them up at the village and then you towed them in behind your motorboat in the canoe, in a native canoe. What happened after that? Where did you go after that?

AC: As soon as we got to Port Moresby I went on the radio and told them I'd rescued them and they said, "We cannot send a boat to Buna, it's too dangerous."

INV: You mean as soon as you got back to Buna you radioed Port Moresby?

AC: "When we can get a boat we'll send it to Oro Bay and we'll arrange for you to take or send the crew to Oro Bay."

INV: So you took Fred and the crew to Buna?

AC: That's right.

INV: What did you have at Buna? Was it a house with a radio transmitter?

AC: There were two European built houses, quite in good condition. Fred and two or three others bunked in with me in my house and the others went into the other house. They had good housing there.

INV: How long did they stay at Buna with you?

AC: Roughly about two weeks.

INV: Were they gathering food during that time or did you have food available and supplies?

AC: Oh, no, we had Army rations. They lived on Army rations. The funny part was that the day he left he lined his crew up and he said, "Empty your pockets out." They had American money, English money, New Zealand money, Australian money. And he got it all from them and he

handed it to me. I said, "Fred, I'm not running a boarding house. (laughter) The Army fed you like they feed me." So we tossed for it and I won, I've forgotten how much it was, and then he gave me two 45 automatic pistols and an American service rifle and a beautiful big gallon thermos jug with a tap on it.

INV: That would be what they carried coffee in in a B17.

AC: That's all they'd got out of the wreck. And I gave one of the pistols to my patrol officer.

INV: He was in Papua, New Guinea?

AC: Hmm?

INV: He was a Papua New Guinean?

AC: Yes, he was a Papuan, yes. And I carried that pistol all through the rest of my career up there.

INV: The 45?

AC: When I went to Brisbane the first time I was kitted out the Australian Army and the (inaudible) officer, they gave me a 38-caliber revolver. I said, "What about cartridges?" They said, "We haven't got any. You can probably get some at Townsville on your way back to New Guinea." So at Townsville I asked about the cartridges. "We haven't got any cartridges." So that I was discharged about three years later, handed in this nice new shiny 38 revolver that had never been used.

INV: Never had any cartridges.

AC: And I carried that 45 American pistol with me right throughout the war.

INV: I'll be darned. What happened to the pistol? Do you still have it?

AC: No, of course leaving New Guinea we weren't allowed to take anything. Coming in to Australia we weren't allowed. I think I gave it to a planter in Buna. No, not Buna. At Daru where I was posted. Right in the west of Papua.

INV: After Fred and the crew had spent a couple of weeks at Buna how did they get down to the coast where the trawler picked them up?

AC: That is the part that worries me. I'm not sure how they got there.

INV: They walked there, they didn't go by river?

AC: They would have either walked or gone by canoe. I think they must have walked. But the route that is mentioned in

his diary, it seems strange that he would have gone in that fashion because they just followed the coast and they got there in a day, two days.

INV: Did you have boat lined up for them?

AC: Yes, I had a message from Port Moresby saying the [Ellavala?] will be at Oro Bay on such and such date, have the Americans there for them.

INV: And what was the Ellavala?

AC: She was an old -- she was, prewar, the administrator's yacht, but then she became the official boat for the district commission in Samarai and was used to transfer people. She was basically sunk by the Japanese at Milne Bay.

INV: Was it a diesel-powered vehicle?

AC: Wasn't a big vessel, oh no. It had a couple of cabins on it and bunks and a cargo hold. Had a white skipper and engineer. Otherwise the crew were all native.

INV: When you sent Fred and the crew then down to the coast was that the last you saw of them?

AC: Yes, that's the last I saw. Never heard anything again, any more about them again.

INV: Never heard that they'd gotten back to (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

AC: By the way, my wife was evacuated to Brisbane. Fred rang her up and said I'd saved his life and would she go out to dinner with him. She didn't because we had a small child. And that's the last we ever heard of Fred.

INV: I'll be darned. Somewhere I get the idea that Fred and the crew were heading toward Buna and then the word got out that the Jap invasion fleet was coming and they left Buna and then came back. Is there any truth in that?

AC: No. See, the Japanese didn't invade Buna until July and this was in --

INV: February, right.

AC: Funny, several times afterwards, after it was all over, a flying fortress came over Buna and wagged his wings like that and away he went on a bombing mission and I said I bet that's Fred.

INV: Probably was. I know that he flew back over the old airplane at least once.

AC: Oh, yes, he told me. Did 62 missions over in New Guinea and another 40 odd in Europe. I can't understand how he came out alive.

INV: It's amazing that he did. I've been trying to get him to write a book, but he says, "Oh, I don't have anything to tell." What happened to you after Fred's crew -- after you sent Fred's crew on down --

AC: I just carried on at my same job, you see, until the Japanese invaded. They invaded late one afternoon.

INV: Did you look out suddenly and just see the horizon full of ships coming?

AC: Yeah. I had a pair of binoculars. Looked like a low formation of cloud. I got the binoculars and I saw two big Japanese transports, a cruiser, and two destroyers. And I told the radio men to pick up their radio and proceed to Kokoda, but they panicked a bit and they smashed up the radio.

INV: Were they Army personnel?

AC: They were Army personnel, yes. I think there were three privates. They called them cypher clerks because they did all these deciphering of the code messages. And then I decided then to abandon the station because the two roads came in, the Kokoda Road and the Buna Road, and the Gona Road joined. I said if I don't beat the Japs to the Gona Road I've had it. So it was just on dark, I went into the radio shack, they'd left the code words on the table. (laughter) So I picked them up. I can't remember what they were. Sort of cardboard with holes in them. I can't remember. But I just picked them up, I chewed them up as much as possible and shoved them in the crab holes on the way. I told the station, "All right, any prisoners in the jail, you can go home." And I made the police I took with me and we meet the Japs at the junction of the road and I got to -- just when I got to Awala, I think it was next morning, I met my boss. He was the resident magistrate and a patrol officer. He told me to proceed on to Awala and go see what was happening. They were lucky because they said they just turned round a corner and walked into the Japanese and they jumped into the ocean and got away from them.

INV: Is that right? They were going back to Buna to check it out?

AC: They eventually got to -- went over the Owen Stanley range to [Arbow?] and the into Port Moresby. And later on the same resident magistrate said to me, he said, "Look, I don't know the northern district, you do, will you come back with me behind the lines, see if we can rescue these mission women?" So I said yes and he went to Major General [Moss?], put the proposition to him, and he said, "Definitely not." He said they had instructions to evacuate the whole -- all women and children to be evacuated. They refused to go, so and so. "I'm not going to expend men on them."

INV: Those women, there were a lot of them killed.

AC: They were executed by (inaudible) and this.

INV: What do you think was the Japanese idea in executing people like that?

AC: I just can't understand at all because one of them was this seven-year-old boy, his father as well. Every European they found they just --

INV: You can't understand the mentality?

AC: Can't.

INV: Did you ever come into actual contact with Japanese troops or did you see them?

AC: No, I didn't. When I got to Awala I was instructed then to proceed to Kokoda to report to a Colonel Owen who was in charge of the 39th battalion. That's the first battalion of troops that was flown into Kokoda. When I got to Kokoda, I walked all day and got there midnight, and I reported to Colonel Owen and he said, "Intelligence people want you, catch the next plane in." There was no next plane so I had to walk.

INV: Into?

AC: Took me nine days.

INV: Into Moresby?

AC: Into Port Moresby, yeah. After that I mucked around in Port Moresby for a while and then I was sent out to be a liaison officer between my crowd and the Seventh Australian Division. They were in their [advance?] headquarters. I went down to a very bad attack of malaria and they shipped me to Australia and I went to an Australian hospital for

some weeks and they didn't seem to know much about malaria at the time. Anyway I was sent back to Port Moresby. I had a hearing problem. They said, "You can't go back there, you can't hear." Anyway I said, "I've got a hearing aid." They wanted to get rid of me. They shot me out. And I went back to Port Moresby and I was flown over to Dobodura, that's next to Buna, where all the Americans were, landing craft, airplanes, everything was landing there. And my boss said to me, "I want you to go out, investigate, and find out just who handed these missionaries over to the Japanese." I (inaudible) about seven or eight (inaudible) and I took them up to a place called Higaturu and they were tried there and sentenced to death. And from there I went on to Kokoda and I never saw much more. I was (inaudible) but I never saw much of the war after that. It was my job to rehabilitate all the villages that had been smashed up during the war.

INV: Did you spend a lot of time in New Guinea after the war then?

AC: Yes, after the war I was in Kokoda for five years. From then I went on leave. I came back to Higaturu as headquarters of the northern district and I was there for not quite two years when I was due for leave again. And Mount Lamington erupted in 1951.

INV: I've read about that.

AC: That killed about 28 Europeans and 4,000 natives. I actually -- the airplane that I flew out in flew around this eruption, you see, on a Friday and of course on Sunday the whole side blew out. That's when it did all the damage. Then I went to Samarai as district commissioner. Went to Daru as district commissioner and to Port Moresby as district commissioner when I was nearing my age of 55 for retirement. And I couldn't stand the red tape so I retired at 55 years of age and came to live in Brisbane.

INV: You spent your entire foreign or civil service career in Papua New Guinea then, or in New Guinea.

AC: Hmm?

INV: You spent all of your career in New Guinea from start to finish virtually.

AC: Yes. Not quite 25 years. My wife's English. She came here at -- I was married in England and she came here and she's been all on these stations. She's put up with a lot.

INV: I'm sure. New Guinea today is still wild and primitive and in those days -- I know just enough about it to know that it was really a different kind of country.

AC: They're pouring a lot of money into it. Of course they've got independence. Australia's got to keep England and otherwise they're going to get their (inaudible). They're pouring millions into it. I've been back two or three times since I retired. I had no desire whatever to go back again. The natives are just truculent. They don't want white people at all. They don't mind his money.

INV: Whenever you went back to Kokoda after the war was there a lot of materiel and debris of war and battle?

AC: In Kokoda I had a jeep. Plenty of petrol to ride around the bush and an electric lighting plant, etc. Of course there was no houses, nothing --

INV: Everything was destroyed?

AC: So I had to go ahead and build with native fix-all timber. I cut my hand and I built this big house, all native material. Quite a nice place.

INV: Did you discover bodies of Japanese soldiers, helmets?

AC: No.

INV: Materiel?

AC: One day -- we used to get our drinking water out of the creek. One day the natives brought a skeleton in. I said, "Where'd you find this?" "In the creek." I said, "Whereabouts?" It was just above where we were getting our drinking water. (laughter) But they had a Japanese small cemetery at Kokoda (inaudible). Of course we had a big allied Army cemetery as well.

INV: How would you sum up your service in New Guinea? How would you sum up the country of New Guinea in your years there?

AC: An interesting life, sometimes exciting, sometimes dangerous. But I would do the same again.

INV: You know, my dad, as I told you, flew B17s out of Port Moresby and went through the war and he said, "I wouldn't take a million dollars for all those experiences, but I wouldn't give you a nickel to do it all over again."

(laughter) Those are stirring times and they ought not to be forgotten. They ought to be remembered.

AC: I had two brothers up there, they were both in the service. One was in the Army, the other was in the Navy.

INV: Do you have any other comments about Fred Eaton's crew? Anything that might have --

AC: No, I'm afraid it's such a long time ago it's gone through my memory.

INV: I'm acquainted with most of them.

AC: Oh, are you?

INV: Of course I've known Fred Eaton for a number of years. Clarence [Lemieux?], Howard Sorenson, Clippy Crawford.

AC: I had a letter from him.

INV: From Sorenson?

AC: He's the chap that's mixed up in the Seventh Day Adventists?

INV: I don't know. He could be.

AC: Some religious organization.

INV: Sorenson was a real tall fellow. He was the radio operator.

AC: That's the man I'm thinking of.

INV: When did you hear --

AC: He came out without his boots on, didn't he? He lost his boots --

INV: Some of them did. I don't know about Sorenson, but I know two or three of them lost their boots and seemed like they were having to carry one of the fellows. I don't remember. I don't know who that was. But as you mentioned to me, Fred said that they took the Norden bombsight out and shot it up with 45s and threw it off into the swamp there. They were trying to carry -- drag a raft along behind them for a while with supplies in it, but the [coon eye?] was so deep they just couldn't drag it so they abandoned that also. There's a wartime photograph that was taken of the airplane which shows where it landed and then kind of skidded around to the right. And then you can see what are probably the raft and bits and pieces of gear kind of scattered off that they discarded behind them as they made their way through the swamp.

AC: Speeth has sent me a copy of his book.

INV: Oh, you've got a copy of that photo in there then.

AC: And of course I've been in hospital two or three times now. Never had a chance to ever reply to him properly. My wife wrote to him and told him.

INV: Do you have any photographs from that time period of yourself?

AC: No, none at all.

INV: Do you have any photographs from --

AC: The only photograph I have of myself was -- I sent it to Patty Hall.

INV: OK, so she's got it. Whenever the book is published they would sure want a photograph of you in the book.

AC: It was taken just after Buna when I returned to Australia and I had a photograph taken. I'm in Army uniform.

INV: She has that?

AC: I sent it to her and she said she'd send it back, but we wrote and said we didn't -- we've got a copy, there's no need to send it back. So she would still have it. What got her interested in this thing?

INV: I believe that she had a relative who was lost on a B17 in New Guinea. I wouldn't swear to that. Bruce [Hoye?] is a good friend of mine from the -- have you heard of Bruce Hoye? He was the national head of the Museum of Modern History at the National Museum of Papua New Guinea up until just recently. He's Australian. He and I went out to the airplane together and he had some contact with Patty Hall and they became good friends and there's sort of a network of those of us who are interested or who had fathers or relatives in that area and she's one of that network. I've never met her, but I look forward to meeting her someday.

AC: I believe she's been to New Guinea a couple of times.

INV: I think she has. I'm hoping to see Bruce Hoye. The government of New Guinea terminated his job as director of the Museum of Modern History, an absolutely stupid thing for them to do because they don't have anybody that knows anything about World War II over there and they've got so many artifacts and historical sites that need to be looked into, cared for, and what have you. And they replaced him with somebody else. That's their policy, to move the expatriates out and replace them with Papua New Guineans. It's very shortsighted as far as he's concerned.

AC: I corresponded with a native correspondent (inaudible) Popondetta and he recommended me for (inaudible) medal of independence, which I received, a nice citation from the governor general.

INV: That's great.

AC: And he's called to see me. He's a very interesting man.

INV: That would have been in 1985 then? Didn't they get independence in '75?

AC: That's right.

INV: That's wonderful.

AC: He's writing, in contact with Patty Hall as well.

INV: The more information that we're able to gather about those historical events and personalities and people, the better off history will be because it's something that ought never be forgotten and I'm just --

AC: Are you going up there again now?

INV: Not any time soon, but I will be going if, as, and when we get permission to get the airplane out of there. I've been talking with [Siroy Iyowa?] who's the head of the National Museum of Papua New Guinea and he has a presentation to make on our behalf to a minister, but we never seem to be able to get -- there's always a new minister. Every time we think we're about to get approval somebody else takes office. And we've been working on this about three years now, or I've been involved in it about three years. The United States Air Force has agreed to send over a C5 transport, one of those huge transports, to Moresby and what we plan to do, the Royal Australian Air Force has agreed to lend us Chinook helicopters. We intend to go in and take the wings off and lift it out to Popondetta and then put it on a barge and take it around the coast to Moresby. And then the C5 would fly into Moresby and carry it back to Travis Air Force Base.

AC: Have you had permission of the Papua New Guinean government to remove it?

INV: No, that's the single thing we're waiting on.

AC: I'm just wondering.

INV: That's where we keep running into a new minister. Every time we get our proposal worked up to a point where we're ready for them to consider it there's a new minister that

has to approve it, and we haven't been able to get approval.

AC: I can't understand. They can't do it themselves, haven't got the gear or the finances.

INV: Or the knowhow.

AC: Why not let somebody who can do it --

INV: Exactly. Apparently there is at least some sympathy among some of the Papua New Guineans in our favor. We have been able to get the plane declared not a tourist attraction so that it could be technically removed from the country. But we have to have, of course, specific permission to do that. I believe by treaty after the war, or by contract, the US government gave the government of Papua New Guinea, or at least the Australians at the time who then turned it over to the New Guineans, all the materiel and equipment that was left. It doesn't belong to the US anymore.

AC: And you work for Boeing, do you?

INV: No. Glen Speeth works for Boeing. I'm a lawyer in [Panther?], Texas. But since my dad and Glen's dad flew together over there we have a very strong shared bond of friendship and a very strong interest in what our dads did over there. And that has developed into the interest in this airplane. My dad was on the mission that this plane went down on. There were about nine B17s that took off from Townsville heading for Rabaul and only three of them actually got to Rabaul. This is on February 23rd. Of course one of them was Fred. And it was quite a thrill for me to sit on the wing of this airplane and realize that my father had seen that very airplane in 1942. It meant a lot to me and of course knowing Fred and the other crew members it really --

AC: Yes, I'm having to learn to walk again. I can't walk.

INV: I hope I haven't tired you this afternoon or taken too much of your energy by asking all these questions.

AC: I don't mind it at all.

INV: I'm very grateful for it and appreciate a chance to do so.

AC: You've got any family with you besides your wife?

INV: No, sir. We have three little girls. I'll go ahead and shut this recorder off now.

END OF AUDIO FILE