

**CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

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**INTERVIEWEE: J. Stan Wilson**

**INTERVIEWER: Glenn Cook**

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**Transcription of Interview 31D 1 WILSON**

**J. Stan Wilson**

**Interviewed 7 December, 2000**

**By G. Cook**

INTERVIEWER: This is an interview with Stan Wilson on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December, 2000. This is tape 1, side A.

WILSON: My name is Stan Wilson and I spell my last name W-I-L-S-O-N.

INTERVIEWER: Stan, welcome to the Oral History Project for the War Museum. To start the interview off, I wonder if you would be good enough to tell us a little bit about your background, brothers and sisters, high school that you attended and what prompted you to join the RCAF in the first place.

WILSON: I come from a family with one brother and one sister. My brother was six years older than me and he joined the army at the beginning of the war and served in the artillery right through the war. I was born in 1924 and a month after I was 18, I went down and signed out for the Air Force. And I guess as a... I was a youngster, I use to always read stories about fighter pilots and British some magazines since the First World War and I guess I always wanted to be a fighter pilot, which I guess was the basic for all the guys that joined the Air Force. But unfortunately... and I went to Glebe High School and when I signed up, there was a bunch of other chaps who signed up on the same day, went down to the Recruiting Office together and, at the end of the school, near the end of April, they let us off early and way we went to the Air Force.

INTERVIEWER: This would be what year?

WILSON: This would be in 1943. Unfortunately, when I got in the Link Trainer, they found out that I was not suited to be a pilot, so that is how I became a navigator.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you take your navigation training? Did they have a manning depot that you went to initially?

WILSON: I initially went to Manning Depot at Lachine, Quebec, then they sent us down to Little Norway, which is in Toronto, and we stayed there while we took the Link Trainer at Initial Training School... I forget the number, it could be number one, it was up on Eglington... and right after that I went to #6 ITS, I believe it was the number which was in the centre of Toronto, not far from Maple Leaf Garden, it was on Church Street.

INTERVIEWER: And did you do any training there or was this all general training that you were undertaking? You took no navigation training until that point.

WILSON: No, at that #6 ITS, it was all general training.

INTERVIEWER: And how long did that last?

WILSON: You got me. It could have been about two months.

INTERVIEWER: Other people have said about six weeks, two months.

WILSON: I would say six weeks to two months. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Where did you take... Then, how... Could you tell me a little bit about your selection for navigator? Did they put you through any sort of IQ test of any... Did they do mathematically...

WILSON: I think they... I should not say this but I think that generally the fellows that had the higher marks that did not make it as a pilot became navigators and... That is the way the process worked, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: And you would have been about 18 or 19 at this point?

WILSON: I was 18.

INTERVIEWER: Eighteen years old. Now, could you tell us a little bit about your navigation training, where you took it?

WILSON: Yes, I guess that navigation training I took at that Malton Airport and I think we were out there by September and I think I graduated in February of 1944.

INTERVIEWER: 1944...

WILSON: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: ...so, that was an over-winter session. That would be about three or four months of training...

WILSON: Well, it would be from September to February...

INTERVIEWER: What kind of airplanes were you flying at the time?

WILSON: ANSONS.

INTERVIEWER: All in ANSONS?

WILSON: All in ANSONS. In fact, that was the first time I was up in an airplane, it was the first flight, that ANSON, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And do you remember how many hours you flew in the training program?

WILSON: Well, as I remember, I would estimate that I flew about 125 hours in the training program and they taught us how to use the hand held computer, I guess we called it. It was like a circular slide rule and they taught us how to use this sextant to determine our position and we use to take cross-country flights of about two hours or so to practice our navigation. And this is how we learned.

INTERVIEWER: And after you were finished in February, did they send you directly down to Halifax to embark or were you allowed leave?

WILSON: No, as I remember, I had some leave and then, they send us to Valleyfield, where they had a commando course which lasted about a couple of weeks and then, from there, we went to Halifax and overseas.

INTERVIEWER: And when you got to Halifax, did you go directly on the ship or were you billeted at another sort of manning depot there...

WILSON: Right, we had got off the train and went in to a ship.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the name?

WILSON: Yes, I do. It was the ANDES, A-N-D-E-S, I believe it was a Dutch ship.

INTERVIEWER: A Dutch ship.

WILSON: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And was it fairly heavily loaded with military people?

WILSON: Yes, it was a mixture of army and Air Force. Well, it was fully loaded . I mean, you wer sleeping in hammocks...

INTERVIEWER: Were you escorted by destroyers on the trans-Atlantic crossing or did you go solo?

WILSON: We went solo and they sort of, I guess, took a zigzag course to meet submarines.

INTERVIEWER: And where did you...

WILSON: And we landed in Liverpool and from there, we went directly by train to Bournemouth which was sort of a holding area for RCAF over in England and it was on the south coast and I was there for a few weeks and then Bournemouth, the depot there, got transferred to, Gloucester, near Bristol, Ingeworth, I think, some name like that. And

from there... just trying to think... we might have gone on another commando course in England for about a week or two and then I went over to Flatdurock, (?) I think was the name of the place, in Wales, and we flew in ANSONS there and we use to fly out over the north sea, go south...

INTERVIEWER: This would be about March or April of 1944, is that correct? You finished your training in February and...

WILSON: It would be approximately about that time, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And could you tell me a little bit about your advanced training?

WILSON: Well, after we finished at... flying the ANSONS and we were not crewed up—we were strictly on navigation training... we went to OTU, and this is where you get crewed up, with the exception of your flight engineers there, and OTU was in Long Marston, which is near Stratford on Avon. And we flew in WELLINGTONs at OTU and, as I said, we were crewed up there and then, after several weeks of training there, doing cross-country flights and there were longer traps and higher and so on. Then, we went to conversion unit and the pilot learned how to fly a four-engine plane, which was Halifax and that is where we picked up our flight engineer who was a British chap. All the rest of the crew were Canadians. And this was at Dishforth, which is not too far from York. We trained there, I guess, in December. I know we were there over Christmas and in to January and that is when we were posted the number 415 Squadron and then East Moore.

INTERVIEWER: At East Moore.

WILSON: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Stan, I would like to explore one area that I think might be of interest to the Museum and that has to do with the crewing up process. Could you explain how that was managed, if it was managed at all? Did they take everybody and put them in a large room? Was that how it worked? Or was it more logical than that?

WILSON: Well, as I remember, when we were in OTU, we weren't crewed up initially and all the different air crew trades were sort of mixed and often in meetings together, but they were not crewed up. So, then, I guess they... if people struck up a friendship, then they formed the crew. Like it wasn't appointed...

INTERVIEWER: No.

WILSON: ...they formed their own.

INTERVIEWER: It was a natural...

WILSON: ...a natural thing. And then, if you had not formed a crew there, then I guess whoever the fellows that were remaining, well then they sort of suggested, made

suggestions, but it was strictly on the basis... Mostly, I think that the pilots would go around and ask chaps if they would go in the crew.

INTERVIEWER: I see. But there was no sort of management of it. It was done by the air crew themselves...

WILSON: Yes. That was my experience.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any thoughts about why that method was used in later years?

WILSON: Well, I would think that would be the logical way to do it. If people are compatible, they are going to get along better if they choose their crew rather than been forced into it, I would think.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. I see. So that probably was the reason. When you started flying with your crew in four-engine aircraft, you had the flight engineer by this time, was your training program oriented more over water?

WILSON: No, I would say it was mostly... we flew both. But I would say that we were over land more, then we are over water. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And how long were your training missions?

WILSON: Oh, boy! Well, I would say they were four or six hours.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

WILSON: As I remember.

INTERVIEWER: I would like to explore a little bit the types of navigation that you did. We all understand DR navigation, which is just open-ended computation using your circular slide rule, but did you have any electronic aids in the UK that you used?

WILSON: Oh, yes, definitely.

INTERVIEWER: Could you...

WILSON: [Coughing.] Pardon me.

INTERVIEWER: ...explain to me what they were and how they worked?

WILSON: Yes. One aid we had was a GEE-box which was a radar and it received a signal from the ground and it was very accurate. And you could plot your position very accurately on that and it was great. The only problem with it was that, once you got over

in to, say, enemy territory or Germany, they would jam it. So, at a certain point, it was not...

INTERVIEWER: Lost.

WILSON: It was lost. But we also... most of the time, most of the aircraft had a self-contained radar unit called H2S, which was a scanner on the bottom and it sent a signal down to the ground and it came back up on the screen and gave you a crude outline of the area below.

INTERVIEWER: So, you could tell a coastline...

WILSON: A coastline, it was quite good, but... or a lake or something like that, but if you, say, we were going over the Prairies, I think you would have a tough time...

INTERVIEWER: In using it...

WILSON: Well, maybe it would be too bad there because there are only a few cities and they are far apart. But it was... That was one thing that I don't think we had enough. We could have... because the bomb aimer often operated that. If I was operating the GEE, he would be operating the H2S so as to get a familiarity when we had to use it, you know. Like he would be... he could check with me what he was seeing as we went along. But then, when I lost track with the GEE, he was the fellow that operated it... and our bomb aimer was, I would say that he was good at it, but it was a crew device in a way and we had problems sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: When you were coming back from a mission, did you use GEE on the way back, the GEE-box on the return?

WILSON: As soon as I got it ranged.

INTERVIEWER: And what would that range be approximately? How did... two hundred miles?

WILSON: Well, I would... oh, at least. Because, see, we were based in Yorkshire and say if you came back across, into France, it would be a good two... Well, of course, the station probably be based in the south England, the radar station. So, I guess it would be two hundred miles. It would depend... We didn't get the full range because the Germans were jamming it. So, it was how far it was effective competing with the jamming.

INTERVIEWER: With the jamming.

WILSON: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: But when you were closer to the UK, it became better and better and better.

WILSON: Oh, it was... you could set up on the screen the blip shall we say, you got them all right in. I used to tell the guys, the crew "I'll tell you when we're over the airport", you know. Yes, and...

INTERVIEWER: Now, in bad weather, how would the pilot...? That takes you over the airport. But how did he make his approach? What navigation aid did he use to make his approach, if it was, say, foggy?

WILSON: Well, I think if it was foggy, he came down the best he could and I guess sometimes, we were little high, they had to dive down the last little bit to get in. So,...

INTERVIEWER: But, generally speaking, you did not fly when you knew the weather was going to be on the ground, kind of, on the return trip.

WILSON: Well, if it was real bad, absolutely bad, they diverted somewhere else. We would not get back to our own...

INTERVIEWER: You would go to the other air station...

WILSON: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And you would get back the next day?

WILSON: Yes. Or whenever the weather cleared. Likely... Well, you are pretty tired when you got to wherever you went, so you went to bed. And then you would fly back as soon as it was...

INTERVIEWER: The feeling one gets in researching those flights was the navigator was one busy person, almost from before the start of the flight until he got back. I wonder if you could take me through, sort of, from before the briefing, the getting up and getting prepared and then having your navigation briefing and take us over on a typical mission, from a navigation perspective, and then bring us back.

WILSON: Yes, well, we put in longer hours on a trip than anybody else because our briefing started at least an hour before the others, as I remember, and we would go to the nav room and the navigation leader... First of all we would have to prepare our maps and he would have all the concentrated flak areas that you'd mark on it and so on, that were on your route. Then, they'd give us the winds as far as they could figure them out and you made your... you would plan your trip. You made your trip with your D, it is DR really then. And... So you were there an hour or two and you were going to it. The bomb aimer seemed to me came in towards the end there, and he got together with you a bit. Then, we went over to the briefing with the whole crew and the station commander would then tell us... we knew where the target was because we had to plan our route and the route we were taking and so on and the timing, but then he would tell us what to expect and maybe what we were bombing and what the conditions were and, generally,

things like that. And then when we were finished there, we would get driven out the end... mostly British gals in the Air Force, WDs I guess you call them, and they would drive us out to our planes that were dispersed all over the place. So, I was the last guy out and by the time I get out there it was... we took off very shortly after that.

And then, once you got going, you had to have a fix of your position every six minutes. So, that kept you going pretty... you didn't have too much time to spare and it made the trip go fairly fast because you were working the whole time and you didn't see too much. And you had to... you were supposed to get to the target within a minute either way. So, you had sort of to try to see that --you may have to lose a little time or try to gain a little time. And sometimes, if you hit a bad head wind, that was impossible, you were beat. But you did your best. Anyways, we would fly the target and... well, with just getting our position every six minutes was basically what you were doing-- and that was keeping you busy and the bomb aimer would help you. Like if we went on a long trip... I consider a long trip when we went to, say, (UNCLEAR) or Leipzig, you are up about eight hours maybe and you are into Germany quite a way, you had extra fuel tanks, so that is when you needed your H2S and you hoped it worked. Now if you went out along the coastline, like up to Keil or Hamburg or something like that, you could work. In fact we actually bombed using the H2S and the camera would take a picture of the H2S screen. You know, I press... that was one time that I press the bomb tit. But anyways, along the coastline, it was pretty good, but it was tricky when you are inland.

So, then you would fly back. Sometimes, you would have little things like... one trip on the rear gunner... you would have extra fuel tanks and you drained those tanks first. And I guess he had to keep the plane balanced. So, one trip I remember, the rear gunner noticed he could see the fuel shooting out and passing. It was like a spray, I guess, you know. So, I guess, some of the connections hadn't been made. When the engineer went to empty the fuel tank it went out of the plane. But anyways, the pilot, I remember that time, asked me to calculate if we could make it or not and I guess we could make it, but we would not get back to our base. We would have to land before that, which... Anyways, that was another thing you had to be able to do. Anyways, and a couple of times, we did not get all the way home. Like one time, we landed in Brussels and we were getting ready to bail out because we were so low in fuel. I think it was that particular trip. And another time, we landed at the south of France at an airport called Juvencourt when we had been out on a long trip. I mean, by then, most France has been pretty well liberated, so it was not an enemy territory.

And then, once you got... Well, you had to keep working all the way back, because... although you were more relaxed when you got into England... but you had to cross the coast at the right point too or they might shoot at you and you did not want to take shortcuts and nip home. Anyways, and then we landed, we had to go around and get interrogated, they had an interrogation officer and he asked us conditions over the target and I guess the bomb aimer always had the most to say there because he was lying down there looking at it. And then, we went to bed.

INTERVIEWER: And, in say a given period like a month, how many missions would you sort of average? Now, I am talking about operational missions as opposed to test flights and...

WILSON: Well, when we got on the squadron there was crews there that had ten trips and so on, and we never missed a trip. Like it used to be six weeks, you were working, no days off, and then you got nine days leave. And we were... we got... our first trip was at the end of January and we did a tour at this... and ended with a last trip at the war. So, we never missed... Any trip that was on, we were on it. And one time, we came back and they said "There is going to be an operation tomorrow, but you fellows are not on it" and great, you are lying in bed, you could hear that...

INTERVIEWER: When you say "not missed a trip", you mean, Stan, that you did not abort a trip. Is that correct?

WILSON: No, that is not what I am saying. See, on our first trip, our oxygen did not work. So, that is... Once we got over 10,000 feet, the wireless operator, he was... he could tell right away and it affected him. So, we had to go back and that was our first trip and I think the service police were waiting when we landed because maybe they thought we chickened out, I do not know, but I mean it was legit. But... I lost my train of thoughts...

INTERVIEWER: I was concerned when you said that you did not miss a flight.

WILSON: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: I would like to know what...

WILSON: Okay. What I mean by that is that every time there was an operation, we were on it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

WILSON: You know, there was... Every crew did not go on every trip. There was more crews than planes. But we never missed one. I don't know why. And which was, in a way, made us get a lot more trips in. But this one time, we got back and they said "Well, there is going to be another one tomorrow, but you guys are not on it". So, as I say, you are lying in bed, you hear the guys taking off, you say "Have fun, fellows!" and, four hours later, there was another one laid on. So, way we went. So, I guess we...

INTERVIEWER: So, every time... you seemed to be scheduled every trip.

WILSON: Yes. Which was fine, you know, because we got our tour done, although the war ended then, but guys that say had ten trips, and maybe they had already done another ten, I don't know why it happened.

INTERVIEWER: No. I just... what I wondering was how many trips you would get, say, in a month or...

WILSON: February, March, April. Well, I would say we averaged at least about nine a month.

INTERVIEWER: That would be one every two, three or four days.

WILSON: Yes, and quite often, there would... one again... you'd go... you'd get called to go down for a briefing, there was going to be a trip, and they had a Tannoy... if the loud speaker set all over the station said "Tannoy calling" that meant there was... get down there for a briefing. But anyways, several times, we would go down, get our maps ready, have the briefing of all the crews and so on, then it get called off maybe because of the weather or something. And I remember one time, a bunch of guys had taken Benzedrine tablets to keep themselves awake and just after that they called the operation off and these fellows are all trying to stick their fingers down their throat trying to throw up so that they would be able to get back to bed to sleep. Laugh.

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice any different... did you have any difficulty culture easing yourself to the British way of life? Did you find it significantly different? You were only 18 or 19 and here was a country that had different values, different protocols. Did you find that you sort of melded in to their way of life as opposed to the Canadian life that you had been used to?

WILSON: I had no problem at all because my mother came from England and I had --all my relatives were over there, so, I'd go and visit them when I was on leave and I found... They were different. I remember one cousin, we were talking and she says "Well, you know you Colonials". They are not much... Their culture is slightly different, but we were very compatible and I did not find any adjustment.

INTERVIEWER: But your accommodation was quite acceptable and the food was reasonable, was it?

WILSON: The food could have been better. I mean, they... Well, I am not knocking the Air Force, but I mean it was wartime, you did not see much fruit and you got powdered eggs and you got... Well, let's say, I think that our food was better than what the RAF guys got. But when we landed at an American station, say if we were diverted, the food was better there. And it all had to come over by boat, the same as ours did. So, that was my experience and we always liked it if we landed at an American station.

INTERVIEWER: In your squadron, 415 squadron, how many were British and how many would be Canadian?

WILSON: Well...

INTERVIEWER: In a percentage kind of way.

WILSON: Well, I would say... there is seven in a crew and this was in Number 6 bomber command which was a Canadian group and, on our squadron, the only British guys in air crew were the flight engineers, because they were mostly trained in Britain. They were British, all the other fellows were Canadians. So, one-seventh were British and there was the odd Canadian flight engineer too.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you flew 30 missions. You said that was the...

WILSON: No, I flew 28, the pilot flew 30 and the gunners flew 30, because the pilots had to go on two with other crews just to get the feel of it, I guess, before hand to get acclimatized and the gunners would fly with somebody who was short. But that meant that the rest of the air crew would do 28, they would call that a tour.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any missions that were significant in the sense that you took bomb damage or there was an emergency at all, Stan, that (garbled)?

WILSON: We took bomb damage?

INTERVIEWER: Well, flak damage, I am sorry.

WILSON: No. I do not think that we ever got hit. We were lucky. And the worst problem we had was the time I mentioned that we landed in Brussels. We could not seem to locate the airport because it was not lit up and we knew we were over Brussels. So, in fact, the pilot was making an approach on a railway, a freight yard and he was pretty low when he said "Hey, you're doing it wrong!" So, I guess the wireless operator kept trying to contact the airfield and also there were some flak coming up but not at us. But it made us a little nervous and so, finally, we asked him to send up a flare and put on a few lights. So, which they did, and we got landed, but we were pretty near on the fumes by then, because the pilot was telling us to get ready to bail out, that he was going to point the plane to head out over the North Sea because if he cannot get down... and as I say, we were very, very low on fuel when we landed.

INTERVIEWER: The missions were flown at what altitude, most of them?

WILSON: Well, it depends on which plane you are in. The planes were not all at the same altitude because they wanted them staggered. So, they would probably go... on most trips, the lowest guys would be at about 17,000 feet and the highest guys would be at 20,000, and they alternated at the-- A, for Apple, say, would be a 20,000 one-trip and the next one he would be at 17,000. But the only problem was that if you did not have your own aircraft, sometimes, it would be an A one-trip and Z the next, so it might... if you are unlucky out there... nobody wanted to be at the bottom.

INTERVIEWER: No.

WILSON: Because the... you are underneath, the bombs coming down. It is pretty bad. And... sorry... and also, I guess it was a tendency, that some fellows flew at 20,000 feet all the time, which, you know, congested a little more.

INTERVIEWER: But you were... these were streams and most of your bombing was at night time? Or were you in the daylight at the time?

WILSON: Most were at night, but at the end, we started to do more daylight raids and we would fly in what was called a gaggle. In other words, there is the bomber stream, but the lead plane would emit smoke and you would more or less gauge yourself... you were to be a certain time behind him when he let out the puff of smoke. But the navigator, he still kept navigating because he... it is not up to him, he did not want me wondering where he were. So, that is the way it worked in the daytime. It was: follow the leader. But there was not a formation like the Americans.

INTERVIEWER: No. Now, when you were flying in this gaggle, were you escorted by either P51s or fighters across... in your sweeps across?

WILSON: Yes. At the end, there, in the daytime, they would not escort us all the way because we would not really need it. But they would... when we got near the target, quite often they would come, the Mustangs, those longer range fighters would come in because the daytime and they would take out the Germans. I remember that the rear gunners were sort of laughing, or the gunners were laughing one trip, because I guess the Germans had set up some rocket plane or jets and the Mustangs were chasing them and they could not get near them, you know. But I guess it is funny if they are not shooting right at you. But it was just... you know... they were trying and they were keeping them away maybe, but they just, you know, they did not have the speed to match a jet or a rocket plane.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see any foreign fighters attacking other aircraft while you were on the daily light raids?

WILSON: Well, I did not see too much, because I was busy navigating and... but I'd hear sometimes what the gunners were saying, you know. So, no, I did not see too much. Sometimes, I would go and take a peek when we were over the target just to see.

INTERVIEWER: Did your pilot have specific crew procedures and specific procedures for bail out in the event that you were attacked? Can you recall whether you discussed that as a crew at all?

WILSON: I do not think that we did. I mean, I sat on a trap door in the nose, that is where I went out and I guess the rear gunner... I do not know if he could turn his turret and go out or he would have to go to the door at the rear, the mid upper. And the wireless operator, the bomb aimer and myself and I guess the flight engineer, we would all go out at the front there and I guess the pilot would be the last guy out and I guess he would get out which ever was closest. We never... you knew where you had to go out but we

never... I do not know why we had to discuss it, you knew you had to get out if he'd say, if he said "Bail out!", you know where to go, you knew where you had to go.

INTERVIEWER: Could I explore? You mentioned that you received six or seven days off was it?

WILSON: Nine days.

INTERVIEWER: Nine days off after...

WILSON: It... beyond six weeks on duty every day, then you would get nine days off, six weeks on, nine days off.

INTERVIEWER: Did you explore England at all or did you pretty well stay at your base?

WILSON: Oh, no, we did not stay at the base. Well, sometimes you are there a day or two you get involved in a crap game or something like that, but, no we use to go on leave and wherever you wanted to go, you got free... they would give you a railway ticket, so it did not cost you anything and so we would go. Sometimes, I would go and see my relatives for a while but we'd go up to Scotland or to London or different places. We did not stay on the base.

INTERVIEWER: So, how long did it take in terms of months from the time you did your first operation until the time you would finish your tour?

WILSON: The war ended in... I would say just slightly over three months, a couple of days over three months.

INTERVIEWER: That was very, very fast.

WILSON: Yes, that is where I say that we were doing an average of about nine a month.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that is pretty clear, in fact.

WILSON: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: After your tour, can we discuss what you do at the end of a tour, how you were managed, and how you were returned to (garbled) Canada?

WILSON: Well, actually, because the war ended, and I think that normally, if you finished your tour, you went on leave and maybe you became an instructor for a while or something, and maybe then eventually go back into another tour. But the war had ended in Europe, VE-day had come. I think they asked people who wanted to volunteer to go to Japan and they were crewed up and lot of them flew... well, they had to fly the LANCs over. I don't think that they were taking the HALIFAXes. So, we'd done a tour, so I think

that there was one guy there in the crew who volunteered to go to Japan. I do not mean the rest of us would not, but we said "Give us a break for a little while". So, after the war, they closed up East More, I would say, within a month or so and I got posted in a place called Roughearth(?) which was not far away, it was about six miles south of York and I was there for a while. Then, I came back to Canada early in August. So, I was fortunate I got back.. People... if I had missed that boat, I probably would have got back until after Christmas because they had a priority and the guys in the army that had been over there a lot longer took a while to get them back to England, so the army fellows that were on the boat had been overseas for six years.

INTERVIEWER: So, actually, when you measure it in terms of time, your overseas period was relatively short. It would be from January, I believe...

WILSON: Well, no. January is when I went on the squadron. It was from say about April, 1944 to August, 1945.

INTERVIEWER: August, 1945.

WILSON: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: This concludes the tape 1, side A.

INTERVIEWER: Stan, I wonder if you would take us through the period of time shortly after you returned to Canada, the name of the ship, roughly when you left and when you arrived back.

WILSON: We left from Glasgow and the ship was ISLE DE FRANCE and I remember that because we had to go out by... it was anchored out in the water, we had to go with little boats to get on it and it was quite a large ship, it was quite a bit bigger than the ANDES which we went over on and there was, I guess, some other people in our crew were on it too. The rear gunner had gone back earlier, but the pilot, the bomb aimer, the wireless operator, we were all together on the ship going back. There was a lot of army fellows. Anyways, we left around the beginning of August. It seems to me while we were going back that maybe the first atomic bomb might have been dropped on Japan. I am not just sure if that was the date, but I think that it was around then, because I remember we... Anyways, we landed in Halifax and right on to a train to go to Lachine and it seemed I was not there very long, I jumped the train and came in to Ottawa and get off the Union Station with a bunch of other chaps and the mayor, who was Stanley Lewis at the time, was there to shake our hand but I did not hang around long. My folks were there, we jumped on a street car and went home. And I was glad to get home, although the house seemed awful small after being away for a couple of years. Then, I guess that was in August. I guess that by September I had to report down to Rockliffe.

After that, I got out of the Air Force and I went back to school to finish my senior metric, I guess, grade 13. I did that in an abbreviated course, I guess, from the middle of September until February and then I enrolled at Queen's University and this was made

possible through a grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Anyways, I went there for one term, which ended... I went there and I guess about March and then September, but anyways, it was not my cup of tea and I came back home and I got a job at Research Council. I left there and I went to Nortel and where I worked for a number of years and anyways, I paid back the money for my university, what they paid for my university, and used that money to build a house at Carleton Heights, several years later.

And I found the transition to civilian life, I guess, in a way, you had to settle down a little bit, but I mean... I didn't join any veterans organization. I did go around and visit our bomb aimer who was... well I got a new car in 1950 when you could finally get a car and I went to see our bomb aimer in Montreal and our... I guess my rear gunner, he been down to Ottawa to see me, and he lived near Hamilton, I visited him and another mid upper gunner was in Sarnia, and I went to see him and I guess the wireless operator was in... near Chatham... forgot the name of the town... it doesn't matter... and I went to see him. So, I kept in touch with the guys after the war, with the exception of the flight engineer who was in England, but I would write him occasionally. And the pilot, I didn't have much contact with him, he was out west in Edmonton.

Anyways, and then I lost track with these guys after a few years and I didn't belong to any organization to do with the Air Force or armed services and it is not things you discuss, you sort of forgot about it. But then, I guess in 1990, my son was living down at Guelph and he used to listen to CBC on a Sunday morning, he phoned me up and said "Dad, they are having a reunion in England next year for 6 Group Bomber Command. Would you be interested?" I said "Well, I do not know. I don't think that your mother would want to go and..." Anyways, he said "Well, how about if I went with you?" And I said "Well..." He said "I will find out the information and..." So, I said "Okay." So, he moved back to Ottawa shortly after that and we had got the information and we were going to go and my other son heard us talking about it and he said "How come you haven't asked me?" I said "Well, I did not think you would be interested." So, we went over there and the rear gunner from our crew was there and I got back together with him and he had been in contact with the wireless operator and... So, when we came back to Canada, then we visited back and forth every... at least once a year. Then, the wireless operator got involved in restoring a Fairy SWORDFISH airplane, so we decided that the first time they flew it we were going to be down there to see it. So, my sons, when they heard that, they wanted to go too. Then, I got in touch with the bomb aimer and it is pretty hard to get him to go any distance, but the last... Okay, anyways, that Fairy SWORDFISH did fly. In fact, every year they would have an air show down there, in which the Fairy SWORDFISH, I guess, was the star, but they had a lot of other aircraft like the Spitfires and so on there. Anyways, then about three years, the wireless operator died very suddenly but the bomb aimer and myself, we get together every year at Remembrance Day. The rear gunner likes to come to Ottawa and go down and take part of the ceremonies at the War Memorial. Then, I pick up the bomb aimer later and we go down to 410 Wing at Rockliffe and have a little get-together. And we try to get together other times during the year too. So, that brings you sort of up to date, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: That is very interesting. That, more or less, concludes the interview, Stan, for the War Museum. I would like to ask one more question. Is there anything that you would like to say that we might not have covered in the course of the last hour or so that is significant in your life and might be significant for War Museum listeners?

WILSON: I cannot think of anything offhand. I will probably think of something after you are gone.

INTERVIEWER: Then, on behalf of the War Museum, I would like to thank you very much for taking your time off this morning and I personally appreciated the interview myself.

WILSON: Well, it was a pleasure and you made it easy and I enjoyed it. Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: This concludes the interview with Stan Wilson. This is the end of tape 1, side B.

**TRANSCRIPTION ENDS**