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Keith Brown

Born in the UK in 1946. Parents were from the UK but had met and married in South Africa. The family moved back to South Africa in 1951. The family moved to Rhodesia in 1959. When the father was made redundant the family returned to South Africa in 1963. When he turned 18, Keith returned to Rhodesia to join the police in 1965. Left the police in 1969 to return to South Africa and returned to Rhodesia 18 months later. Joined the Police Reserve. Started flying with various freight airlines and was involved in sanctions busting operations. Stopped flying in 1979 and joined the reserve Air Wing. Left Zimbabwe for South Africa in 1983. Left South Africa for the UK in 2000.

This is Annie Berry interviewing Mr Keith Brown on Wednesday the 13th of May 2009 in Sevenoaks. Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed.

Pleasure.

Perhaps you can start by talking about your family background and reasons for being in Rhodesia initially.

They go back to the war: My father was a British soldier injured in the Middle East and sent to South Africa as an injured soldier to Pietermaritzburg. My mother was a nurse. They met, married and came back to England at the end of the war, which would have been in 1945. I was born in 1946 in Folkestone and in 1951 my parents decided to go back to South Africa and we went to Cape Town initially, then to Durban and then to a place called Ixopo. It's a Zulu, Xhosa word. In 1959, my father being a schoolteacher took up a position as a headmaster of a school in Rhodesia just outside of Salisbury. I initially went to a junior school in a suburb called Mabelreign for a year. Then I went to a high school also in Mabelreign: Initially to Alfred Beit Junior school and then to Ellis Robbins boys high school until December 1963 at the break up of the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. My father was then made redundant and went back to South Africa and because I wasn't eighteen, I couldn't stay on to join the police force. So I went to school for nine months in South Africa and as soon as I was eighteen, went back to Rhodesia and joined the police. So I joined up on the 12th of January 1965.

So a few months before UDI?

Just before independence, in November. I don't know if you've heard this before but we were called recruit squads in the police at the Morris training depot. I was 1 squad of '65 and our particular squad happened to be what they called the Display Squad for the police display at the agriculture shows and such like. That finished round about August/September and I then went on to police driving school and from there to the crime prevention unit at Salisbury Central charge office.

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Can I take you back to your schooling? What sort of values would you say that your Rhodesian schooling instilled in you?

I was never one for school, I couldn't get out quick enough and University was the last thing on my mind. I did what I had to do, got away with it and I can't say I regret it. I've done well in life, I've achieved a lot so I was very, very lucky. I could have done a lot better at school, it was an incredibly good education (00:03:42) system. We had excellent teachers, excellent schools, all run on the British lines so we were very much a colony of the UK.

And your family had travelled from the UK to South Africa, to Rhodesia. Did you have much awareness of those different countries and of the wider world?

Yes, well, initially we found Rhodesia very, very different to the life we'd lived in South Africa because that little village we lived in, Ixopo, was small and we were there for eight or nine years I think. And that gave me a love of rural areas. I'm not a town person, never have been from those days. When we lived in Salisbury of course we always lived out in the country and so there was quite a difference in the education system between South Africa and Rhodesia but I adjusted to it very quickly. You just do as a child. When you're in your early teens you adjust to anything; as long as your parents are happy, you're happy.

What did you think of your neighbourhood?

My neighbourhood was very rural. We actually lived fourteen miles outside of Salisbury on the road leading up to Kariba at an old British Air Force base, which had been converted to a school. So I actually lived a very privileged life in the country. And then, as I said, to Mabelreign which was about five or six miles away to go to school. But every day it was home again to a rural life.

So your father was working at a different school to the one that you were in?

Thank goodness, yes. I'd already had him at junior school so that was bad enough. From my last year at junior school right the way through, I had nothing to do with the same school that he taught at.

So which junior school had you been at that was the same one?

In Ixopo, in South Africa. When we moved to Rhodesia, he actually ran a school for juvenile delinquents. It was a modern concept that had been put into place, far, far ahead of its time. He had fantastic success but it was ahead of its time and at the break up of federation, it was all dropped.

And what sort of family upbringing would you say you had?

(00:06:29) In what way?

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Especially if your father was working in a school that was quite innovative for its time…

He was a very strict disciplinarian but very fair, so we knew where we stood. We had boundaries to work to but we had a very free life. If it was school holidays I'd get up in the morning, we'd be fed and we were off. We just spent the whole day out in the country enjoying life. It was a very free life, so as far as that went it was fantastic. We tried to set an example to the boys of what anybody could consider a normal family would be. I have two sisters who are younger than me: I've got one left now, younger than me and the younger one was actually killed in the police, in the BSAP so there is a tie-up there. But as far as a family went, we were just a normal Rhodesian family, there was nothing different about us to anybody else.

And which boys were you trying to set an example for?

The boys in the school that had been put there by the courts, not all of them criminals, some of them for truancy and that type of thing. They were there for various reasons but his belief was that you don't lock them up, you give them the opportunity to settle down to life and to be reintegrated into normal society which succeeded with 99% of them. They were all from under-privileged backgrounds, broken homes, that type of thing.

And I was interested in your pronunciation of Ixopo. Did you have much knowledge of language and African culture?

I picked up a bit of Zulu when lived there. It was Zulu mixed with Xhosa because the two different tribal areas clashed together. But then of course when we went to Rhodesia, it's a totally different language again so it was Shona they spoke up there. I picked up a bit of it, not an awful lot so my African language knowledge is as good as nil. Of course the African people in Rhodesia spoke pretty good English. They were educated to a reasonable standard and a lot of them spoke English so we didn't need to learn the language unfortunately. But there were those that did, the farm kids all spoke it fluently.

Did you have much awareness of social hierarchies in Rhodesia such as petty apartheid?

Yes it was there but it didn't really affect us because the apartheid system that the English know about was South Africa. There was a bench marked "for blacks only" there was a bench marked "for whites only," but we didn't have that. Initially when we first got there, there was something like that but it changed very quickly from when we arrived. Initially when you went to the theatre it was one side for black and one for white, that soon changed and anybody could go anywhere whenever it suited them. So we didn't really notice it. In fact we (00:09:42) noticed it more when we went back to South Africa because then we did see it. But when we lived in Rhodesia, it wasn't that bad.

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So you did notice a difference from South Africa to Rhodesia?

You do notice yes. Even in Rhodesia you do notice the difference between black and white because you've got two totally different cultures living in the same country. They don't want to live like we live and we don't want to live like they live, it's the way they've been brought up, it's the way we've been brought up. So who has the right to tell one over the other who lives how? Each to their own, you live as you want to.

So you were very keen to leave school and go into the Police?
Very much so.

How had you learnt about the police?

I learnt about the police through living at this school because we had a lot of dealings with the normal run of the mill policemen and some of the senior police, one of whom is still alive and here. He's known me since I was twelve years old, Mr Tim(?) if you know him?

I don't think I do.

He's a very elderly gentleman now, down in Southampton. I don't know whether he's going to be interviewed but he was a big influence in me joining the police. I just liked what I saw and felt that it was something I wanted to do, so I did.

And can you tell me more about this display squad?

Every year the police used to put on a display that went to the various agriculture shows so we had the British South Africa Police Band, which was well known. We had horses, so we had what they called the musical ride. You also had drill formations and the African police used to put on a display as well so it was a huge organisation. I think if you speak to the BSAP historian, Alan Toms, he might be able to supply you with pictures, maybe movies. But it was well known in Rhodesia, when you went to the show, you went to go and see the BSAP display. Again, it was British pomp and ceremony in Africa with all the brass polished and everything shone.

And so was one squad selected to do this?

Normally it was the first intake of the year or possibly the first and second, depending on what they did. That became the display squad because you needed that much training for the seasons when the shows were on at (00:12:27) Salisbury, Bulawayo, Gwelo, Umtali, they went all over the country performing the display.

And what other people were in your squad? Where had they come from?

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Some from Britain, some from South Africa, some from Rhodesia. I don't think we had anybody, in our squad from some exotic place. We had two ex-British Bobbies with us. They did what they call a short course and then went off because they'd been in the British police but the rest of us were all Rhodesians and South Africans.

And did you notice any distinctions made between you, other than the British ones going off?

No because the British chaps that came out to join the police were like us, they knew nothing so they did the full training, we did everything together, we were literally a squad. We thought together, we drilled together, we did everything together. We didn't notice any difference except that they spoke funny. Apart from that, there was no difference. We were a bunch of guys in a force learning. We didn't always like what would happen but that's part of the forces. When you look back on it, it wasn't that bad, it was good, gave us a good grounding for life.

At this time, where did you believe your "home" was?

Rhodesia, very much so. After we went to South Africa, I came back as soon as I could because I loved Rhodesia so much so I came back to Rhodesia to join the police.

So where were your family at that time?

They stayed in South Africa and I came back on my own.

And what did they feel about you joining the force?

No problem, they were very happy about it because the BSAP I reckon was one of the most respected police forces in the world.

And had your siblings joined?

My youngest sister, she joined the police as well in about 1975. But she was killed in a motorcycle accident in Salisbury on duty. One of those things, it happens. At that stage I'd left as a regular and I was now a reservist and I was working for Air Rhodesia, in a different area again.

(00:15:05) **Can you tell me a bit about your early days in the force and where did you first go?**

After my training I was posted to Salisbury Central into the crime prevention unit, which was plain clothes work where we just patrolled the town trying to see which type of people were involved with what really. It was an unusual set-up because nobody knew who we were but we were there as policemen. So we'd have to be the eyes and ears of what was going on and if you saw something happening, you arrested. You had your identity card, you arrested people and you took them from that. I only did that for six months and then I

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was transferred to the charge office so that was more just patrolling the town centre on foot; we all did foot patrols.

And the crime prevention unit would have been under-cover?

Well it was just plain-clothes work, that's all. We were just walking a beat in civvies really. We'd do things like the Salisbury agricultural show. Whenever it was on, we'd be the police force without the uniform and if anything really serious kicked off then we'd call in the uniform guys and pass it over.

And was there quite a focus on gathering information at that stage?

Not really, not from our side. That was done by other departments in the force but for us, we were literally plain-clothes beat officers.

So it was very much focused on criminal activity rather than intelligence, as it were?

That was just purely criminal activity, that's all we did.

So then you became…?

Then I went back into uniform, to the uniform branch into the charge office. Again, this was foot patrols, walking a beat, but in uniform this time as a senior police officer, the front of the law as it were. I did that for a year then I was transferred to a police station in a black area. It was on the border of the industrial area and the black townships and it was called Harare Police Station. I was there for nine months and then I was transferred to a satellite station right in the black township called Stodart. I was only there for about three months I think because I applied to go and drive patrol cars. Then I went on a patrol car course and at the end of that I moved on to patrolling in a patrol car round Greater Salisbury, the whole of the Salisbury area.

And what had attracted you to that line of work?

(00:18:24) I don't know, it was just something else I fancied. I'm a person who looks around and thinks, "I'd like to have a go at that," so I do. But in the meantime I'd also learnt to fly. I'd always been interested in flying because at that school there was an airfield next door so you know what you're like when you're a little kid, you get to go and have a look and I made friends and they used to do a lot of flying so I actually took up flying when I joined the police, as a hobby, and learnt to fly that way. But that didn't come into the police life at all, that was personal and up to me only. So I went on to driving patrol cars, which was good. I enjoyed it, it was a variety, a lot of different things went on, 24-hour coverage. It was very, very interesting and you saw everything in patrol cars.

So was this operating from Harare?

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From Salisbury Central police station, we were then based at Salisbury Central and it was called "Information Room." Why I don't know, but that's where we drove cars from. I suppose to differentiate from the Traffic Department, which was in the same complex. They had beat cars like ours, they looked the same, but they only did traffic. We did crime and after hours traffic so if there was an accident after hours, we'd go and attend it. We could all do everything else; we were multi skilled basically.

How interesting. So this would have been around 1967?

That would have been '67, round about there. You're only allowed to do a year on patrol cars, sitting like that doesn't do your kidneys any good they said. So then I went and became a dog handler. Another thing I fancied, that I always wanted to be. I love animals, I love the dogs so I applied for patrol dogs and got it. I think it was four months' training we did, also in the Salisbury area and from there I was posted to Gwelo (which was going towards Bulawayo, three hours away by car) and I went down to do dog handling.

And what were the different make-ups of the departments you were working in? Were they African forces as well?

We were mixed. When we walked the beat there were black and white police walking the beat together. They were known as Constables, we were known as Patrol Officers so yes, there was apartheid, segregation, if you want to give it a word, but they were proud to be Constables and we were proud to be Patrol Officers. When we worked in the patrol cars, there were only white patrol car drivers because the standard was incredibly high. Some of them had the ability to a degree, so they were our observers in the car. They were the eyes and ears while we were driving and you worked as a team. I got on very well with all my observers; I never had a problem. In dog section it was black and white, we were trained together, we did everything together, there was no difference between black and white in dog section, you were a dog handler and that was it. Although you were still called Constable, or Patrol (00:22:13) Officer, or Section Officer for a white sergeant, or Sergeant for a black sergeant, we did the same job. We had our own dogs; we didn't multi-handle dogs. When you got there, you were allocated a dog and you got on with it and you became a team.

Had you been fond of animals before?

I've always loved animals so to have an Alsatian was fantastic.

And what sort of uses were made of the dog handling section?

It was mainly for crime, tracking, people running away from the scenes, tackling, that type of thing. There was no war involved in that at all. We didn't use the dogs in a war situation at all when I was in. It was done purely in a normal police environment so there would be house break-ins, you'd go and track, pick up a trail and see if you could find whatever was at the end of it;

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preferably the accused with all the goods he'd nicked! But it didn't always happen, things put paid to that: roads, rivers, people. We weren't always successful but we had a lot of success with the dogs.

I've spoken to Dave Kennedy who I think set up one of the dog handling sections.

I don't know that name.

I think that he helped to set up and train dog handlers I think.

Dog Training School it was called, we were out at Bluff Hill. But the dog school had been going for a long time before I joined. That started way back.

I think it was a second section that he helped to set up somewhere.

Oh did they have a second section? They could have done because in 1969 I left the police. I got fed up with it, the grass looked greener in South Africa so I went to South Africa. The only problem is, the grass in South Africa also needed mowing, it wasn't very nice, so we came back here. Only lasted eighteen months and so we came back again to Rhodesia.

So was your last work before leaving for South Africa in the dog section?

In Dog Section in Gwelo, yes. At that stage I'd got married in the meantime.

And you were married in Rhodesia?

In Rhodesia, yes

(00:24:48) **So what motivated you to leave for South Africa?**

Sanctions were in and we looked at South Africa and thought, they've got petrol, they've got everything they want, you know. My folks were still living there, you go on holiday and everything's there, it always looks nice. It looks lovely on the other side until you move there and as I say, the grass is not greener on the other side and it still needs mowing. There was something about Rhodesia you can't put in words. It was in your blood, it was in your body, it was in the land and we just longed to go back the whole time. We just wanted to go back and we did. I actually went back to re-join the police and I saw a friend of mine on the way up, stopped off at Gwelo and he said "you're mad, don't come back to the force, you're leaving what you left to get away from, look around." So I did, and I ended up working for Air Rhodesia instead.

And was your wife Rhodesian as well?

Yes, well she was born in this country but she went out when she was one and a half. Her father was an Anglican priest so he went out to a big mission station. They then came back to England for a while to Kent and they didn't

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like it. Two years they lasted and they went back to Umtali. They then moved up to Salisbury so she and I were at junior school together and her parents and my parents were friends so that's how we knew each other. But we didn't like each other at school; it was only long afterwards. So we got married in 1969.

So might the move to South Africa have been to sort of start a new life?

Oh no, we just decided it looked better down there and we found out, like a lot of people, it wasn't. So we went back to all the problems because they were fantastic, it was good. Life was incredibly good in Rhodesia; even with all the problems we had a good life.

Can you tell me where you were at UDI?

I was in the crime prevention unit and they declared UDI, I think, at one o'clock in the afternoon. By half past five I was back in uniform patrolling Salisbury Central prison because they thought that there might be problems with some of the prisoners that were in there, trying to get them out, that type of thing. So we were sent up to patrol and I think we were only there about a week and they realised that things were calm, nothing was going to go and life just drifted back to normal. We went back into doing what we were supposed to be doing and that was that.

What did you think about the political situation and how it was going?

It didn't worry me, so long as the country was run, we were happy. We didn't worry. We weren't political for a start so we couldn't care who was (00:27:57) running the country so long as we had a job and our country was left alone. We got on with it and we lived the fantastic life we were living and really that's how it was.

And it wasn't until the late sixties that you started to feel the pinch of sanctions?

Well we got fed up with the sanctions. It wore a lot of people down but when we looked at it, it was actually good for us. It really made us grow up.

A lot of people have said that they helped to strengthen Rhodesia's identity in many ways.

It did because prior to UDI, we imported everything. The only thing we had were cigarettes in abundance but razor blades, cornflakes, all those sorts of things, were imported. Chocolate came in from outside, now all of a sudden we couldn't get it so we made it. It was a bit rough to start with but it didn't take long before they mastered it and we had everything we needed. We didn't have everything we wanted but we had everything we needed, that was the difference.

And there is great pride in that self-sufficiency perhaps?

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That's right, yes there was.

So you longed to go back to that from South Africa?

It was a good life in Rhodesia as it was. Of course by now, the war had come in. As a regular when I left in '69, the war hadn't really hotted up within the towns; it was still very much in the bush. It was only when I came back at the end of 1971, so by February '72 I started working in Salisbury again and I promptly joined the police reserve again, straight away. I just volunteered for it because that's what I knew and then of course the war was hotting up where you were going in and doing your stint and then back to work, and going in and doing a stint. But because I was what they called "A Reserve" (here you call them "Specials") we did the same duties and because I worked for Air Rhodesia, I was not much involved with what went on in the bush. I went and did my normal duties at the police station, which was able to release regular policemen to go and do other duties. We were able to cover that way.

That was so that you could continue doing your work for Air Rhodesia?

Yes, I had to because it was the national airline. The Army were calling people, the Air Force were calling on people, the Police were calling, so of course the guys were getting called into the different services to do their call-ups. So with me being A Reserve, it helped a lot because I could say to them "well ok, next week I'm off Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, I'll come (00:30:50) and do a shift for you on those three days." They'd say "right, can you come in and work such and such a shift?" That's how I used to work it so it suited them and it suited my job so we were able to do the two together.

It was a very difficult time, wasn't it, in terms of manpower and trying to maintain the economy and industries and so on.

That's right, so that's how it worked. Everybody just gave a bit of extra. We didn't expect anything and as an A Reservist we did these duties but you weren't paid for them. You agreed when you started you'd do a minimum of sixteen hours per month. Anything you did over that, they were grateful for and we often did more. So that's how my life ran when I was working for Air Rhodesia.

And there would have been conscription or national service at the time?

Yes there was but because I'd been a regular policeman and I'd volunteered to go in as a reservist, I didn't have to face any of that. But there were other people that were called-up, yes. The young guys that joined the airline, they had either done or had to do their national service. Everybody did it, it was accepted.

What did you think of conscription?

I think it's a good thing, I still believe it's a good thing. You need to have some values for the country you live in. If your country's worth living in, it's

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worth fighting for. But you need to go in and have some discipline, which this country lacks I'm afraid. I'd been brought up strictly; nobody likes discipline. But you soon realise: If you buckle down, life becomes pleasant. I had no problem with it.

And was there any pressure on your family life with you having to work or volunteer in your time off?

Not really because I was lucky, my wife was at home with the kids all the time. I'd see them, we go on holidays, we had weekends off together, it was fun. We still had quality family time but you fitted everything else in. That's the way it worked, you just did. It wasn't a case of today it was a loaf; tomorrow it was hectic. It was something that slowly evolved, change just came.

Break in interview (phone call)

We were talking about that evolvement.

(00:33:29) Our family life just evolved over a period of months really so it wasn't that bad. We did the odd call-up where we were away from home for a month at a time but it wasn't a stress, you could write letters home and that type of thing.

And were the call-ups under your A Reserve capacity?

Yes, as an A Reservist, they said to us, "we need a certain number of people, when would suit you people best if we can fit it in?" Then I'd say to the boss "well I need to do a call-up" and he'd say "well can you go between then and then?" So I'd say to them "there's one here, that's fine," and away I'd go.

And where were you? Were you usually stationed in the same place?

I was stationed back at Salisbury Central in the Information Room. By then they'd changed it to Control Room so I was still working at the same place where I'd been a beat car driver before, but of course with different staff there. They'd all changed since I'd left there but we were accepted the same as any other police personnel.

And so you were driving again?

Yes, I was driving patrol cars again. I went back to the driving school and re-did my test and got my licence back to drive patrol cars. I went back doing that and then I actually left Air Rhodesia and went to work for a firm locally known as Air Trans Africa, but we were doing sanctions busting so I got involved with that side of things. Then our life changed quite a lot because we moved away from Salisbury to a place called Marandellas where my in-laws lived. Because I was spending a lot of time away from home it was nice for my wife to be near her parents and to have help with the kids and that. I then transferred to the police station down there as a reservist, but just as a normal

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country policeman in a police station that was still doing the same types of duties on that a sixteen-hours basis.

And this was when you were still working for Air Trans Africa?

Yes.

Can you tell me more about the sanctions busting? Where were you doing flights out of?

We did flights all over the place. It was known as Affretair outside of the country, or CargOman. (00:36:01) I went and worked for them initially on the communications side for a brief period; then I moved to the commercial side doing flight planning; and then on to the actual flying side. We learnt on the job, load-master. We did everything except fly the aeroplane so we loaded it, we worked out all the bits and pieces, we didn't work out any of the flying technical side of things but we did what they called 'the balance sheet.' The aeroplane had to be balanced to fly so we used to load it to make sure it was balanced, that type of thing. We went with the aircraft, we stayed with it, we worked as a crew and we went all over the place.

Where were you flying to?

All over the place, a lot of Africa, Middle East, Europe.

And were there particular countries that were more willing to help with the sanctions busting?

Yes, there were. It was a long time ago I suppose but Oman helped us a lot, only because one of our ministers and the Shah of Oman had been at Sandhurst together as officers so they were friends and they helped us a lot. South Africa of course helped us; Holland helped us; Switzerland; a lot of countries. I think the powers that be knew who we were but the average run of the mill Mr Man in the street had no idea at all, none whatsoever. We also had a base in Gabon because the men that owned the airline had backed Biafra during the war. He was a very good man too, a really nice genuine humane person. Biafra was being oppressed and he backed them and got caught and hassled and all sorts. But the president of Gabon was friendly with Biafra so he and our boss became friends and he also helped us. It helped his country as well: You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours, that's how it worked. So that's how we got to fly to those African countries, it was mainly exporting meat and veg.

I was going to ask what sort of loads you had?

Meat and veg; foodstuffs. We'd take foodstuffs in and then once we'd dropped that off, we'd go off various places carrying general cargo. We had agents looking for work for us and we carried all sorts. Cars, cattle, horses, batteries, lobsters, live lobsters, 32 tons of live lobsters from Cape Town to Paris! We had all sorts.

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That must have been a funny one.

Chicken houses with the male chicks, you name it, we carried it. It was just freighting, general cargo, prop shafts for ships.

And so this sanctions busting was obviously crucial in keeping the economy going?

(00:39:20) It helped the economy. I don't know where, how or why or what were the funds but somehow the fuel had to be paid for. We used to come in through South Africa; I personally think that's where a lot of the money came from. We were backed by the government, Ian Smith and our boss had been in the war together flying aircraft and it was all tied in.

And what did you think about the fact that this was all happening very much out of the public domain?

Fine, no problem at all. We felt that we were being unfairly treated and you've got to make ends meet, what must be, must be. We survived seventeen years and I think that's a lot to be said for the people of the country. Not only the whites but the black people too, a lot of them knew what would happen if the wrong people got in. Unfortunately things went the wrong way because the majority are uneducated people who put the wrong person in. Through no fault of their own: You could tell the child not to go and do something but they'll do it, and now they're reaping the benefits today.

What was it was like being a part of this sanctions busting? You were keeping the economy going but at the same time, later on, these partnerships were covered over or denied.

Well at the time, yes. Now though I think a lot of it is common knowledge of what went on. At the time it was covered over, but it had to be. I mean there's things going on in this country that you will never know about; well you might know about it in a hundred years time but they go on, they have to, that's how life works. For us, I personally didn't see anything wrong with it, I really didn't. I believed that what I was doing was perfectly legitimate.

Was it frustrating then when those who had previously been helping, withdrew their help, for example when South Africa withdrew?

Well I don't think they had any choice. I think pressure was put on them from the rest of the world and it was a case of them and us sinking; or just us sinking, and the bigger ship floated. They had no choice. The pressures that were put on them were great. Then of course what we were doing eventually became legalised because the airline that we ran as a cargo airline became Air Zimbabwe Cargo so I think they just carried on flying.

Was this after independence?

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Yes, after 1983. I actually stopped flying in '79 or else I wouldn't have been married today: I was never at home, always away. Then of course I was doing the odd call-up in between which they didn't like so they put paid to that.

Who didn't?

(00:42:31) My boss. There were only three load-masters and we had fifteen other crew. Three members in a crew have to be on the aeroplane, plus the load-master who doesn't always have to be there. So there were only three of us to work with the other fifteen. We were stretched and we worked long hours. We'd leave Salisbury Airport, we'd take off at eleven o'clock on a Friday night and we'd get off the aeroplane Wednesday morning nine o'clock. But we did it because we believed that what we were doing was right, we didn't have a problem with it.

What sort of other people were in your crew?

All Rhodesian guys, we were all local chaps. Some of the guys were pilots that I'd learn to fly with; they'd now become big airline pilots and that type of thing. I think there were a couple of foreign guys but they knew what the story was, that's why they were working for us, they agreed with it. The Captain's First Officer and Flight Engineers were all Rhodesian people.

And at this point then, your family had moved to Marandellas?

Yes, I'd moved my family to Marandellas and we were living there

How often were you expected to do these call-ups?

I wasn't because I was flying for Affretair then. It was all then just kept quiet because I couldn't leave.

Ok so they had to come to an arrangement quite early on?

Yes, they'd started asking questions and when my superiors asked the wrong questions, they were told by the right people to mine their own business and leave me alone. It was just quietly dropped and nothing was said ever more, I was just left alone. I did my duties as and when I could and it was sorted out. Then, as I say, at the end of '79 I stopped flying because my family life was non existent, it's bad news. As a single man, life out the country's great but not when you're married with children. So I packed in and actually went to work for a friend of mine who had a tyre retail business in a garage. I then went into the Police Reserve Air Wing.

And where was this?

In Marandellas, because I could fly an aeroplane. At that stage I didn't have a current licence but I could still fly an aeroplane so I joined the Police Reserve Air Wing in a gunner observer role.

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This was in…?

In Rhodesia.

(00:45:16) **What time, about ’79?**

This was 1979, yeah. In ’79, ’80, middle of ’81, there wasn’t very much happening and the Police Air Wing kind of drifted into nothingness. I stuck it ‘till Easter ’83 and I left to South Africa, couldn’t take it any more. I’d had enough by then, big time.

And in the time that you were working for Air Trans Africa, what was your opinion of what was going on back in Rhodesia? Were people around you being called-up?

Yes, everybody was still being called up, very much so.

And did you maintain contact with the police station that you had been involved with?

Yes, I still went and reported for my duties when I came home.

When you could?

Yes, when I could. I just went in and there were no questions asked. They knew I was doing something but that I couldn’t tell them about it and I was just left alone. Nobody ever hassled me, nobody ever questioned me again: Once it came down that they weren’t to ask questions, it was just accepted. We knew there were things going on. Sometimes it was a little bit obvious if friends came round and there was a huge bowl of tulips in the lounge. “Where did you get those from?” “The florist, don’t ask any more questions,” it was quite simple. But we all had a respect for each other. Everybody in the country respected everybody else and that’s how we survived.

Would you say that travelling so much gave you a wider outlook perhaps?

Yes it did, because I saw the outside world in a big way. We flew all over the place. A lot of the places we only saw airports; other places we were lucky enough to stop over and have time there. It was nice but we always longed to go home. We always looked forward to going home.

How would you say that informed your outlook on the political situation in Rhodesia, as opposed to those who perhaps weren’t able to get out so much?

I don’t think it was any different. We all loved the country, we all wanted to see it carry on and survive and we wanted to win the war. We were convinced we were going to win the war but things change. I was actually at the Ford Air Force base when the results came out, when we heard that we’d

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lost and that we were going to loose the country. I was actually on a call-up when that happened. From '79 through to about the middle of '81 I suppose, I was doing regular call-ups but from Marandellas. Because we (00:48:13) were aircraft-bound as it were, we had to be at an airfield all the time; we couldn't go trailing of to so and so. We were always based either with an Air Force base or back at our home airfield in Marandellas, because I flew with a local guy from Marandellas. It was his aircraft and I was his gunner so he and I always flew as a team, just the two of us.

So you actually decided to leave Air Trans Africa before independence?

Before independence, yes. I finished in 1979 for family reasons, otherwise I'd have kept going. Family life was non-existent.

That was when you were working…

That's when I just went into doing tyre sales, I learnt to be a tyre sales person.

But you were then being called-up far more regularly?

Yes I did more call-ups then as well, but as I say, within the Police Reserve Air Wing role because that's where I'd moved to. I'd then been trained as a gunner on the aircraft by the Air Force, so my pal and I were a team and we just went where we were told to go, where we were needed.

What was your view of the different elements of the security services?

There was a lot of rivalry between the services but when things went wrong, everybody worked together, as a team and we all needed each other. The police couldn't do it on their own, the Army couldn't and the Air Force couldn't. That's just the way it worked and Intaf couldn't do it on their own. There was the Joint Operations Centre where everything was reported to, but there was the rivalry and the camaraderie all together, you'll always have that.

So people did pull together when needed?

Oh yes, very much so. There was one incident where we were told to go and escort a road party gang out that had been working in what we used to call a "hot area." They were coming back out to civilisation as it were and they were being escorted out by the Army. They came under attack and we were sent in to circle overhead and see if we could help sort things out. We got shot up and then the Air Force arrived and as soon as they arrive, we clear off, we leave it to them to sort out. So there was that: Army, police and Air Force working together to achieve a common goal and it was achieved in the end.

And how did you perceive things going back into the forces in '79? Did you feel that the situation had escalated?

(00:50:54) Well I was still in the forces; nothing had changed because I had just been a continuity, I'd been in a different role that was all. I'd gone from

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being at a police station, to working from the same police station in a different department.

And being involved in it more regularly I suppose

Oh to be more regular was fine, it didn't worry me in the slightest, because again being with Air Wing now, I was able to come and go to suit my requirements at work. Like I'd go off in the morning to go and visit my farmers and to do a normal day's work and I had a police radio with me and they'd call me up and they'd say "where are you and so and so? Can you get to such and such an airfield, Steve will pick you up?" So I go across the headland, you know, do everything for take off, go and do what we had to do, you drop me back, I'll get my van and carry on doing a day's work on a farm, no problem. That's how life was, you just did it.

And did the build up of the number of incursions or contacts that were going on concern you, in that you were involved more frequently?

No, they were just there and you had to go and get on with it. You just did it, it wasn't very nice, it was very frightening at the time. Anybody who says they weren't scared going into it…you were scared, make no mistake. But it was a job. Somebody had to do it and you just went in and you got on with it, you did the best you could under the circumstances and then when it was over you went home.

Were there any particular contacts or engagements that you were involved in? You mention this one that you were shot at?

We didn't get involved in big contacts, that was not our role. A lot of our work was done with stock theft: They used to go into the farms, cut the fences and steal the cattle, so we used to go and do a lot of that work, tracking and that sort of thing. We'd have the odd thing where we were sent off to go and do a patrol like that, where the patrol was coming and we had to go and sort them out. But it was mainly going off after the stock thieves and of course when you caught with them, they didn't like it and so they "two pieces of leaded" you, which wasn't very funny. So a lot of our work was that. A lot of it was just general patrolling, being a presence if you were needed. When you've got a thing floating around over your head, you tend to keep your head down rather than stir it, so again it was prevention I suppose in a way. If we had farm attacks, we'd go down and see if we could pick up trails; you can see a lot from the air if you know what you're looking for and my pilot was incredibly good at that because he was a big game hunter, so he knew what to look for and he taught me a lot. So we worked together as a team and we used to both be the eyes and ears when we got into the odd small contact. There were a dozen or so of them, but it doesn't matter whether it's one or a dozen shooting lead, it's no fun when it's coming your way.

(00:53:48) **And the air wing were all white pilots, were they?**

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Yes, they owned the aeroplanes. The aeroplanes belonged to them and were all privately owned aircraft leased to the police. They were paid a certain amount of money for every hour they flew, depending on what size of aircraft it was. So they were paid to use their aircraft.

Because there were very few, I suppose? At that stage had South Africa pulled out their aircraft?

No, they were still there, still very involved. But the Air Force was very involved with the war. They had their role to play, we were there as an annoyance more than anything. Afterwards, the ters said, "if the Air Force came, it was fine because you knew you were dead. If the Army came, that was also fine, you knew you were dead. But if the police reservist air wing pitched up, anything could happen." It was a very hit and miss system, but it was a deterrent, it was a help. Sometimes we'd do satellite work: We'd get up high, and do radio so they'd talk to us. We also used to drop supplies to people; we used to drop newspapers and all sorts of bits and pieces. It helped the Air Force and gave them chance to go and do other things because we all knew our local areas well. So if things happened there, that's what we went and did. We knew where the information posts were and that sort of thing, and we knew where to go to drop, so we did a lot of that as well.

And had your family been involved? Were they in contact with you?

No, they'd never experienced war-type violence at all although the kids had regular training at school as to what to do if something happened, so they knew exactly what to do. In fact, so much so that when we first went back to South Africa, they were at school down there and something went bang outside and our two disappeared under their desks. The teacher couldn't understand why and it took them a while to get over it but the children at school all knew what to do, mine included. They were never ever involved in any skirmishes at all, nothing. They never ever saw a shot fired in anger, they heard them but they never actually saw anything.

And how would it have been for your wife; she'd moved to be closer to her family?

And then six months later they moved back to Salisbury so it didn't make any difference. But we were very happy. The kids were happy at school so we just stayed where we were, it was fine. That was just the way things worked. We were very happy where we were; we were in a nice community, which we knew well, so we just got on with it.

(00:56:53) **And do you mind me asking you this? You mentioned about your sister having been in the police as well. Did that affect your confidence in terms of being involved in things?**

No because she wasn't killed in any form of violence, it was purely a motor accident. Somebody did something stupid, hit her, she was killed and that was it. I'm not bitter about it, I'm not heart-sore, it happens, that is life and

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some die younger than others. It doesn't worry me, I'm happy to talk about it; I've got no problem with that at all.

And we've mentioned that you did have a relatively wide range of sources in that you were travelling around internationally; the political developments as it were.

With the airline? Yes.

What did you feel that the war was doing for a Rhodesian identity?

The people of the world didn't know where Rhodesia was, the bulk of them. They'd heard this name, Rhodesia, but if you asked them where it was, they wouldn't have a clue. It didn't affect them and the rest of the world and unless it affects them personally they're not interested, their life goes on. That was the way I experienced things when I was away from the country. South Africa was different because it affected them big time because they were right next-door. But Holland for instance, they couldn't care less. The Middle East, they couldn't care less, it's just another country with a problem. Like now, take Pakistan; that's just had a big punch-up, but it doesn't affect you, does it? It doesn't affect you at all, you couldn't care less, I couldn't care less, if they want to have a punch-up, that's their business. That was the same with Rhodesia, that's what I'm trying to say. To the outside world, they weren't worried about what went on there. We were the ones who worried because it was our future; it was our home. It wasn't my birth home but it was my home of choice and I was prepared to do everything I could for the country.

What did you think that the war was fighting for?

I felt that we were fighting for a free country; a country where we could all live together happily so that everybody would benefit and the country would go forward. We didn't want what's happened. What's happened now is exactly what we said would happen if these people got in. We said it would go that way and it has.

And who would you say you were fighting against?

Well we knew that a lot of the people had been brainwashed. A lot of the younger guys were told "we'll take you overseas, we'll give you a fantastic education." Who's not going to take an opportunity (01:00:00) like that? You can't blame them. But when they got over there, their head was filled with rubbish, they were told "the white man was this, that and all the rest of it" and "they were robbing your country – go back and take it over." And they came back and that's what they thought they were doing. I suppose they had their views; what they actually thought, I don't know. But we were fighting for our survival to keep the country, the lovely country we knew it to be.

How did you see it in terms of the Cold War environment and fighting against communism?

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Communism was involved in that all these terrs were trained by communist countries. But I don't know, I can't say I can really see communism getting a hold, being that close to South Africa. I mean it hasn't really taken a hold in Africa if you look at it. Congo-Brazzaville is communist, but I can't think of any other countries where they've got a foothold. None of them, the others just ran.

And did you see the war at all as an ideological war, a racial war or a civil war? How would you describe it?

Probably a mixture of civil and ideological, because they were fighting for what they thought was going to be freedom; and we fought for what we thought was going to be freedom. In the end, nobody's won anything, we've all been losers. I suppose like any war it's a pointless waste of time, but at the time you don't know that. You've got to go through it to see that at the end.

Did you see the effect of things like sanctions on the war in terms of weaponry?

Not really because the authorities had their sources for getting stuff. We didn't ask. If I needed ammunition, I was given ammunition, I didn't ask where it came from, I didn't care where it came from. I had a job to do, they gave me the tools to do the job and we got on with it. So as far as that side of it was concerned, it wasn't a problem.

And in terms of sanctions busting, would you have been involved in that movement of weaponry or had some awareness of where it was coming from perhaps?

No, we carried pure general freight. I know there were a couple of flights done, what we used to call smirch flights but none of us were ever involved. The pilots, first officers and flightees knew of some of them, but as loadmasters we were never involved. We were never asked to get involved and we never asked questions, we were told no lies. We just got on with it. You got off the aeroplane and it would stop in a funny place, there was a vehicle waiting, you took your stuff, you got in the vehicle and you went home. You didn't ask questions.

(01:03:13) **It was very much on a "need to know" basis?**

Very much a "need to know" basis and we all learnt that very quickly. Since then I've found out what happened but at the time I had no idea at all. When we were involved with the normal everyday running, run of the mill flying, it was the same cargo that anybody else would have carried. I only carried one consignment of ammunition and that was from Oman back to Holland. It was ammunition that got out of date and it was being sent back to the UK to be destroyed. That was the only time I ever carried it and I happened to have very expensive cars on as well.

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I'm interested that you've said a few times that now you've thought more about some of these issues. Maybe you can be more rational now about the contradiction of these countries helping you or enabling the sanctions busting to go on; but then being snubbed by them towards the end?

Well no, we weren't snubbed by them because, as far as Affretair was concerned, the countries we dealt with are still friendly today. We don't have a hassle with any of those countries, they knew what was going on, they never turned the tap off because when it became Air Zimbabwe Cargo, they carried on flying to the same places. There was no animosity at all, nothing whatsoever, they just carried on doing what they'd been doing before, only now it was legal as far as the world was concerned.

But at the time did you feel any resentment about what was happening privately and publicly, in that sense?

No, I had no problems with it at all; it was a job that had to be done. We were (in a loose sense of the word) 'fighting' for our survival, and we just got on with it and did all we possibly could to survive and to get it where we could get it. We even had the cheek to come into the UK, into Gatwick! We had to get out in a hurry; we didn't stay long when we were out because somebody let on who we were.

So I suppose in some ways, you were the ones pushing the boundaries?

Oh we pushed the boundaries alright, make no mistake. I can't talk for anybody else, but in my mind it was perfectly legit. I suppose one way of looking at it is that we were being discriminated against by Britain.

And so this was actually a way of sort of fighting back?

Well, no, it wasn't really fighting back. There was a job to be done, they had freight that needed to be moved, they paid money, and we needed money, so we moved it. Well we didn't in the end because the fellow knew who we were. I had a British passport and Britain thought I lived in South Africa. I'm perfectly entitled to (01:06:39) a British passport; I've always had one from the day I was sixteen. But when it needed renewing, I got it done through South Africa. I lived in Johannesburg, prove otherwise. They tried a couple of times with forms and things, but I could jump in an aeroplane, fly down to Pretoria, walk into the office, sign what had to be done and fly back again. The boss paid, it was only and hour and a half each way, it didn't matter.

Had you been able to vote throughout this time?

Yes, we were allowed to vote, but we weren't allowed to get involved with political gatherings and that sort of thing. You still had the right to vote, you still had the right to say who you wanted in.

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And did you vote? Because you've mentioned that you were there in the 1979 elections.

I voted in all the elections that we could, yes. When it came to voting for a new government, I put my vote in as well. I didn't vote for 'Mugas,' I voted for Muzorewa. He got in for a short while but Mugabe made sure he didn't stay there.

Did you have any contact with the auxiliary troops that were in place in 1979?

Which auxiliary troops?

Sithole's and Muzorewa's troops who were…?

Well yes we did because once we got independence, well, it would have been in 1980 when they started to rule the country, there was a blanket amnesty: "Come in chaps, hand in your weapons, we're starting a brand new country." They then came in and we used to chat to them and it was frightening what they knew about us.

Is this at the assembly points and so on?

Well I was based in Marandellas in those days and they used to come into the police station there because that's where I'd been based. They'd come in and say "oh yes, we know you, you fly such and such aeroplane. You did so and so and such and such. You work for so and so and we saw you down there." They knew all about us, more about us than we ever knew. It actually makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up when you found out what they knew.

I was interested as well that you would have left Air Rhodesia before the passenger Viscount was shot down in '78?

Yes, I knew the crew on both of those aircraft. I'd worked with them all.

(01:09:18) **Yes, I wondered how that affected you?**

It didn't. We were supposed to take off and climb up over Salisbury Airport and all that nonsense and the boss used to say "I'll pay for the fuel, that's where you're going – go" and we did, we just took off and flew it. But we didn't have to worry because we were cargo, it didn't affect anybody. But when you've got people in the back it's a different kettle of fish. Of course, Air Rhodesia had different ways of doing things to us; it was two totally different systems that we were working.

And you had left Air Rhodesia some time previously?

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Yes, but we still worked very closely with them because we used to transship cargo. We'd move stuff from our airline to theirs, and theirs to ours, to move it around to other places.

So we still knew all the people over there and they knew what we were up to because there was this liaison between us. So we knew them, they knew us and of course I knew all those crews, some of them from way back in the sixties. I did know them personally.

Had it been a concern to you that things had been shot at? Though I suppose if you're going on a different route…

That we might get shot down? No.

But if you knew these people, was it a concern?

No. I mean we were heartbroken because they had been killed; especially the first one when the hostesses got out and then they were killed afterwards. Now that's not on, that's brutality. We were in a war situation, people walk across the road and get run over by a car, that's the way it works; it was the same there if you just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. But when we found out what these guys knew: They knew which farms I'd visited, what I'd done on the farms, how often I visited, which days I went. It suited them not to get rid of me. Sometimes it doesn't pay to take people out because it just draws attention to yourself. They were probably achieving a lot more by operating and keeping quiet than by picking on and getting rid of little old me, and causing a big problem for themselves. They weren't stupid, and they could run.

What was your opinion of how African nationalism was operating?

I didn't agree with it because they were talking rubbish to the people. They were telling the people all sorts of weird and wonderful things. We'd deal with (01:11:48) a farm labourer and they used to come in and say "oh the terrs visited last night and they told us this and this and this." You'd say "well yes, that's right and that's right, but that's a load of rubbish and so is that." And they'd say "this and this and so and so." "Has it happened to you? No, exactly the opposite's happened. Who do you believe, us or them?" Those farm labourers were in a hell of a position, they really were. But we made the best of it. Again, we just had a life to live, a job to do, and we had to move forward. You can't keep looking over your shoulder; you had to get on with it. Those Rhodesian farmers went through hell. Every night of their lives, "were we going to get taken out tonight? Were we going to be attacked?" That's not a nice life for anybody; in the towns we had it cushy.

How did you differentiate between black Rhodesians and the opposition?

The terrs?

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Yes.

You sometimes didn't know the difference. I mean they were just black people. If they were in civvie clothing, you wouldn't know one from the other. You had no idea at all who was a terr and who wasn't if they didn't want you to know. So you didn't know. You could have been sitting in a room full of them and you wouldn't have known any better.

What would you say made a good African, in that sense of being a black Rhodesian?

The average run of the mill rural African wanted to live in his house, he wanted his wife, wanted his women and he wanted his song. If he had that he was happy. He didn't want any more than that. It was us white people that said, "You can't live in a mud hut." "Why can't I live in a mud hut?" So they were happy with their way of life and then of course these people came and turned it upside down and messed things up. For those in the town it was different; they'd seen white-type lives. They didn't always want what we had and some of them tried it and didn't like it. Some of them did it and have done well, but they're a different type of people. This is what is so hard to understand. You've got to adhere to a degree in that you've got your lower class white person and your upper class white person. You've got the same amongst the black people as well: You've got those that are very astute businessmen, some of them have got incredibly good businesses; some of them are just average run of the mill people; but the majority of them are just rural folk that want to be left alone to lead their lives. That's how it was, but they couldn't, because everybody kept interfering with them.

And would you say one of the things being fought for by Rhodesia was to preserve that for these people?

(01:14:44) I think we were, we were trying to preserve it for everybody, for them and for us. We had a fantastic way of life; I'm the first to admit that we were privileged. But again, the government were giving them schooling, they had hospitals, they had lovely schools, and they burnt them down. They weren't deprived; they weren't told, "oh that building there is going to have to do as a school." Some of the farmers built lovely schools and put in proper teachers, built clinics and gave them qualified nurses. They gave them everything; they really tried to look after them. But to civilise people, you've got to educate them and we were trying very hard to do that in a number of ways, but it just didn't work out. People elsewhere wanted things done yesterday; but you can't do that. It's taken us thousands of years to call ourselves civilised in this country and we pitch up there two hundred and something years ago and try and do the same to them. It's not fair on them.

Do you feel that the internal settlement could have achieved that, through this attempt to try and draw some agreement?

I think Bishop Muzorewa might have achieved it because you've got to talk to people. This is where Morgan Tsvangirai now differs to Mugabe. Morgan's a

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union man and he says fighting never gets you anywhere; but dialogue does. We'll see. There's not been much change, but he's not a fighter. He believes in talking through things and getting agreements with people; coming to compromises to make things work. I think Bishop Muzorewa might have achieved that. I know Ian Smith said "never in fifty years" or "not in my lifetime" or something. But it happened, and I believe that he would have made an effort for everybody's sake, because I knew him personally as well. When I was in the police in Gwelo we used to do farm guard for him, so we used to spend quite a lot of time with him. He's a good man as far as I'm concerned, but that's beside the point.

And do you think that there was an attempt to encourage the troops towards the end of the war that they were fighting to reach some kind of agreement; rather than to win the war as such, as it may have been earlier on?

I don't think so. I think we sort of started realising towards the end that it was going to go the wrong way; we saw the writing on the wall. Things happened, South Africa had to cut back and they pulled back a lot of their troops and things. They had to, they had no choice, and then I think we realised that it was a matter of time.

So you stayed on through independence?

Three years of independence, yes, and I stayed in the police reserve. I became Zimbabwe Republic police reserve and carried on, but life was not very pleasant. Law and order started going, I had a lot of problems and hassles. I used to get stopped at roadblocks by people that I knew, who used to give me a hard time. They searched my house for arms and ammunition (01:18:13) and that sort of thing and I thought, I don't need this in my life. I just want to run my business and get on with my life. My business was somebody else's but I was working for them.

And were you being called-up much?

No, call-ups were finished. It all just died down and stopped.

Yes, I've heard that it sort of fizzled out.

It just fizzled out and I used to just carry on. In fact, I carried on doing A Reserve duties again, as well as Police Air Wing. I used to go and help out with A Reserve as well, so I was still doing that side of it at the time.

So this was in a station again?

Yes, at Marandellas. I used to go in there and then go out and attend scenes of crime or patrol or whatever happened. I did that as well as doing Air Wing, because Air Wing had just died down. It was just the odd thing. When we were in town, they used to phone up and say, "we've got an exercise on, can you make it?" "Yes, sure." They told us where to meet or we'd go to have

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meetings or go away for a weekend exercise or things like that. But apart from that, I just carried on doing what I used to do before, but as a Zimbabwe Republic policeman instead of a British South Africa policeman. We wore the same uniforms with different things on our shoulders, that's all. But as I say, I saw the changes coming and law and order was rapidly going downhill, big time.

And what finally prompted you to leave Zimbabwe?

I had a hassle at the garage one night and they tried to beat me up because I wouldn't give them petrol. We didn't have any to give them and I phoned the police station and I'm still waiting for them to come. I went home and I said to Judy, "I don't have to put up with this, I really don't see why I have to put up with this." I literally packed up my old clapped out motor car, we had to go to the bank and get all sorts of clearance and stuff, and we moved to South Africa.

And how did you find life in South Africa from Rhodesia?

It was a lot more relaxed of course; there was law and order at that stage. We'd gone from a country that was becoming very lawless, to a country that was a lot more organised, but it took a lot of time to settle. It took me a good year before I did. A couple of times I nearly went back and then I just had to think back to the problems and I thought, "I don't need it." We still went back on holiday once a year because my in-laws still lived there, but we didn't go to the city. Well, we went to the city, picked up the family, and we went to Kariba. The guy I used to fly in the air wing with had a big safari camp and a holiday place up there, which we had the use of because we had this bond between us from the war. It's a bond (01:20:55) you can't describe, you just…I needed him, he needed me and you thought together, you just got this thing going; I don't know what it was. And they said to us…we only found out afterwards that we were one of the privileged few that were allowed to use this place. We used to take my father in law, who was a priest, so he loved it. It was nice for him to get away, to be able to sit up there and look over the lake and just wind down and do what a priest does; just enjoy his time. We had a fabulous time and we did that for the next five or six years, or longer. We stayed until August 2000 when we left to come over here, but we always went up to Rhodesia for our holidays to Kariba.

So you were in South Africa for…

Seventeen years.

And what was it like coming to the UK after South Africa?

Very freeing. We sold everything we owned. All we had left was on our back and we had two hundred and fifty quid; that's all we had in this world. We had a house that we couldn't sell in South Africa, which we'd managed to rent out for less rent than we were paying in a bond, or mortgage; and then when we got here, we couldn't find work and the government wouldn't help us. It was

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fine, we made a plan, it's come right and now we're very happy. One thing we did notice was the law and order. We started off down in Hythe in Kent and then I got a job here in Sevenoaks. That's how we moved here and my wife works at the local girls' school. She said, "you know, it was so nice, you could walk out the front gate, and walk to the school." To start off with she was very aware of who was around her she said "it's so free, I can walk along and I don't have to worry, I don't have to stress, I don't have to nail, bolt and chain everything down." We've been out and left the front door wide open and come back in the afternoon, "oh hell, we left the door open," and everything's still there. So to us, that was great. Law and order makes a big difference in your life, it takes a lot of strain off and we didn't realise the pressures we'd been living under until we'd been here a year or two. We go back now and straight away we're aware of them. We go back because our daughter still lives there. They came here, we came here, they went back and we're staying here.

And did you feel different to British citizens in any sense?

Not really, I was born here. I have an affinity for Folkestone, possibly because I was born there. I don't know why, take me to the docks down at Folkestone and I'm as happy as the day is long. The rest of it I don't particularly like, but I enjoy England, I really do. They need to sort themselves out because I think it's going the wrong way. But by the time I'm dead and gone, it'll be really getting bad big time. You people are going to suffer, your kids are going to suffer unless they do something about it. But I'm very, very happy here. I've got a fantastic job.

(01:24:04) **Were you aware of this sense of the end of empire; and what do you think about it?**

Only since I've been in England. I used to say, "oh I've got to go back to Great Britain," until I got here. Great Britain is history; they've thrown it all away. What our parents and our grandparents worked so hard for has gone and the people in the colonies have all lost out as a result. I mean the BSAP was a prime example of British pomp and ceremony and strict discipline, that type of thing. But it was a very, very respected police force. You wanted something, you asked a policeman. You don't do that in South Africa. Ask a policeman? You've got to be joking, I wouldn't talk to them, you're mad. Here, if you want something, go and ask a copper and that's how it was with us. We were not armed; we were one of the few police forces in the world. I used to walk the beat, two or three o'clock in the morning, with a truncheon. That was my weapon; I did not carry a firearm.

Did that change when war came?

It changed towards the end. In our patrol cars we had firearms, locked in a box in the boot so you had to unlock the boot, unlock the box and unlock the padlocks to get them out. So it's as good as being unarmed really.

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But some must have though, if they were doing duty on PATU sticks and things like that?

Oh yes, I had a weapon.

But then they were taking them out?

But it was in the armoury. Then towards the end, when we moved to Marandellas, I was issued with a firearm, which I used to carry with me all the time; it was my constant companion. When I got to work they had a special safe, we all did it, we'd lock our firearms away. When we came back again, we picked them up and off we went. It was your constant companion, but that was just circumstance. I never, ever, ever fired it in anger, never, not that one. Others, yes, but not that one. The other one we had in the aeroplane, we did. But that stayed at the police station, I couldn't lug that thing around, it was too blooming heavy, it was a huge thing.

What was in the aircraft?

That was mounted in the aircraft, and we used to use it for shooting from the aircraft.

(01:26:30) **Looking back now, what do you think about the struggle in the 70s, and do you feel that it was worth it?**

No. I've now realised that no war is worth it. How many of my friends were killed? I killed people, it worried me like hell the first time until somebody pointed out that it was either him or me and I kind of accepted it. It's still hard to live with, but I lost friends, for what? What did we achieve? Absolutely nothing. Nothing, the country's still gone down the tubes. The First World War and the Second World War, yes, our parents fought for the freedom that we had, or that we had as kids. You're a lot younger than me and you're not benefitting from that. Things are going wrong again for you. For what your grandparents fought for, you're not getting any more; but I did. But that Rhodesian war was an absolute waste of time. What did we achieve? Nothing in the end. But that's part of life, isn't it? You look back through history, there's always a punch-up going on somewhere. There's always somebody who wants to be the top dog.

You said "killing in defence," of terrorists. When would that have happened; when you were in the Air Wing?

In the Air Wing, yes. It's not so difficult there because it was just a little black speck on the ground; it moves you, that was all. But it was afterwards that I got home and I thought about what had happened and I thought, "it's somebody's son, somebody's brother, somebody's husband, maybe somebody's father," I don't know. But he was doing his damndest to get rid of me; it was a war. So yes, there were a few unfortunately. But I spoke to my father-in-law about it a long time after that, because it did worry me. He said, "well look, it's a war situation, now you can make peace yourself with it." So it

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still worries me a bit, but there's nothing I can do about it and one day if the big boss upstairs asks me, well I'll have to go up and answer won't I? I'll cross that bridge when I get there.

It was all a waste of time because they just left us to get on with it. But Britain caused the problem in the first place. If they'd just left everybody, they should have realised: They gave Kenya away, it went wrong; the Belgians gave the Congo away and it went wrong; they broke up federation and it went wrong; they gave our country away and it's gone wrong; South Africa's going to go the same way because you know, they've just got in. It's bad news. And also, what we don't realise is that the African people are very, very tribal. Who are we to tell them, but in this country it's tribal. People in the south don't like the people in the north of England; the English won't talk to the Welsh; the Welsh don't like the Scots. You pull the plug out and this Island's gone in ten minutes, it's ridiculous. You've got the same thing with them there but you've got millions, all in their different tribes. They all want to be either left alone with it or they'll fight each other for a bit of extra turf. It's hard, but the older you get the more you realise unfortunately. When you're young, you see things differently. It's only when (01:30:18) you look back at what's happened that you think well that was an absolute waste of time, waste of everything, waste of money.

But at the time, it did feel that you were fighting for something.

We were fighting for our survival. As I say, <u>our</u> survival; the Rhodesians, black, white, pink, green, all of us. We wanted to be left alone to live our lives the way we'd always lived them. There were a few black people that didn't like what they had but then those black people that saw an opportunity took it, moved ahead and did very, very well. Now I had dealings with a lot of the African priests because I married into the family; they were really nice people. They used to voice their opinion, I voiced mine, we'd have discussions about it, we all ended up being friendly about it. It's fine, that's how it should be. But when politicians get involved, that's when things go wrong.

And was the church or religion an element for you in the war?

For a lot of people, but it was for us before the war as well. It was a big time for us before, but during the war, we saw some things happen that you can only put down to miracles, it's impossible to put it down to anything else. In one incident, my boss was sitting on a observation post and we went off somewhere and we were getting the hell shot out of us. They really gave us a good hammering and he said, he "didn't know what it was, just that my name came to his mind and that I was in big, big trouble…and I had to pray for you." We were in the middle of the thick of all of this and all of a sudden it stopped; and that time, that's when it happened. Now he didn't know it was going on, we were miles and miles away, he knew nothing. He didn't even know I was on call-up because he thought I was running the business. Now, how did he know, and why did it just suddenly stop? I don't know, I can't answer that question. I have my beliefs on why it was, others can have theirs. Put it down

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to coincidence, we call it 'God incidence.' But that's just the way it goes I'm afraid.

But the church was very involved with the troops; they were there for the troops. A lot of the black priests dealt with the terrs out in the fields, they had dealings with them. They had to live with it and work on it, so it all came into it. But not only the Christian religion; I'm sure if you spoke to Muslims that were involved, they'd have the same thing to tell you. I don't know; I never spoke to any of them so I don't know, but it was good. A prime example of this, disputes: We were in Israel three years ago and we went down to Jericho and we went to have lunch at a place there and in our group was a Masonic Jew. Do you know what a Masonic Jew is? He's a Jew that's become a Christian Jew. He was one of us and there was a Palestinian who owned the place. We've got a photograph of the three of them sitting at the table with their hands together and this Palestinian said "all we want in this great country is to be left alone to live our lives, but we can't because the politicians keep causing trouble." And that made me think as well, it's all those people want, they don't want all this nonsense. It's a few that are causing upset for everybody else. And we're going back in October for another ten days.

(01:34:08) **To Zimbabwe?**

No, to Israel. I'm never going back to Zimbabwe, we went back five years ago to fetch my mother-in-law and it was a nightmare, I'm not going back.

Oh, so that was when she left?

I brought her over here, she lives in an old people's home, she's ninety-four.

That must have been an upheaval for her?

It wasn't too bad because my missus and her are very close. She's got a brother in New Zealand, one in South Africa and a sister in South Africa, but Ju and her mum have always been very close. I don't know why, they just have. And we went and saw her and said to her "do you want to come and live in England with us?" and she said "no." Then she changed her mind and said "yes," so my sister-in-law brought her over and she lived with us for a year. She's blind and crippled, so what Judy did is she laid her bedroom at home out as close as she could to what her bedroom was there. So when she came in, in her mind, she kind of knew where everything was and it didn't take her long to settle. She lived with us for a year and then we found this place for retired Anglican clergy, an old place. My father had already died in Zim, so she's gone there. She's very happy, well as happy as can be at ninety-four.

That's wonderful, yes

So it's great, England's been good. I'm happy, got no complaints.

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Well I think we should finish there.

Are you happy with that?

Yes, thank you.

End of interview