

**CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW CONTROL NUMBER: 31D 8 HYNDMAN

INTERVIEWEE: Robert S. Hyndman

INTERVIEWER: Mai-yu Chan

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 11 October, 2007

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Chelsea, Quebec

TRANSCRIBED BY: Beverly Miller

Transcription of Interview Number 31D 8 HYNDMAN

Robert S. Hyndman

Interviewed 11 October, 2007

By Mai-yu Chan

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program Interview with Robert Hyndman, 11th of October, 2007. Tape 1, Side 1.

Mr. Hyndman, we have both signed the oral release form. Is that correct?

HYNDMAN: Fine, yes. So what I say now is going on the tape is it?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

HYNDMAN: Alright, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Hyndman, after the Second World War, the RCAF commissioned you to go to Europe to do some paintings. Can you tell us about that?

HYNDMAN: Yes, well, there was no specific thing that I had to do. There were no portraits. I did the portraits during the war or near the end of the war.

But this thing was a question of doing paintings. I think I did about 40 or 50 of them of the goings on in the Canadian Air Division in France and Germany. And that was about it, France and Germany. Went over there for two weeks.

INTERVIEWER: In Morocco.

HYNDMAN: In Morocco.

INTERVIEWER: That was in 1954?

HYNDMAN: Yes. And I did a few sketches that – there was not a great deal one could do there because there was just a bombing run for practice things for them. They would go out and fire because of the ocean being right there. They could practice their skills. And it wasn't a great thing for the air force, I don't think. I mean, my presence there.

INTERVIEWER: But they sent you again in 1960.

HYNDMAN: 1960. God, when did I go? I went twice with the RCAF.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

HYNDMAN: I forget. It was just after we had landed, I think. Anyway, it was rather a funny old one here. Oh, yes. I was coming in to land back in England I guess.

Oh, yes. This is most interesting, I must say.

INTERVIEWER: This one in Langar.

HYNDMAN: Oh, yes. That was interesting with the dark, the painting. Here are the – oh, yes, well, I'll be darned. You know, I don't remember doing this at all, very interesting.

INTERVIEWER: This is the "Vapour Trails over Bristol".

HYNDMAN: Where was this supposed to be?

INTERVIEWER: Bristol.

HYNDMAN: Bristol.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

HYNDMAN: I don't know any more.

INTERVIEWER: The Vapour Trails.

HYNDMAN: Yes. Well, I suppose the old buildings are the reason I did it, I think.

Oh yes, which is that one?

INTERVIEWER: Metz, in France.

HYNDMAN: Oh yes. This was definitely – what was the name of the place again?

INTERVIEWER: Metz.

HYNDMAN: Yes, oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: Grostenquin

HYNDMAN: Yes. Well, well, well.

INTERVIEWER: It's been how long? How long has it been?

HYNDMAN: Sixty years. You know 19...

INTERVIEWER: 54. Yes that's right.

HYNDMAN: Yes. Where was this fellow?

INTERVIEWER: Lelling

HYNDMAN: Oh yes. Looking down on a little village. There it is. Something very amusing happened. A priest had seen me up there drawing or painting and he came up to see what was going on – from that church I presume. And he had to go through a barbed wire fence to get to me. Well, he got all caught up in the barbed wire with his black robes, you know. And I had to help him out of the mess that he was in. Always remember the little church in that. He obviously wanted to know what I was doing. And he needed assistance though. [Canadian War Museum 19710261-6439]

Where are we now?

INTERVIEWER: A street scene in Lelling.

HYNDMAN: I can't remember that.

INTERVIEWER: There are a few paintings from Morocco. This one "Entrance to Rabat".

HYNDMAN: The actual painting I cannot remember. Now, this next one?

INTERVIEWER: "The French Guard".

HYNDMAN: Oh, yes. OK. Another one under here. Oh, now, that can't be seen.

INTERVIEWER: These are two chapels, I believe, in Lahr. Do you remember if that is in 1954 or 1960?

HYNDMAN: Oh, my God. Oh, my Lord. Honestly, I don't recognize that at all. I remember this one very clearly.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, "Sabres Over Tower". [CWM 19710261-6439]

HYNDMAN: This would be when I was in Baden, I guess. Where are they? These are at present day in the war museum, are they?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

HYNDMAN: You know, I had a letter from them about eight years ago saying they had lost about 25 things and did I know where they might be? I didn't have a clue. I think some people took them from their offices when they left and said, "Well, I might as well have that." They never did tell me whether they found them or not. About 25 missing.

INTERVIEWER: This is one in Lahr.

HYNDMAN: I seem to remember that, although I don't know what this is.

INTERVIEWER: That is the "Bunker Remains" [CWM 19710261-6438] in 3 Wing in Lahr.

Would this be – when you were in Lahr, was that 1954?

HYNDMAN: Don't ask me when I made it. Did I go after that?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

HYNDMAN: Oh, God.

INTERVIEWER: In 1960 perhaps or...

HYNDMAN: '54 was the first main one.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Did you go to Lahr in '54?

HYNDMAN: I think I must have.

INTERVIEWER: What about Zweibrucken?

HYNDMAN: Zweibrucken. Yes, I was there.

INTERVIEWER: Were you there in '54 or '60?

HYNDMAN: You got me there.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

HYNDMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember Zweibrucken and the Sabres? You painted a....

HYNDMAN: Yes. Those are the Sabres. Oh, my God, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And this is the one that is in close formation. ["Sabres in Close Formation CWM 19710261-6428]

HYNDMAN: Close formation, yes.

INTERVIEWER: With the T33. Oh, the "Aerobatic Team".

HYNDMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: In Zweibrucken.

Another Zweibrucken, the “Dispersal Area”. [Dispersal Area, Zweibrucken CWM 19710261-6444]

HYNDMAN: I suppose I was trying to make it interesting but they weren't. Oh, yes, there we are.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us what you do remember about your experiences back in '54 in Europe.

HYNDMAN: Well, I remember people were very good to me. I was in uniform, of course. I had to put a uniform on for that although I was retired. And they offered me all kinds of things. They gave me a little jeep to run around in because the distances were very large.

INTERVIEWER: And you had a driver, of course.

HYNDMAN: No, I drove myself.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

HYNDMAN: In this particular case. I think I did. God almighty. You see, this kind of thing. I must have had a driver. I don't know. If you think I did, probably.

INTERVIEWER: I wouldn't know.

HYNDMAN: But anyway, that was a great help in getting around. And it was very interesting from every point of view back in the mess.

INTERVIEWER: When you were over in France and Germany and Morocco, who looked after you? Was it part of the Canadian military?

HYNDMAN: Oh, yes. I just stayed in the air force base. And they looked after me very well. Anything I wanted in the mess was fine.

INTERVIEWER: And you ate well.

HYNDMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And was there any – did they give you any idea of what to paint?

HYNDMAN: Maybe. I don't think. I think I chose the subject myself because they would have a different idea of what it was.

INTERVIEWER: Were there areas you were forbidden to go into?

HYNDMAN: There were some but I can't remember where.

INTERVIEWER: And how long were you there?

HYNDMAN: In Baden?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

HYNDMAN: I think about three weeks maybe.

INTERVIEWER: And then you went – what about France, England and Morocco?

HYNDMAN: Well, I had two. The first one was in France. I had two in France before going – oh, God, still ain't coming back.

INTERVIEWER: You had some time in France and some time in Germany.

HYNDMAN: Yes. About two weeks I'd be in any one of those places.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

HYNDMAN: I'm sorry I'm so hazy about it, but I just remember going from one to another.

INTERVIEWER: OK. That's alright. Now, were you remunerated? Did you get paid?

HYNDMAN: No, nothing but my regular air force pay which, as a flight lieutenant, it wasn't very much. Paid later on.

INTERVIEWER: They didn't pay you for the portraits?

HYNDMAN: No, because I was just – as far as I remember now, it was just part of my job.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel – what were the differences or challenges of painting World War II paintings and after World War II?

HYNDMAN: Well, it was just a question of, they would get in touch with me and say, "We will be sending you to Winnipeg to paint so and so." So, I would do that. And then from there I went to Edmonton, Air Marshall Guthrie. And then from there I went to Vancouver and did two portraits there, I think. They didn't put me anywhere. They just said, "Guess you're going [unclear word]" Way it is.

INTERVIEWER: You were not displeased?

HYNDMAN: I was what?

INTERVIEWER: You were not displeased with that.

HYNDMAN: No. I would say I was not displeased. I just did the job and that was it. I accepted it as part of what I was doing.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you get involved with the CAFCAP program in 1974?

HYNDMAN: Gosh, you know I haven't a – I simply don't remember that business at all.

INTERVIEWER: Here are the five paintings for the CAFCAP program. And this first one, there are CF 104s ["CF 104 outside Hangar" CWM 19740548-004] up here. Do you remember anything about this one?

HYNDMAN: It must have been over in Baden. That's all I can think of. There weren't many mountains like that anywhere else and no tall trees either. So this must be Baden.

INTERVIEWER: This is the "American Phantom Jets at Baden".

HYNDMAN: Oh yes. American what?

INTERVIEWER: Phantom jets.

HYNDMAN: Oh.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember that?

HYNDMAN: No. Obviously, I liked the – I think that's a good one.

INTERVIEWER: This is the "11th Tactical Weapons Meet". ["11th Tactical Weapons Meet June 1974" CWM 19740548-001]

HYNDMAN: Which place?

INTERVIEWER: "11th Tactical Weapons Meet"

HYNDMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Of the score board and control tower.

HYNDMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you stay for the meet?

HYNDMAN: Oh, God, this, cannot remember. No. I can't remember this one either.

INTERVIEWER: The "Bombing Run".

HYNDMAN: I see. Jesus, terrible. Oh, here was an interesting one. Now this is a good painting.

INTERVIEWER: That's the "Town of Heugelsheim" [CWM 19740548-003].

HYNDMAN: What?

INTERVIEWER: The "Town of Heugelsheim".

HYNDMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: A small town probably close to Baden.

HYNDMAN: Yes, that one, the church made it very interesting. That's a good painting. That would have been – no, sorry. All I knew, they kept in touch with me and, of course, these things and we would have a meeting before I went over. They did all the arranging of the planes and things. So I just went along with it. And they built a great big ruddy box about this long, that wide, and this high. So I could carry everything back. And then I had to give the box up which I was very sad about.

INTERVIEWER: Now, did you do mostly in oils or watercolours?

HYNDMAN: Well, I think they were mostly – what was the kind of paint? They weren't oils. No, they were a type of gouache, which is a word in the art world. No, they weren't oils because I had to have them able to dry you see. So this was almost like acrylic but I can't remember the name of it, type of thing. Anyway, they were very good paints.

INTERVIEWER: Did you sketch mostly and then come back to finish them?

HYNDMAN: Not here. I finished them on the site. Well, not while I was standing there. I'd do a drawing and then go right back to my room and paint from the drawing and from what I was doing. In other words, I couldn't have done it just from a photograph. You had to be there to do the drawing.

I still behave that way. I mean, I still go out and do the drawing and take notes because you can't always stay out there. Might be cold or it might be raining or it might be snowing. So it's up to you to get the information then go back and paint. Get any information I can.

They were very helpful. They arranged the trip here and there. And it was – we went in a great big Bristol plane down to Morocco. And there was nothing very much I could do about a painting there because, I mean, if you want to paint a lot of Arabs that's fine, but I don't think that's what they wanted. In fact, I did do a lot of old people in the streets. When I came back I had them in an exhibition.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, tell us about that exhibition. Do you remember about that?

HYNDMAN: Nothing to do with the air force at all.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

HYNDMAN: Purely a personal thing in the gallery of – God damn it, the names. But it went very well. They wrote it all up in the newspaper. Said that, oh I know what – there was a big thing in the newspaper about someone in the House of Commons saying, “What the hell are you sending somebody over there to paint? Why do you spend the money that way?”

That is about the cost of one tire, my total trip. I felt like saying, “Listen buddy, you don't seem to know what you're talking about.”

I was no problem for them. I just stayed in their messes, why not? Some of them, you know, they have these crazy ideas that if I spent another \$10, you're in trouble. I just completely ignored it.

INTERVIEWER: Good.

HYNDMAN: But they made a lovely writeup in the paper saying, “Why are you sending this air force officer over to do these paintings?” Anyway, that was a little innocent.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about the RCAF showing all those paintings after your trip in 1954?

HYNDMAN: Well, they did. They had a – I think somewhere I've got a picture of where they were displayed. I can't find it now. But oh, no, they did a good job of that.

INTERVIEWER: So this is the catalogue for the RCAF show. It lists number 2 to 65. And we don't know what or where number 1 is.

HYNDMAN: The same piece of information. Oh, yes. Good job.

INTERVIEWER: I guess that would be a mystery for a while.

HYNDMAN: Where number 1 is.

Well, I was very pleased to be asked to go over again. And it was a great chance to see something. That was my job, to go and do as many paintings as I could, and interesting ones. And I think it came off well, the show. But I can't remember where I saw it, whether it was here or somewhere else.

INTERVIEWER: And what was it like going back to Germany after the war?

HYNDMAN: Well, I wasn't really in Germany, but I was on an air force base.

INTERVIEWER: A Canadian one.

HYNDMAN: Yes. So I didn't sort of mess around with Germany as such. I just wanted to get the job done that I was sent there to do. And I did that.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Well, thank you very much talking to us.

HYNDMAN: Listen, I'll be glad to, if there's any other thing that you want to know about.

They're still sending people over aren't they?

INTERVIEWER: Yes they are.

HYNDMAN: One way or another – but I'm far too old to get involved in that again. Really, the main thing I can remember, they were very, very good to me. Being in uniform was, of course, a huge help. And they'd say, "There's that crazy artist over there."

INTERVIEWER: [laughs]

HYNDMAN: And I had the run of the place if I wanted to go out on a certain day. I was entirely my own boss as far as what I painted and when, as long as I played ball with them to some extent. They were very delightful. They had, you know, senior officers and I being a registered flight lieutenant was not much.

Anyway, I think it's interesting to see the paintings again. What's going to happen now to the actual paintings?

INTERVIEWER: The Canadian War Museum has these paintings.

HYNDMAN: As always.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. I expect that some of them will be on show some time.

HYNDMAN: I have about 60 or 70 paintings in.

INTERVIEWER: In the war museum.

HYNDMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

HYNDMAN: I don't know. The one that is there of Carl Schafer. I think it has been there long enough now.

INTERVIEWER: Since it opened in May of 2005, it's been there together with Babs Stockton.

HYNDMAN: Yes, I know that.

INTERVIEWER: And there was one more. Eileen Boreham is now in gallery three.

HYNDMAN: Who is that? Oh, there she is. That's the one there.

INTERVIEWER: Myrtle Eileen Boreham. She is now in gallery three

HYNDMAN: This is a very extraordinary man. He was, at the age of 22, he was a group captain.

INTERVIEWER: And this is Allan Frederick Avant.

HYNDMAN: Avant, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Of Saskatchewan.

HYNDMAN: I think that is perhaps one of the strongest paintings. That's Johnny Johnston. He's disappeared. I don't know where he is.

She died didn't she?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Eileen Boreham.

HYNDMAN: Funny thing, this was in London when I did that painting. The man she married was a friend of mine in the air force. You know, we all knew one another but he came up to my studio in London which was a wonderful place out on top of a building. And he said, "So do you know any cute little girls I could get in touch with?" And I suddenly thought of her so I said, "Just a minute. I'll see if I can get a hold of somebody." So I got her to come up to the studio and meet what's his name and before you knew it, they were married.

INTERVIEWER: Really.

HYNDMAN: So I can't remember who this was.

INTERVIEWER: Let's see. It's George Andrew Sweany, DSO DFC, also from Saskatchewan.

HYNDMAN: Oh yes. Well, they were good models. That was – these were done in what year?

INTERVIEWER: These are Second World War paintings.

HYNDMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: It is just that you were asking what's on display at the Canadian War Museum so your work is represented quite a bit.

HYNDMAN: I have four big paintings like this of Spitfires doing various things parked in a wheat field or something in France. So I just wondered if there was going to be any change of the pictures after a year and a half.

INTERVIEWER: We don't know about that.

HYNDMAN: No, neither do you.

INTERVIEWER: No.

HYNDMAN: What's her name?

INTERVIEWER: Dr Laura Brandon.

HYNDMAN: She would know.

INTERVIEWER: She would know.

HYNDMAN: Maybe she would arrange that.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

HYNDMAN: If that's what they wanted to do. I feel that people that go back two or three times, they like to see a different one.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

HYNDMAN: However, that's not my business.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you could talk to her about that.

HYNDMAN: Oh, I could just say, “Do you think there is going to be a change with all the paintings tucked away there?”

INTERVIEWER: We have over 10,000.

HYNDMAN: Ten thousand from the....

INTERVIEWER: In the war museum.

HYNDMAN: God almighty. Well, now. Experience just last week, a good friend of mine who was also a painter, he was very energetic to see paintings by Augustus John the great painter from England. And so he got in touch with them and made an arrangement to meet two of the ladies who could show us these things. So they showed us about nine actual portraits in the back rooms and about 40 etchings by John. We had a great day, you know, looking at these original paintings that are in the war museum. I was surprised that they don't put them up more often or change them.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, they will.

HYNDMAN: Yes, I'm sure they will. I mean, there are many, many things we saw that day and I said, “Oh, my God, there's an Augustus John.” And everybody had a second look. Anyway, that's not my business.

INTERVIEWER: Well, thank you again.

End of interview.

TRANSCRIPT ENDS