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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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INTERVIEWEE: Randolph "Ran" Clerihue

INTERVIEWER: Eric Brunt

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Randolph "Ran" Clerihue

Interviewed 27 October 2022

Eric Brunt (00:00):

So, just to get started, what's your full name?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (00:03):

William Randolph Clerihue.

Eric Brunt (00:11):

What name do you normally go by in terms of?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (00:13):

Well, during the war, my nickname was Tim. And how I got that, was the first squadron I joined, you were paraded before the commanding officer, and I was just young and in my late teens. And I looked younger, and he looked at me and he said, "What are they sending me now for a replacement? Tiny Tim?" <laughs> And the Tim stuck. But after the war, I reverted back to Ran. R A N. From Randolph and I got that—the reduction of—Ran from Randolph at UBC [University of British Columbia]. Because I was in the track team and so everybody said, "Oh, he ran. <laughs> That fits."

Eric Brunt (01:28):

It does, I like it. What was your race in the track?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:32):

The mile.

Eric Brunt (01:33):

Nice.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:33):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:34):

My sister was part of the track team at UBC. Yeah. She did the 1500 meter.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:40):

In those days—we're talking about the late 1930s. They had one fellow by the name of Osborne <sp?> who was the coach, and he coached everything. <laughs> He had some assistance but basically it was a quite a quite a small operation in those days. There was only about 2,500 people at UBC at that time. And after the war, I think they got up to about 40,000. Probably got a lot more now.

Eric Brunt (02:09):

I think it's like 70,000 now. It's crazy. Yeah. So where were you born?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (02:14):

Here in Vancouver [British Columbia].

Eric Brunt (02:16):

What date?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (02:18):

June 1st, 1923.

Eric Brunt (02:20):

Incredible. Where in Vancouver were you born?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (02:23):

General hospital. But we had a house at 43rd and—just one of those streets just off the center of Kerrisdale. I forget the name of the street now.

Eric Brunt (02:49):

No worries. That's a nice area. And what did your father do for work?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (02:54):

Well, for work, he was a chartered accountant. Had his own firm.

Eric Brunt (03:01):

And he was a pilot in the First World War?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (03:04):

Yes. Yeah. Flew camels [Sopwith Camel].

Eric Brunt (03:08):

Did he tell you much about his World War One exploits or not too much?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (03:12):

Not much. Not much. No, he didn't talk much about it. No.

Eric Brunt (03:25):

And where did you go to school?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (03:28):

Well, I went to the Kerrisdale School [Kerrisdale Elementary School] at Carnarvon [Carnarvon Street] and 39th. Then I went to Point Grey [Point Grey Secondary School], the one up on Arbutus [Arbutus Street], and then it went to Lord Byng [Lord Byng Secondary School]. And I qualified for a university at Lord Byng. And then I went to one year for university, and then I joined the Air Force.

Eric Brunt (03:55):

Right. I guess during the depression—did you feel the effects of that at all? Or was your family—?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (04:03):

Yes, you could see them. I had a paper route, and I had to go back many times to collect my money. And also, I then became what they call a submanager. And I had to recruit boys to deliver papers and make sure they came in time and delivered to the right addresses and collected their money and that sort of thing. That was interesting, but. My older brother and I were formed a partnership, and he had the paper route that went to the drug stores in those days for the province. And when I finished my paper route, I'd come and join them and pitch in and help them deliver the papers. <laughs>

Eric Brunt (05:05):

Wow. You must have been in high school when the war was declared.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (05:15):

Oh, yeah.

Eric Brunt (05:16):

Do you remember that happening?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (05:17):

Yes. Oh, yeah. Well, it was pretty well preordained, that they were going to have to go to war to suppress the Germany.

Eric Brunt (05:33):

Did you have in your high school many Japanese students at the time or?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (05:37):

Japanese?

Eric Brunt (05:38):

Yeah.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (05:39):

Oh, yeah. I remember—actually, when I went to UBC, in the athletic operation, I was wrestling with the Japanese guy, and then all of a sudden, he disappeared. And that's when they sent them all into the interior.

Eric Brunt (06:06):

Wow. Yeah. Crazy. And so, what year would it have been when you joined up?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (06:15):

What year did I join up?

Eric Brunt (06:17):
Yeah. '42?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (06:20):
1942.

Eric Brunt (06:21):
Wow.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (06:22):
And I just turned 19.

Eric Brunt (06:25):
Why did you decide—?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (06:26):
Actually, I joined up when I was still 18, but I turned 19 within a month or so.

Eric Brunt (06:34):
And why did you decide to join?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (06:39):
Actually, I wanted to join when I turned 18, but my father talked me out of out of it. He thought I should get a little more experience in going to UBC. But I think at that time there were some significant disasters. Britain lost those two battleships down off Singapore and Singapore collapsed. And all the news was bad. And so, I thought, "Well, you know, I guess I should do something to help." And so, I joined. And the year that I was at UBC—all the males who were medically fit had to join the COTC, that's the Canadian Officer Training Corps and were sublieutenants in the Army.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (07:50):
And so, I had to—when I joined the Air Force, I had to give that commission up and go back to the lowest rank in the Air Force. <laughs> And then I wanted to be a pilot, but there was no assurance that I would be able to qualify for a pilot, but I did.

Eric Brunt (08:13):
That's what everyone wanted to be, I think was a pilot. Yeah. And where did you get your basic training?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (08:21):
Well, in the Air Cadets, I learned a lot about basic information that you had to have to be aircrew. And so, when I joined, I went to Edmonton [Alberta], the manning depot, and they sent me over to the university to take my basic training. And then I qualified for a pilot, and they sent me to High River [Alberta], which was actually a base in World War One for training pilots. And at High River, the instructors were still civilians. And so, when I graduated there, I went down to

Claresholm [Alberta] and trained and became a pilot. And it was rather interesting. My wife showed you the picture of getting my wings.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (09:32):

Well, that's the Earl of Athlone who did it—was very unusual. And the reason for that was that in our class we had a royal—I don't know exactly what his connection was, but he was the son of one of the sons of George V, I think. And so, apparently the protocol is that if he's to get his wings, he has to be given to them by a royal. So, he was the governor general. And the Earl of Athlone was a royal. So, I got my wings from a royal. <laugh>

Eric Brunt (10:23):

That's pretty amazing. Wow. Do you remember the first time you got to fly?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (10:28):

Yes.

Eric Brunt (10:29):

What was that like?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (10:30):

Well, it was pretty interesting. It was in a Tiger Moth [de Havilland Tiger Moth]. Which was a fairly elementary aircraft. And my instructor said, "I'm going to do some maneuvers and see how you like that." And so, he did a couple of rolls and a couple of other maneuvers which were pretty interesting, but I took it, and I liked it.

Eric Brunt (11:05):

Yeah. And when you got your wings, was that in Claresholm [Alberta]? You said?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (11:11):

Yes.

Eric Brunt (11:11):

Wow. Cool. So, you got your wings and then what happened after that?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (11:16):

Well, then I was posted, and the head of the instruction at Claresholm had told us that if you worked hard and came first in the class, you would get your wings first and you'd get your posting that you wanted. So anyway, they called me in just before the wings parade and said, "We're a little sorry that you won't get your wings first. You have a royal in your class. He gets them first." <laughs> So I said, "Okay, fine." So, I got mine second. And so that's what happened.

Eric Brunt (12:13):

Did you get to choose where you wanted to go or?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (12:18):

[Inaudible] and I wanted the fighters. And I was posted to overseas to a OTU [Operational Training Units]. And what happened was when I got down to Halifax [Nova Scotia] where the departure was for going overseas. I got called out and said, "Oh, we're going to change that posting. We're going to put you in a squadron on the East Coast because of the submarine problem." Which was very drastic at that time." And we have to have all—as many good pilots as we can. And we like your record, and we want you to go hunt submarines." So that's what happened. But in between, I had to go on a—I think about a month course at Charlottetown [Prince Edward Island]. And it was a navigational course.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (13:27):

And they said, because the pilots have to know the navigation to help out with these long flights that you going to be on. So anyway, that's what happened. And I joined one 117 Squadron [No. 117 Squadron RCAF] at North Sydney in Cape Breton Island [Nova Scotia].

Eric Brunt (13:53):

And that was a very important point, because I know that there was quite a few ships sunk in between Sydney [North Sydney] to Newfoundland.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (14:02):

In the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. And we did a lot of flights in the Gulf. In fact, up there, we had a detachment at Gaspé [Québec], and I served for a couple of months up there looking for submarines in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

Eric Brunt (14:27):

Wow. What was Gaspé like at that time?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (14:30):

Not much. <laughs> It was a pretty rudimentary station. It had an officer's mess, and I suppose it could support, I think, about three or four Catalina flying boats [Consolidated PBV Catalina].

Eric Brunt (14:51):

And when you were on these Catalina flying boats how many people on board a plane?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (14:58):

Well, let's see, there was two pilots, a navigator, a front gunner, two engineers, one aero engines and one aero frames. And another gunner back in the blister. I think it was about eight.

Eric Brunt (15:27):

Wow. Yeah. Big crew. Would you fly with the same crew every time when you were?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (15:34):

Most of the time. Yes. Well, when you went on detachment, you did. But back at the bases sometimes a fellow would be sick or would be given a given a job that he couldn't fly that day. But mostly you flew with the same crew.

Eric Brunt (15:54):

Who was the other pilot that you'd fly with? Do you recall?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (16:00):

Several. I flew a lot with the commanding officer of the squadron. A fellow by the name of Jeffrey Woolfenden <sp?>. And he liked the way I flew. <laughs> And so he let me do most of the flying. But then I had a followed by the Alan Byers <sp?>. Their family came from Montreal [Quebec]. And they were a fairly rich family. And when I went down there with Celanese <sp?>, Allen's older brother was running one of the big law firms. And actually, Allen got killed flying Catalinas later in the war. And I'm not too sure how that happened, but unfortunate. He was a very good guy, very good-looking guy, too. And he was married and had a couple of little kids.

Eric Brunt (17:08):

Awful. Was it from the same squadron he stayed with or?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (17:12):

No, he went to another squadron.

Eric Brunt (17:16):

Gosh. What squadron was it again when you were?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (17:23):

It's 117.

Eric Brunt (17:25):

117. Okay, I got it.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (17:27):

Based at North Sydney [Nova Scotia]. At a place called Kelly Beach.

Eric Brunt (17:31):

Kelly Beach. Okay, I've been to North Sydney, but I don't remember a Kelly Beach.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (17:36):

Yeah, it's on the way the road around to Sydney.

Eric Brunt (17:43):

It's on that way.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (17:44):

It was almost in the town North Sydney.

Eric Brunt (17:50):

Did you ever have to land in Newfoundland for any reason or no?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (18:02):

No. I can't recall landing in Newfoundland. Although I remember doing a flight where—Port aux Basque [Channel-Port aux Basques, Newfoundland and Labrador]. We had to aim at that little establishment and then work out from there, but we never landed there.

Eric Brunt (18:27):

Wow. Interesting. Yeah, I know that—it was before you would have gotten there, but there was that big disaster with the Caribou [SS Caribou], the passenger liner. And I think it was going to Port aux Basque and got torpedoed. And a lot of civilians lost their lives.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (18:46):

Yeah. That was a little bit before my time.

Eric Brunt (18:51):

Yes.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (18:52):

That's probably one of the reasons I was posted down there. <laughs>

Eric Brunt (18:55):

Totally. Was there ever any U-boats spotted by your crew?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (19:05):

We spotted a couple at a distance and then homed in at them, and they submerged very quickly, and we dropped some depth charges, but I don't think there was any results.

Eric Brunt (19:27):

I imagine just your presence being there was probably a good defense.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (19:32):

Yes. That's exactly what [inaudible]. Actually, they put on a very strong air support of convoys and they created a number of squadrons there was one at the Halifax [Nova Scotia] and ours at North Sydney [Nova Scotia]. And then there were a couple of Newfoundland. And they covered all the convoys. And finally, the Germans gave up and decided to focus up where—which was a dead area for air coverage—about halfway between the Canada and England. And that's where most of the action, eventually, happened later.

Eric Brunt (20:28):

Did your plane ever accompany a convoy?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (20:34):

Oh, yeah. Yeah. In my album I got several pictures of convoys.

Eric Brunt (20:41):

Wow. Interesting. It must have been pretty impressive to see all those ships in the ocean.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (20:48):

And some days, you know, the North Atlantic can be pretty rough. And some of those corvettes were bobbing up and down. For the bigger ships, it didn't make too much difference. But the escorts were having a tough ride.

Eric Brunt (21:05):

You probably looked down and were happy you weren't in the Navy.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (21:08):

That's right.

Eric Brunt (21:10):

You should have showed your daughter those photos. You might have convinced her otherwise.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (21:15):

Also, energy—of all the experience I had through the whole war, I never had an engine failure. And that tells us something about how good the training was for the ground crew that the Air Force had accomplished. And because, you know, there was a lot of moving parts. And they trained these aero engine ground crew very, very well.

Eric Brunt (21:47):

Were there women on the station in North Sydney, like WDs [Women's Division]?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (21:56):

Not in the flying end of it, but in the catering end. And in the—I think there were a couple in the office as well.

Eric Brunt (22:09):

Wow. And what was North Sydney like? Did you enjoy it?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (22:13):

Well, it was an interesting place. It wasn't very big. And we used to have parties in the officer's mess, and we invite some of the local women and [...] But it was basically a coal mining town, and I guess mainly Scottish as well.

Eric Brunt (22:41):

When you go there—because I went there, I guess I went there three years ago. And you still feel the effects of the mine. Like you—there's still a huge area where the mine used to be. It's shut down now, but you can tell it was a big mining town. For sure. Yeah. Did you ever get to go down into Halifax [Nova Scotia]?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (23:01):

Occasionally my commanding officer had to go down for a meeting and I'd fly him down, and so I'd stay overnight in the Halifax. And it was it was basically a naval town and a lot of activity on the waterfront.

Eric Brunt (23:25):

Was there any times where you couldn't find your way back to the base and had to land elsewhere?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (23:39):

No, I think we made it home. Yeah. No, I made it home on all my missions.

Eric Brunt (23:53):

Nice. That's good. Were there ever any bad storms you had to fly through?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (24:01):

Yes. Yeah. Well, in the wintertime, you picked up a lot of ice, and that was a problem. And you had to be to be careful, you know, if you start picking up ice, you had to turn around and get out of that area. Another way to answer your question—in England when I was doing—the last squadron I was on, I asked somebody, "Well, you know, if there were a storm, how do you how do you find your way back to England?" Oh, he said, "That's easy. You just find the biggest, blackest cloud and under there's England." <laughs>

Eric Brunt (24:54):

That's funny. So, after 117 Squadron, you were sent elsewhere?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (25:02):

Well, when we drove the submarines pretty well off the East coast, the squadron was disbanded. And my CO [commanding officer] was posted out to 413 [413 Squadron] and so on. And so, he said to me, "You're coming with me." So, we went to England and did a course at Enniskillen in Ireland [Northern Ireland] and then flew a Catalina [Consolidated PB Y Catalina] out to India.

Eric Brunt (25:49):

Now that's how you got to India?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (25:52):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (25:52):

Wow.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (25:53):

Yeah. And he went down to Gibraltar and then he went to, a little place on the north coast of Africa called Budge <sp?>. And then he went on to Cairo [Egypt], and then from Cairo he went to Albana <sp?>, which was Baghdad [Iraq] then down to—I forget the name of the town now—not Saudi Arabia, but there is a Canadian naval attachment at this town in the Gulf. And it's there. And then we went to Hyderabad [India] and then down to Ceylon. Well, actually, when at Hyderabad, I came down with malaria and I spent a month in the hospital there. And so, when I got out of the hospital, they put me on a commercial airline and flew me down and so on.

Eric Brunt (27:10):

Gosh, that's bad timing to just get to arrive there and then get malaria right away.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (27:15):
Yeah.

Eric Brunt (27:16):
How long were you sick for?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (27:19):
About a month.

Eric Brunt (27:23):
Oh. That's bad. And did your whole crew come with you and the CO [commanding officer] or just?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (27:33):
Yeah. He picked what he thought was the best navigator and the best air gunner and the best [...] And when they got there, he was flown down to Ceylon, but the crew had to take the train. And it was quite a long trip and with layovers and that sort of thing. So actually, when I came down, they hadn't arrived. Only about a week before. <laughs> It took them about three weeks to get down.

Eric Brunt (28:15):
Wow. So, you didn't miss very much by—it's interesting, you were in Ceylon. So, what squadron would that have been in Ceylon?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (28:30):
413 [413 Squadron].

Eric Brunt (28:30):
413. And you were still flying Catalinas?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (28:33):
Yeah. Actually, we were flying Catalinas that were made in Vancouver.

Eric Brunt (28:41):
Really?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (28:41):
Yes.

Eric Brunt (28:41):
Oh my gosh.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (28:42):
Yeah. And Boeing set up a plant at Sea Island to make the Catalinas. And my girlfriend, who I married after the war, was an inspector, and she one of the letters she wrote me, gave me her

inspection number and told me where in the aircraft she was inspecting. And I found her numbers.

Eric Brunt (29:22):

What was her name?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (29:24):

Her name was Gloria Stickney <sp?> at that time. And she became Clerihue. <laughs>

Eric Brunt (29:30):

Yeah. I met another gentleman who was an inspector. He lives in West Vancouver, here. Yeah, and he was an inspector for the Boeing as well for Catalinas. What was Ceylon like?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (29:50):

We had a lake that we had—it was only about a quarter of a mile inland. Well, Ceylon was—you wouldn't know there was a war on, unless you were at the station. And we did a lot of work there. We used to go up to Trincomalee [Sri Lanka], which is halfway up on the east coast and do for flights. They sent me on a survival course, and I became the survival officer of that area. And we also had a base down at Addu Atoll [Maldives], which is 400 miles south of Ceylon. And we also had a base at Diego Garcia, which is, I don't know, 6 or 700 miles south of Ceylon. And Diego Garcia today is a big US [United States] naval base.

Eric Brunt (31:08):

Wow. What is a survival officer?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (31:13):

Well, they teach you what you should do if you get—have to bail out in the jungle or bail out in the sea—how to survive. And, you know, there's a lot of tricks to that. So, I had to give classes. There were three squadrons based at this. Another Catalina, a British squadron. And a Sunderland [Short Sunderland] flying boat squadron. Another British squadron.

Eric Brunt (31:56):

Interesting. What were some of your operations?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (32:03):

Well. Mainly Anti-Submarine, observation, trying to find out where the Japanese were doing and particularly from Diego Garcia and Addu Atoll we did long trips off the coast by Sumatra [Indonesia]. We didn't land or anything like that, but we were just trying to find out what the Japanese might be doing. And I did several trips, had to go up to Trincomalee [Sri Lanka]. There was a RF <sp?> base—I think China Bay—and flew out of there to try and find a aircraft that had gone down on the Indian Ocean. And the Americans had some B-29s [Boeing B-29 Superfortress] operating. They were doing bombing raids on the oil fields in Sumatra and that sort of thing.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (33:33):

And they got beaten up—some of them went down on the way back, and we had to go out and find them. If the ocean was very, very calm. We could land and pick them up. But most of them, you had to drop a package of—it opened up and became a little boat.

Eric Brunt (34:07):

Was there any times where you actually landed and picked up survivors?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (34:11):

No, on that, I never landed on the on the ocean.

Eric Brunt (34:20):

But I guess it was possible if there was—?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (34:23):

Yes. A couple—one other guy did and picked some up.

Eric Brunt (34:29):

Did you ever find any survivors just from the air?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (34:33):

Oh, yeah. I think every time we went out, we found them. We had a device called Walter <sp?>. It was a transponder. And our radar—if they had Walter and survived their crash, it would kick in exactly where they were. And you could pick that up within probably 100 miles. And so, if you can get in that area, you could find them. One night I had to go—I kept getting these Walter—and it took me about six or seven trips over the area until I found them. There was something, I guess, atmospheric, that was interfering with the system.

Eric Brunt (35:37):

Were they always still alive, or were sometimes they'd already passed away?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (35:41):

No, they were alive.

Eric Brunt (35:44):

They must have been pretty happy to see—.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (35:46):

Oh, yeah. Yeah, they were happy <chuckles> down there. Because now they knew they were going to get rescued. And we would—there'd be destroyers in that area, and we would tell headquarters where they were, and they would tell the destroyer what to do.

Eric Brunt (36:09):

Wow. That must have felt like pretty good, because you would have been saving these people's lives.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (36:15):

Oh, yeah.

Eric Brunt (36:18):

A pretty good way to have do operations is do that.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (36:22):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (36:24):

Would you ever get to meet those people that were rescued or not typically?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (36:29):

They would probably be on the on the destroyer for—I don't know how long—depending on the shape of their—if they had medical problems, they would probably go straight into Malaya <sp?> and go to the hospital.

Eric Brunt (36:49):

I interviewed one guy from Vancouver Island [British Columbia], and he was on one of those lifeboats, those life rafts, for ten days. Close to Scandinavia. And the Germans found him. So, he was rescued but had to be a prisoner afterwards.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (37:10):

Yeah. Was he in the Air Force or the Navy?

Eric Brunt (37:14):

Air Force. Yeah, he was a pilot as well. And did you ever see any Japanese U-boats?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (37:27):

There were Japanese and German U-boats in that area, and I saw one in a distance trying to get him, but he went down, and I think it was the Japanese. But one of the guys actually did attack a German submarine in that area, and probably just—probably sunk it.

Eric Brunt (38:00):

Yeah. And you were telling me a bit earlier, but was there somebody from your squadron that saw that?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (38:06):

Yes.

Eric Brunt (38:07):

Can you tell me that again?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (38:08):

Yes. It's a fairly well-known guy—you could, if you asked a question—I think of anyone in the Air Force or something. He was called the Saviour of Ceylon [Leonard Birchall] and he was a

squadron leader, and I think he ended up as an air commodore. And he has a fairly common name, and it just escapes me for the moment.

Eric Brunt (38:40):

No worries. And what did he do? How? Why was he the Saviour of Ceylon?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (38:43):

Well, he was one of our flight commanders. And he identified or picked us up on his radar and he was in low cloud, and he went down to try and identify the exact ships that were involved—which he shouldn't have done. <laughs> And they had picked him up in the clouds on their radar. So, when he emerged, there were Japanese fighters in there and they got him. But if he had stayed up there and the result would have been the same, the headquarters would have been alerted that they were there. And unfortunately, he was trying to do too good of a job.

Eric Brunt (39:48):

And did he survive?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (39:50):

He survived. Yeah. But he lost a couple of guys on his crew.

Eric Brunt (39:55):

He became a prisoner of war.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (39:57):

Yeah. And they took him to Japan.

Eric Brunt (40:02):

Crazy. I interviewed a few men who had been in Hong Kong when Hong Kong fell. And they became prisoners of war in Japan. And they said—.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (40:12):

It was bad.

Eric Brunt (40:12):

Oh, it was awful. They had a really tough time.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (40:16):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (40:17):

And had scars and wounds that lasted them their whole lives as a result.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (40:23):

Well, they overworked them, they underfed them. And they brutalized them.

Eric Brunt (40:29):

Awful. When you were in Ceylon, did you get any leave?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (40:38):

Yeah. I went up to a rest place in the interior, in the mountains, which was a fairly well-known place. And I met an English, naval WREN [Women's Royal Naval Service]. And had a good time and a pretty interesting lady. Nothing became of it.

Eric Brunt (41:12):

That's interesting that she was all the way over there.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (41:15):

Well, she was based at Trincomalee [Sri Lanka]. It was a big, big, big base. They had a couple of aircraft carriers and several battleships and that sort of thing. But the problem was—when this squadron later identified the Japanese fleet. The navy sent their fleet south out of the way because they knew that they could not contest this fleet. And in fact, that fleet went back and was involved with the Americans at Midway [Battle of Midway] and was virtually destroyed by the Americans. But that's what would have happened to the British fleet, because they weren't nearly as strong as the Japanese fleet.

Eric Brunt (42:13):

And so, this WREN was kind of involved with that base?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (42:20):

Yeah. They bombed Trincomalee [Sri Lanka] and they bombed our base and several places. And then disappeared back—and I guess they had ships with troops on them and I think they had about 20 or 30,000 troops. They were wanting to occupy Ceylon and [...] But I guess when they put up the opposition to there, they disappeared. But it may have been that they were recalled because of the Americans were making inroads on their transportation lines.

Eric Brunt (43:18):

Were you there when the base was bombed?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (43:21):

No, I was just after that.

Eric Brunt (43:23):

Lucky.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (43:25):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (43:26):

Did your squadron lose any planes or?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (43:33):

Yes. We don't know quite why. They just didn't come back.

Eric Brunt (43:44):

One plane just never came back.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (43:46):

Well, maybe they attacked a submarine and got shot down or something. I don't know what happened.

Eric Brunt (43:55):

Did you ever have to—?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (43:56):

Or it could have been weather, too. The weather was bad down there in the on the monsoon season. You get thunderstorms, and, boy, they were very, very bad. And I think maybe that was probably the reasoning.

Eric Brunt (44:16):

I know the guys in Burma had a tough time because there was a lot of mountains. And when a monsoon would come, you wouldn't really be able to see some of the area you were flying through.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (44:26):

Well, when the monsoon season, we used to fly with the window open and put your hand out again. And any moisture you were getting, you turned around and went five or 10 miles and then try it again. See if we're getting around. It was very dangerous.

Eric Brunt (44:48):

Crazy. How many hours would you be out on a op?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (44:53):

Well, I think the normal flight would be eight to 10 hours. And I think I did one of 17 hours. The Catalina was a capable of going 24 hours. But you'd have to fill it up with gas. Fully filled up. We normally carried about 12 hours. We always tried to give ourselves about 20 per cent leeway.

Eric Brunt (45:27):

Wow. 17 hours is a lot—it's a long time.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (45:33):

Yeah. In the same seat.

Eric Brunt (45:36):

Oh. Could you go to use the bathroom?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (45:38):

Oh, yeah. Well, yeah, we had a sort of a rudimentary thing. <laughs>

Eric Brunt (45:46):

Oh my gosh.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (45:47):

And one of the engineers was the cook and had to cook up stuff.

Eric Brunt (45:55):

Wow. Was it cold up there or not really?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (45:59):

No, it wasn't cold because we didn't go that high. We normally flew at around 1000 feet.

Eric Brunt (46:12):

Because I know some of the guys in England complained of the cold when they were flying.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (46:18):

Well, the Bomber Command, of course, they were up about 20,000 and.

Eric Brunt (46:23):

They were a lot higher, eh. [cross-talk]

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (46:24):

And it would be very cold up there.

Eric Brunt (46:29):

Yeah.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (46:30):

I don't think we went much over 1500 feet, somewhere around there.

Eric Brunt (46:38):

Okay. Nice. Yeah. That's good. Was it hard to stay awake while you were?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (46:45):

No, you were sort of charged up.

Eric Brunt (46:49):

Wow. Did you get to meet the civilians of Ceylon?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (47:04):

Well, I think most of the civilians had met were jewellers. And there were a lot of very good, cheap, precious stones. And, and there were a lot of jewellers. I think the guys used to buy a lot of the stuff for their girlfriends and send it home and that sort of thing.

Eric Brunt (47:44):

Wow. Did you get letters?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (47:47):

Oh, yeah. I got letters from my parents and a couple of girlfriends in Vancouver.

Eric Brunt (47:56):

Nice. How long were you in Ceylon for?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (48:00):

About a year.

Eric Brunt (48:01):

Wow. Long time. Were you homesick?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (48:08):

No. I just want to get on with the war. <laughs> Well, same thing happened, eventually in 1944. They figured that we'd driven all the submarines out of the area, and they didn't need—and the Japanese were in retreat at that point. So, we didn't have to deflate to find out what they're trying to do. So, the squadron was disbanded, and I was posted back to England. And so, they said to me, "Well, you know, you've had a lot of experience here, maybe we should send you back to Canada and be an instructor." I said, "Hell, no, I came over here to win the war. I want you to give me a posting on another squadron." And then that's when I got the 407 [407 Squadron]. So that was based up at Chiveno [England], but near Barnstaple [England] in North Devon [England]. And it was we were flying Wellingtons [Vickers Wellington].

Eric Brunt (49:24):

How many men on a Wellington?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (49:29):

I think about six.

Eric Brunt (49:35):

And what were your operations then?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (49:38):

Well, about the same. It was any submarine and also patrols to find out what the Germans might be doing in certain areas. And a lot of the patrols were at night with Wellingtons [inaudible] to a 10 million candlepower. And that was also dangerous, too, because you were down about 200 feet or something like that. And that light comes on and it could be quite disoriented if you're not trained to handle it. And then if you caught anything it and try and destroy it, you'd have to be maneuvering down near the water. And it wasn't a piece of cake, as they say. So that was that was interesting work. And we did some daylight work as well. And again, I was patrolling off the south coast of England and I saw what I thought would be a submarine.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (51:03):

And I went down after it and it disappeared. <laughs> And then when the war finished, they brought all the submarines in. And there were about 20 or 25 of them all stacked up. And they

were there. <laughs> We were finding them. But to get at right at them was a little more difficult. The Germans at one point decided to stay up and fight it out with, with the airplanes. And there was a fellow Canadian flying out of Iceland that got shot down, and he got the Victoria Cross. He spent more time in the water—they didn't have enough of dinghies to accommodate the whole crew. So, he spent a fair amount of time in the water and finally died. And so, he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Eric Brunt (52:18):

Because he did that to save his man.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (52:24):

Being in the water in the North Atlantic it was different from being in the water in Ceylon. I was always concerned when on the first and last squadron that I'd have an engine failure or something or be shot down and trying to survive in that water was tough. But fortunately, it never happened.

Eric Brunt (53:03):

Was Wellington a two engine?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (53:07):

Yes. It was the number one bomber in the beginning of the war. It was a good aircraft.

Eric Brunt (53:18):

Was it?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (53:18):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (53:19):

What did you prefer, the Wellington or the Catalina?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (53:23):

Well, I think they were both good for the job that they were at. I think the Catalina—it's interesting, it was developed by the Americans, I think, in around 1935. And it was a very, very good long-range submarine, aircraft. And the Wellington was a very good aircraft for operating on the around the coast of England and doing the late Wellington work at night. Most of that work was done down in the Bay of Biscay. They would fly down and it would take three or four hours to get down there, and then you'd be down there for two or three hours and then come back and it was about a ten-hour trip.

Eric Brunt (54:20):

So, you like them about the same?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (54:22):

Yeah. I just liked to fly.

Eric Brunt (54:25):

You just like to fly. Yeah. You must have done a lot of trips, I imagine.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (54:29):

Yeah, quite a few.

Eric Brunt (54:33):

And do you remember when you arrived onto 407 Squadron? Like what month that might have been or hard to say?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (54:42):

Oh, it was—I think it was January in 1945.

Eric Brunt (54:50):

So, you were there from January until the war ended?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (54:52):

Yeah. The CO [commanding officer] was named Wilson <sp?>, and he came from Vancouver [British Columbia] area, too, and he was a member of this Air Force Officers Association. But he's dead now. I got a call from the CO of 407 in Comox [British Columbia]. And we corresponded. And so, he said, "Anytime you're in the area, come and see us. We'll give you a trip."

Eric Brunt (55:35):

Wow. That'd be cool. I went through my list of veterans I've interviewed, and there's nobody else from 407 Squadron. You're the only one I've met. Yeah, so maybe you're the last one from—.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (55:49):

Probably.

Eric Brunt (55:50):

407.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (55:51):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (55:53):

At least the last pilot, maybe?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (55:55):

Well, maybe the last one of all three squadrons that I was on.

Eric Brunt (56:01):

Crazy. So, do you remember when the war ended?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (56:06):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (56:08):

Was there a party?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (56:09):

Oh, yeah. <chuckles> I think in a way it was a bit of a relief because, when it ended, one of the jobs I was given to take the aircraft and fly them to Doncaster [England], where there was a depot for looking after them. And they asked me if I'd volunteer for the Japanese War. And I said, "Well, look, I've done a fair amount of work up to this point, and I don't think that Japanese war is going to last very long. In fact, I don't think it will last long enough for you to train me for what you want me to do." "Oh no, we're going to be big casualties and going to take a year and a half." I said, "Look at the facts. There's Japan. Russia is against them. The United States is against them. The British Empire is against them. There's no way they're going to survive."

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (57:34):

"And they may try and hang on for a while, but they're just going to be overwhelmed." And so, I had Wilson <sp?> who's interviewed me for this said, "Okay, Ran, I'll bet you \$100, that the war will go on for at least six months." I said, "Okay, I'll take that bet." I landed back in Vancouver on VJ Day [Victory over Japan Day]. <laughs> He sent me a cheque for \$100. <laughs> Well, you know, but most of the guys did volunteer— because I guess a lot of them didn't know what they wanted to do. But I had a very specific idea I wanted to get—once the European war was over in May, I wanted to get back to Vancouver [British Columbia] and go back to UBC [University of British Columbia] in fall session. And that's exactly what happened."

Eric Brunt (58:45):

Were you able to resume your schooling or did you have to take over?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (58:49):

Yeah. And in fact, the last two years I had to go. I did that by going the fall, the spring, the summer and the fall. And so, I did it in about 18 months. and then then I went with KPMG.

Eric Brunt (59:10):

Did you get your education paid for by the?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (59:12):

Yes. They paid all the UBC fees. And also, I think they gave me 60 or \$70 a month. And then when I went KPMG, they also carried that on for at least two years, I think two or three, maybe three years. And so, it was a very good program for veterans.

Eric Brunt (59:44):

Yeah. Very good. I think that a lot of Canadians got educated as a result, because that was an option for them now to go to university and have it be paid for. You were already in university, but I know a lot of people wouldn't have gone otherwise, right? And a lot of women got to go as well, that would be in the services, and they got their education paid for, too.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:00:07):

Well, you know, now the Veterans Affairs is giving me a hearing aid. And also, they give me a small pension and which I never thought I'd get or need. <laughs> But these hearing aids, they're not perfect. I have—particularly if there's a crowd, I have a hard time hearing who I'm talking to.

Eric Brunt (01:00:47):

And you joined the Aircrew Association of Vancouver?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:00:52):

Yes. And I joined the RCAF Association [Royal Canadian Air Force Association]. They have a very good paper, it comes out every month, I think, about Air Force stuff about the war and since the war. And the Burma Star [Burma Star Association] send a quarterly magazine.

Eric Brunt (01:01:21):

They still do?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:01:21):

Yes.

Eric Brunt (01:01:22):

Oh, I didn't know. Interesting. Yeah. Like I say, I don't meet very many Burma Star veterans. There are very few left—in Canada at least. Maybe some more in England.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:01:39):

Well, there was a Burma Star Association here. But it's been disbanded. And they had several big international meetings at UBC [University of British Columbia], they did it in the summertime. So, all the people from England and other than Vancouver stayed at the residence at UBC. Particularly the people from England, would really enjoy to come out here to Vancouver [British Columbia].

Eric Brunt (01:02:19):

Yeah. Interesting trip for them. Yeah. I interviewed another gentleman from the Burma Star who lived in West Vancouver [British Columbia] years ago. His name was Barney Nunns <sp?>.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:02:32):

I know him.

Eric Brunt (01:02:33):

Do you know him?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:02:33):

Oh, yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:02:34):

Yeah. He was one of my first interviews.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:02:36):
He was on for 435—transportation?

Eric Brunt (01:02:40):
Yeah.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:02:40):
Yeah. He's dead now.

Eric Brunt (01:02:42):
He is. I think he died in 2019.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:02:46):
Yeah. We used to see a lot of him.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:02:48):
Oh, good. He was one of my very first interviews. One of my first five, I think. While I was still at UBC. And now I've done 450. He was at the very beginning. He was a nice guy. Yeah, I liked him a lot.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:03:02):
He had a place on Bowen Island [British Columbia] as well.

Eric Brunt (01:03:04):
Okay. Yeah. I interviewed him at his apartment close to here. Just on the—those towers, that way.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:03:10):
Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:03:11):
Small world. Would you attend the November 11th ceremonies?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:03:28):
Yeah. The Air Force officers had what they called the Dawn Patrol <sp?>, which was started by World War One Air Force veterans. And Don McLaren <sp?> was a member there. The [inaudible] Nanaimo [British Columbia] who was Canada's third ace. And the airports that called after him—were founding members of that association. And so, they've been having Dawn Patrols <sp?>, since about 1935, '36. Somewhere around there.

Eric Brunt (01:04:16):
And that's where you go?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:04:17):
Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:04:18):
Where do they have it?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:04:19):
This year they're holding it at the Masonic Hall [Vancouver Masonic Centre] on Seventh Avenue, there at Granville [Granville Street].

Eric Brunt (01:04:29):
And you'll go?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:04:30):
Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:04:31):
Nice. There must not be very many World War Two veterans that go.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:04:35):
No.

Eric Brunt (01:04:36):
And very few in as good a shape as you, I bet.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:04:39):
Well, so far, so good. I play golf three times a week. And I take personal training two times a week. And I do exercises every morning. And we live fairly—not austere, but here. But we don't overdo it—watch our food. We don't overdrink or anything like that. I usually have a glass of wine at dinner time, but other than that. So, it's worked out fine.

Eric Brunt (01:05:20):
I was going to ask, what's your secret? And you've given me a few tips. I think exercise is a big one.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:05:27):
Exercise and also controlling your calorie input and your alcohol. And if you look after those, your system will probably respond pretty well.

Eric Brunt (01:05:44):
Yeah. Did you ever keep in touch with anybody from your crew after the war?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:05:51):
Yeah. This fellow was my first CO [commanding officer] in the squadron when I was running the Air Cadets. He was the chairman of a sponsored committee of Air Cadet in London, Ontario. And he asked me to come down and inspect his squadron. So, I did. And he said, "Well, we're going to have dinner at the racetrack, we want to watch that Kentucky Derby," I think it was. And there was a filly running. So, we both bet on the filly and won. <laughs> So he died. Also, I

kept in touch with the navigator. And also, the number one, radio operator. And they were all in Ontario, but they're all dead now.

Eric Brunt (01:07:07):
You're the last one.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:07:10):
Maybe. It would be interesting—also in BC [British Columbia], the statistics we're talking about, I think there was about 7000 in British Columbia still here. But there may be less than that now. And there's also this thing on my computer said there was—one fellow was 112, and he had joined the Air Force at age 31. And it didn't say whether he was an aircrew or not. But it's interesting.

Eric Brunt (01:07:54):
I think I interviewed him.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:07:56):
Did you?

Eric Brunt (01:07:56):
If his name was Reuben Sinclair <sp?>. I think he did. Yeah. He lives in lives in Richmond [British Columbia] and he was ground crew and ground crew. Maybe it's the same guy, but he turns 111 this year. He lives in Richmond. He's a Jewish gentleman. And he worked in airports across Canada as ground crew.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:08:27):
Was he in good shape?

Eric Brunt (01:08:30):
He was okay. Yeah, he was pretty good. Not as good as you, but [...] He was. Yeah. Very nice man. I think he's the oldest living veteran in Canada. And he just lives in Richmond [British Columbia].

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:08:47):
Yeah. Well. It's interesting. During my career, when I was in New York [New York City, United States] running the Celanese chemical company <sp?>, we had a big joint venture with ICI <sp?> in the fibers business. And I had to go to London [England] once a month. I took the Concorde. And the guy who was the head of the Concorde division of British Airways, had flown with me at one point. And, so anyway, he retired and he's living in White Rock [British Columbia], and his name was, Duff, Mike Duffy <sp?>. And so, every time I got on the Concorde, they'd invite me up in the jump seat to watch the landing. And then when they got to Heathrow [Heathrow Airport], they'd invite me up and watch the takeoff or the landing or whatever. <chuckles> Very interesting.

Eric Brunt (01:09:59):
Did you ever fly after the war?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:10:02):

Yes. When the Korean War came along, they had a program with the chipmunk aircraft to show ex pilots how to become instructors. And so, I flew—the Korean War was, I think, 1950s or then—it started about then. So, I was on that until 1955. And that's the year I went to Montreal [Quebec]. So, I gave it up. But it was interesting I got a pilot's license to instruct and also instrument reading to instruct instrument reading. And so, it was very good.

Eric Brunt (01:11:09):

You became involved with the Air Cadets as well?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:11:15):

Yeah, yeah. Well, I used to run the fund for donations. And because I was running big companies in the east, I'd always get a letter from somebody, one of the guys of another company, how about the cancer association? So, I'd say fine, but I'm raising money for the Air Cadets, so I get money for the Air Cadets. And so, I did that. And then when my when my career ended, when I retired, they asked me if I'd become the president. So, I worked on that, and that's what happened there.

Eric Brunt (01:12:09):

And you were telling me earlier—was it your father or your uncle helped found?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:12:13):

My uncle was also national president of the Air Cadets in, I think, around the '50s. My father never wanted to do that. He had his own accounting practice here, so he didn't want to give up the time.

Eric Brunt (01:12:36):

But he helped start the Air Cadets here in Vancouver [British Columbia] or?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:12:41):

Before I went to Montreal [Quebec], I was chairman of the No.1 Wing of Air Cadets [No. 1 Wing Royal Canadian Air Cadets]. And we had three boy squadrons and one girl squadron. And we paraded at the old number three RD <sp?> Right down there in Jericho [Jericho Beach, Vancouver, British Columbia]. And I raised money to make sure that was run properly. And I turned it over to a guy who was very good at it too. So then when I went to Montreal [Quebec], they asked me to go on to the Provincial Committee of the Air Cadets [Quebec Provincial Committee of the Air Cadet League of Canada] in Montreal [Quebec]. So I was associated with that even when I went down to New York.

Eric Brunt (01:13:36):

Interesting. Well, I think that's all my questions. You have a great memory.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:13:43):

Yeah. Pretty good. Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:13:45):

It's very interesting. I haven't met many people that were in Ceylon during the war—and especially all those different squadrons.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:13:53):

Well, I have a good memory, but sometimes when I'm talking, I'm looking for a word I can't recall. Yeah, maybe I've always had that problem.

Eric Brunt (01:14:05):

I think I have that problem myself. When this is finished, I'm going to send you, and I'm going to send your daughter Barbara <sp?>, a copy. And then the other copy is going to be in the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa [Ontario] to try and keep the stories alive and keep educating the next generation.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:14:28):

Well, I'm glad you're living in Montreal [Quebec], you appreciate these paintings. [cross-talk]

Eric Brunt (01:14:33):

Yeah. I walked in and I thought, oh, my gosh, because your daughter had told me that you that you lived in Montreal for quite a time. It's a beautiful city.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:14:43):

Well, yeah, he said that "I want to paint the city before they rip it all out apart." And that's why he concentrated on the city. But that painting there is just north of Montreal and this is Sherbrooke Street East [Montreal].

Eric Brunt (01:15:14):

Oh, yeah.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:15:16):

And that's the Bowery in New York [New York City, United States]. That's the old town.

Eric Brunt (01:15:24):

Yeah, that's old town in Montreal.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:15:27):

That's the Nelson's monument. I was the biggest collector of this artist. And when we moved here three years ago, we had a house on Second Avenue over by the yacht club, and it was the same size as this, but I couldn't put all the paintings in. They didn't have big windows like this. And so, I sold 20 of his paintings to the Klinkhoff Gallery [Alan Klinkhoff Gallery] in Montreal. It's down on Sherbrooke Street [Montreal] there.

Eric Brunt (01:16:11):

Wow. Is he still alive? This painter?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:16:14):

He's still alive. But he's not painting. He lost his wife three or four years ago. And he has three sons, and they look after him. He still lives in the same house in the town of Mount Royal [Quebec].

Eric Brunt (01:16:30):

Oh yeah, you told me he's from there.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:16:33):

He lives on Geneva Crescent.

Eric Brunt (01:16:35):

Interesting. I live on Marianne. Marianne East <sp?>. It's a nice area. I'm pretty close to Sherbrooke [Sherbrooke Street].

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:16:49):

This is the old town—the working district, just west of the old town.

Eric Brunt (01:17:04):

Wow.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:17:06):

So, my first wife, she enjoyed the paintings too. Unfortunately, she died, she had an aneurysm in her aorta artery.

Eric Brunt (01:17:22):

Did she like Montreal?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:17:24):

She just lived a block from me in Vancouver. But she liked Montreal then. And she wasn't so happy about New York, but [...]

Eric Brunt (01:17:37):

Too busy for her? Well, you got to live in three very interesting and very different cities Vancouver [British Columbia, Montreal [Quebec], and New York [New York City, United States].

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:17:49):

Actually, I lived about 14 months in Detroit [United States]. It was an interesting experience.

Eric Brunt (01:17:55):

I bet.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:17:56):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:17:57):

I'm driving back now across the country. I'm driving back to Montreal and I'm going to be going through Detroit. I want to skip Northern Ontario because it's so dull up there.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:18:08):

Yeah, well, we had a house in Bloomfield Village <sp?>.

Eric Brunt (01:18:11):

Okay, I'll look it up.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:18:11):

Yeah, it's in Birmingham [United States]. Which is just north of Detroit [United States]. My wife liked Detroit. [inaudible]. She liked it because she could get all the Canadian program.

Eric Brunt (01:18:25):

Oh. From Windsor [Ontario].

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:18:28):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:18:29):

Yeah. I'm going all the way to Winnipeg. And then from Winnipeg, I'm going to drive through the States, through Chicago, Detroit, and then get out through Windsor.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:18:39):

Well, we drove out from Detroit to here and back.

Eric Brunt (01:18:43):

Nice.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:18:43):

Yeah, it's a nice drive.

Eric Brunt (01:18:45):

Yeah, it will be November when I do it, but it will still be—at least, I don't think there'll be too much snow, hopefully. I'm doing interviews all the way across and then I end. I start my interviews in January and my last stop is Halifax. Most mostly Navy guys out there. But I'll do a few of those.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:19:10):

Well, it's interesting that you're doing this work because again, I would think in the next couple of years there won't be many.

Eric Brunt (01:19:20):

No.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:19:21):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:19:22):

And I think right now the average age is 97. And that's probably a lot of those people never saw active service. They were maybe trained and then it was too late. The oldest one, like I say, he's turning 111. That's pretty incredible. And I did a 96-year-old a few weeks ago who lied about his age and got in that way. But I interview anybody who was a veteran—the only requirement is they were in World War Two. Because there's lots of veterans that were in Korea or after the war. But just World War Two. And when it's going to be finished, it's going to be on the Canadian War Museum's website.

Eric Brunt (01:20:04):

And they're going to have a big database of all the interviews, and they'll be you and Barney Nuns <sp?> and a few other Burma Star guys. Yeah, I interviewed a Burma Star guy who wrote a book or two. I wonder if you knew him. His name was Robert Farquharson <sp?> I forget how to pronounce his name, but it was a strange last name. It was like Farquharson. Yeah, maybe you knew him, but maybe not. But when it's released, you'll be able to see all the different Burma veterans, which could be interesting.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:20:39):

Did you interview fellows in Bomber Command?

Eric Brunt (01:20:46):

Yes. Yeah. Those are interesting, too.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:20:50):

What was their feeling about Bomber Command?

Eric Brunt (01:20:54):

They felt that it was something that had to be done. And I think some of them, like, for example, the guy who was shot down and was in the boat for ten days. He was a pilot, and he lives outside of Duncan [British Columbia] on Vancouver Island. And he said that whole experience of being in the boat doesn't bother him. But what bothers him is having to bomb those cities when he knew that they'd been bombed like two days before, three days before. And he said it wasn't right that they kept going. And that he still wakes up at night because of that, but he says that he had no control, like he couldn't—you can't say no, right.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:21:39):

That's right.

Eric Brunt (01:21:40):

So, a lot of the Bomber Command guys say similar things that they felt they felt bad because they had to keep going. But they had no control over the situation.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:21:51):

Well, Bomber Command coming under—has been under a fair amount of criticism. But, you know, that was the only way that Britain could fight Germany was through the air.

Eric Brunt (01:22:09):

Yes.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:22:10):

They didn't have an army they could put into Europe. And Germany didn't have a navy. They could fight. And so, the only two things that they could do was fight the submarines and Bomber Command. So, it was an interesting experience.

Eric Brunt (01:22:38):

And it was like we say, like it was so dangerous. But they lived—it's interesting to hear their stories compared to the army, because the army, it's like you're there, you're sleeping in a slit trench, you're on the ground. But with the Air Force, you fly, and you come back and you get to sleep in a nice bed in England. But that job that you're doing is so dangerous that so many guys don't make it back.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:23:01):

That's right.

Eric Brunt (01:23:02):

But yeah, I think a lot of people don't really understand that when [...]

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:23:12):

There was another guy—in 407 [407 Squadron]. We lost a guy very near the end of the war. And he was coming back from one of these operations at night. And I think he was within 20 or 30 miles of our base, and the aircraft just boom, into the water. And it must have been a mechanical problem somewhere. They must have been putting the wheels down or the flaps or something—something happened. But it was a very interesting situation. I don't know if they ever found out what happened.

Eric Brunt (01:23:58):

Gosh. Did your squadron ever have those women pilots, those female pilots deliver the planes? Those ferry pilots?

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:24:14):

Yeah. 407 [407 Squadron]. They flew in Wellingtons [Vickers Wellington]. And of course, down in Ceylon, they there were no women. And in Canada, there weren't any women either.

Eric Brunt (01:24:31):

No. Just in 407 Squadron. Yeah. Yeah. Flying in the Wellingtons.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:24:37):

Yeah, they were very efficient. They just fly in and sign out the way they go. Take the train.
<laughs>

Eric Brunt (01:24:46):

There was a woman in North Vancouver who did that, and she just passed away at 103.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:24:52):

I saw that, yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:24:53):

I interviewed her, too. She was a character.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:24:56):

The last trip I did was interesting. I was in the officer's mess. And it was the day after the war finished. And this air marshal walked in and looked around, "You [inaudible]. You're going to fly me to St. David's in Wales. I have an appointment." "Oh." <laughs> I said, "What kind of an aircraft you got?" "Well," he said, "I have an Anson bomber [Avro Anson]." I said, "That's great. I've flown those." And so, we went out to the aircraft, and I looked at the manuals and checked out, you know, what speed I should take off, what speed I should land or whatever. [inaudible] Said, "Okay. We're going." "Okay." Flew them there. Got there. And he says "Okay, take the take the plane back to Tuner base <sp?> where we were, and I'll phone you when I want to come home." <laughs>.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:26:12):

But also, the day before the war finished, I was asked to fly cover for a troop ship that was going back to Canada. And escort it in case there was any submarines that hadn't turned themselves in. And so that was the last trip and sort of an anger that I flew—this this trip to St. David's was just a fun—I think he had a girlfriend there. <laughs> My guess.

Eric Brunt (01:26:59):

He saved a lot of time then, rather than take the train.

Randolph "Ran" Clerihue (01:27:05):

Yeah, well, you'd have to go over the Bristol Channel and take ferries and what have you.

Eric Brunt (01:27:11):

Yeah. That's funny. Wow. Well, I think that's great. Okay.

TRANSCRIPTION ENDS