

## Transcript of Walter Meadows Audio Clip

The aircraft had been attacked and it had been damaged and it had been damaged such that the – the pilot, who was the captain of the crew, had to give the orders to abandon ship, you know. To bail out as they call it, mm, and in order to bail out from a bomber aircraft you had to go down halfway down the aircraft. The rear gunner had to come up and the others, we had to go down. Halfway down there was a – a door where you could jump out and, of course, jumping out in the middle of the night, the middle of the night from about twenty thousand feet and was a bit scary in a way but not really because you knew if you stayed where you are you were a goner. If you jumped out with your parachute and the parachute, the pilot used to sit on it, see, but the rest of us had the chest parachutes. They used to – you had a harness with two clips and you clipped on the parachute and there was a handle where you could pull the ripcord and you jumped out with that and, of course, you didn't pull the ripcord until you were well clear of the aircraft. I was unfortunate in the sense that in the hurry – in the hurry to clip mine on one of the clips had not fastened properly and when the parachute – when the parachute came out only one clip held and the parachute blossomed out above me and instead of having two harness straps, there was only one. But it was good enough, it was good enough, and I just floated down. Once the parachute was out, successfully, and you were floating down by parachute, it was a marvellous experience really. Your main concern, really, was whether you were going to land in Germany or whether you were going to land somewhere safer. Also whether you would land somewhere where the people, where you landed, might – they wouldn't welcome you very much but they – they might be – become a bit belligerent and want to attack you. But of course the Germans they knew that they had successfully attacked an airplane, one of our bombers, and, of course, they were big airplanes these bombers and they knew that they got a crew aboard of several people and they were looking to round them up. And, of course, they had a system where they knew roughly where people who parachuted out from one of these attacked aircrafts, roughly, where they'd be coming down and they were looking for them. It didn't take them long to find you. Once they found you, of course, the people found you were people who knew what they were doing and their job was to get you rounded up. You were soon rounded up one by one and taken to a place where the other people that you knew from your crew were already there or coming in and once you became part of a little bunch like that and you knew that you were in the hands, not of the Gestapo or anything like that but were in the hands of the German air force, the Luftwaffe.