

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Arthur Jones (Joe) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1010>

### Tape 1

00:37 **So Arthur if you could tell me a little bit about growing up in the Mount Pleasant area of Perth and Guildford?**

Yes, we moved from Guildford, where I was born, to Mount Pleasant in 1934 and we had an old house right on the river and

01:00 it was quite a good life to have canoes and boats and then to yachts and this probably was why I always wanted the navy if ever I had to join the forces, you know.

**Did you belong to any yachting clubs?**

No, never at that time. No, we just amused ourselves on the water with a fishing boat, we had our own fishing boat,

01:30 and we lived on the Canning River with mullet and tailer because life in those days was pretty hard in those years, the 1920s and '30s - and coming from a big family and work was hard to get I think we probably lived on fish.

**How did the Depression**

02:00 **affect your family?**

The Depression, it sort of divided the family up a little bit actually. Dad had to go to the country and work and Mum was left more or less to look after us, six kids, so it was a case of most everybody in those days, as soon as you turned 14, you left school and got a job.

**Why did your father have to leave?**

02:30 Well, there was no job around the metropolitan area so people that had no jobs, they sort of called it the dole, put them on the dole, and sent them off up the country building railway lines and roads for six weeks at a time and then they'd come home for a couple of weeks and then back again. So more or less Mum had to manage the family, the six kids, and

03:00 of course naturally everyone went to work as soon as they could to help out with the financial side of things.

**What sort of work did the kids get?**

I went to work at a grocery shop in town, in Perth, and two of my younger brothers took up apprenticeships and my eldest sister was working in office work in Perth. Because in those days Mount Pleasant

03:30 was still out in the bush, roads were scarce and electricity and water were scarce. I don't think we lived in a house that had electricity and water until after the war so it was out in the blocks actually. And quite often if Mum wanted to go into town we used to row her down to Canning Highway in a boat and put her on a bus and wait for her to come home. So our life virtually

04:00 was on the river, you know, it was involved in practically all our lives in those days.

**That's quite nice I mean Mount Pleasant now is almost on top of the city?**

Yes, Mount Pleasant has become a bit now like a second Nedlands or Dalkeith now. We only had a little two-bedroom house with a veranda all round right on the river, a holiday cottage really, and Mum bought it and

04:30 it also included two acres of land, 4 acres, two of them on the riverfront, and I think in those I think she paid three hundred and fifty pounds for the whole lot. No deposit, ten pound a week, no ten shillings a

week I beg your pardon, until it was all paid for and of course now the blocks would be worth half a million each.

05:00 So the place has really changed, you know, it went from a working-class area to, you know, a middle-class area now.

**Absolutely just in a relatively short period of time it's changed so much?**

It did all of a sudden, you know, up until about 1980 it was still a working man's area but all of a sudden land became valuable and the big blocks were cut up and people were building two or three homes on them and big mansions on the

05:30 river now so it's completely changed now.

**Did you play any sport?**

At the moment – I never played sport like club cricket or football or any of those sorts of things but we used to amuse ourselves with cricket around the house. But since I retired I took up bowls and that's my only sport now, I love it.

**It's a very good**

06:00 **sport, my mum plays a lot of bowls and I know it's a great part of her life, it's a good thing to do. So you mentioned that you left school at 14, what sort of subjects did you enjoy by the way at school?**

Subjects? I don't think I was very good actually but general subjects I think I got sort of ordinary passes – arithmetic and all that sort of thing but, no, I wasn't a great scholar.

**So it wasn't a big deal for you to leave at 14?**

Pardon?

06:30 **It wasn't a big deal for you to leave?**

No, it wasn't, no. I think people today wouldn't realise what it was like to live in those days, you know, you left school and started work on ten shillings a week and twelve shillings a week. Everybody had a bike, we had six bikes in our family, lined up, everybody rode to Perth for their jobs whereas

07:00 you know in modern life today with the buses and that sort of thing, everybody's got a car whereas everybody had a bike in those days. No, we managed and we had a pretty happy sort of family life with four boys, two girls, and so you know we were able to amuse ourselves.

**A pretty big family did you have any rules of the house?**

Well, not rules, but everybody had a

07:30 job to do. The boys had to look after firewood and that sort of thing and when Dad came home we used to help him with the gardening, he had a big veggie patch right there on the river but you learned to amuse yourself and then the local lads all you used to meet down the shop, the local store, and have their get together. We all amused

08:00 ourselves and of course by the time you turned 18 the war had started and everybody was starting to join up and as soon as I turned 18 I put my name down at the naval depot at Leeuwin – but ships were shot in those days and you had to wait quite a while and it wasn't until I turned 19 that I got a call up and that's when I joined.

08:30 **Before we sort of get into that part of your life, I just wanted to find out how you went about getting a job at the age of 14?**

You actually went round and put your name down in the shops and that sort of thing, you know, and I actually had a friend who was a friend of a friend in Charlie Carter's grocery store and she said, "Go in and see the manager there," and I got the job straight away, that's when I was 14, and

09:00 stayed there until I eventually got the call up in 1941.

**What sort of a job was it at Charlie Carter's?**

Oh, generally despatch work and you started off weighing up all sorts of products from spuds and onions and wheat and bran and (UNCLEAR) and from there you went to despatch work and then as soon I turned 18, I got my driver's licence, and started driving one of their delivery vans.

**It sounds like it was a reasonably happy time for you.**

09:30 Oh yes, we enjoyed it and I stayed on driving until I joined up.

**How aware were you of the kind of build-up that was coming along as part of the possibility that there could be a war happening?**

Well it happened all of a sudden actually when England declared war and from then on it was a case of everybody knew I think eventually that they were going to have to join the services somewhere.

- 10:00 And it started, you know, people went from their jobs in, well, the men went from the shops and their work everywhere started joining up and the younger ones had to sort of take over then. That's when I sort of took over one of the driving jobs.

**Did you talk about joining up with your friends at all?**

Yes that was on all the time everyone

- 10:30 spoke of their preferences whether they wanted to go into the army or navy or air force. I had two brothers join the army and another one joined the air force when he got old enough, the younger ones.

**Why was your preference the navy?**

I had a couple of friends down the road that lived nearby and they joined the navy and living on the river and sailing some

- 11:00 yachts my preference was always on the water and the navy sounded pretty good to me.

**So how did you first approach the navy in order to join?**

Well you had to go down to the naval depot and put your name in and have an application form made up and they just said we'll call you up when vacancies occur and it wasn't until January 1941 that I got a call-up to come down for a

- 11:30 medical examinations and that sort of thing and then eventually in February I got the call up to come down and say "You're in" and bring this and that and come along and we'll fit you out and you'll start your course.

**What did your family think about this?**

They were quite happy, they were quite happy, they knew that I'd have to join up sooner or later and

- 12:00 it was the done thing to do in those days, you know, everyone sort of knew if they didn't join up of their own preference that eventually they'd probably be called up anyhow and have to go into the army, you know. So this is why most chaps when they got older joined up with their own preference you know.

**So what was the process that then happened after**

- 12:30 **you've been called up? You've had your medical exam what happens next?**

Well you then were billeted out at the naval depot, you did training there and then after about two months training there we were all sent to Flinders Naval Depot in Melbourne and you're put through what they called a new entry course over there.

**What sort of things did you originally do as part of your training in Perth?**

It was divided up into

- 13:00 general seamanship training and gunnery training and torpedo training and that took about four months and at the end of that you were drafted somewhere or another, either to a depot to await a ship and I was lucky enough to get a draft to HMAS Perth.

- 13:30 **Which part of the training did you enjoy the most?**

I think the seamanship actually. It was almost mostly ropes work, knots and splicing and boat work and of course you did drill work out on the parade ground and all that sort of thing, PT [physical training].

**What were the conditions like in the camp?**

It was good really, I liked it. The food was

- 14:00 good and you got weekend leave. A couple of days every fortnight you got a weekend in Melbourne so there were no complaints from me, I liked it.

**How did you actually get from Perth to Melbourne?**

Originally we went by the, what do they call it, the express that used to go from Perth to

- 14:30 Sydney, it was still civilian, it wasn't even a troop train then, so you all had bunks to sleep in on the way over and good food. It was quite enjoyable actually, it was my first time away from the state, I hadn't been out of Australia before that.

**How long did it take to get from Perth to Melbourne?**

About three days I think, yes, about three days to get over there.

**Did you do anything to pass the time on the way over?**

Oh, played cards, you know,

15:00 and of course they did a lot of stops on the way over in those days, it was still a steam train in those days, and it used to stop and take on water and coal and we were able to get out and run around a bit.

**It sounds like a bit of an adventure?**

It was, too.

**When you arrived in Melbourne how many other West Australians were with you?**

Well the train was completely full of troops that

15:30 went over and I suppose there were around about 20 or 30 navy fellows went over in the one group.

**What were some of the first things that you came in contact with - sorry, which base were you in, in Melbourne?**

Flinders Naval Depot.

**What did the Flinders base look like?**

It was big, big buildings where the men were housed and playing fields

16:00 and eventually you made close friends then with 2 or 3 and you usually went on leave with them and stayed at the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] in Melbourne but to us, you know, who hadn't been out before, and you'd lived at home all your life, it was quite an adventure really. There was about, probably about three

16:30 thousand going through training at Flinders at the same time so there was a lot going on.

**It's quite a lot of people. So how was the camaraderie?**

That was very good, you know, you were usually clobbered up with about 20 of you in the one mess and you shared the same sort of group, trained together and you all became, you know, pretty close friends.

17:00 **And who were your mates at this time?**

A particularly close one was young George Ward, he was about the same age group, slightly younger, I think he was about 17 actually. So we eventually used to go on leave together and then you'd meet up with others in town from the same group that you knew and you'd go to different shows together.

**What sort of shows?**

Oh, to the pictures and whatever was going. You'd go to the

17:30 YMCA and they'd usually have something on that you'd go to and you'd travel around and have a look around, up to Pine Tree Gully, you know and the country places, you know, have a day's outing. And there were people in Melbourne used to sponsor you, you could go and they'd take you out for the day, pick you up and take you out on tours. Some of them you could sleep overnight at their places but if not the Red Shield

18:00 would have something going but there was always something to do.

**What did you think about Melbourne in comparison to Perth?**

Pretty cold, you know, it was rather cold and wet and we landed there in April and left there in July so we saw quite a lot of their winter and it was cold and wet compared with Perth.

18:30 **Was there any sort of homesickness that happened?**

Oh no, not really, we used to write home very regularly and always got letters from home and there was always something doing and you were flat out with your training and of course naturally were in bed fairly early. You had your hammock slung and you were sent to that, lights out I think we had around 9 o'clock and up again about 6.

19:00 **I wasn't aware that you were in hammocks?**

Yes, hammocks, the big mess decks would be full of hammocks, there'd probably be around 50 or 60 hammocks strung in each mess deck, it could even have been more. No, we had no beds or sheets or pillows or anything like that. It was into your hammock and wakey, wakey in the morning, you'd have to lash your hammock up, tie it up and then put it in a big

19:30 rack and then at night time after about 8 o'clock you'd sling it up again and they had rails going right across the mess decks and you slung your hammocks on these rails.

**How did you actually find out what ship you were going to be placed with?**

Well you didn't know until your course finished and I think it was in August 1941 and your name went up on a

20:00 noticeboard and you were called out over the loudspeakers to assemble outside of the regulating office and you were told you had a draft and you were to be ready in a couple of days' time with all your gear packed and hammock at the ready and a kitbag and cases and we were told we were going to join the Perth in Sydney and it was all aboard a troop train to go down to Sydney.

20:30 **What were the conditions like on that?**

They were very sparse, I think we stopped the train somewhere about half way, I forget the name of the place now between Melbourne and Sydney, and fall out for meals and then on to Sydney.

**How were they giving you meals?**

The big dining room on the train station - I don't know whether it was Shepparton, I'm not sure -

21:00 I'm not sure of the name of the place now but they were all set up and catered for troop trains. Then on to Sydney and from there it was down to the, where was it, in the [Circular] Quay. And we were waiting there for a while and the Perth came in and it wasn't moments later that we were on board.

21:30 **What were your first impressions?**

You know wondering what was going to happen and how it was going to be and what it was like. But things on board a light cruiser with about 600 crew were very crammed, you know, and fortunately everybody except the local Sydney fellows had gone on leave, interstate. So this made it not easy but you were no sooner on board and it was into hard

22:00 work. We had to de-ammunition ship.

**Sorry, what's that?**

Take every bit of ammunition off and put it onto barges and it was taken off ready for the ship to go into dry dock. And of course being the new recruits we copped all the hard and the dirty work and all the experienced sailors were telling us what to do. But you expected it and you

22:30 hopped in, you didn't mind.

**Were you on the Perth with the mate that you made?**

Yes, and of course we were all proud to get to a ship that had a name like the Perth. It had come back from the Mediterranean and been in action and to get a ship with the name of the Perth on it, you know, and she was well-known, you know, a good fighting ship. But the next thing we

23:00 knew we were being taken up to Cockatoo Dock and the ship was put into dry dock and that's when the real work started. Everything had to be checked over and all the anchor chains taken out and put on the deck and the dry dock and you had to help a blacksmith check over all the links on the cables, hundreds of metres of it.

23:30 There's all sorts of cleaning work and getting the ship ready for sea again, you know. We spent six weeks in the dry dock.

**What would be an average day while you were on that six weeks in the dry dock?**

Well, from dawn to dark, well to 4 o'clock in the afternoon anyhow, it was all this sort of work helping the different artisans checking over ropes and

24:00 cleaning up and painting and all the time this was going on there were welders on board and riveters and noise was going on all day and night. And you were glad when 4 o'clock came and you were able to get dressed in your gear and go ashore.

**So tell me a little bit about the uniform that you were wearing at this time?**

Well the navy uniform, typical navy uniform. Bellbottoms and jacket and

24:30 collar with three stripes on it, white shirt and the lanyard and all the trimmings, you know.

**Any particular way to wear it?**

Oh yes, too right. You were all lined up for an inspection before you were allowed to go ashore and an officer used to go along the front row and look you up and down and make sure everything was clean and everything was nice and what they used to call 'tiddly'.

25:00 Everything was set nice and in position and all this sort of thing was called 'tiddly' and the issue gear was what they used to call pusser, everything navy was pusser. And of course as soon as you were able to gather a little bit of money together you went to a tailor and got a tailor-made

25:30 suit made and this was called a 'tiddly suit' and that's the one you wore when you went ashore.

**So how long did it take you to get one of these?**

Oh, only about a week in making. You could buy the material for it from the store and a shore tailor would make it up for you. It used to cost you 30 shillings to buy enough material for a suit, for a blue serge, and another 30 shillings to have it made up. So for three pounds you got a complete

26:00 new outfit. And of course your hat, your cap, you'd buy the cap from ashore and there used to be a couple of shops in Sydney that used to sell all naval gear and you could get new caps and lanyards and all the gear form there and that's what everyone used to get as soon as they were able to afford it because the pay was only 4 shillings a day as an ordinary

26:30 seaman. After 12 months in the navy you became an able seaman and it went up to six shillings a day. So by the time you sent a few shillings a week home to Mum you didn't have too much to play around with.

**It sounds like it was quite competitive with the outfits?**

Oh yes, everybody got a tiddly suit made and they looked nice, wider bell bottoms. And you used to have

27:00 to do your own ironing and put the seven creases in your trouser leg, one for each ocean but everyone took a pride in the way they dressed. And of course when the officers used to inspect you every morning and before you went ashore in the afternoon you got a tap on the shoulder to say get a haircut or your shoes needed re-heeling or something like that, you know.

**What sort of things did you get up to**

27:30 **on shore leave?**

Usually straight to a hotel for a few drinks and then look for a cafeteria for a good feed of steak and eggs and that sort of thing, you know, the usual thing. And there were different places in Sydney that you could go and they had games on, you could sit down and play cards or listen to music or that sort of thing. There'd be quite often free tickets to go somewhere

28:00 so there was always something to do, dances to go to.

**Are you on the hunt for girls?**

Yes, usually chummed up with somebody, you know.

**And where would most of the girls be?**

Where would they be? You'd probably meet them at some of the Red Shield places or at the Anzac House, there was a club, Anzac Club and you'd meet them somewhere, of course you would meet them on the street, too,

28:30 sometimes and get to know them.

**How easy were they to approach?**

Oh, fairly good, it didn't take much to strike up a conversation and next thing you knew you were being taken home and would meet the family and this particular cobbler of mine, Georgie Ward, he and I met a couple of girls that lived up near Central Station so we went home to their families and we were

29:00 looked after, stayed for a meal and might go on the weekends.

**That's nice so how long did that go on for?**

It went on for a couple of years actually. We used to write to them when we went away and meet them again when we came back to port, you know. But of course that was only - you were away for six months and you were only in port for a week or so and then out again so we didn't see very much of them after that

29:30 initial - oh, on the Perth for 3 months.

**It sounds like you've got yourself a girlfriend, Arthur?**

Pardon?

**It sounds like you've got yourself a girlfriend?**

Yes, we kept up you know writing to one another for a couple of years well to the war's end almost and that was it, we all went home and it ended then, well, it did for me anyhow and it did for a lot

30:00 but a lot of them, you know, probably stayed with them and eventually married them. But, you know, as I say I was on the Perth for 3 months and they eventually decided they had too many ordinary seamen on board and in November, the beginning of November, I was drafted to the [HMAS] Manoora.

**Just before you were drafted on to the Manoora - so you've been in dry dock for six months, sorry six weeks?**

Six weeks, it was in dry dock for six

30:30 weeks and the ship was towed back to Garden Island which was a naval base where they fitted the ships out.

**When you say towed back, is Garden Island off the east coast?**

Garden Island in Sydney, in Sydney Harbour, and that was a big naval base there and eventually a big dry dock was built there. Until then all the ships used to have to go up to Cockatoo Dock, under the bridge, up the harbour a little bit.

31:00 **Which would be a prime piece of real estate right now?**

I think it's still a big repair place, Cockatoo, and Garden Island is still a naval repair place.

**Is that like Balmain now?**

Pardon?

**The Balmain area now?**

Yes, off the shore there, yes.

**I've got you, I've got the picture in my head.**

Yes, and they built a big dry dock between the island and the mainland I think.

**So how did your duties**

31:30 **change from being in dry dock into this next phase?**

It was still quite a lot of work to do on board, they had to re-fit the ship out and re-stock it with food and all the ammunition that we'd taken off had to be brought back and stowed away in the magazines and then you were given an action station and drill and that sort of thing.

**What were you given?**

32:00 I was given down near the magazine, below and up forward the shell handling room which was between the gun turrets and the magazine and this was about half way down, a couple of decks down, not a very nice place to be actually. And there used to be gun turrets and then the shell handling rooms half way down and then the magazine right down the bottom of the ship, below,

32:30 and munitions would be passed up through a chute to the shell handling room and then we would pass it on up to the gun turret. They used to do so that if there was a fire up in the gun turret or it got hit then the flash couldn't go down to the magazine, it would come down to the handling room and stop there. Not a nice thought but this was a safety precaution.

33:00 **That would leave you in a bad safety position?**

Yes, it was, it wasn't a very nice place to be and anyhow I was fortunate really at the time when I was given the draft to the Manoora, you know, I didn't want to go I would have preferred to stay on the Perth with all the West Australian mates we had and I liked the ship and so I found a chap who wanted to go the Manoora and

33:30 so I raced along to the regulating office and tried to get a swap but they said no, the draft stood, so they said be here the next morning at 8 o'clock with your gear and be ready to go to the Manoora. So as it turned out I was fortunate because I believe the Perth was hit with a torpedo early in its action and that part of the ship got blown and there were very few survivors from either the

34:00 gun turrets or the shell handling room.

**You must have lost a few mates?**

Yes, quite a lot. There weren't too many survivors and Georgie Ward, the close mate, and a couple of others, they didn't survive. So I was very fortunate to get the draft really.

**It must have come as an enormous shock to you to hear this news?**

Yes, you more or less thought they were sort of invincible ships like the Perth and the bigger war ships but it proves you were

34:30 not. Ships like the Hood and the Prince of Wales and the Repulse and all those, they were mighty ships but it only takes a shell in the right place and they were gone.

**They were mighty ships but mighty big targets too.**

Yes and with the HMS Hood - 1,000 men went down with it, only 2 survivors I think it was, so you're not invincible and the Perth of course and the Sydney. So, you know, it's a matter of luck. It didn't matter

35:00 what you were on it was a matter of luck with where you were and what you were doing and you could be gone, you know.

**So how were you received on the Manoora?**

Oh pretty good, it was a very nice ship to be on, it was a big 10 thousand ton ex pre-war liner, converted to an armed merchant cruiser, nothing like the warships like the Perth and those sort of things, they had seven old six-inch guns on it and a

- 35:30 couple of 3-inch HAs [Heavy Artillery] and a couple of Vickers and a stripped Lewis for anti-aircraft work but they were mainly used for convoy work.

**So what were some of the duties that you had to perform on the Manoora?**

It was a different life on this sort of ship. Everybody had to do a lot of deck scrubbing and this sort of thing and keep the ship in, more or less the order that it was in pre-war days but I was fortunate to get

- 36:00 posted to the forward part of the ship and we were more or less in the bow, what they call the bosun's party and we looked after all the rope work and I was able to do quite a lot of splicing and different seamanship work. So it suited me down to the ground and I liked it very much but we were only on it for about 4 days and we put to sea. And then it was a
- 36:30 case of cruising stations and action stations.

**Where did you head off to?**

We went north and round the top of Australia to Darwin and we picked up Admiral Sir Guy Royal and he had conferences to do in what was called Batavia then, in Indonesia, and then across to Singapore and we arrived there on

- 37:00 December 6th, Saturday, the day before Japan came into the war.

**This must have been an extremely exciting time well first of all you're in another country for a start?**

Yes, yes, it was getting dinkum now and that night, Sunday night, air raid sirens went and we knew we were at war and the Prince of Wales and Repulse they were anchored just off the wharf from where we were

- 37:30 and we left on Monday afternoon, on December 8th, and we were heading out to go up to Calcutta and take over convoy work across the Bay of Bengal. And of course the Prince of Wales and the Repulse they left the next day and they went the other way around up the China Sea direction and they ran straight into a Japanese fleet
- 38:00 and they were gone.

**It's certainly getting serious. What sort of things were you hearing about the possibility that the Japanese would be literally on your tail?**

Well we took over like, as I say, convoy work around Burma and then we'd be back to Colombo and places like that.

**I was just wondering what the buzz was like on the ship before you hit Singapore about the Japanese?**

We were continually

- 38:30 told what was going on in Malaya and that they were moving down on Singapore and things didn't look too bright. Of course we heard that the ships had been sunk, the Prince of Wales and the Repulse and we were kept informed on what was going on. Of course all the troops we were picking up, some troop ships, they were taking them over to Burma as well. So the war was really
- 39:00 started and we were kept busy keeping look-outs closing up action stations and all that sort of thing so there was no spare time on your hands. You were kept at action stations and sleeping and that's all you did the whole time on duty.

**What sort of things did you do as part of action stations?**

Well we had a cruising watch, you were

- 39:30 kept in three, what they call three watches, the whole ship's company and one watch was closed up all the time so you did four hours on and 8 hours off and this went on every day so you were kept closed up with a gun 4 hours a day or doing a trick at the wheel in between times and then when you weren't doing that you were doing other work like cleaning up, keeping the ship
- 40:00 clean and that sort of work.

**How tiring was this process because you were under pressure?**

It was quite good, you had your 8 hours off and you worked probably for, in the tropics you worked for 4 hours of that and then the other 4 hours you were either going to have a sleep or go into the rec [recreation] room, the rest room, and have a game of cards or things like that. We used to play cards



like

40:30 crib and all that sort of thing, you know. You could go up on the deck and have a bit of a sun bake and that sort of thing and there was a canteen also.

**What did you think of the weather?**

That was good up there in the tropics. Very hot, you know, and humid but it was quite good, a lot like the weather we were used to at home in West Australia – you got your occasional rain squalls and that sort of thing but

41:00 it was quite good.

**How was morale on the ship?**

Very good because, you know, it wasn't a crowded ship, it was a big ship and only a crew of about 400. It was very good and we had a good lot of officers who made life good for you and made it quite easy. You had a lot of pre-war merchant seamen officers and they stayed on the ship

41:30 as well as regular naval officers. So life was pretty good.

**What was the crew's relationship like with the officers?**

It was very good, very good as I say with the merchant navy officers, they were sort of more relaxed. The regular officers were typical naval officers of the day, you know, you had to stick to a routine and you had to be dressed in

42:00 whatever the rig of the day was and that sort of thing.

## Tape 2

00:34 **Can you tell me in a little more detail about the types of convoy work you were doing?**

Yes, we were based mainly in Calcutta and we would come down the river there at the ocean and meet us with ships from various places that would assemble there and from there would go around to Burma and drop them off there and sometimes we returned to

01:00 Colombo and we'd re-store there and take on water and any stores that were needed and then sometimes we'd go up to Trincomalee which was a naval base in Ceylon, I'm going back to pre-war days, names, and they had a big naval base there in Trincomalee and pick up ships. And we'd get a bit of

01:30 shore leave in places like Colombo.

**So what did you think of some of these places?**

We'd go around visiting, have a look at the place and see how life was lived there and walked around the different towns there, close to Colombo and at the villages and that sort of thing.

**It must have been a bit of a culture shock?**

It was, to see how people lived, you know, they were terribly poor. Colombo, Singapore, Calcutta,

02:00 the life of people up there was terrible really the way they lived, they'd be sleeping in the streets of a night time. There'd be beggars everywhere and street beggars would follow you around.

**What did you do about the beggars?**

Well, you just tried to ignore them because once you gave them money, you know, they wouldn't let you go so we devised to try and ignore them as much as possible.

02:30 And you'd do a bit of shopping and things would be cheaper, you'd barter for things, you know but there were lots of places to visit and as I say the lifestyle was so different up there. I'd say it was quite interesting.

**What sort of places appealed to you?**

We went out to Calcutta, you could go to the races a couple of times. Mostly there wasn't a lot to do actually, you were only in there for a day or so, a couple of

03:00 days at a time then you'd be out again. You were never very long there so stays would be short and you might go to the pictures or something like that but you know you were only there for a short time so you didn't really have a chance to you know get stable as it was back out to sea again.

**What sort of things were you interested in buying?**

Not too much, you used to get

03:30 things to send home to your Mum and that sort of thing. You'd get kimonos or whatever you called them and you'd get dressed and you could get dress material and that sort of thing we used to post off home. It was very cheap. And locketts and that sort of thing, you'd send them home. But wages, as I say, four shillings a day we were still on as ordinary seamen and you couldn't let your head go and buy

04:00 too much.

**How big were the convoys that you were a part of?**

The convoys usually were 6 to 8 ships I suppose and they were quite a mixture – unfortunately a lot of them weren't very fast they were probably 8 to 10 knots at the most and occasionally we'd get a coal burner amongst them and these were a bit of a hazard. They were usually a bit slower

04:30 probably about 8 knots so your convoy had to go at the speed of the slowest ship.

**We were just talking about convoy work?**

Yes the typical convoy work was gathering ships up and as we were doing taking them around to Burma and then back to different ports in the Bay of

05:00 Bengal but we were very fortunate we never struck any enemy ships, any Japanese ships, and we carried out this work for about four to five months and eventually we had another big convoy, picked up at Colombo and in the company

05:30 with the HMAS Vampire and the HMAS Nizam, two destroyers, a couple of British cruisers, we would bring a big convoy down to Australia. The crew, the Vampire and Nizam and the British ships only stayed with us for about 3 days, they went back to Colombo and we heard later that they picked up a

06:00 convoy, the work we used to do, and took a big convoy across the Bay of Bengal, heading to Burma, and they ran into a Jap cruiser squadron and the Vampire was sunk and a couple of British ships were sunk. So we had luck with us then and we came on down to Australia and eventually dropped a few ships off at Fremantle and took the rest round to Sydney.

**What was it like receiving the news about the Vampire and what happened? What was the**

06:30 **atmosphere on the ship like and what did you guys do?**

Well of course we didn't hear about the sinking of the ships until quite a bit later but, you know, it's just one of those things that you felt lucky about. You know, it could have been us. But then we went on with more convoy work, we took ships to Noumea and a couple of the islands up there and then back to Sydney.

**Well Noumea's quite a nice spot. Tell me what you thought about that area?**

07:00 I can't tell you much about Noumea because we weren't allowed ashore. We took the convoy up and had to drop them off there at Noumea and turn around and come back to Sydney. That's where I parted company with the Manoora and I went to Flinders Navy Depot to do a gunnery course as a gunner on merchant ships.

**That's a pretty big change in your life so tell me actually**

07:30 **how this happened Arthur?**

Yes, well when we got back to Sydney there was a notice on the noticeboard wanting people for the job as gunners on the merchant ships so I thought that sounded fairly good, a good change, and I'd heard doing that sort of work was quite good because you went around to different ports, sometimes, you know, overseas and around the Australian coastline

08:00 so I thought that sounded quite good so I applied for it and was sent to Flinders Naval Depot to do a special gunnery course.

**How do you apply for it?**

You just went up to the regulating office and put your name down and you were selected for it as suitable.

**How did they select you?**

I think probably basically on what you were doing on board, my action station being

08:30 on a six-inch gun and also my cruising station was on a gun so they probably thought that was suitable for the particular work as a gunner.

**Are you quite interested in the whole gunnery aspect?**

At the time I was, yes. Your course involved training on four-inch guns and anti-aircraft guns, Oerlikons,

Beauforts and some of the smaller

09:00 machine guns like the Lewis and Vickers and those sort of things. You specialised in gunnery so it was quite interesting the gunnery work.

**So how did they inform you of your success?**

When you finished the course you went through tests in each facet of the gunnery and you were assessed on the sort of different phases of

09:30 it and I'd only just got to the passing out stage when I did another silly thing and volunteered for special service work with what is commonly known now, generally known as Z Unit [Services Reconnaissance Department] but there was no Z Unit then it was just special duties.

**Before we get into that I want to hear a little bit more about your training and where you were training**

10:00 **with the gunnery and how long it took?**

The training for a DEMS, what they call a DEMS, defensively equipped merchant ships, to be a gunner on those was done at Flinders Naval Depot in Victoria and you specialised – they had a big gunnery section there training you in all sorts of guns from six-inch to

10:30 four-inch and anti-aircraft gunnery work. They used to have a plane come in low over a gunnery range with a chute behind it and you'd go out on the range and practise shooting at this chute towed behind the plane.

**I wouldn't have liked to be the pilot in that plane?**

Yes he probably was a bit worried but

11:00 all the guns had special sights on them and they also carried safety devices, you wouldn't – the pilot was quite safe really. They also had a range there where you shot at clay pigeons and that sort of thing you know, learned to shoot things on the move generally.

**Were you blowing up things?**

11:30 No, we weren't blowing up anything then. When you did your pre-gunnery training and new entry training you handled a bit of stuff like TNT and that sort of thing but, no, we didn't do any demolition work generally.

**Are there any sort of real strict safety procedures that you have to adhere to when you're doing gunnery?**

Mostly

12:00 it's how to have guns like the six-inch, four-inch guns made safe and that sort of thing and if they had misfires how to go through misfire drills and just sort of obeying safety procedures with safety catches and all that sort of thing.

**What is a misfire by the way?**

Pardon? A misfire can occur with your 4 inch and 6 inch guns.

12:30 When they're loaded, your 6 inch guns for instance, you load a projectile into the barrel of the gun and that is followed by a bag of cordite and the breach is closed. A cartridge is then inserted in the breach and this is set off by a firing pin. When the order goes to fire if the gun doesn't fire the breach worker will

13:00 know because the breach doesn't come back and he'll call out and he'll have his hand resting on the breach also, and he'll call out, "Still misfire, carry on," which is carry on with the misfire procedure and they go through a drill checking whether it was a cartridge that misfired. They'll check the cartridge; you stand clear of the breach just in case when the cartridge is

13:30 removed sometimes if it's the cordite inside that hasn't caught alight and fired sometimes if the cartridge comes out air will rush into the breach and will set it alight and so you don't open the breach in case that happens. You don't open it for a short period before you open it and everybody stands clear of the breach. And misfire –

14:00 accidents have occurred when they've opened the breach too soon and didn't realise it was a misfire and all the gun crew were killed. This has happened you know so you've got to go through all these safety procedures before you go any further.

**Were there any accidents when you were at Flinders?**

No, no, nothing serious there.

**So how long were you spending at Flinders sorry?**

- For this course I was
- 14:30 there for about six weeks.
- Were you enjoying that?**
- Oh yes, it was interesting, very interesting, and you get leave at the weekends as well.
- Back to your old haunts in Melbourne then?**
- Yes, the only thing is there's not much to do in Melbourne in the winter time except go ashore and go and have a few beers and that sort of thing.
- 15:00 Then, after the training there, two funny looking people came around, a Scotsman and an Englishman and then a Major Lyon in the Gordon Highlanders and a Lieutenant Davidson an English navy fellow, they came around looking for volunteers for a different type of work which they said was very
- 15:30 adventurous and different to your normal navy work and could be a bit dangerous.
- Were they addressing a big group?**
- No, individually, you went to see them individually and they said, "Think about it and we'll have another interview later on."
- It's quite a line-up, when you say they were funny-looking blokes what do you mean by funny looking?**
- Well different to the navy set up, a fellow in
- 16:00 Gordon Highlander rig with kilts and this sort of thing so you wondered what the devil was going on and what it was all about. But they said you'd find it very interesting and a bit adventurous and you'd go through rigorous physical training and also they didn't say what sort of work it would be or where you'd be going or anything like that.
- 16:30 **Can you remember any of the questions that they asked you?**
- They asked you all about your pre-war life and what you used to do and where you'd been during the navy and I think what probably interested them was that we used to do a lot of canoeing and boating on the Canning River in the younger days and perhaps a lot of swimming and also the fact that probably I'd been up to
- 17:00 Singapore on the Manoora and called into places like Indonesia and this sort of thing. And then also the fact that probably my build probably interested them. You know, I was nuggetty and not too big and hefty to go into a canoe and also I found out later they thought that with a bit of
- 17:30 colouring and in a sarong I'd probably look a bit like Jap or an Indonesian for up in that area.
- You've got a bit of an olive skin going on then?**
- Yes, so anyhow I believe they interviewed about 40 or so volunteers and then they picked around about 17.
- How did you find out that you were in the pick of the 17?**
- I was re-called
- 18:00 up to go to see them again and they just said that if I was still interested that I'd be one of the ones that were picked. Apparently they picked about 17 all together for further training.
- Did you know any of the other blokes that got picked?**
- No, I didn't know any of them. As a matter of fact it turned out that I was the only seaman that had been to sea. The rest were all young fellows, mainly from Queensland
- 18:30 I found out later, some of them were only 18, 17 years old and had only been in the navy about 6 weeks and were still doing their new entry training which, when you think about it, was rather strange in one way that they would pick them so young but I think summing it up later on
- 19:00 older, perhaps older, experienced men, you would think with jungle training probably wouldn't volunteer for that sort of thing - a bit too wise you know.
- Innocence of youth is may be something they were looking for?**
- You think that the age and their experience they would have gone for somebody a little bit older but maybe they thought that they could train them, you know, it may be better for training into what was required.
- 19:30 **With these 17 blokes, are these blokes all from the navy?**
- Yes, the ones from Flinders, they were all navy of course. When we eventually got together there was

only 1 army man in the group plus Major Lyons but he wasn't actually picked as an operative he

20:00 belonged to a male nursing group in the Royal Army Medical Corps and he was also Major Lyons' batman. He was the only army fellow that we had in the training group. Later on we were to pick up a Captain Page in Cairns and Andy Krelear,

20:30 corporal, for a cook.

**So what you're saying is that a great percentage of the operatives ended up coming from the navy?**

Yes it was more or less I suppose seeing it was going to be a sea-type operation they thought the navy type would be more suitable. But when I thought about it, to me, an army man would have been able to

21:00 do the job just as well I think because on a boat like we were going to use seamanship didn't sort of come into it very much.

**So when you found out the news that you were picked as part of the special 17, what was your reaction to that?**

Oh, quite good, from there we went to an army camp in

21:30 Victoria and were put through an unarmed combat course.

**Where in Victoria?**

Frankston, it was a special army school for teaching physical training work and unarmed combat and that sort of thing. So that was our introduction to unarmed combat and physical training and that sort of thing.

22:00 **I need to find out a little bit about the training but first of all I want to find out what are the conditions like there in this camp?**

In the training camp at Frankston?

**Conditions and facilities?**

Oh, that was typical army style of things. You were put in a hut and up at 6 o'clock in the morning and went for route marches and course marches and then taken to what they call the snake pit, a sand

22:30 pit and did unarmed combat and you did a bit of all that sort of thing, a bit of boxing.

**What did the snake pit look like?**

The snake pit was a cleared area in the bush where they had quite a big round ring of soft sand about 30 or 40ft wide and you did unarmed combat, like wrestling and that sort of thing. Putting on strangleholds and do chopping work and learning how to

23:00 disarm and maim people and that sort of thing.

**How do you learn how to maim people?**

You go through the procedure of chopping with the sides of your hand on the sides of the neck, the carotid artery, and strangleholds and things like that.

**So by this time you're probably figuring out that this is a fairly intense kind of special job?**

Yes, it was going to be physical. We had a couple of weeks of that and

23:30 then we went down to our camp down in Broken Bay in New South Wales.

**How important is the level of your fitness during these training times?**

It played a big part I think in being able to stay for weeks at sea without any physical training. I think it played a big part, you had to be fit before you took on the job.

**How many drop-outs were there?**

After that physical training, the 17

24:00 was cut down to 13 and later on of course it was cut down to 5 before we left.

**It sounds like there's pretty high pressure to succeed on all levels to a very high level?**

Yes, it was not only physical training involved you know and being fit for that particular job, particularly the canoeing, but everybody had to be of good temperament to get along

24:30 together in a cramped space in pretty hard conditions. The food was bad, 2 meals a day, living on - water was restricted to a litre, it had to last you three days for drinking and things like this. So all those had to be of fairly good temperament and get along with one another. Nobody that was sort of a bit

25:00 temperamental and would argue and that sort of thing they were dropped out so they had to be fairly selective in this sort of thing.

**How do they check for what your temperament is like?**

The officers would take note during the training of how you got along with one another, whether you argued, whether you sort of were choosy about things and

25:30 you know argued with them or differed with them on their suitability or this sort of thing so it was pretty easy to judge whether chaps got along with one another.

**Were you aware that you were being judged on that level?**

No, not really, not until later when you realised that you knew a couple of the lads were sort of a little bit temperamental and a little bit argumentative you know. Although they may have been good

26:00 physically and quite good at their jobs but they were dropped out on those grounds you sort of noted it later.

**I know that you've done quite a lot of different training camps. You've done Frankston, how long were you at Frankston?**

Only a couple of weeks, about two weeks.

**So the main things at Frankston were the snake pit and?**

It was a build up of - Frankston was

26:30 made to sort of build your confidence up in handling yourself I think. If you could do a bit of unarmed combat, you know, you'd feel confident and also the physical training would keep you fit.

**From there did you go to Broken Bay or was it Refuge Bay?**

Broken Bay but it was a big area, Broken Bay, it covered a big area and our little bay that we set our camp in was called Refuge Bay.

**Okay.**

That's how Refuge Bay came in.

27:00 It was known as Refuge Bay but the whole area was Broken Bay.

**So how big was this area for you to train in?**

Well Broken Bay itself covered a whopping big area, acres and acres of river. It's where the river went back for about probably about 5 or 6 miles back inland and the Hawkesbury River fed into it

27:30 and from Gosford, the river around Gosford area, that fed into it and there were a couple of other big bays that opened out into Broken Bay so it was quite a big area. Corvettes sometimes used to come into it from Sydney after they'd done their refits and tidy up the ship before they went to sea so it was quite a big -

28:00 it was a perfect area because it was isolated and you had the various, you could push out, go out to sea as well and surf, coming in and going out on surf at Palm Beach so it was an ideal area for canoe training.

**It sounds like a bit of a wilderness area?**

It was.

28:30 There was nobody living around the area. There was nobody living around the area, there was no housing, it was a big reserve actually. Lots of hills for climbing practice and that sort of thing keeping you fit. Canoeing, sometimes we used to go up to Newcastle, we'd go as far as Gosford and the river would finish and we'd get out and we'd pack the canoes up in the bags and carry them to the next river and paddle

29:00 up into big lakes like, I forget the names of the lakes now, but up near Newcastle and then back again. So it was an excellent area for this sort of training.

**It sounds like it was a fairly secretive sort of an area?**

It was - there was an army camp.

**Have a glass of water.**

29:30 **I warned you I get a bit like this when I'm talking.**

**That's okay if you get a little bit like that just go for the water.**

Yes there was an army camp about four miles away from where we were and there was another one situated at the entrance into Broken Bay and they had a couple of guns set to cover the bay. West Head I think it was called

30:00 the army camp and there was also a searchlight battery in the Hawkesbury River just near the entrance of Broken Bay. We used to use these for a bit of training as well, approaching them at a night time and climbing up the hills to where the battery was and that sort of thing.

**Were you instructed not to talk about the kind of training and where you were when you went out into the normal world?**

30:30 Yes, it was kept secret, we weren't allowed to tell anyone, our home, parents and that sort of thing, what we were doing and where we were. Our mail was sent to an office in Sydney and then passed on home and then all mail from home was sent to the Sydney office and then through to our camp. And the only way you could get to the camp was a long overland walk, about 4 or 5 miles or via

31:00 boat from, where was the place, Bobbin Head, it used to be a boat-building place and a yacht mooring area and our little dinghy used to go down there and pick up stores and pick up mail and that sort of thing.

**So am I right - when you said you've got two separate camps a bit of a distance away from each other.**

An army camp, it was nothing to do with us,

31:30 it was just a camp that used to cover the road into the army camp on West Head.

**So how big is your camp?**

Not very big. It was situated on top of a rocky area probably about a hundred feet above the water and there were probably about 8 or 9 tents, all living in tents, no

32:00 electricity or running water or showers or anything like that. You had a running stream that ran through the camp and everybody had to bathe in that and there was a big waterfall that went down to the beach and a big cave behind it. Our canoes and explosives were kept there and after going out in canoeing training we used to just put the canoes in this big cave area behind the

32:30 waterfall and keep our explosives down there.

**A cave behind a waterfall?**

Yes, it was big, you couldn't get under it, it was too heavy. So you'd only stand on the fringes of it, it would hit you pretty hard, it would come down 100 feet, I believe it's only a trickle now that comes through. But we used to

33:00 do a lot of swimming there and blowing fish for our camp and for eating and that sort of thing.

**Blowing fish you mean?**

Gelignite over the side, stun the fish and catch them and oysters on the rock. If there were oysters there you'd go and get a feed after training and get a mugful and give them to the cook to mix because we used to only get stores once a week and there were no refrigerators

33:30 or cooling of any sort and after about 3 days you'd see the cook wander down to the creek with a lump of meat in his hand and you used to wonder what he was doing. He used to dangle it in the water and shake it around and I asked him what he was doing one day and he said, "I'm washing out the maggots." And he'd take it back - it was usually corned beef or something similar.

**Why would it get fly blown?**

Well there were no safes to keep it in.

34:00 He used to hang it up with a bag around it to try and keep the flies away and of course we only got this once a week and of course the bread, after a couple of days, that wasn't edible so the fish and the oysters supplemented the diet.

**Was this like a purposeful thing that they were doing to you?**

In a way I guess it was. We were only on 2 meals a day there, we were

34:30 training to get used to it. And at midday you might be given a few rations of army biscuits and they were a bit hard to chew you had to soak the damn things before you could eat them. But it was good training for the Krait, you know, once we got under way.

**Is it difficult to do such intense physical activity and be living on such a small amount of**

35:00 **food?**

No I don't think so. You probably made up for it in quantity and we got used to it and I don't think you

were ever hungry. You had too much to do in training and you were kept busy doing PT and unarmed combat and that sort of thing and on the rifle range, we made our own rifle range and we

35:30 finished up getting two army sergeants in to take over the training in small arms fire. This was when we got the Owen guns that were just starting to come into vogue and we got Owen guns and we had also some machine guns, Strip Lewis, thickish light machine guns, that sort of thing. No we got used to the training it was quite good really.

36:00 **With the canoeing training can you go into a little bit of detail about the kinds of things they were trying to teach you to do with the canoeing?**

Yes there was quite a bit of night-time training in the canoes, getting used to working of a night time, and approaching places like the searchlight area of a night and working out the best way to keep them invisible or as near as invisible as

36:30 possible. Occasionally, when one of these corvettes would come into the bay we would sneak up on that and surprise them by hopping aboard because they were fairly low in the water, Corvettes.

**What would happen when you'd do that, just sort of like present yourself to the captain?**

Yes, surprise them, you know. Of course the officer with us used to go and do that and

37:00 of course they'd sharpen up their look-outs from then on and we also used to see how close we could get with look-outs before they could sight us, you know. We used to do that quite a lot.

**How often could you get through the security?**

With a search light you could only get a certain distance before they'd pick you up but the idea was to find out how far and how close before the canoe

37:30 became visible. Because with search lights they show up a bright area and then after that they sort of have a black ring around them and you can approach right up to that sort of area before being spotted. This was proved once when we got up to Singapore as a matter of fact. The area that Bob Page and I went to was lit up along the wharf area and

38:00 the light shone out, you know, about 20 yards from the wharf area and lit up very visible but outside of that was black so you could sort of paddle fairly comfortably along that area.

**When you were sneaking up on the corvettes, were they aware of the fact that there was a secret camp out there?**

No, they didn't know until we made contact with them and

38:30 the army camp, I think they knew that we had a camp somewhere down therein Broken Bay but apart from that we had no contact with anybody and we more or less didn't have contact with any of the places roundabout. So as far as I know nobody knew we were there, it was kept quiet.

**Were you one of the first people to come along into that**

39:00 **camp or were you like, you know, the third group through?**

No, it was our own established camp just for our particular purpose and after it was finished with the training it was taken down straight away. Of course it wasn't long after that that they started their camp up on Fraser Island, Z Camp.

**So this camp where you were was like the**

39:30 **precursor to Fraser Island?**

Yes, Fraser Island didn't start until '43 I think, some time in '43.

**Were there a lot of people that new about Fraser Island, a lot more than knew about your secret little training area?**

There would have been because a lot of the fellows were going backwards and forwards from Maryborough and in and out of Maryborough they had

40:00 landing craft going out to Fraser Island and launches and that sort of thing so the people on the land base there in Harvey Bay they would have known something was going on, that there was a camp there because they were backwards and forwards but they wouldn't have known what was going on. They might have had a bit of an idea something

40:30 special was going on because the canoes quite often used to go across there and back again and I think it was about twelve miles across but, no, it was kept pretty secret.

**With the secretiveness of your base was there any camouflage to stop people spotting it from the air?**

No, not really, sentries were kept, we always had a sentry at our camp in Refuge Bay



- 41:00 but just the one. That's all we found necessary because a couple of times boats poke their nose form Bobbin Head around the corner but when they did we just fired a couple of rounds in front of them with a tracer bullet in them and that would skip across the water and they'd know not to come around any further. They should have been warned round at Bobbin Head not to come into there,
- 41:30 that it was now a special area but it only happened once or twice so it wasn't a problem.
- How much information is seeping through to you blokes as to how special the training is in regards to what you're going to be expected to do?**
- Very little, very little. You know, we knew we were training for this special job and it was going to be (UNCLEAR) minds
- 42:00 but where we were going and what we were doing nobody had any idea.

## Tape 3

- 00:33 **Arthur, who was supervising your training while you were at Refuge Bay?**
- Lieutenant Davidson, he was in charge of the camp and he was excellent for the job, he was a nice fellow to get along with and he spent a lot of time up in Malaya and those places pre-war days, very athletic and
- 01:00 he was the sort of fellow that would go and do things first and then he would lead. He would go and do trips of a night time, he'd go and map out somewhere to go climbing, hill climbing and canoeing and then the following night he'd lead everybody out on the job so, you know, you had a lot of confidence in him and he was good.
- So he was developing the exercises as you went along by the sound of it?**
- What sort of exercises?
- Like the one you just**
- 01:30 **mentioned?**
- Yes, he used to work it all out and plan it, trips up to Newcastle and that sort of thing for the training. Yes, he was a good instructor I suppose, he got on well with everybody and he knew what he was doing.
- What was it like meeting up with him and training with him given that you'd had little or no experience and he seemed quite**
- 02:00 **experienced as an instructor?**
- Well because it was a different life to everybody, to what we'd been used to, navy life was totally different, this one you had to learn to look after yourself a lot and be able to handle yourself and you knew that you really had to be in good physical shape to be able to stand up to what's ahead of you.
- 02:30 **How competitive was the environment in the training camp?**
- It wasn't really - you weren't sort of competing with anybody but it was just a matter of everybody working together and training together and getting along.
- Was there a friendly rivalry happening?**
- Not very often, sometimes in the canoes, the fold boats, you'd have a bit of a race and
- 03:00 we'd paddle sometimes down to Bobbin Head and you'd run back and meet half the party down and they'd canoe back and you'd run back and sometimes they'd time you on how long it took but, no, generally no, there wasn't too much rivalry.
- Any kinds of pranks amongst you guys while you were training?**
- 03:30 There's always be a little bit of water fighting going on or something like that, you know, but no everything was pretty serious. There was never much mucking around I don't think as you'd like to call it. I think every one took it pretty seriously.
- So nobody got up to mischief?**
- No, you couldn't really, there was nothing in the camp really to get up to mischief with.
- 04:00 Everybody had a stick of gelignite hanging up in their tent to get used to the smell. Gelignite used to give you a bad headache when you handled it, first handled it, but if you were handling it every day you never got the recurrence of the headaches. Things were always a little bit of danger there, everybody had their own Owen guns and

04:30 revolvers and that sort of thing so there was always work to do, looking after your own arms, that sort of thing, personal interest so it was serious.

**I'm wondering what it would have been like to have been thrown in to the responsibility of handling dangerous situations?**

I don't think so. I mean you sort of accept that I think it came fairly naturally. Particularly because you had the

05:00 rifle range and you used to go out regularly and have shoot ups out there. So you got used to handling guns and even knives. A bit of practice on sand bags with knives in case you had to use them.

**Can you describe what a knife-handling exercise would be like?**

We used to have bags done up to resemble a sentry or something like that and you'd be taught where to come in and how to use a knife on them and how to use a piece of hose filled with lead shot to disable them and where vital parts, a carotid artery is, if you were able to belt them hard enough on the carotid artery you would temporarily disable them and affect their brain temporarily and different things like that.

**And did Davidson act out all these procedures for**

05:30 **you guys to observe?**

06:00 Yes, Davidson, Lieutenant Davidson was pretty well versed in that and he'd go through the motions.

**Was that quite entertaining watching Lieutenant Davidson these articulate type of moves?**

No, it was just sort of part of the training and of course doing unarmed combat of course this was quite good. This was quite good because you could sometimes

06:30 get your own back tossing somebody around, you know. You had to take it in turns being tossed to help each one learn to do it and you had to have the co-operation of whoever your partner was. If you landed a bit hard yourself you could do the same to them but, you known, it was all in fun.

**Were there any holds barred?**

No, providing you never hurt anyone really.

**What did you find most challenging about the training in Refuge Bay?**

07:00 Oh, the canoe work of course was good and the unarmed combat. It was all very good and of course the rifle range work and handling all different sorts of rifles and machine guns and grenades and that sort of thing. And they had a 3 inch mortar, we used to use that as well, practise, so they kept it interesting. The two sergeants we had as instructors, they were pretty well

07:30 versed in teaching all these things.

**Who were the two sergeants?**

They were two from some army corps in Sydney, I don't even remember their names, Sergeant Willoughby and Sergeant Sam - I forget his name now but they were pretty old hands at teaching all the

08:00 what you have to do with the rifles and machine guns and that sort of thing.

**Do you think that Lieutenant Davidson and the two sergeants found the same adventure in this exercise as you young recruits were finding?**

Yes, Davidson would have because it was all really I suppose really new to him all this unarmed combat and all the canoe work which he probably wouldn't have done a lot of I don't think.

08:30 Yes, he would have found it very interested I think he was that type of person. We did have one other officer there for a while but he eventually left and we got another replacement but he didn't have very much to do with the training, he used to train with us, but Davidson was the CO of the outfit.

**Were there any funny incidents?**

09:00 **There was one funny one. The toilet we used to have was up between a couple of rocks up on the hill and the chap was the look-out for all the gear in the camp and the general dogsbody, he used to go up there and light a fire up there in the crevasse in the rocks for general hygiene he used to set it alight**

09:30 **every day. He used to pour a bit of kerosene and light it and one of the boys went up there one day to visit the latrine and have a smoke and he didn't know that Taffy Morris had put kerosene down there and it caught alight and sent him running pretty quick with a hot bum.**

10:00 **No, there was very little, they never used to play jokes on one another very much, that was purely accident.**

**Was he disciplined for that accident?**

No, the discipline was pretty lax in the camp really. As long as you did your job all right and showed you were interested and that sort of thing there was nobody that got censured or disciplined or anything that I know of.

10:30 Because by this time most of the crew, there was 13 of us there, at this time they were mostly fairly easy to get along with. There was only a couple that were later dropped off through not being sort of the type that could cause a bit of trouble in complaining about food and general conditions, you know,

11:00 when things got a bit tough so that's why it eventually came down to a selection of about 5, five of the seamen plus the officers, 3 were to be operative and the other 2 to be reserves. No everything in the camp went pretty smoothly.

**What happened when training came to a close at Refuge Bay?**

Well all the time tat this was going on

11:30 the Krait was in Sydney have a refit done or supposed to be having a refit done and eventually it came up to Broken Bay, it sailed into the bay near our camp at the beginning of January in 1942 and training stopped immediately and the camp was closed down and I think

12:00 it was about 7 of the 13 were selected.

**What happened when the final selection was announced?**

Well Lieutenant Davidson got everybody together and we knew that there was going to be some drop out and there'd only be a certain amount selected. He got everybody together and her read out the names of those that were and those that weren't and

12:30 apologised to them and they were sent back to the navy for general service. And the rest of us, the others of us, went and joined the Krait.

**Can you describe the scene, the disappointment?**

Yes, they were very disappointed and I think a couple of them managed to stay attached to the special services and they joined another unit, not doing the same work but doing more like case watchers

13:00 used to do being sent up to the island and getting back information. I believe that was 2 of them that did that but the rest of them went back to the navy and were drafted to ships and general navy work.

**And how excited were you guys?**

We were glad to get underway until we took off from Broken Bay and we got outside the heads, just past the light house and we turned north to head

13:30 towards Newcastle and all of a sudden the engine went bang and cut out and we were left whiling away in a broad beamed sea and I think everybody went over the side after a while and were seasick all bar two or three. The call was sent up to Newcastle and eventually a mine sweeper came down, took us in tow and took off

14:00 and pulled out half the bough of the Krait. And the navigator that we had whose name was Lieutenant Reynolds who came with the ship, it was the first time we'd met him, he was pretty volatile and abused them and he dived down into the engine room and eventually got it going. So we made it to Newcastle under our own steam and had a couple of days there where they did a few refits and we dropped

14:30 one of the 7 fellows off there, no, we dropped 2 off there I think.

**What events had led them to be dropped off?**

Well, they'd decided that 7 would be too many, that 5 would be sufficient.

**Who's they? Who decided that?**

Davidson and Lyons and Second Lieutenant, I forget his name now, there were three of them, mainly it was Lyons and Davidson

15:00 they were the two senior officers and they'd decided that 5 was enough and so they dropped the other two off and they went back to the navy.

**Were they happy with the decision?**

No, no, they were disappointed, you know.

**Did they show their disappointment?**

They were pretty downhearted about it but they had to take it in good spirits.

**Did you guys try to comfort them at all?**

Pardon?

15:30 **Did you guys try to comfort them at all?**

Well there wasn't much we could do except say, you know, "Sorry," and that we hoped to see them later and, "Good luck." As a matter of fact we did see one of them later in Cairns but he was on an old mine sweeper but apart from that we never struck them again.

**Just while we're on this subject if we could just backtrack to when Lieutenant Davidson announced the successful recruits at Refuge Bay, how did you assemble, can you describe the**

16:00 **scene in the camp?**

No we just gathered on the deck and he told us that they were going to lose 2 of them and that there'd only be 5 going.

**Sorry, I mean earlier when the initial party was announced back at Refuge Camp. How were you assembled in the camp?**

Just called together and announced

16:30 that the training had finished and the party was going to be cut down which he'd told us earlier it was going to be. Then announced that eventually he'd cut it down to 7 then and later on it would only be 5.

**Had you dismantled most of the camp?**

No we hadn't then, we went and packed our gear up, what we could take, and what we couldn't take was sent back to a

17:00 navy depot and I don't know who they got to dismantle the camp, I don't know about that, but I believe it was dismantled as soon as we left.

**How soon after the announcement of the final party of 7 did you board the Krait?**

Straight away, yes, straight away we went on board.

**So you descended down the cliffs?**

Yes, took all our gear down.

**What gear did you take with you?**

This was 1943, we'd been training there since September

17:30 1942 until the beginning of January 1943. From there of course after we left and we finally arrived at Newcastle and repairs were done we took off then, heading north, and we broke down at Coffs Harbour and repairs were done again there. And then we took

18:00 off from Coffs Harbour to Brisbane and it was decided to do a bit refit there and we were there for six weeks while the refit was done.

**What were your thoughts when you ran into mechanical difficulties?**

We wondered what the hell was going on and why all this wasn't done in the first place and why would you put to sea for a long trip when you had a motor that was so broken down and worn out.

18:30 As it turned out we enjoyed the stay there because they managed to find us a cottage down at Surfers Paradise so we were billeted down there for six weeks.

**Can I just ask you what you did when you were billeted out for those six weeks?**

Yes we used to do a bit of swimming and a bit of walking and running and we were more or less on our own down there to do as we pleased. And eventually

19:00 somebody from the Surf club came down., a surfer and was going to stay down there and we had to move from the village we were in, the little seaside cottage. So he said come and stay in the surf club there's 40 bunks in it so for the next couple of weeks we stayed in the surf club and we used to give him a hand to put the reel up and helped to carry a couple of bodies up one day.

19:30 We used to have our meals at the restaurant there so life was pretty good actually for six weeks.

**Were a few swimmers stranded in rough surf?**

Yes, a couple of people were stranded there and I went out, didn't go out that deep mind you because I wasn't a surfer, and gave them a hand to bring a lady in one day but that was as far as I - because I'd never been in surf before or

20:00 swimming in surf so I never went out too far.

**Did you feel like heroes?**

No, it felt funny carrying somebody who was all wet and limp and just flopping all over the place but she was all right, they did the resuscitation on her and brought her to. An ambulance came and took her away eventually but she was okay fortunately. But the only time I tried to surf I got dumped and damn near broke my

20:30 neck so I was very careful.

**You stayed on the beach after that?**

Yes, and got sunburned. As a matter of fact we were all told to get as sunburned as possible, get as brown as possible during our training and they didn't say why but they said preferably if you can get burned, brown, all the

21:00 better - so we did this quite happily.

**There would have been a few girls on the beach I suppose?**

We met a few that used to work at the hotel actually, a couple of very nice girls.

**Were you drinking at the hotel at this stage?**

Very little because we never had any pay given to us. Our pay was all made over to a bank right from the time we joined up because we didn't carry pay books in the navy and we only had a few pounds between us

21:30 so it didn't go far. So, no, we drank very little. As a matter of fact the hotel was on restricted hours, it used to only open 1 or 2 hours a day.

**Why was that do you know?**

Beer was all rationed in those days and I think it used to open about 11 until 12 and about 5 until 6 and it was rationed to what you could buy so we very seldom went there.

**Was there a 6 o'clock swill?**

22:00 Yes, yes. Nobody used to drink very much anyhow and nobody smoked in the group, not after we got going anyhow. They told everyone that there'd be no smoking once we got started so the couple that did smoke gave it up.

**So that hadn't been a reason for eliminating any of the earlier?**

No, it hadn't been but as a matter of fact I think there was only 2 or

22:30 3 in the whole 17 that did smoke. A lot of the young fellows they never - I think they were too young to smoke actually at 17 or 18.

**So what happened at the end of this relaxing phase?**

Suddenly Lieutenant Davidson came down, no, I beg your pardon, he did come down one day and say we would be going back

23:00 shortly, the Krait was ready, and on my 21st birthday, that's right 21st birthday, 1943, February, it was by this time, an army fellow came down with a ute and said I've got to pick you up and take you back to the Naval Depot and the Krait was tied up there. So he said

23:30 "I'll give you about 2 hours and get your things ready."

**This was on your 21st birthday?**

Yes. So our things were got ready and it was only a short 100 yards from the club down to the hotel so we got them ready and dived back to the hotel and I had ten shillings left in my pocket so we put it on the bar and we knocked it off.

**What could you buy for ten shillings?**

Oh, I think it was only about

24:00 sixpence a glass so it went a long way, ten bob, ten shillings was about 20 glasses, you know.

**In an hour?**

This was only about 4 or 5 of us, about 4 I suppose of us, yes, only about 4 of us so it went a long way.

**So you would have been ready for a snooze when you got back on board the Krait?**

24:30 I probably slept in the back of the ute on the way back. But anyhow the Krait was supposed to be ready and we'd picked up a couple of new boys, we'd picked up a new engineer, a seaman, Cobber Kane,

Kevin Kane, he was just a seaman, not as an operative or anything. An engineer, a seaman

25:00 and we didn't pick up a telegraphist until later on, a new telegraphist. Anyhow we set off north again.

**Fingers crossed?**

And we got as far as Maryborough and we anchored off the Mary River in Maryborough, we broke down there, and our engineer was taken ashore by a couple of

25:30 forestry workers from Fraser Island, they were working over there, took him ashore and he got some parts and came out, fixed it up.

**What did you do to kill the time while you were waiting?**

It was only about 2 days.

**Did you go ashore?**

No, we didn't go ashore we were anchored out.

**Fishing?**

We did have a go at blowing some fish one day

26:00 but we weren't quite successful, we didn't do much good. But anyhow it was only about 2 days. So we got going again and we anchored off Lindeman Island for the night and the next morning Paddy McDowell, the engineer, started the engine up and there was a hell of a bang from the engine room and it had blown the side of the engine apart and the (UNCLEAR) had come through so it had

26:30 blown it to pieces. So we had to radio to Townsville for a two into Townsville and then that started another phase of landing the Krait until it was eventually fixed up and it had a new engine fitted.

**What was your reaction this time when the engine finally blew up?**

Yes, this time they said well, look, we don't know where we're going to get another engine, when we can get an engine, and

27:00 we were sent down to a naval base down near Newcastle and it was a place where they had a training camp for chaps on barges going in and out on barges and landing barges sort of thing, HMAS Assault.

**How were you sent down?**

There was about 5 of us were sent down there.

27:30 **How were you sent there?**

By train. Of course you're sworn to secrecy and you can't talk, nobody talked, you could be shot if you talked, that was the threat. Either that, or if you were lucky you'd be put in jail and you'd be left there until the end of the war so it was pretty tight the security. Yes, so when we got down there they never had

28:00 too much in the way of training so they put a couple of our boys going on a stores truck and another one helping out in unarmed combat, not another one a PT fellow, they never did unarmed combat up there until we went there. So we built them an obstacle course with all wires going through trees and pits that go underneath and barbed wire and rope climbing and cross ropes in the trees and that sort of thing.

28:30 So the PT fellow was a chief petty officer, the physical training officer, he was all for it so we built this for them and then from then on every day we took fellows in classes over these obstacle courses and that was the main thing we did all day then. And at weekends they used to make the five of us go on shore patrol and more or less act as military police.

29:00 Dress up and put side arms on and go into Newcastle and we used to have a bed, bunks at one of the hotels, so then we used to go and patrol around Newcastle. But our job wasn't dirty really - if anybody was a bit full we'd take them to the hotel where they were staying and get them out of trouble.

**Did you make a pretty tough military policeman?**

No, not really but they knew we were teaching unarmed combat and used to put them

29:30 over the course, you know, so they had a lot of respect for us so there was never any argument, you know.

**Did you put them through the mill when you put them through the obstacle course?**

These blokes, yes, yes.

**How high did you set the degree of difficulty when you were building that course?**

Oh, not too bad, the chief petty officer was there and he used to oversee it as well because we were only

able seamen and they were ordinary seamen so we didn't do have much say over them we only had to show them

30:00 how to do it and tell them what to do. So we weren't too hard on them, no.

**When did this period come to an end?**

We were then from March, about March I think until the beginning of July. We were up there and when we got the

30:30 news, our Lieutenant Davidson was there too all the time as a matter of fact so he was sort of keeping us informed how things were going. And they finished up, they got a new motor from Tasmania and flew it up to Cairns and installed it.

**How anxious were you to get back to the Krait?**

Yes, we were all keen to get going you know. And as it turned out, the motor blowing up was the best thing that happened for the whole operation,

31:00 really, when you look back over it. You got a brand new motor, the old one should never have been put into it, it should have been taken out in Sydney, and we got a new skipper, a Lieutenant Cars, and a navigator and who was far better suited than the original navigator in my opinion anyhow.

**Why was that?**

He was better to get

31:30 along with. The original fellows, Reynolds, if I might name him, he was a rather bad tempered type, an engineer who had come down from Malaya, used to looking - or probably a lot of Malays under him on a plantation as an engineer and very quick tempered. He got under the skin of a few people on the way up and anyhow after the

32:00 breakdown they told him that the Krait tour might be off and he might be better if he looked for something else. And he was quickly snapped up because he was a fluent speaker in Malay and that sort of thing and knew the islands well.

**Can you give me any instances where his temper flared up?**

Once when the engine broke down he really took to the engineer fellow down below, physically one of the

32:30 seamen that was down there. As a matter of fact I heard that he gave him a heck while he was bending down and told him to get the hell out of it and that lad gave him a hook to the jaw and that was one of the reasons he was put off in Newcastle. I heard him sort of abusing a sub lieutenant we had on board

33:00 telling him what he should be doing and shouldn't be doing and this upset I think the other officers a bit. So anyhow, we were told he was going and we got this Lieutenant Cars, a lieutenant, a navy lieutenant. Old fellow compared with us but nice and easy to get along with, you know, a very nice chap. We got the lieutenant, we got a new

33:30 telegraphist, Horrie Young, a leading telegraphist, he took over from the other fellow who was out of it by this time. The only unfortunate part, we lost the cook, he didn't like it either having to cook for 14 fellows on a couple of primus stoves wasn't to his liking and he was a little bit quick-tempered too.

**Aren't they all?**

Cooks? They've got to be tolerant, a good cook.

34:00 And the lieutenant, Sub-lieutenant we had, he went also, went back to the navy and we got Captain Page, Lieutenant Page, he was an army lieutenant and he'd been up at the house on the hill in Cairns and he'd had a bit of experience in canoe work and demolition and limpets as well. So he became my canoe partner actually.

34:30 So we trained and we got a lot of good people that fitted in. The navigator, Lieutenant Page and then we finished up, we couldn't get a qualified cook to volunteer anywhere, so a fellow by the name of Crilly. Andy Crilly, he was due to be, he wasn't too healthy, was due to be boarded out of the army which he didn't want to happen to him, he was a 7th division man and

35:00 he was the only volunteer that Major Lyons could get to do the job. So he asked him had he cooked anything and he said pancakes and boiled water, that's all he could do. So he said, "Well, you won't have much to do. all you've got to do is boil dehydrated mutton, onions, carrots, potatoes and soak them overnight in

35:30 sea water and cook them the next day in a dixie. And he also said he could make pancakes so he got a bit of a nickname as Pancake Andy. So he was a little bit, Andy Crilly, I think he had Scotch and he was a pretty high-spirited fellow. But he was ideal, you could have a got at him about his cooking and he'd have a go back at you, you know,

36:00 but other than that he was good to get along with, a friendly guy, all the boys got along with him very well.

**Was there much jibing going on amongst the crew at this stage?**

Oh, there always was. Not at that stage but once you got knowing, you know, it was always a bit of fun.

**What sort of friendly jibes did you often get?**

Nothing very much.

**Did you have nicknames at this stage?**

Yes, somebody nicknamed me Joe, I don't know why, short for

36:30 James I suppose – as they often used to do in those days, shorten your name. Yes, Wally Forbes was the elder of the five, he was 24/25, I was 21 at the time, and so he was called Pappa. And Freddy Marsh was the nuggetty, real nuggetty young fellow and he had rather a big head to go with his nuggetty build so he got called Boof.

37:00 And Mostyn Martin he got called Moss or Mossie, you know, and the others Cobber Kane, Kevin Kane, he got nicknamed Cobber I don't know why. But he was sort of one apart from the rest, he hadn't trained with us or anything., He'd only come on board to be a seaman and so he was always a little bit apart. He used to do a trick on the

37:30 wheel and there'd be officers and that sort of thing so we didn't sort of get to mix with Cobber as much as we did the rest of the boys.

**And how strict were the officers on board, were you calling them by their nicknames?**

No, no, they all got their title, Sir, they all go Sir, including Lieutenant Cars, the senior navigator, it was always Sir.

**And then we've got Joe, Boof, Pappa and Mossie?**

Amongst all the others, yes.

38:00 No, they used to call you your surname mostly, the officers did, yes, they'd call you Jones or Merriman or whatever. It was still a little bit on the strict side. I mean, Lyons had been brought up in a military family, his father was a lieutenant general in the First [World] War, or major general, and then he'd come through the military schools and that sort of thing so him it was

38:30 strictly men and officers.

**He was pretty formal?**

A bit formal, yes.

**What was his relationship like with Lieutenant Davidson?**

Oh yes they were quite friendly, yes they were always friendly. Lyons used to, quite often he used to stay apart a little bit, he'd often be seen sitting up forward on his own, you know, probably be thinking and working things out. But the officers kept themselves busy by doing their trick on the wheel, at the helm.

39:00 They shared that between them, there was the four officers so they did the tricks on the wheel. None of us handled the wheel, we did the look-out jobs and had to go up the mast now again and sit on the cross tree or sit on top of the wheel house and keep look out. So that kept us going because there wasn't a lot of us – the cook didn't and neither did the

39:30 telegraphist, he very seldom did because he was always on duty down at his wireless and so that only left us 5 really to do the look-outs.

**What was life like below deck on the Krait?**

Very crowded because the officers had the long hatch up forward that was vacant and they had bunks there and

40:00 probably from the wheel house back belonged to us, about 2 ft I suppose and we had about 3 hammocks rigged up above the engine room hatch and three of them had to sleep on top of the engine room hatch with just a thin, very thin mattress out of their hammock. Crilly, the cook, used to sleep on top of the water tank, just opposite his little

40:30 galley, and the engineer, he slept on a bunk rigged up down in the engine room, he slept there the whole time. And after we got going the two reserve canoeists, Marsh and Merriman, they were given the job as the engineer's offsider so they had to learn to handle the engine and do their trip down in the engine room.

41:00 And Hewson, Wally Falls and myself did the look-out. So four on and eight off, you know, was what you usually did. It was very cramped, terribly cramped and meals were only two a day, two meals a day,



breakfast and an evening meal.

**What time were your meals?**

Meals were roughly about 8 o'clock whenever the

41:30 look out came off watch, anywhere between 7 and 8, and you'd either have pancakes or porridge and then you had a cup of tea or coffee, one drink, only one, no refills. And at midday you had a cup of lime juice and you could have a couple of army biscuits if you wanted them.

**Lime juice that sounds like an unusual issue?**

Yes, lime juice, we always got

42:00 lime juice every day.

## Tape 4

00:32 How's my voice getting through?

**It's good.**

It' doesn't sound too good.

**Just take your time and pause for a glass of water whenever your voice feels like you need it. We've got plenty of time, we've got all day.**

I don't seem to be able to clear it all day. It's probably the asthma, the Ventolin you take for asthma you've got to really wash out your throat with salt water. It does bugger up your throat a bit.

**After this**

01:00 **tape we'll probably pause for I think an hour and a half for lunch to prepare yourself.**

Go for a walk and get my land legs back again.

**Well, Arthur, I think you were under way, under steam from Cairns?**

From Cairns, yes, we left Cairns at the beginning of August 1943 and as I say we were put into watches and meals were regulated. Water, we were issued with a water

01:30 bottle, only a litre, and that had to last you three days for drinking. And the only other drink you had was a cup of tea at morning and night and a cup of cordial, lime juice, for lunch. No fresh water washing, just a rinse with sea water and you eventually got used to it and managed. Anyhow we took off and went from

02:00 Cairns up to Thursday Island, without any hitches, the motor was ticking over beautifully. And Patty McDowell used to nurse it night and day, you know, he used to be an engineer on submarines in World War I so we got a good engineer there. We stayed at Thursday Island for a couple of days and then headed across.

**How was that time spent at Thursday Island?**

We just went ashore a couple of times and just walked

02:30 around very close to the jetties there was nothing else to do.

**Did you meet any of the local Thursday Islanders?**

No, we didn't, no. I don't know whether the wharf might have been guarded I think. We never went ashore, just got up on the wharf and had a walk around. A couple of patrol boats were there, native fellows. So there was very little to do,

03:00 we were only there two days and took off.

**Why had you spent two days waiting there, do you know?**

I'm not too sure whether they - I think we took on some fresh water and topped up the fuel tanks. It probably wasn't really necessary because we carried enough fuel to go a hell of a distance but I suppose it was a precaution. So we

03:30 took off from Thursday Island headed off across the top of Australia and everybody getting used to the Krait and getting used to the meals and what to do and what not to do.

**What were the rules on board?**

More or less just getting used to doing your watches and getting used to trying to get yourself to sleep.

And you had an engine going underneath you night and day, non-stop, it takes a bit of getting used

04:00 to particularly for the chaps who were sleeping on top of the engine room hatch. I was all right I was up in a hammock it wasn't too bad but you were only just about 6 inches from the deck head so every time the ship rolled you rolled and you bumped the deck head but it was quite comfortable.

**Was the Krait diesel?**

Pardon?

**Was the Krait diesel or petrol?**

Diesel, yes. It had a brand new type of diesel

04:30 which they'd flown up from some hydro electric scheme in Tasmania, it was supposed to be the only one in Australia that they could find so they were lucky about that.

**A lot of chance so far?**

Well, when you come to think of it as I said the breakdown at Lindeman Island was the best thing that ever happened to it. The other thing that they did, or didn't do when they put the new engine in - they said they never had time to put a new

05:00 propeller on so the Krait had only a top speed of 8 knots and a cruise of 6 knots. If they'd put a new propeller on they might have got a speed of up to 12 knots out of her, but that's the good and the bad.

**What was your destination as you headed across the top of Australia?**

Exmouth Gulf, which was called (UNCLEAR) the army, the American navy base. We were to go down there and refuel, there was

05:30 a tanker anchored there and a salvage ship used to come in and out. So we arrived there probably late in August and it probably took about 3 weeks I think to go across and we had a week there and in that time a couple of us, half of the crew stayed in the navy base ashore

06:00 and the other half stayed aboard and did a few odd jobs cleaning up and that sort of thing. Then suddenly a plane arrived and we had new canoes, bigger canoes, we had the old ones still on board that we trained in but these were new 16 ft fold boats, collapsible canoes, and some new explosive. The gelignite they decided wasn't good enough and they had, over in England they'd just brought out

06:30 a plastic high explosive which is a cutting explosive, it cuts steel, excellent for cutting steel as against gelignite. So there were these new canoes.

**It's not as volatile either is it?**

Pardon?

**Plastic explosive is not as volatile as gelignite?**

No, it's not it's excellent in the way that it doesn't give you headaches, you can hit it with a hammer and it won't explode and you can light it and it doesn't explode, it's got to have a

07:00 detonation and so it was perfectly good for our type of work. Any steel you wanted cut, if you wanted some anchors or something like that for buoys you could cut railway line with it. You could put a stick of this plastic every two foot, join them up together put a detonator on the end and she would cut the whole lot all at once.

**Did you experiment with the plastic explosive?**

No, we hadn't, on it was new to

07:30 us. So we ditched the old canoes and gave them to the Yanks I think.

**You didn't sell them to the Yanks?**

No, you could sell them almost anything but, no, they gave them away. Anyhow, we had about two nights of practice with the new canoes.

**What did you do to practise?**

Just went and had a paddle around the bay there and got used to

08:00 them, that's all you could do. And then reassemble them and assemble them.

**Could you explain how you assembled them and dismantle them.**

Yes, they were put together with dowling actually and the dowling has brassed tubing on the ends of them and you could undo them and just slide them apart and they'd lock in together and you'd assemble them, out of the canoe casing, you'd assemble two ends

08:30 together and then you'd force the bow in and then the stern in and the centre has a hinged middle piece which you bring together force them down and it spreads the two, the forward end and the stern end apart and then you'd just join the dowering up together with the brass ferrules and there's a couple of nuts and butterfly screws go onto the gunnel and you've got it all together. So

09:00 they're reasonably rigid, they do twist a little bit but they're reasonably stable.

**What size cases or bags did they collapse down into?**

We had two canvas bags about the size of a wheat bag I suppose and they'd all collapse down and the casings and the framework would all fit in these two bags and two of you could carry them as long as you weren't going too far.

09:30 I mean if you had to go over a waterway from one lake to another you could carry them.

**Can I just interrupt, earlier when you were on the east coast were you doing some limpet mining exercises?**

I apologise for that, yes. Only up in Cairns, that was another boon for us. There were liberty ships tied up there and we were based out at the house on the hill just out of town at the

10:00 time.

**That was a Z Force house was it?**

Yes, it was called Z House, Z Experimental School and there were all sorts of people there, different islanders and that sort of thing. Anyway, we were able to launch the canoes and practise putting limpets on the liberty ships, only dummy ones full of sand and we were putting them on and taking them off and going alongside and they didn't know anything about

10:30 it. So this was actually - it made you very confident, you know, that you could do the job all right.

**How many of those exercises did you complete?**

Oh, a couple of nights we did, you know, one canoe would go along and put them on and another canoe would take them off and we'd do this for a couple of hours.

**Were you at any risk, were these ships guarded?**

I don't think so, we never saw any.

11:00 And Davidson and Lyons did go aboard them on the second night we were there I think. He went along and probably told them what they were doing just to see for themselves what it was like when we approached with the canoes, what they could see and couldn't see because the wharves were alight and they were all working there so the place was lit up fairly well.

**Did this cause a bit of a stir of what sort of reaction did you get?**

No, no, it was all done on the

11:30 quiet. As a matter of fact some months previous there was a party from ZES had gone down to Townsville and put them on ships down in Townsville Harbour. It caused a bit of a stink actually because they hadn't told anybody and the limpets were found the next morning when there was a low tide and the ships had unloaded a lot of their cargo and had

12:00 come up out of the water and some of the mines became visible and of course there were a lot of panic stations in Townsville. So they got quite a blast I think from headquarters for not notifying people they were going to have an operation there.

**What Z Force would have been responsible for that stink?**

They were based at the house on the hill in Cairns and they were originally going to go to

12:30 Bougainville, or somewhere over there, Rabaul. They were going to do a raid over there but Rabaul fell and that fell through. So Bob Page, my partner in the canoes, he was in that party and he was going to do that operation.

**All right, shall we leap forward again to Exmouth, Arthur, in your own time.**

13:00 Yes, and then at Exmouth of course we managed to get the new canoes and they were beautiful compared with the old ones. The old ones were only 12ft long and these were 16ft so there was twice as much - there was room for a 3rd man if you needed it. But then we were due to leave on September 1st and we

13:30 left that evening of September 1st, we got half way out of the Bay at Exmouth and there was a hell of a bang from the engine room and Paddy McDowell the engineer put his head up and said that the coupling had shafted in part of the tail shaft. So we got in touch with the - luckily, an American salvage ship had come in so they sent a boat out and towed us in alongside -

- 14:00 a fairly rough sea it was too so they'd come in from the work they were doing outside. But they were a friendly lot and the captain came aboard and had a look and they brought some engineers down and they went to work undoing the coupling and the shafts, took them up on board, this was about 8 o'clock at night, and they did a good job too because they had to get a crane over the side, lower a wire right down through our little
- 14:30 hatch, about 2ft square, in our decking and down into the engine room, get these parts on and take them back up. Of course, the Krait alongside of her is bouncing up and down and they were still but we were going up and down but anyhow they got them up top. Then coming alongside, we had no control over the bow boat and their tow boat wasn't very big, it was only a whaler, and we hit the side of the boat and
- 15:00 took a couple of planks out of the bow above the water line. So within minutes they had their shipwrights down, measured her up, took the measurements, went back up on board, they cut timber up, brought it down, they worked under lights and replaced the timber, had it replaced by midnight. The engineers they had to oxy
- 15:30 weld the shaft, they couldn't do it with electric and they had to do it very slowly so the shaft wouldn't overheat and it took them a long while to do just a little bit at a time. Anyhow it was done by midnight and they said leave it until morning to cool down and we'll fit it back again. Anyhow, the morning came, they'd fitted it back and we were fit for sea but the captain came down
- 16:00 he said, "Stay for lunchtime and we'll give you a good meal before you leave." And he said Admiral Christie, the American Admiral in West Australia had asked us to keep a look-out in Lombok Strait to see whether it was being patrolled or not because his subs wanted to use it. Anyhow, we stayed and he put on a chicken dinner for all of us and he was great. We were
- 16:30 about to leave and the stewards went to throw the frameworks of the chickens overboard and we said, "Hang on to them, hang on to them, we'll have them if you don't want them." So they handed them over to us and we lived on chicken for a couple of days. I might add that living on board there was no electric light and no water laid on of course, tap water, and the cooking had to be done on two
- 17:00 little kerosene burners and two meals a day. So anyway, we took off from the Chanticleer, the salvage ship, and we refilled at the tanker and took on about 8 44 gallon drums of fuel as well as what we had below and these were all tied up and secured on deck. And by this
- 17:30 time we only had about 8 inches of free board. So out we go and run into a hell of a storm and we took a big sea overboard and the Krait went over on a 45 angle and it stayed like that with water pouring overboard from the other gunnel and it couldn't escape but we got up a little bit and there was all water down the side of the ship. We managed to free the scuppers which had become rusted
- 18:00 and belted the scupper boards out and eventually we righted and the water drained away but if another big one had come we would have been gone, we would have gone over, and she would have gone down with all that weight on board. It was decided that the ship was a bit top-heavy and there was some decking, 3 inch bitumen decking, they'd put on for an aircraft safety so they chipped that all off and
- 18:30 tossed it overboard and lightened it down a bit.

**The crew got down on the deck and did that?**

The crew did, yes. So away we went then, it was plain sailing, everybody settled down to what we had to do, look-outs and all that sort of thing and watches. Then after about two days Major Lyons got everybody together and he said, "Righto, do you know where we're going?"

- 19:00 And I said, "Oh possibly Surabaya."

**What gave you that inclination?**

Because it was only just inside the Japanese perimeter more or less and I knew it was a shipping harbour, quite a reasonably sized harbour, so I thought well that's probably where they'd go. Not

- 19:30 Singapore I didn't think or right up to Batavia, as it was named then, I didn't think they'd go that far. Anyhow he said, "You're going to Singapore," and of course that raised a few eyebrows and "Ooh, aahs."

**Were you doubtful you'd make it?**

Well, also he said, "If anyone plays up or you want to pull out

- 20:00 I'll drop you off at the first island we come to and if you're there when we come back we'll pick you up." Anyway, of course, you don't pull out of it.

**Sorry, after when you say "Oooh, aahs" what kind of comments were made?**

Well nobody expected to be going that far and there was sort of talk about how dangerous it was.

**Was there a mutiny**

20:30 **looming?**

No, when you're that far you don't pull out when you're that far and all the training you've done then you'd lose a bit of face. Anyhow, talking about faces, he then produced a couple of tins of dark brown dye and sarongs. So he said, "You can take off that gear you've got on, put sarongs on and only come out in sarongs on deck."

21:00 We had screens down right around the back part, the aft part of the ship from the wheel house right around and back again and mainly we stayed behind these screens on top of the wheel house deck. You only went out on the front deck forward when you had to. So he said, "From now on that's what happens and you've got to dye your bodies dark brown and wear sarongs." Of course there were a lot of bloody

21:30 comments about sarongs, what everyone was going to look like.

**Can you remember some of the comments that you guys made to each other?**

Oh, you know, some of them were called islander. Who's that girl that used to play in those films, those road films with Bob Hope and those characters? It was one of those film stars who always used to play a part in them. No, there were a lot of rude comments of course.

22:00 Everyone was stripped down and they started putting it on and somebody looked down and said, "Do I have to dye the old fellow?" He said, "Of course, you won't get a native coming on deck with a white old fellow." So then it was on for young and old, you know, and those who had light coloured hair had to rub it into their hair, and ginger hair, there were a few of those. Yes, and then of course everybody had to paint one

22:30 another from behind and daub it on and there were a lot of rude comments then.

**Was it fun and games?**

A lot of fun. There were more laughs that day than there was on the whole trip because everyone was young, fairly young anyhow, and there was a lot of laughs. But then of course it got serious when we started approaching Lombok Strait.

**Were the officers painted up as well and wearing**

23:00 **sarongs?**

Yes, they looked funny too. But this dye, it wasn't a very good dye, it would wear off on any parts of your body that chaffed, you know, your arms and your legs would and you'd have to go to the tin and put more on and this went on for your whole trip and it was particularly bad when you perspired, it got sticky,

23:30 it was terrible stuff and they shouldn't ever have - well, I suppose it could have helped, probably helped. So we approached doing our 6 knots and 8 knots.

**It sounds like you still regret wearing that dye?**

I tell you what, I think it's had its results - my skin's terrible now but when I went back to the navy that dye,

24:00 of course all my skin used to go white and where I took a jacket off I'd have to shake it out because the effect this dye had on your skin it used to dry it out completely you know - I think you lost a few layers of skin but anyhow we survived.

24:30 So the idea was to approach Lombok Strait at night and hopefully be able to get through and we didn't know what to expect - search lights, patrol boats, anything. And this day that, I forgot to say, that we did the dying and sarongs, the blue ensign was taken down and the Japanese ensign was furled up,

25:00 the Japanese merchant flag.

**Can you describe that moment, the scene on board when that happened?**

Yes, it was put out on deck, a new one was brought out that they had and they said well you can't very well put up a brand new flag on this old Krait, you know, so it was put down on the deck and everybody had a go at making it fairly dirty and then it was taken down and our signalman hauled it up.

25:30 So that was meant to fool the Japs and I think it did a good job. So, anyhow, approaching Lombok Strait a search light came up on our port side and started to swing towards us and it lit the water up around us but the main beam didn't get as far as us, it was too far away and by this time the

26:00 tide had started to turn, and the tide was coming out, and the old Krait was making heavy weather of it and we entered the strait and it probably wasn't fully flood, the tide, but it was started to flow pretty hard and fast. Anyhow, they realised that we were standing still half way through the straits and

26:30 you know the trees were just standing there, we weren't moving.

**Not going forwards and not going backwards?**

Yes. And Paddy McDowell, the engineer, was getting a bit worried because then it didn't do the engine any good to be standing still and going flat out. So morning came and everywhere, still in sight of Lombok and another big island that was there and everybody just stayed under cover and didn't move or show

27:00 ourselves out on deck and the tide changed just before midday and slowly we started to make progress and by night we were out of the Lombok Straits and heading across towards Borneo.

**What was the mood on board?**

Very tense, you know, because they knew that there was an aerodrome on Lombok and there was an army garrison over there but it just depended where they were.

27:30 **And how was that time spent below deck?**

Just sitting there quietly – sound carries over water, you know, and you've got to be very careful and have no tins around or anything that can make a noise and you've got to speak quietly, no talking out loud.

**Were there any whispers?**

Whispers? Yes. Later on from that time on you more or less talked in whispers all the time.

**What did you whisper about while you were there?**

Just anything you had to talk about or to say or

28:00 do, you talked very low.

**What about during those tense hours what did you whisper about then?**

Oh, I forget now, but just hoping to Christ that the Japs wouldn't come and find out or get suspicious. And we didn't know who was on the big island, whether they had anything on there as well so it was very tense for quite a while until we got through.

28:30 But they decided to avoid the main shipping routes, direct routes, to Singapore say from Bali or Lombok or any of those places and headed across towards Borneo and go up the coast of Borneo and cut back across to Singapore from there and avoid all, not only ships, but any time we saw a mast

29:00 we just changed course if it was coming our way – and a sail because a lot of these junks and sailing vessels up there were quite fast. So if you saw a sail you altered course and some of them could go faster than we could.

**How frequently did you have to alter course?**

A couple of times with the junks that were coming from Borneo and going there and probably coming from Java

29:30 and as a matter of fact one big ship almost ran us down one night. I was on watch on the top of the wheel house and a rain storm hit us, everything just went black, the middle of the night it was, and the next minute across the bow I sighted this big tanker it was, probably only 100 yards ahead, and it was only barely visible. Of course I yelled out to the skipper down below, "Ship ahead," and

30:00 they stopped and went astern for a while until it cleared but it went across fairly quick and it would have pushed us under if we'd have been in its way. So that was the only close, really close, shave. We didn't see any other ships, only the junks occasionally from the distance.

**That must have kept you alert after you saw the ship?**

30:30 Yes, everybody was on their toes. So the next part of the voyage from there was to approach through the Temiang Straits and they worked all this out to go through at night time. They said there would be probably quite a few junks and craft like the Krait probably going through there, a shortcut to Singapore, and we probably wouldn't attract any attention because the Krait

31:00 came from Singapore in the first place and was used round the area and flying the Jap flags.

**Just for the record, when was the Krait commandeered and from where?**

Yes, when Singapore fell this Lieutenant Reynolds commandeered it and he was taking people across to Java or Indonesia, Sumatra, he was taking people across there

31:30 and evacuating them from Singapore. And that's when Lyons saw the boat and decided it would be a good boat to use and come back and do a job like this and carry out this operation – so that's how we came to get the Krait.

### **What a vision?**

What a vision, yes. I think he was a bit suicidal myself, you know, one of these chaps,

- 32:00 a typical English officer "do or die," you know, and bugger the expense. But anyhow we eventually got through the Temiang Straits at night and they anchored off Pompom Island I think it was and anyhow everything was all quiet until we heard noises of engines
- 32:30 and the next minute two float planes took off from somewhere the other side of Pompom Island and patrol planes went out, they went right over the top of the Krait, but never wiggled her wings or anything, but challenged us, and then a couple of fishermen were heading towards us in their canoes so we quickly up anchored and started to move slowly towards Singapore.
- 33:00 This was the idea, to keep moving, and don't show yourself on deck unless you have to, to avoid suspicion. We didn't know how the locals were going to treat you, whether they were going to dob you in or whether they were going to be friendly or not. We didn't know what the position was with the Japanese and whether they had planted a police station on the island and taken over, we didn't know what to expect, you know.

### **33:30 So when were you briefed on your operation ahead?**

Well, we knew about the operation while we were on the Krait but the actual operation itself?

### **Yes, in Singapore Harbour?**

After the - we cruised up getting close to the Bulan Straits which led into Singapore looking for a place to hide the Krait actually but they decided that that wasn't a very good idea and they decided they'd send it back to Borneo

- 34:00 and not use the two reserve canoeists, only use three canoes. And we were looking all the time then for a spot then to hide and a suitable landing spot, and we found what looked like one on Panjang Island and this was about 20, 25 miles from Singapore itself. So we kept moving until dark and we
- 34:30 turned around then and headed back towards this Panjang Island and Davidson and I took a dinghy that we had carried, a small dinghy, and rowed ashore and we had a good look around. We couldn't see any sign of any natives living there in any of the villages. So I went back to the Krait, paddled back to it, and told them everything was OK and it was a good spot. So then the work started, shifting all the canoes, in their bags
- 35:00 all done up and food, a few reserve cans of food.

### **Can you go into a bit more detail about preparing your canoes for this sort of operation?**

Well, at the time the canoes were still all in their bags and all the rations, they were all done up in cartons ready to go in.

### **What did they consist of?**

Pardon?

### **What did your rations consist of?**

Our actual canoe rations were what they call one man one day army rations. They were a tin

- 35:30 that had three little containers in them and they were horrible bloody things, too, to be quite honest. They had - two packs had little containers of dehydrated M & V [meat and vegetable] tablets, it was like an oily looking sawdust and you crushed these, soaked them in water and heated them up and you just more or less ate them like soup.

### **What did they taste like?**

Like sawdust, but they really never had a

- 36:00 taste at all really and they had a couple of packets with 4 army biscuits in. One of the packets only had a 4 inch tin of beef in it, a small tin of beef, and so you had two with these packets in it and one with a tin of beef in it.

### **Was that dehydrated or bully?**

The beef?

**Yes.**

No, that was tinned beef, a little tin of beef, a bit like

- 36:30 bully beef but the others had biscuits and these packets of dehydrated M&V tablets and there were a couple of little packets - there was salt tablets and, what else, I think there was some tea tablets, salt tablets and Vegemite, little tiny tins of

- 37:00 Vegemite. So you mixed all these up and put them in with the M&V tablets, stirred it around you know, to make it a bit palatable. We took twelve of those to each canoe and about three or four tins of bully beef and that was all the rations we took. We also had a 4 gallon drum of fresh water and about 6 water bottles as well, fresh
- 37:30 water, took it all off the Krait.. And while we were on the island, Panjang Island, we hid a couple of containers of water and some 4 x 4 rations, four men four day rations, they were the size of a kerosene tin, 4 gallon tin, we then hid them on Panjang Island in a bit of a cave, a bit of a recess.

**Arthur, did you canoe into Panjang Island in your canoes erected or did you take them?**

No, we took everything on the island

- 38:00 and then the following day the Krait went and left us then at midnight. We had a bit of a scare when a patrol boat went through, we don't know where it was going, it was probably heading towards where that air base probably was, where the sea planes came from. We don't know but it used to go through nearly every night as a matter of fact, through Bulan Straits and past Panjang Island. You could hear the diesel coming from a mile off, you know, you could hear this "boom, boom, boom" a typical diesel noise, and I think after I came
- 38:30 back after the war I used to hear that diesel for miles off a truck coming from a long way off, I could distinguish these diesel motors, you know - but it used to go through every night, it was like a big motor launch.

**You could hear the drumming up the river now?**

Coming from Singapore you could hear them coming and of course you'd hide and hop into the mangroves, you could hear them coming through, it was always in darkness. Anyhow, it was at midnight that they dropped us off, that went through, they stopped

- 39:00 unloading for a while until it went through and then finished off unloading after it went. Then they said their goodbyes and we went ashore and, you know, just rested for the rest of the night because we didn't know what was around us and kept our look-outs. Then in the morning we had a look around the landscape to see what it was like for security and then we started - in behind the mangroves there were little mangroves and a little flat area and assembled all our
- 39:30 canoes and hid the stores and we just rested. He said, "Well, rest for a couple of days and get your land legs back, you know, you've been cramped up for a few weeks on the Krait and get used to living on these stores." They were supposed to be one man one day and we had to make them last two men one day, you couldn't carry any more.
- 40:00 We didn't carry any implements as far as mugs or knife and fork, spoon, anything like that, we just had a sheath knife to do anything like that with. And you made yourself a spoon out of a piece of bamboo and a mug to drink the tea out of. We had a little billy and made a couple of cups of tea and each canoe looked after themselves and
- 40:30 you made a billy out of the empty bully beef tin, made a cup, and one had that and the other one drank out of the billy. Bob Page and myself were partners and we managed to get along all right. The rations were pretty light of course and we hardly touched our water bottles we mainly tried to do without them but you had to go thirsty it was terribly hot. We all wore blue
- 41:00 japara silk suits that covered the whole of your body and they didn't breathe only except where your arms went and your neck, you know. They were buttoned up and of course in that climate you sweated like the devil and of course when that came everybody smelled pretty bad but you didn't notice it much because everyone smelled the same. So we stayed there for about two nights and then the night we took off we just loaded the
- 41:30 canoes up, you couldn't unload the canoes, I mean you couldn't just carry the canoes loaded up onto the beach you had to beach the canoe and then take everything out - the water bottles, the limpets and the whole lot. The limpets were just put between the legs of the paddler at the stern of the canoe and the water bottle, the 4 gallon drum of water.

**How stable were the limpets?**

The limpets, stable? Well, they were just stacked on top of one another.

## Tape 5

- 00:30 **Arthur, just before we broke for lunch we were talking about your loading canoes on Panjang Island - if you could step us through that process of what you did of loading your canoes?**

The idea with the canoes, they were not very strong, so you've got to put your canoe into the water and then bring all your mines and equipment and everything and stow it away up in the bows and down aft and midships and all that sort of thing. They're so fragile



- 01:00 and when you land you've got to land on the beach and carry everything up and hide it and then take your canoe up as the last thing. We just loaded them and were getting into them to leave, just as it was getting dark, that was the usual drill every night - getting down just as it was starting to darken a little bit and most of the fishermen had gone home, the locals, and we heard this diesel coming along the straits from Singapore
- 01:30 so we had to back off into the mangroves and wait for it to go through. So from then we started the journey towards Singapore, you could see the lights in the sky of Singapore even from that far away you could see the light haze up in the sky.

**How far away are you from Singapore if you could draw a straight line?**

You could have been 15 miles, 10 or 15 miles I suppose but as I said about 25 when you zigzag all the way to get

- 02:00 there, 3 nights paddling all together.

**So am I correct in my understanding that you were basically over the next period of time attempting to zig zag your way to Singapore?**

Yes, you couldn't sort of plan where you were going to go, you could head towards a spot but it was up to the tide and as soon as the tide turned you had to dive for shelter - well actually before the tide turned, when you've got still water between the tides -

- 02:30 you had to dive for a spot to hide, you know, a suitable spot to get the canoes up and all that sort of thing.

**Would it be a regular time that the tides would change, would you be able to plan for that?**

Yes, you'd roughly have an idea I think of sort of how long you had but it took us 3 nights paddling to get within 8 miles of Singapore so it's a bit hard to say exactly how far it was

- 03:00 but I can tell you how many nights paddling it was with a loaded canoe. The difference between with a loaded canoe and after the raid coming back with an empty canoe we only made one stop from Dongas Island and back to Panjang.

**When you're paddling away are you sweating your guts out?**

Sweating, oh yes. As I say the heat up there is terrible, I reckon in Singapore all you do is perspire up there

- 03:30 and as I say with these black suits we had on there was no ventilation in the darned things and I think they were a bad choice it would have been better if we'd just had some green military uniforms, you know, jungle suits. It would have been better as it turned out.

**What are you wearing on your head?**

Just a skull cap and of course our faces are still dark with dye. Anyhow we got half way through the

- 04:00 Bulan Straits which is one of the straits leading into Singapore, there's quite a few, and the tide turned so we were stuck in the middle of nowhere, we were right up against an embankment that was about 3 ft high and the tide was starting to race through and you couldn't paddle against it. And Davidson's canoe was leading, which he did for the whole of the operation actually,

- 04:30 Davidson, he took over from Lyons as leader. Him and Falls went to scout a place in a little sort of a tributary coming into the straits and we were hanging on to the mangroves at the side of this embankment and all of a sudden Lyons - he was in the second canoe, he always followed Davidson, and we were last, and he lost their grip and their canoe came back onto

- 05:00 our canoe which did a little bit of damage to the dowling in the boat's construction. And that can make a difference sometimes to a canoe - if you've got something that just a little bit weakens you can find yourself having to paddle a little bit more on one side, it throws out the sort of line of the canoe a little bit. This was a bit bad because Lyons and Hewson were probably the weakest paddlers of the three. Lyons did very little

- 05:30 training with us actually. He lived in Sydney and would just come out on weekends every now and then up to where we were at Broken Bay. So he didn't get a lot of training and he was a pretty fragile looking fellow - tall and thin. Anyhow, they found a spot there to get into but dawn was breaking as we got into it and there was a village, fishing village, just across the water and it wouldn't have been more than 100 yards a way I suppose and

- 06:00 anyhow we got in behind the mangroves and Lyons and Davidson could speak Malay and they heard them talking about - somebody talking about 3 canoes so we were on our toes from there on, you know, what are they going to do? They realised that they weren't their local canoes obviously because we looked nothing like them so we had to keep a good watch all day and of course by the time night time came we were off again.

06:30 **Did you have to keep totally silent the whole time?**

Yes, yes. Up there the noise carries, your voice carries, you know, you can hear voices coming from miles away and little sounds – this is why they cut down on no cooking utensils more or less in the canoes because they could knock and rattle so you had to do away with things like that. So we were off then towards Dongas Island which was going to be our next base, they'd sort of picked that out as a spot

07:00 and that wasn't far from – those sand bar oil tanks were just near there. Anyway, we made there by dawn and found a nice little spot to hide our canoes behind and still close to the water.

**So you've actually gone from that island to Dongas at dawn?**

We got there at dawn, yes. Actually I think I've run ahead of myself there, we stopped at an island just at the entrance to the straits but

07:30 that was just a rocky outcrop and we took off the next night. So it was after 3 nights paddling we arrived at Dongas Island, our base.

**How big is this particular island, is it large?**

Not very large no, I would say it wouldn't be more than – it might have been a kilometre long, that was about all. It was uninhabited, there was nothing, no running water or anything like

08:00 that on the place but quite an excellent spot, we had a good view over to the Singapore Roads Anchorage area from there.

**Have you got any special equipment where you can actually see long distance?**

Telescopes? Lyons took a telescope with him actually, the long telescope.

**Was that useful?**

Yes, he could get a good view. From up on top of the island

08:30 he could watch over there and as a matter of fact we were there two days and he spotted a convoy coming in of about 13 ships over in Singapore Roads. So it was decided then – we never had our mines ready, they weren't primed or anything like this.

**How long does it take to prime a mine?**

Well we had to load them with a plastic explosive first. You've got to ram that into the mine, it takes around about 4 to 5

09:00 of these sticks of PEC, plastic explosive. So you've got to do that first and then you've got to lead a detonating chord through three of them, there's three in a set, three mines in a set, and you've got to join them all up together with detonating chord. Then the end one, you put in a delay fuse, and the delay fuse is a chemical operated thing that eats through a spring-loaded copper

09:30 wire which where it eats through it that plunges a plunger into the detonator, they're quite a big detonator actually. And you have a case of little glass ferrules with different colour liquid in it and each of these represent a different timing. But we didn't set the first night, we left it until – we finished up and we didn't arm them.

10:00 We had the detonators in there and this delay capsule but we never broke the capsule. And for that reason, why that happened, we decided to take off we got everything ready and as soon as it got dark we headed across but the tide was that bad, racing through the islands, that to get straight ahead up there you've got to point your canoe up there and you're sort of going across like that and it takes a lot of strength out of you trying to

10:30 paddle like that and we were only barely half way across to Singapore and I think it was about 1 o'clock in the morning.

**This is where you've just left from Suba?**

Dongas Island.

**Dongas. Are you heading for Suba now?**

No, we're heading across to Singapore Rhodes where all the ship anchorage was or part of it was where the ship anchorages were. So it was 1 o'clock in the

11:00 morning and we were only half way across so they decided to abort it, our 3 canoes were fairly close together and decided to abort it and head back to Dongas Island again.

**This is because under light you would be spotted and picked off?**

Yes, we would have had no hope of putting them on and getting away. We wouldn't have made it.

**At this point what do you think at this time what your chances are of making this mission out alive?**

Our life?

11:30 **Yes, do you think you're going to make it out alive, do you think this is a suicide mission?**

Well, I think we were all confident, I was confident we could do the job but I was a bit doubtful about getting away. I thought that they would have thrown up blockades, you know, in the different entrances into Singapore Harbour and put out patrols, enough to really pick you up and stop you getting away. But of course what you've got to take into account is they wouldn't know how those mines were placed on the

12:00 vessels or whether they were torpedoes or who put them there or were they submarines or what. They wouldn't know until they did an investigation and this could take them some time.

**Do you just like under these circumstances focus on actually getting there and once you're there and you've done the task focus on getting out?**

Yes. We were pretty confident because we'd done it in Cairns in training and nobody seemed to worry that you wouldn't be able to do it.

12:30 So we made back to Dongas Island after we had to abort that attempt.

**How are you going for water at this stage?**

Well we carried water. We carried a 4 gallon drum plus water bottles.

**I'm just wondering if this is enough with all the sweating that you're doing with the canoeing?**

Yes, it probably wasn't, it probably wasn't I would say because we were limited, you know, they sort of rationed it. The officers made the sort of rules,

13:00 you know, "You can have a drink now," and so forth but we only struck one island where there was running water that you could drink and that was Panjang the first island we dropped off at. The other islands had water holes here and there but they were that murky and there's a lot of pigs running around in a lot of those places up there so you couldn't touch it. It was necessary to carry your own. Anyhow the following night - actually

13:30 getting back to Dongas Island after that aborted attempt, Lyons and Hughes got lost, they didn't turn up, and our 2 canoes were there and waiting all day and they didn't turn up, we didn't know what had happened to them, whether they'd got caught up with it. But Davidson said we've got to go ahead with it now, we can't wait for them tonight when it comes.

**When you're travelling together and you're travelling one, two, three do you usually have eyesight of**

14:00 **the other canoe?**

Yes, while we're travelling to and from, yes. We parted company when we actually did the raid.

**I'm just wondering how you managed to lose Lyons?**

Well, this is one of the things, the weakness of the canoe party, and they said they were having trouble with their canoe but the tide was racing down away from where we were going - to get back we had to paddle across it to come back again and you drifted down from where

14:30 Dongas was so we had to go partially with it and then get right in close in shore and come back to Dongas Island close to shore. And as it turned out Davidson said, "Well, we're not going to wait for them, we can't, we've got to do the attack as soon as possible." Otherwise the rendezvous with the Krait was for 12 days time and we'd lost a little bit of time and things were getting a bit close.

**Are you getting any sort of signalling or messages**

15:00 **in relation to where ships are in relation to where you have to go and where you have to put the limpets on?**

This is a point that you didn't know until you could sight them really - whether there were ships there and where they were. That's why that convoy would have been quite good because it was visible. So when we moved up - oh, at dark, just as about to move off Lyons and Hewson turned up and it turned out that they were on the other end of

15:30 Dongas Island - I don't know why one of them didn't walk overland and along the island and let us know what was going on. But they waited until dark and found their bearings and came around, around the back quiet little area behind the island where we were. So they didn't have to unload their canoe, they were told they had to go straight away. And you paddled, you'd go for days without sleep you know, you could do it, you get used to it. You'd paddle all night and you'd spend

16:00 half the day awake as well and it's very tiring - that's why you've got to be really fit before you take on

these jobs. So we paddled right up to this Suba Island then, we tried a couple of islands further up moving further along, further east.

### **What was wrong with these islands?**

A couple were inhabited and dogs came racing out chasing – Davidson and Falls, they were doing the looking round for a spot and we were just

- 16:30 hanging in there behind them. And then eventually we came to this little rocky outcrop, it wasn't very high, it was about 10 ft out of the water I think and covered in low shrub. So we pulled in there and got our canoes under some scrub and cut a bit more and covered them over a bit to hide them and got our gear up on top of the island and rigged up a bit of canvas and cut some bushes to throw over it and lay underneath that out of the
- 17:00 sun. And from there it was about 6 or 7 miles across I suppose but the tide was going to help us a bit you see so this is why it was more favourable. And we had a view of Bukum Wharf area but not down in the Singapore Rhodes. So plans were made, we were running late. We didn't want to hold the Krait up if possible because if
- 17:30 she had to come back in and out and in and out they would be a bit suspicious. So they worked out for Davidson and Falls to go down to Singapore Rhodes and look for ships there and Page and I and Lyons and Hewson were to go into Keppel Harbour and Bukum Wharf area and we could see a few masts there from the island where we were so we knew there were
- 18:00 some ships there but how big they were we didn't know because we couldn't see, we could only see the masts.

### **How far did you have to canoe for this bit?**

Probably about 6 miles I think. So we set off together for about an hour and then Davidson and Falls they branched off, they were going in a slightly different direction to us.

### **Why's that?**

Well, they were going down to the Singapore Rhodes

- 18:30 area – we were more or less going straight across but they had to veer across to the right to get down to Singapore Rhodes. And we were halfway across and a search light opened up on our port side and it flamed down on the water and it came towards us and we headed the canoes into the light to cut down the silhouette and I slid underneath, down as low as I could get down in the canoe and Bob Page sat up on the back of the canoe and sort of just
- 19:00 paddled with one paddle – we had single paddles, just paddled with one paddle like the fishermen do and hopefully they wouldn't take any notice of us. But anyway, it got almost to us the light, the water was light around us, and then suddenly it flipped up in the air, went across over our heads and then out. Of course we said a prayer.

### **How fast is your heart beating under that circumstance?**

Probably 200 to the minute. About ten minutes later it came down in the

- 19:30 water again and started coming towards us and of course we thought, "Oh, they've woken up, there's somebody out there or something out there and they're a bit suspicious," you know. So we went through the same routine again and they did it again too they got almost to us and then went up in the air and over the top and out. It never came on again so whether they did know there was something there and were suspicious or whether it was just a training run, a nightly training run, I don't know but anyhow
- 20:00 we were pleased with that and said a few silent prayers and a few words. From there we just kept paddling – oh, I beg your pardon – before that at 10 o'clock, we weren't quite there at 10 o'clock, and the 3 canoes wherever they were stopped and then we activated the detonators on the mines. You had a
- 20:30 detonator on each set of mines, there was a detonator, a time fuse and everybody, all you had to do was screw down a screw on the end of it, on the end of this little casing and that broke the glass ferule inside that had the chemical in it. This was a 7 hour delay due to go off at 5 o'clock in the morning so we reckoned that would give us time to get away after we'd limpetted them and on top of that just near that
- 21:00 fuse there was another pencil time fuse which was only a minute. And this was if you got caught putting them on, you pressed it, you just pressed it and it activated it and the mines would go up within a minute.

### **You would be dead then?**

Oh no, we'd probably be paddling like hell trying to get as far away as we could in the dark, hopefully. The chances would have been slim but it would have alerted the others as well, they could have taken off straight away as soon as –

21:30 if they'd heard it.

**How far are your targets away from each other for the 3 canoes?**

Davidson's were quite a long way actually, it's pretty hard to estimate how much further he was, he'd probably be a mile or so, I'm not quite sure. Lyons one was supposed to be pretty close to where we were but it was talked about that

22:00 Page and I would go along the Bukum Wharf area and pick out the largest one we could, ship there - there were quite a few small ships - and then there were another couple of masts we'd seen just straight out from the wharf. Over the top of Bukum Island we could see another couple of masts from where we were on Suba and they were to be our targets and Lyons was to go a little bit further down. There were supposed to have been a couple of ships there during the day

22:30 but it turned out that night that the only ship they could find there was a tanker and they weren't supposed to put mines on tankers because they've got too many small compartments for different types of oil and fuel and that sort of thing. And you could blow 3 or 4 of them and you mightn't necessarily sink or do too much damage. It would depend what sort of fuel they had on board, you know, if any.

**What's the ideal target that you could have?**

23:00 Just an ordinary merchant ship and you had three limpets, a set of three joined up together. So we paddled along parallel to the wharf, Bukum Wharf, and it was all alight, there was no black-out or anything and, as I say, there was this stream of light right along parallel with the wharf. And when you're out there paddling parallel and you look in and you think there's probably no way possible that you could get in there, probably paddle your canoe in there without being seen because there's so much light.

23:30 They were all working on the wharves and there were lighters like a barge underneath the stern of one of them, there were arc lights on they were working and welding on it. Anyway we paddled along and then came across one that looked the largest of the lot, there were a few smaller islander boats there, you know. This one was quite large and it had its bridge and living quarters and everything at midships with a funnel and engine room which threw a little bit of a

24:00 shadow out onto the water as well which was a bit of a bonus. So we said well we've got to do it, time to go, so we paddled straight in and got right in alongside. So then I just clamped my hold fast on the side of the ship and Bob Page put his first limpet on and then I'd take my hold fast off. It's a little frame with magnets on it and I'd put that on and keep the bow of the canoe

24:30 into the ship, with my other hand I'd push the stern of the canoe away while Bob Page put the limpets on - it's a wooden stick about 5ft long with a catch on the end and he'd put some iron on that and he lowers it down as far as he can and then he's got to let it come in on an angle, hopefully the bottom row of magnets ease them on, they're set in rubber but they're very strong and

25:00 ease them on and then bring the stick over and let the top other row of magnets take on the ship and then just disengage the funny little catch on the end of the stick, disengage that.

**Is this noisy?**

This ship it was, very noisy. It was empty and of course as soon as I put the hold fast on to hang on, clang, it just grabbed and went clang. Probably to us it sounded noisy but it mightn't be to anyone on the ship it would be just another noise

25:30 but it sounded a little bit like somebody hitting with a hammer actually. And of course with the limpet, you haven't got that much control when you've got that dangling on the end of a 5ft stick 4 or 5 foot under the water, you know, and trying to come in on an angle, it's on the end of the stick and it takes control more or less. Anyhow, then he tapped me on the shoulder and it was on and then I took my hold fast off and grabbed my paddle - the tide was running with us at this time so we had to paddle a bit and

26:00 keep the canoe just running slow with the tide while the man in the stern splays the detonating chord out until he gets to the next, coming up to the next limpet, and he gives me a tap on the shoulder again. I stop paddling, grab my hold fast, get it on and then he puts the next one on. Then you repeat that and go and put the third one on. By that time we were down under the bow of the ship and it had an anchor chain down as well so we just

26:30 drifted over under the flare of the bow and took hold of the anchor chain and we hung on there. We watched a sentry walking up and down on the wharf and about from there to the road they were working on another ship all lit up and doing some repair work. We had a bit of chocolate that was out of the rations there and we sat there and at that and then thought, right, it was time to move. So we back paddled back up to the centre of the ship where there was a bit of darkness up there. And when you look out

27:00 "Oh God," and you see all that water and light and you think no way can you get out again. And you've got to turn your back on it, you can't see, you don't know whether you're going to get a bullet in the back or what's going to happen. So you had to turn around and paddle out and just hope for the best until you hit that dark patch again. When you're in there, near the wharf, and you look out and here's all

that lit up water then you see that black line, right down, and you can't see anything the other side of it so

27:30 you're safe as long as you can get to that back line.

**Would you say that that was more of a tense moment for you than actually attaching them?**

Oh yes it was, that was the tensest moment I think, going out and not knowing what's behind you and whether they're going to discover you or not. We could see our next target was straight out and we headed out for that and we decided that if there was any crew up on deck that they would be on the side overlooking the

28:00 wharf area, which was their port side, because Singapore itself in the water was dark on the starboard side so we thought well they wouldn't be leaning over there looking at darkness they be all looking where the activity was going on. So we went under the starboard side bow and we were just about to get ready to start putting the first limpet on and we looked up and there's cigarettes with blokes hanging on to them hanging over the side and so we had to back paddle then and

28:30 go under the bow and around the other side - it had to be our target, we'd picked it out, and just hoped to god there was nobody there. And from where we were up at the bow we couldn't see anyone looking over the side so, righto, we turned our canoe around and drifted down to the midship section. This was quite a good ship it was a fairly new one with goal-post masts - the other one was the old type with the funnel midship and engine room at midships.

29:00 So we put the first one and drifted down, the second and the third. You put one on the engine room and one on each of the hatches. We didn't look up the whole time we were doing this and putting them on because we hadn't seen anyone from where we were under the bow so you didn't look up because sometimes your face would show or a movement would give you away, or too much movement. So we put them on, drifted down under the stern and then I had a peep up and

29:30 couldn't see anyone so things were safe. So that was our second one done and the third one we knew approximately the direction it was so we paddled across towards the mainland of Singapore and we found it. This one was low down in the water, it was well loaded obviously. It was a very old ship too as a matter of fact, there was a lot of rust on it. So we snuck up alongside up to the midship section.

**How much of a distance is there between the ships that you've just put limpets on?**

30:00 Probably not half a mile I shouldn't think but of course at night time it was black as black, you know, so you haven't got too much visibility for too far a distance. Anyhow, putting the hold fast on, it didn't want to stick because the darned rust and the condition it was in, you know. So this is why you had the flexible magnets to help overcome that, you could put one side on rust and the other side might be on clean steel,

30:30 you know, or a barnacle or something like that. So I sort of had to move it and scrape it to make it get a grip. So we had to be quick working on this one. It was low in the water and there wasn't very much - it wasn't very far up to the deck as a matter of fact you could almost stand in the canoe and reach up to the upper deck. So if anybody had came and looked over the side we would have been gone. Anyhow, they didn't.

**What time of night is it now?**

I don't have too much

31:00 idea actually. It could have been about 1 o'clock in the morning, 1 or 2 o'clock. I think it was getting on towards 2 o'clock. So we put the three on there and everything was all right so then we dumped the hold fast overboard and a couple of things we didn't need and then pointed towards Dongas Island. This was to be our rendezvous, with Lyons only, to rendezvous at Dongas

31:30 Island. Davidson and Falls, when they put their limpets on, they were further down the harbour to what we were, almost opposite Dongas Island I suppose, but we were further up the harbour so it was agreed that, as we were running a bit late and they were strong paddlers, that they would go back a different way to us to Pompom Island where the rendezvous was going to be, not Panjang, Pompom, that was another day's

32:00 paddling so the Krait wouldn't have to come any closer to Singapore than necessary. So they were to go ahead and try and make it before us and get hold of the Krait to come back 2 days later if we weren't there. Anyhow, we met Davidson and Lyons, they found 3 ships eventually and put all their mines on and we just made the beach at Dongas Island when they started to go

32:30 up. So we hurried around the back of the island, we were at the front of the island facing Singapore, so we got around the back and climbed up a bit of a hill and had a bit of a view. But all you could see was a lot of smoke going over the harbour so one of the oil tanker's holds must have been caught alight and all you could see was black smoke everywhere. We couldn't see what was happening to the others but we heard 7 separate explosions and so we knew then - we knew

33:00 by then that Davidson got his three and we got three and Lyons got the one tanker. So we knew that obviously they'd done their job and were on their way hopefully.

### **It must have been a moment for celebration?**

Yes, everybody shook hands all around, a good job well done. But when we looked around from this Dongas Island and the view across the harbour you realised you were only a little island stuck there, if they sent out patrols looking around

33:30 they could have easily have searched that island and we could have been gone. So we moved over about 100 yards to a big island called Batam and we thought well if they do come round looking we've got a chance of getting away anyhow, doing something about it. But we had to wade through mud up to our waists to get in amongst the mangroves, to get far enough back to be out of sight because the mangroves went back quite a way.

34:00 So we were more or less in water up to our waists for half of the day and we had to wait there and managed to get up on our bum onto the branch of a mangrove tree and sit there for a while. We stayed there until dark. Aeroplanes were buzzing around and we didn't know whether they were looking for submarines or what they were doing. And there were what looked like patrol boats, big launches, moving around and

34:30 so we stayed there until dark on this island and waited and then away we went. There was nothing came around anywhere near us looking for us. So then it was back into the Bulan Straits, where we'd come from.

### **Did you manage to have any sleep?**

Sleep? Very little, very little because the night we did the raid that we had to abort we were paddling all night until dawn then the following night we had to move up to the next

35:00 island, Suba Island, and that night we had to take off and do the raid and then come back the next night and off again. And we just moved, the 2 of us canoes, just moved into Bulan Straits, heading back for Panjang, and anchored across the strait was this patrol boat that we used to hear of a night time. And it was funny the way it was anchored, it was anchored sort of across the strait, it was only narrow there and it was in complete darkness. There was nobody on

35:30 deck keeping a look-out that we could see but we couldn't do anything about it so we just took our paddles out of the water and let ourselves drift with the current until we got past. I could have reached out and touched the anchor rope that it had out at the stern. But they may have had asdic and were keeping a submarine watch. It could have been that, they might have had somebody down below.

### **Did you tend to think then and also in retrospect that they thought that they were being hit by submarines?**

36:00 Yes, probably, I would think so. And of course the rubber canoes they probably wouldn't give them a thing on the asdic anyhow. We got half way down the strait, when dawn came the tide had turned. So we made camp there and it was dark when we made our camp and in the morning when we came to view what was around us we were in a little cemetery, a Chinese

36:30 type of cemetery. And they had all these little stone ornaments about so tall and so round all stuck in this ground with all these graves. So we thought we were pretty safe, they won't come wandering around us, and we knew there were villages on Batam because we'd seen them earlier but they probably wouldn't come wandering around into a cemetery during the day unless they had a burial on or something. So we stayed there all day and no patrol boats came

37:00 so we took off that night and this time we were able to get back to Panjang in two nights paddling and we got there in the early hours of the next morning. But we didn't know at the time whether Davidson had already been and as it turned out Davidson had been and he'd gone to the stores, him and Falls, and got themselves a decent feed out of one of the 4x4 ration tins.

37:30 Of course Lyons, being a real officer you might say, a real strict officer, he wouldn't have done that and we just had to eat what we had, you know - there was some good tucker in some of those tins and some good rations. So we were due to take off that night and head for Pompom Island which they reckoned was about 40 miles away

38:00 from where Panjang was and anyhow come dark and a heck of a storm came out. The rain just pounded down, you couldn't go out in it. It went for hours so Lyons said, "Well, we'll just have to take the risk and stay here the night, it's no good risking going out in that." Anyhow the next morning came and he had a change of heart

38:30 he decided to change what he'd been doing all through the operation and that is hiding up of a day time and just paddling in the night time. He decided to try and make the rendezvous on time that he would take the risk and paddle in day time. We sort of were against it, the rest of us, but he decided, he'd made up his mind that he was going to take the risk. Because we also knew of an

39:00 operation post, a look-out post that we'd seen in a tree quite a few miles away from where we were but it was fairly risky. I don't think he should have done it myself. We took off an hour apart, we led off and then Lyons followed and by lunchtime we made an island probably about half way to where we were going and it was

- 39:30 just a bit of sand out of the water with a couple of trees on it. So we pulled in there and had a drink and a rest. We used to paddle for an hour and then a five minute break and then an hour and then a five minute break all the time. They came along, Lyons and Hewson caught up with us, so we had a little break there and we took off again for Pompom Island. Darkness had
- 40:00 come and we still weren't anywhere near it and eventually, about 3 o'clock in the morning, we spotted Pompom but there was a heck of a rip going right around the island and we got caught in this rip and we had a real battle to make land, to get out of it and make land. By this time of course we were completely exhausted the four of us and even though we were on Pompom -
- 40:30 I understood the rendezvous was to be at midnight that night, the 12th night, and if we weren't there she was to leave and go back through the Temiang Straits, away from the island, and then come back two days later.

**Why was it so important to actually be there on that 12th day?**

Well, to save the Krait coming back a second time because she had to come through the straits and they weren't too sure about some of the islands, the bigger islands there, whether

- 41:00 the Japs had outposts on them and look-out posts and that sort of thing. So even though the Krait was typical of that sort of boat in that area and the Jap flag was flying it was still risky, they might challenge you. And if they saw the same boat go backwards and forwards a couple of times you could be in trouble. So that's why we tried to make it that night and anyhow as far as I know we didn't see the Krait, she'd been and gone and picked up
- 41:30 Davidson, they were there, and Falls. They said they waited a while but if they did we never saw them. We were too exhausted we just flaked out on the beach and pulled up our canoes when dawn came. But then we moved around, further around, on a different side of the island where the Krait was supposed to pick us up, we were in the wrong spot to be picked up.

**Was this because you were so exhausted?**

Yes, yes, we'd only just made it, you know. And the

- 42:00 Krait was supposed to move, as far as I know, move up and down that part of the island.

## **Tape 6**

**00:30 So you've just been asleep on the beach on Pompom Island?**

Yes, and completely exhausted. So during the day we moved our canoes along the beach and up towards where we thought was a better spot to catch the Krait when she came in again, hopefully came in again, because we didn't know at this time that they had picked up Davidson and had been. All that day we sort of hid up behind the

- 01:00 mangroves and nothing happened that night. So there was a little bit of talk going well what if she doesn't come back what are we going to do, what is the best thing to do? And we were running out of stores because we only had rations for 12 days really and I think we had about one tin of the one day one man rations left. So it was decided if they didn't turn up within a day or two we'd probably have to go back to
- 01:30 Panjang Island and then make other arrangements which Lyons was capable of. He said we would capture ourselves a junk of some sort and we'd possibly head towards Ceylon. He'd done a trip before when the Fall of Singapore happened so he knew what he was about.
- 02:00 So that day two fishermen came while we were hiding up between the mangroves in the trees so Lyons said, "I think I might go down and talk to them because we might need their help." And as he walked down to the beach they threw a couple of fish out of the canoe at the beach at him. So he spoke to them for a while and asked them what it was like under the Japanese rule. And they said they'd be glad when it was all over and they could get back to was very scarce, rice particularly they said
- 02:30 living normally and food. The Japanese were collecting all the food that they could get themselves and the islanders were doing without, they could only make do on vegetables and fish, whatever they caught. Anyhow, Lyons said to them well, look, if you come back tomorrow he said he would leave some stores on the beach for them. And anyhow,
- 03:00 the Krait came that night so we went aboard and of course celebrations everywhere and we got noisy and Crilly, our cook, had a nice big feed waiting for us. I think he might have put a few tins of bully beef in and some tinned vegetables and made a bit of a feast out of the dehydrated mutton.

**How were you greeted when you rendezvoused with them?**

Oh, everybody was happy.



### **Had they been worried about your whereabouts?**

Yes, they didn't know

- 03:30 where we were but they had heard the explosions from the Rio Straits where they went, Davidson and Falls, and they'd heard the explosions so they knew that part of it was all right but the rest of it they didn't know. They were wondering as they told us when we met them, they were wondering whether we were still all right, whether we were going to be there or not. So Lyons got
- 04:00 Davidson to go down and pull out a bottle of rum that they had, they had some bottles of rum down there. They had rum and they had cigarettes for bartering with the natives, not so much the rum but cigarettes and bags of things, guilders, bags of guilders I believe. So everyone had a little tot of rum and then we got in our hammocks and slept for 24 hours, we didn't wake up until the next night. So then it was back - by that time he
- 04:30 Krait had turned round and gone back through the Temiang Straits and we were heading back down towards Lombok and Bali. I'm not sure how many days we were at sea before we got there but everyone was feeling quite happy and we were feeling quite safe actually because we'd come through Lombok Straits on the way up without any troubles. So they had the ship and the
- 05:00 navigation all teed up to arrive there at dark and catch the tide going through. Wally Falls and I were on watch, we were sitting on top of the wheel house keeping watch, this was at midnight, and I said to Wally, "Look there's something white over on Lombok side, just in the lee of the island, and it seems to be moving with us," but you couldn't tell whether it was a sail or what it was, you know, it was something light coloured. So I said, "Just keep your eye on it and I'll duck down and tell
- 05:30 Lieutenant Carrs," who was the duty officer and I told him, I said, "There's something over there and we can't make out what it is," (we never had glasses and they wouldn't have been much good anyhow at night). And just then Wally Falls jumped down and he said, "It's a warship, it looks like a small destroyer or a corvette." And by that time it was only about 50 or 60 yards away, sailing parallel with us and of course we'd woken everybody up and they all put
- 06:00 lifejackets on and got their Owens ready and the grenades were there already primed and Lyons he told Davidson to go into the wheel house and get the tin of cyanide tablets in case anyone preferred to take them in the case of emergency, they'd knock you out in a couple of seconds. We had them in the canoes actually during the operation.
- 06:30 And he went down and he had previously set the Krait up to be blown up. He had the spare cases of gelignite which we didn't use when we got the PHE explosive so they put them around the Krait and wired them all up so he could blow them. Meanwhile, everybody is down under cover, down aft on the interim hatch, watching and peering through the
- 07:00 curtains at this damned patrol bloke. It was about the size of a corvette or small destroyer I would say.

### **Were you muttering to each other?**

Not too much - I think Crilly, the cook, was the most vocal. He said, "Oh, you navy fellows, let the 7th Div have a look at it," you know, he was a 7th Div man. So he had a peek round the curtain and had a look at it and he just sat down and said nothing, you know, he was amazed.

- 07:30 I heard Lyons say to Davidson, "How are the men taking it?" And he said, "They're all ready for a fight so you needn't worry." So it stayed there for about 5 minutes I suppose and then all of a sudden it just dropped back astern, it didn't turn it just dropped back behind us and followed us for a while and then all of a sudden it came up in the same position again
- 08:00 and of course we thought that's it, they're suspicious and we could be going to cop it. So we thought if we could get close enough alongside we could probably board it and do some damage and we might as well and Lyons exploding the Krait up, blowing the Krait up, could do some damage too if we got alongside of it. But anyhow, it stayed there for a while, another few minutes I suppose, it seemed a long time, and then
- 08:30 suddenly it just turned to port and wheeled away and went back across to Lombok and we never sighted it again. We got through the straits by morning and well away and heading for home.

### **And breathed a sigh of relief?**

Yes, and breathed a sigh of relief. That was probably the worst, the most dangerous spot of the lot I suppose - I mean OK we could have been caught putting the limpets on and all that sort of thing but to get back so far after doing

- 09:00 that and possibly coping it there would have been really nasty wouldn't it?

### **I think it's what they call so close but so far?**

I wouldn't have been here today if they had have, I know that. I mean they didn't muck about, I mean they didn't waste much time before they beheaded you if you were caught.

**What instructions had you been given with regards to the cyanide pills had you been caught?**

Well, he said, "I leave it up to yourselves to decide what you want to

09:30 do, that's up to you but I can tell you now that if you get caught you won't have a very good time of it." He said, "They're not known for being gentlemen, the Japanese, they're really vicious." And he said, "What I'm really worried about if we get caught," - this was when we were in the canoes - he said, "you could be tortured enough to give away the whole story." He said, "You may not be able to do anything about it." He said, "This could happen but I'd rather that it didn't happen." Then the fellows on

10:00 the Krait would have a chance of getting back if the Japs didn't know how the raid was done and what was used and all this sort of thing. So he said, "I'll leave it to yourselves individually."

**Did you discuss the option of having to take these pills amongst yourselves?**

No, it wasn't talked about but I wouldn't be surprised, personally, if the officers didn't talk about it and they may have had another

10:30 option like shooting us and then shooting themselves.

**What gives you that impression?**

Well, knowing Lyons like he was that he'd be prepared to die, it wouldn't worry him I don't think. His wife was a prisoner in Singapore and their baby.

**Did this give him a personal agenda for the mission?**

I think so, I think it probably did. And also, as I said, I think he was a little bit of a death and glory type.

11:00 His father being a major general he probably thought, "Something for the name," and it probably didn't worry him. It may be bred into them perhaps in their officer's school in England, in those days, death before glory, and he was prepared to do it and the fact that he went back a second time of course probably figures that out. Trying to make a big

11:30 grand finish I think but that's another story. Anyhow they broke silence when we were a couple of days clear of Lombok and radioed back to, I presume to Fremantle, I don't know how picked it up - I think I heard Horrie Young say Coonawarra, it could be Canberra I think. The straits were, to get in touch with Admiral Christie, the straits were now patrolled and to

12:00 keep a look-out there and the operation was successful. So then we headed back to Exmouth Gulf and by that time we'd been trying to scrub off the dye that was still on us with buckets and buckets of turpentine.

**I was going to ask you, did you welcome the dye and the sarongs after having the blue suits on? After taking the blue suits off did you welcome the sarongs?**

12:30 Oh yes, just in a sarong then nothing else.

**How soon did you get back into your sarong?**

Straight away. As soon as you got back on board and everything was back to normal. But getting it off was terrible and I think it did sort of damage your skin quite a bit I think. But I've got that under the Repat [repatriation], they've got that, [Department of] Veterans' Affairs, so if I keel over with a skin cancer well it's on my papers so then the wife might be looked

13:00 after. If it's any injury or anything that you got through the war well then they've got a chance of getting a reasonable pension out of it. But anyhow, we eventually got most of it off and got back to Exmouth Gulf and I believe there was just enough fuel left to get back to Fremantle if we had have missed Exmouth Gulf.

**Why would you have missed Exmouth?**

Well if anything happened, I don't know,

13:30 they said you've only got enough to get to Fremantle when they measured it in the tanks and maybe if anything had happened at Exmouth we might have had to bypass them because it was an American sub base and that was getting bombed now and again I think somewhere around about that area. The Japs bombed there and Broome and a couple of other places.

**Did you have any Japanese aircraft flying over you at all during the operation?**

Up near Pompom Island when we went through the Temiang Straits

14:00 we had these, they were flying boats of some sort, sea planes, they were going out on patrol obviously at dawn, and they came over this one morning and we saw them occasionally again but nowhere near us. That was the only time we sort of spotted them. We did see other aircraft from Singapore going in different directions.

**What about this side of Lombok?**

No, nothing this side.

- 14:30 That was what we were glad about because they did have an airstrip there I believe but then of course they weren't alert, they weren't worried, you know, they had no idea who or what we were.

**So you made it safely to Exmouth?**

We made it safely but so much of it was good luck because so many times, I mean, even when you were limpetting and that somebody only had to look over the side and spot you.

- 15:00 And I believe Hewson, when they were putting theirs on the tanker, some fellow popped his head through a porthole and sort of looked around but didn't take any notice of them or didn't see them because it is a little bit dark down in the water down below, particularly if his ship's got a bit of height and they might just think you're a fisherman and wouldn't worry about you, hopefully.

**And did you all compare stories once you got back on board the Krait?**

Did we?

**Compare stories?**

Yes, yes. That didn't

- 15:30 take too long. No, we were into bed and into our hammocks and had a damn good rest. The others realised how we were and took over while the four of us had a good sleep.

**Can I just ask you a few miscellaneous questions? What kind of difficulties did you have landing and launching the canoes when you were island hopping from Dongas up to the harbour?**

Not a lot, you had to carry them down empty and then

- 16:00 place everything in its right place so that the canoe and everything was balanced and then the limpets and the water were put in midships right in the centre so that she was quite evenly balanced. And a few water bottles in the stern and a few up forward and that sort of thing and then push them out into the deeper water before you got into them – so you were a little bit wet before you started.

**And then you'd have to unpack.**

Then when we'd found a decent place where we could land,

- 16:30 a suitable landing place, then run up to the shore and then hop out before we could pull it up and start carrying everything up and before you brought your canoes up.

**And when you were hiding up did you keep a watch?**

Oh yes, there was one man on watch all the time, yes. We had – our gear wasn't any great shakes. We had one mosquito net and

- 17:00 one piece of canvas to each canoe so the two of you had to share a piece of canvas and a mosquito net for the whole of the trip. There were no blankets or anything like that, it was too damned hot anyhow. But no cover and the only thing that I found with the canvas was I was asleep one night and Bob Page was alongside of me, I don't know who was keeping watch but I heard this noise and I couldn't work out what it was and I thought

- 17:30 hello, my nerves were right on edge, you know, and you were fully dressed and had a 38 revolver on and so forth and so I got to the stage with my hand on it ready to pull it out and this noise seemed to get getting a bit closer to me and I put my hand out to balance myself, my left hand, and I put it on a little hermit crab crawling across the canvas. The canvas was that dry with

- 18:00 salt and that kind of thing, you know, it made a heck of a noise just its shell crawling across the top of the canvas and I thought it was somebody in the scrub just behind us. And I was ready to wake Bob up and tell him what I was thinking, it's just as well I didn't, I would have been a damned fool wouldn't I? But, you know, your nerves are that sort of on edge all the time and the slightest little noise is very noticeable, you know.

**At any time did you feel like you**

- 18:30 **wouldn't be able to compete with the tides and would just get swept away in the canoe?**

It was pretty touch and go that first night, the first attempt on the operation and we had to abort because we finished up not getting back to Dongas until daybreak and a couple of fishing canoes were out pulling up their pots, their fishing pots, and they obviously knew that we were I would say Europeans. I don't know whether they'd know we were Europeans or not but we weren't local natives of anything by the canoes

- 19:00 you know, and probably the way we paddled, two of us paddling single paddles and ripping along. So we had our fingers crossed there, we didn't know whether they would report us, you know, because

obviously the Japs would have paid them well to have them report us. It was a little bit of a toss up also on one occasion when a canoe did pull in, it looked as though it was going to pull into where we were

19:30 hiding. And Lyons and Davidson said well we can't let them get away if they see our canoes can we and they said, no, they've got to be got rid of. Fortunately, thank goodness, they never came ashore, they'd come to pull up a fish trap. They pulled it up and then just took off for another island. I was glad too because fancy having to do away with anybody, an innocent person,

20:00 I wouldn't have liked to have that on my conscience.

**You were travelling across some fairly open waters, what was the water condition like?**

It was good it was calm, fairly calm, it was almost like paddling on a river, sometimes a choppy river. On particular night, one particular night we ran into a storm, the night we were getting back to Panjang Island as a matter of fact on the way back, and one came up and we had to put covers on the canoe and just ride it

20:30 out, keep the nose into it, it really pelted down. It does over there, they call them Sumatras up there and they just - everything goes black and it just pelts down. You can't see ahead of you so all you had to do was hold the canoe steady until it passed over but that was the worst night that we had I think. There was another one but we were on the island but we weren't in the canoes so we were able to slip into the canoes and just pull the canvas on top of ourselves and just lay

21:00 there and wait. We stayed there all night actually and took off the next morning. So actually the weather was pretty good to us. The night of the raid there was no rain or anything like that.

**What were weather conditions that night?**

Pardon?

**What were the exact weather conditions that night?**

It was calm, it was dark, thank goodness, black as black. Yes, everything was with us as far as that. The tide didn't help us

21:30 of course much but it was a bit of a help, after we'd put all our limpets on and we were heading back to Dongas we were then more or less going almost with it, slightly across, so we were able to paddle like mad and make it by daybreak.

**Did I hear you correctly before when you said that on your return one of the other raiders had come back and gone to the rations before you and taken more rations than they were supposed to?**

No, no,

22:00 never heard anything. That somebody took rations?

**Yes, when you were on your way back and you got to the rations drum?**

Yes, Davidson, we didn't know that until we got back on board the Krait. Davidson and Falls had been and they'd left a note there to say, "Operation OK on our way." It was something like that I just forget the exact wording, but it was meant to intimate that they'd been there and that they'd

22:30 helped themselves to some of the rations, yeah.

**So you got the note?**

Oh, just a few odd things, just a feed I suppose, they wouldn't have taken much.

**And you got the note?**

No, no. We didn't go near the stores. Lyons wouldn't go near them.

**Why was that?**

Well, they were put there for emergency and one of the emergencies would have been if the Krait hadn't have come back. If anything happened we would have had to have made our own way back to Australia or wherever

23:00 so all the rations would have been needed for something like that. So, as I say, Lyons would have been a bit of a stickler and with something like that he would only have touched them in the case of an emergency.

**You mentioned before that Lyons' wife and child were prisoner on Singapore and that he had a person interest in the operation. Did that concern you or maybe**

23:30 **the value of your life throughout the operation?**

No, no, it didn't. At the time his wife was missing. She'd been in Australia and she'd boarded The

Nanking to go back to Singapore before Singapore fell and the Nanking was captured and she was taken prisoner with all the people on board and in a prison in Singapore. Now he didn't know that at

24:00 the time. All he knew was that she'd gone on the Nanking and that the Nanking was captured but he didn't know where she was, she could have been anywhere, or whether she was still alive or what. I think he got to know about it later on, through the Red Cross I think, that she was alive and a POW [Prisoner of War] in Singapore but Lyons himself probably would have been known by the Japs and he

24:30 would have been given a hard time if he'd been caught I think. He was working in intelligence in Singapore as well so he would have been known I believe. He was there quite a while before the war and the Japanese intelligence was pretty good in Singapore apparently, they knew everything that was going on, even where the big guns were pointed. So it probably didn't have a bearing but the fact that he knew she was a prisoner or hopefully was a

25:00 prisoner, but he didn't know where she was so I think that sort of urged him on a bit.

**And were you comfortable or happy with his command throughout the operation?**

Did?

**Were you happy with his command throughout the operation?**

Yes, really, now he was the senior officer and he was in charge and it was his operation but as I say Davidson took over once we went into the canoes, he was more or less made the leader and led the way.

25:30 He was in the first front canoe and he did all the scouting and as Lyons said, "We'll follow Davidson from now on, whatever he says goes." But he was close behind him so naturally he could talk to Davidson and whatever they decided. But he relied on Davidson and his knowledge and the fact that he could talk Malay as well and he was the best man for the job, I think he was.

**Was there ever any conflict between them?**

No, I don't think so. No, I never

26:00 heard of it. No there was never, in the whole of that journey from Cairns say at the beginning of August '43 to the time we got back to Darwin eventually, there was never an argument or a bad word, I never heard it on the whole trip. So that sort of goes to show that not only brain and brawn but the temperament, you know, you've got to look at that when you pick a party to go somewhere like that.

26:30 Because living in such cramped conditions you've only got one whinger amongst them and it could upset the lot. And I never heard anyone whinge or argue they were all pretty good.

**How important was Operation Jaywick strategically for the Japanese or possibly strategically for the Australians?**

Well I think the raid would have upset them a bit. The fact that it would make them vulnerable that the

27:00 enemy could get in there. I mean they thought that they were probably impregnable, the fact that somebody could get in there and do the damage they did, we did, and also it might lead them to draw protection say from a fleet somewhere else. They might draw patrol boats and that sort of thing and certainly their patrol work would have to be boosted up after that lot, you know. It would probably pull a few troops away to patrol the area a bit better.

27:30 So I think morally, and probably mentally, it probably would have made them pull their socks up and realise that they weren't as secure as they thought they were.

**So as well as destroying those ships it seriously damaged the security of the harbour?**

Yes, Singapore has got a lot of little canals and things sort of going into it, waterways going into it from all those islands, because all those Islands around there

28:00 belong to Indonesia actually and are under their control, originally, but in war-time they probably would. There's ways in there and lots of ways you can go into it and when they did the second raid they went in another way but they were caught getting in.

**Had your earlier experience in Singapore helped you at all throughout the operation?**

No, I'd been on the

28:30 Manoora and in those days on a big ship you never went ashore anywhere except into town for one day. So my experience up there wouldn't have been anything valuable.

**Had you moored up there at Singapore Rhodes on the Manoora?**

No, we went straight up to the naval jetty, the naval wharf, which was up near the causeway that goes across to Malaya so we didn't see anything of how the land laid or anything or the islands.

29:00 I'd have been completely lost if I'd have been on my own up there.

**But it had been one of the reasons why you were selected possibly?**

Pardon?

**It had been one of the reasons why you were selected?**

Probably, yes. They probably thought I'm a bit experienced, you know, and been on a ship for a while and all the other - the other 4 seamen were new to the game they hadn't been in the navy very long so they probably wanted a little bit of

29:30 experience amongst them. Apart from one of them I was older than the rest of them, some of the others were only 18, 19 years old - rather young for that sort of work really I think.

**Were there any other dangers when you were island hopping like you mentioned earlier wading into the mangroves?**

Well I never spotted anything but Davidson said, "Yes, if you hear noises during the night you'll probably find they're crocodiles, small crocodiles around," he said, "they are here."

30:00 They were the only sort of thing, you'd be soon up a mangrove tree if you heard a noise or something disturbing the water but while you were in the canoes you were pretty safe. I don't remember ever seeing any sharks, you'd see more sharks in Broken Bay. There were a lot of them in Broken Bay.

**When you were there during training?**

Yes, they'd come up within 10ft of your

30:30 canoe and go along parallel with you, they'd follow you for quite a while, six to eight foot long.

**How did you react to that?**

You'd just keep paddling along and quietly, you know, you'd quieten your paddle down a bit and you didn't make too much noise. You see with those single paddles that we used, they're like they use in the Canadian type of canoe, not the double-ended ones, they're too noisy, too awkward and with the single paddles you can both paddle

31:00 one on the side, one on the other side, and when one gets tired he just says change and you change over and start paddling on the other side. So when one arm gets tired you just change which you can't do when you're using double paddles. And double paddles, one end goes right up in the air and water runs off it and you can see shimmering in the light in the night time with them and you couldn't use them alongside the ship because they were too long and awkward. You would have to break them in half and try and use one half

31:30 so they weren't suitable I don't think for that sort of work. They're quicker, you cover ground a lot quicker and faster but not for that sort of work.

**Can I just ask you, it might sound a bit trivial, we've sort of brushed over this a few times but can you just itemise everything you had with you in your canoes during the operation?**

Yes, well the main thing of course was the 3 sets of limpets, 3 in a set, and

32:00 the fuses that you used, the box of fuses, the detonators and the liquid that you put in to sort of activate the detonators. We also carried holdfasts, two holdfasts for holding onto the side of the ships and we probably carried about 8 water bottles to each canoe plus a 4 gallon drum of

32:30 water and 12 one day one man rations, tins of rations plus a few extra tins of bully beef that only lasted about 3 days to supplement the other rations. Of course, a little tinned box of cyanide tablets were there amongst them.

**Weapons?**

Weapons. Yes,

33:00 we couldn't - I was very disappointed actually, we only took a 38 revolver each which was a pretty small ineffective weapon if you had to get into a fight. But the idea of course was not to get into a fight, to not be seen and not be heard and to avoid anything like that. And each one had a knife, they could choose whatever they wanted, they'd carry a sheath knife.

33:30 I carried an ordinary sheath knife but we had knuckle-duster knives and we had stilettos as well as our equipment but I didn't take mine, I didn't want to get that close to anyone. No, I thought they were a bit useless and a sheath knife was all you wanted and it was also useful for cutting up anything that you needed, you know, because we never had any knives, forks or spoons or anything like that. And we had one mosquito net and one

34:00 sheet of canvas to sleep on and one mosquito net to share between each canoe. I think that about covers it. We were taking for the whole time - tablets, yes, we were taking - how many tablets a day, we were taking about 6 tablets a day of vitamin C, salt, quinine and

34:30 one other, iron tablets. But we started taking them from the time we left Exmouth, particularly the quinine tablets for Malaria. So it must have been effective nobody was sick, we all lost weight but nobody was sick so they must have been effective.

**And what was the overall weight of the canoe once you had it**

35:00 **fully loaded?**

It was up around 600 or 800 pounds with the weight of the two paddlers and all the equipment, it would be close to that I think.

**I reckon the vitamin C and iron would have been important with the diets you were on?**

Yes, because you were getting no fresh – from the time we left Cairns, we did have a week in Exmouth Gulf with a bit of their food, but from

35:30 the time we left Cairns until we got back almost to Darwin – we went to Exmouth when we came back and then Lyons left the ship and came down to Perth, and who else, Bob Page and Taffy Morris.

**Why those three?**

Well they went to – Lyons of course and I don't know why Page did but I think he got married while he was off so I don't know whether it was anything to do with that or not.

36:00 Yes, he had plenty of strings to pull, his father used to be the administrator of Rabaul and his uncle was Sir (UNCLEAR) Page a politician so he had a few strings to pull as well, Bob. He was a nice chap though. He'd done two years of a medical course when he'd joined the army so he was handy in that respect too. And of course Lyons would have had to report I suppose. He went straight back to England I think – I think he flew over

36:30 east to report over there and then went straight back over to England. So Davidson and Ted Carrs, the navigator, Lieutenant Carrs, we sailed then after we'd been there for a week, in Exmouth, took it up to Darwin to the Allied Intelligence Bureau or Z or whatever you liked to call them they had all sorts of names. They had a base up there called Lugger Maintenance Depot, LMS,

37:00 and it was a hopping off point for Timor and those places and we left the Krait there and we got a plane down to Brisbane.

**Was it hard to say goodbye to the Krait?**

Pardon?

**Was it hard saying goodbye to the Krait?**

No, not really.

**You didn't miss it at all? What kind of plane did you fly back on?**

A VC3 – one that had the seats along the side, you know, you faced one another. I don't know whether they

37:30 altered them later on, they probably did, but that was the early days. They might have stayed like that all through the war but anything was good enough for us. We flew back to Brisbane.

**Had you flown before?**

No, that was the first time. And from there they flew me home from there, back to Perth, but the lousy devils didn't fly me back I had to go back by train, troop train but that's all right.

38:00 **Sorry, you flew to Brisbane from Darwin?**

Yes, we flew to Brisbane and had a bit of a celebration there. There was a house there, an old house, Warralunga or some name like that, but anyway they had a headquarters there and we had a bit of a party.

**Everyone from the Jaywick Operation?**

Yes, the Jaywick and a couple of others that were in the – Campbell, a Major Campbell, Major Jock Campbell,

38:30 he was one of the organisers as well, he came down from Malaya, he helped Lyons with the organising and I think there was someone there from Z's office and we were all interrogated as soon as we came back and had to give our individual stories.

**Can you take us into those interrogations?**

Pardon?

**Can you take us through the interrogation?**

I don't think so - I think he was writing - I don't think they had tapes in those days.

**Can you talk me through the interrogation, what actually happened?**

No, he just asked us

39:00 what I've actually told you today, he asked us to tell our story of the raid part of it as I've told it to here probably just to compare notes with the others, they all had to go through it.

**Whereabouts, what facility were you at when you were interrogated?**

This was at this house that they'd taken over up in Brisbane as a headquarters. So we were only there a couple of days and we went off and got a month's leave and came back home for a

39:30 month and then we went back and by that time they'd established this training camp up in Fraser Island.

**Just quickly, Arthur, you were then flown to Perth for a month's leave?**

Yes.

**How did you spend that month?**

With Mum and the family and just occasionally walking down to Canning Bridge about a mile away and down to the local pub and having a couple of beers. But, you know, you couldn't tell anyone where you'd been and what you'd been doing or anything, you know, you just had to tell the family, you know -

**How difficult was that?**

40:00 Pretty hard, you'd meet up with your brothers and they'd say where they'd been and what they'd been doing and all this sort of thing and I couldn't say a word, you know.

**What did you tell them?**

I just said I couldn't say anything about it. It would probably come out after the war but during the war I've been threatened and warned, which Lyons did, he said, "If any of you get talking, you'll know it," he said, "there is a penalty, you could be shot or put in jail probably for the rest of the war

40:30 and kept isolated." He said, "You've only got to talk to somebody and it could upset a future operation." You don't know who's who and what the Japs had around here, you know, whether they had anyone around.

**Did your family leave you alone when you told them that?**

Oh yes, yes, besides I took home a few cartons of cigarettes for Dad and one of the brothers that smoked - I didn't smoke at the time, and we

41:00 split up all these cartons of cigarettes that were on the Krait that they were going to trade. They were cartons of tins of 50, the round tins of Capstan 50, you wouldn't see them these days but they were very popular in those days, they were British cigarettes. So each one took a few cartons of these home and spread them around. I did have a couple of other things that I'd used, equipment, a couple of knives and that

41:30 sort of thing and a little compass and I took them home with me. They said all gear's expendable so I took those home but I gave them to the museum, the Canberra Museum. They asked me did I have anything over here, they were setting up a special room over there, more or less a Z special room and they wanted to put it where they had this model of the Krait and sort of set up a bit of a story

42:00 with the gear that they could get.

## Tape 7

00:30 The one on the left down the bottom she's a teacher down in Albany, lives about 50k out of Albany on a little property and she comes up every school holidays and stays 4 or 5 days and goes back to look after her zoo she reckons she's got a zoo. She's got a dog and she's got ducks and she's got WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and she lets people that are down the road that have got some cattle come and keep the grass down on her

01:00 block, so everything she signs from Jilly and the zoo.

**Well it looks like you've got a bit of help out there from the family which is great, it gives you a bit of break too?**

Yes, it's good that they come round, all care and hop in. But all the personal things you've got to do yourself, you know, like get her in the shower, get Joy in the shower and that sort of thing, it's only you that can do it, you know.



**Still, you need a bit of time off?**

Yes,

- 01:30 well they say you do and perhaps I might tell at the finish but at the present moment I wouldn't go away. I could have gone over to Sydney just recently they had the Jaywick show on over there, the first commando crowd put on a show at the Maritime Museum and they were at me to go over and I said, no, I wouldn't go, I'm not leaving Joy and so I didn't tell
- 02:00 Joy and the family, I told the family don't mention it in front of Joy and the other fellows from Z where we go sometimes and have our barbecues I told them don't mention it because I know what Joy would think, that she was holding me back you see and I thought she'd feel bad about it. So I've tuned them all up, you see, so nobody's opened their mouth yet, I hope they don't, because there's a couple of local fellows went over for it. There's a Z reunion in Sydney as well, their unit association

02:30 decided to have a reunion at the same time.

03:00 **I've just got a couple of questions, just listening after the last tape. You said that you came back home and you couldn't say a word of what you were involved in. How long was it before you could actually speak out?**

Not until some time after the war. Outside there, there's a page of the Sydney Herald or something that somebody sent me over, I think that was in '46.

03:30 It had the story of the raid on it so I felt free to talk then seeing it was in the papers.

**Did it give all the details?**

Pardon?

**Did it give all the details, the Herald?**

Quite a lot, yes, there's a photo of the 14 and a canoe there that we never used. The boys had made it actually while we were down at Refuge Bay out of plywood but it was no good, you couldn't manoeuvre it, it would go straight ahead and you couldn't use it.

04:00 But, yes, I felt free then to talk because it had been made public and also I'd been up to Government House and the Lieutenant Governor had pinned a DSM [Distinguished Service Medal] on me and so it was all out then.

**Now that you've mentioned the DSM, how did that come about? How long after the operation that you were involved in did it come out?**

Not long - as a matter of fact we'd been up to Fraser Island and

04:30 the 5 of us navy fellows had decided that we'd go back to general service. We weren't too happy with the things up on Fraser Island. It was a military show and it was all military and they'd given the 5 of us, experienced fellows you could say, jobs like on the barge and on a launch that they had going over to the mainland and one fellow helping out the unarmed combat bloke, being the fall guy, being tossed around and teaching the

05:00 army fellows unarmed combat. I finished up, I never had anything for a while a job to do and no training and nothing organised, you know. And then they sent me out the back beach, about an 80 mile beach I think it is on Fraser, a sand beach, and gave me a couple of tents and about half a dozen canoes and then every week or so they'd send a party out to practise going in and out of the

05:30 surf. So that was my job for a while but it got boring after a while. I finished up, the rations were there with tobacco in them so I started to smoke and kept on puffing away until about 1980 and it doesn't do you any good does it.

**So that's all you were doing on Fraser Island?**

06:00 And the others weren't happy too on what they were doing so we said, "Oh well."

**What were they doing?**

One of them was helping out - they had two landing barges there that used to go across for stores, they were helping out on that. Another one was helping out on a launch that used to go and pick up mail on the mainland and as I say another one helping out the unarmed combat fellow and two of us, Moss Merriman - I don't think Moss was doing very much he came out on the

06:30 back beach with me for a while and then I was left on my own out there and I thought this is no damned good. So when we went back into the camp I said, "I think I'm going back into general service in the navy and take up where I left off." And they all said they felt the same. So we told Davidson, Lieutenant Davidson, by this time he was lieutenant commander and Bob Page went from lieutenant to a captain. Lyons by this time was over in

- 07:00 England, we didn't know what he was doing, and Davidson said he is coming back but I don't know what we'll be doing. And I told him that we were going back to the navy and he tried to talk us out of it and you couldn't do a course to go up to leading seaman or anything like that. They spoke to the navy about it and they said, no, you've got to send them back to the naval depot where they can do a course and we were getting bored
- 07:30 stiff and we said well what about if we go and do the parachute course, the army fellows all did it down at Richmond, in NSW, and they got a pay rise of an extra 3 shillings a day which was nearly 50% of their pay for those days, and we weren't we were just back on the ordinary seaman's pay. And he said okay and he sent us down to Brisbane, the naval depot at Brisbane, he came down with us,
- 08:00 finished up coming down with us. And then it was announced that we were given these decorations and personally I don't think they did it right giving us 3 seamen in the canoes and the stoker, the engineer, DSMs and the other fellows in the crew
- 08:30 and all the reserve canoeists they only gave them a mention in despatches. And I thought for doing what they did and, you know, putting their life on the line like that and extra duty and that, I thought that that was pretty poor myself. The officers, Davidson, Lyons and Page all got DSOs [Distinguished Service Order], that's right, they got DSOs.
- 09:00 And Ted Carrs, I don't think our navigator, I think he only got mentioned in despatches too, I'm sure he did, and the other boys in the crew except for the engineer and I don't know why he was singled out. I mean he did a good job, certainly, he did a very good job looking after that motor for that length of time without it missing a beat but I think they were a little bit
- 09:30 unfair there and I think the whole lot of them should have got DSMs and made it equal, you know, they all took the same risks.

**I certainly agree with you under the circumstances of what you've been telling us? Did you actually get danger money for the time that you were?**

Yes, they gave us 50%, 50% while we were on the raid and the day they came back they cut it out. So I

- 10:00 think the other boys might have been made acting able seamen by then so they would have been on six shillings a day so they would have got 3 shillings a day extra while they were on the road but as soon as we came back it was cut out.

**It sounds like even though you got a pay rise for it, it sounds like a ridiculously low amount of money to get paid?**

Danger, money, yes it probably was but of course pay in those days was, it was

- 10:30 low and we were only getting six shillings a day when you were an AB [Able Seaman], later on it went up to eight shillings and caught up with the army. So, yes, I suppose three shillings a day, it mounted up a little bit.

**I see what you mean about the money being commensurate for the times but it still is not commensurate with what you were doing?**

- 11:00 I think since the war, I think when we were demobilised I think on my pay sheet they gave you an extra twenty-five pounds I think, twenty pounds or twenty-five pounds I think. I think they gave VCs [Victoria Cross] about fifty pounds but we got about twenty or twenty-five I think. Yes, that was it but the

- 11:30 risk, it didn't matter what you were doing - you looked at it this way that you could have been on a cruiser or something, you could have been on the Kuttubul and got knocked off and be killed. So you sort of looked at it that way when you're young, if you're here or there or wherever you are there's a chance you're going to get killed so you sort of didn't look at the risk. But now of course it's a bit different, you look at it differently now and you think that that was obviously a suicide mission really.

- 12:00 That's my view of it anyhow. You can rate it probably similar to some of these suicide missions that these people are doing except that most of them blow themselves up.

**While we're actually on that subject, you mentioned that you had your suicide tablets on you at all times, I'm thinking about when you were talking to Julian [interviewer] when the boat came to sniff you out off the coast of Lombok,**

- 12:30 **would you have taken it?**

No, no, I don't think I could have taken it in any circumstances. I'd sooner have shot myself if I had to.

**Why's that?**

Well rather than fall into the hands of the Japs, you're only going to be beheaded anyhow if you do which they did.

**You said you'd rather shoot yourself?**

Than take a cyanide poison pill, I think.

**Actually I don't get that?**

"Bang! Gone!"

13:00 That's only my thoughts about it, I never thought of taking it if I had to. Yes, when I look back over it, you know, you get a different view of really that you were stupid for going out of your way when you were doing a job in the navy as it was, why put yourself in that position

13:30 like that, you know. I mean, okay, the other Z people they were dropped off in islands and they had bases and arms and if they were lucky they had food dropped in and you stood a good chance of surviving but the engine only had to break down and where were you? You would never have got back to Australia - I doubt we'd have been able to paddle a canoe

14:00 that far without getting into trouble. There were a couple of fellows on that later Operation Rimau that almost made it back, they got back to Timor or near Timor, an island near there.

**There would have been blokes on that that you knew?**

Pardon?

**There would have been blokes on that mission that you knew?**

The other 5 canoeists plus Freddy Marsh, there were 6 of them. And one close particular mate of mine, Wally Falls, we were pretty close as mates because he was about my age

14:30 and we were similar types I suppose, he was country bred from Casino and came off a dairy farm and I'd lived on a dairy when I was younger, when I was 12 years old, but we got on well together and he was one of those that went back the second time. And it was very close because after we went down to Brisbane to get out of the navy, to get back into the navy, we were sent down to the headquarters in

15:00 Melbourne and we all had to go before a commander, a navy commander who was the Liaison Officer, and he wanted to know why we wanted to get out and all this and he said, "I can do this for you and I can do that." And I said, "Well, we've been asking to be able to do these things and we've been denied them."

**What they actually knew that you were part of that operation?**

He probably would have

15:30 known. We were at the headquarters and so most people at the headquarters probably would have known. Anyhow, I said, "No, I'm not going to change my mind, I'm going back to the navy." And he said, "You won't get a ship, you'll be stuck in Lonsdale Depot in Port Melbourne for the rest of the war." And I wasn't too sure whether it was a threat or whether it was a promise or what because after I'd been there for about six weeks -

16:00 there was 2 of us got out, Moss Merriman and myself, the other 3 navy fellows, he talked them into staying so they went to a Z camp in Victoria for the time being and I'd been in Lonsdale depot for about 6 weeks and I thought, this is not the life for me. I was doing guard duty and this is all I was doing, they put me on sentry duty and 24 on and 24 off and this was going on

16:30 and it was winter time and raining like hell and I thought "Oh No." So I rang Davidson up at the headquarters, I managed to get onto him and I said, "Look, I'm fed up over here can I come back," and how can you be so silly. Anyhow he said, "I'll speak to Lyons about it," and he said, "There is another operation on, I can't tell you anything about it. So he said, "Ring me in a couple of days," which I

17:00 did and he said, "No, it was Colonel Lyons by this time, Colonel Lyons has got somebody else to replace you in the party that he's got organised." He said, "You can come back into Z Unit but he said you'll be sent back up to Fraser Island and be re-allocated somewhere else. So I said, well, I'd been with the other boys for 21 months training and in the operation and if I couldn't come back with them I wouldn't come back at all. So end of story

17:30 I finished up, my papers caught up with me at Lonsdale Depot and I got onto a merchant ship as a gunner which I had trained for before I joined the special service.

**So obviously the operation that you were talking to Davidson about that you didn't know at the time was Rimau?**

Yes, it turned out to be Rimau, yes. And I ran into the 3 that stayed on Spencer Street Station and they were heading over west they told me.

18:00 This was just after, it was later on, they said, "We're going over to the west," and they said, "to do some training for a special job." They didn't tell me what it was I don't know whether they knew at the time they possibly didn't. Anyhow, yes the 3 of them were gone and 6 of them all together.

**It must have been devastating for you to hear the outcome of that?**

18:30 It's all I ever think about of a night if I'm not sleeping, you know, I think about why didn't they do it in

canoes in the first place? It was successful the first time, if you had to go again, you can hide canoes, you can hide them in all the mangroves in the islands and you can wait, provided you've got enough stores – I think going up in the submarine was a good idea, but if you had enough men you could have enough stores planted. You could use some for the operation and some for just planting

19:00 stores. But you can hide and you can wait and see what the targets were, where they were and he could have positioned them on different islands, you know, and a good chance of getting back away I thought with the canoes. But you don't know but you see they had to capture a junk and the junk had no motor in it so they were at the mercy of tide and winds. So when they went past this island eventually

19:30 they were more or less still because of the wind – and there was no wind and the tide apparently was not strong there and this police boat caught up with them. I mean it wouldn't have happened if they'd have had canoes and only moving at night time.

**It seems like a badly planned type of thing?**

They hadn't been tried before the one-man subs that they were using it. They've got one, or a model of it, down at the Maritime Museum but they'd never been, they hadn't ever been tried before,

20:00 only the fellow that designed them, and Lyons apparently saw them in England and decided, for whatever reason, I don't think he liked paddling very much and canoes somehow (just my feeling) but whatever the reason he thought apparently they could do it. But their range was very small, their batteries wouldn't last too long and their speed wasn't too good either I believe from fellows that I know that trained in them and they were very,

20:30 what shall I say, uncontrollable at times. You only had to shift your weight a little bit and they'd go over to one side and all this sort of thing. You had to balance, be very careful with your balance, whatever you did had to be done slowly and make sure you didn't alter the distribution and the weight. They were very temperamental things apparently. And they would have had to finish up in canoes anyhow. They were going to have

21:00 canoes on islands for them to do their job with these one-man submergible things and then go to the island and make their get away in the canoes. So why didn't they do the job in the canoes? It's easy now once it's all over but to me it seemed to make sense.

**I can certainly see your point. It sounds like Lyons brushed you up the wrong way a few times?**

No, we got on all right. I never heard a bad word, I never

21:30 heard him say a bad word to anybody but he was sort of quiet, he sort of kept to himself. He wasn't a mixer with the boys like Davidson was. Davidson was the type of officer that could mix with the fellows and with the other officers too, you know.

**This is a bit of a retrospect kind of question. With Jaywick did it actually change the moral of like Z men or any of the other**

22:00 **people involved in the war the fact that you had such a success with the operation?**

Well the other Z men wouldn't have known. They wouldn't have known anything about it, we never spoke about it to anybody, even to all the other Z fellows. No, they wouldn't have had any idea of where we'd been or what we'd been doing. I don't know, I mean obviously the army and navy obviously were probably happy with it, it caused a bit of a ruckus up there and a disturbance and it could be done.

22:30 So that's probably why they put everything behind Lyons with his second operation, hoping that it would go off with a big bang, because he was taking about 13 men I believe and these underwater craft. So he was looking to try and knock off, you know, quite a few ships.

**How did you find out about Rimau?**

Only after the war, I didn't hear anything about it

23:00 until it was published in the papers because there was nobody from Rimau here to tell the story and I think I heard that they were missing pretty soon afterwards but I just don't know how that came about. There was nothing sort of published about it for a while.

23:30 **Do you have any idea why you were actually chosen for Jaywick? I mean there were obviously other blokes that they could have chosen from?**

Yes, maybe because I looked a little bit like a Jap from a distance anyhow. But the build they said was obvious, more of a Japanese build I guess, short and a bit – probably and a little bit of naval experience if needed

24:00 and probably my childhood experience, you know, being on the river and canoes and this sort of thing and this was going to be a canoe operation. It probably helped a little even though my tin canoes were nothing like these at the time but probably it helped. Maybe they sort of gauged that I am normally quiet I know and I don't talk too much but that could be because my wife

24:30 talks a lot, used to. Possibly they might have gauged with the fellows their temperament when they

were talking to them and got a bit of an idea what they were like.

**You mentioned also, it's a few tapes ago I remember you mention how you don't sleep very well because the slightest noise like with the hermit crab. How long does it take you to recover from that nervousness?**

- 25:00 You didn't sort of get it very often, just every now and again. Perhaps something might have upset you during the day and you can't sleep and your mind goes back to it, you know, and I didn't sort of think very much about Jaywick because I knew everything was all over and quite successful but I used to think, you know, how would I have been if I'd have gone on that raid? How I would have stood up to being possibly in
- 25:30 prison for six months and then being let out to be executed. I feel for those fellows because knowing them so personally, particularly Wally Falls and Bob Page, they were both executed and I really feel for them and their parents and Bob Page had married just before he went away. I did hear that
- 26:00 Page and Davidson weren't that keen on going but they thought they owed it to Lyons to go to back him up and I think that came from the wives, they felt the same way. So this is why I still often lay awake, perhaps I might wake up during the night and I just think about it, you know, but it doesn't worry me very much now
- 26:30 old age has taken over.

**They obviously didn't take the suicide pills?**

I do believe two did. In later intelligence and when they were going around and interviewing some of the natives on the islands up there that were present when the Japs were chasing them from one island to another and

- 27:00 there was, from an island where Lyons and two others were and - no names - where they fought out a last stand, they sent these other two off to another island because they were badly injured. Anyhow, the Japs then with the aid of one of the natives went to this
- 27:30 island and were looking around, because they knew there were more around of the fellows, and they found the two of them, they were badly wounded but they hadn't been dead for very long and there was a smell of - the native told the interviewers that there was a funny smell around them and I believe cyanide leaves a smell a bit like almonds or something like that, rather a strong sort of smell. So it was
- 28:00 thought that maybe they had taken them. They probably only took them when they saw the Japs coming and there was no hope of them getting away and they were badly wounded apparently and they think that they may have taken them. There's also another conclusion about the fellow that was on the pick-up submarine that he suicided in England later on after the war in the
- 28:30 '60s and they believe that he used one of them, a suicide pill. He felt guilty about it because the submarine didn't come on time and pick them up and they think maybe, that's just thinking that this is what happened. Apparently he wasn't injured or anything like that. He did go ashore but the investigation he made wasn't very thorough and the submarine didn't pull into the spot that it was
- 29:00 supposed to pull into as well. It was late, they put off going back to chase ships and try and get a few kills in themselves and put it off. So if they had gone back when they were supposed to some of them might have been saved. They worked that out that they possibly could have saved some of them because they'd been back to the island after fleeing from Singapore to the island, Mirapas I think it was, the name of it, but they had to clear out when the Japs found them on
- 29:30 there. And they cleared out that night to another island nearby and it is said that they would have seen the submarine if it had come in when it was supposed to at midnight and probably a lot of them would have been saved.

**It's a completely tragic story all round really isn't it?**

Yes, and also they might have got away with it if the fellow on that junk hadn't fired at the police boat.

- 30:00 The police boat - they may have been able to talk their way out of it or it may not have happened, you know. When I say it's a police boat, they were Indonesians or Malays on it, you know, so they may have been able to get their way out of it in some way or another but once they opened fire on it they were gone, the security was up because one of the
- 30:30 fellows on the boat managed to swim ashore and raise the alarm. So, you know, if, if and if. It shouldn't have happened.

**It sounds like something that just shouldn't have happened from square one. I also just wanted to ask you about the small destroyer that was hanging around?**

In Lombok Straits coming back.

**Even though you don't know what it was doing at the**

31:00 **time, in retrospect do you have any idea what it was doing?**

It must have been on patrol. It was moving along Lombok Island, we could see it moving with us, you know, so it must have been snooping around and then of course it sighted us because it was dark and that typical boat from around the area and flying the Japanese flag they

31:30 decided it wasn't worthwhile looking at. And it would have been difficult boarding, perhaps with that tide going into the straits, you know, they probably decided just to let it go.

**Incredibly lucky moment for you.**

I would like to meet the skipper of that destroyer and find out what was his reason, you know, why, and thank him of course.

**Have you ever traced back**

32:00 **any of those sorts of stories?**

About that destroyer you mean? No, I haven't but I believe Moss Merriman has found out something about it and the name of it but I've no idea what it was and what he found out - I don't know whether any of the crew are still alive. But I've found out from somebody over there that he found out about it

32:30 and the name of the destroyer. It would be interesting wouldn't it?

**Yes it would be, it would be an interesting story all right. So we're just going back to where we were along the path of your life before we went on a big divert there so you've been told basically that you can't be part of the operation which turns out to be a good thing. What are you doing now, are you on Fraser Island again?**

33:00 No, we were down in Melbourne at the time. We'd gone down there to go back to the navy and I was then put into Lonsdale Naval Depot and I was just doing watch keeping jobs, sentry jobs, because my papers hadn't caught up with me actually and they couldn't give me a draft until my papers caught up because they didn't know that I had done a gunnery course in Flinders until the papers came

33:30 along and as soon as they arrived I got a draft onto what was a steamship, the Colac, it was an old steamship. It used to go up the coast and the islands and around to Darwin and that sort of thing.

**What was its main mission?**

Just taking cargo - as a matter of fact one load was completely 3,000 crates of beer which they took up there. But general cargo and then it would load with general cargo on the way back - call into

34:00 ports up in Queensland and load sugar and stuff and bring it down south and general merchandise. I was on that for about 2 or 3 months I suppose, 3 or 4 months, and then they transferred me on to another ship called the Karringa which used to come down to Perth. It was a new ship, a bigger ship and that used to come round to Perth and bring coal and coke and general cargo around to Fremantle

34:30 and call into Bunbury and Busselton down south on the way back and pick up loads of timber and used to go back fully loaded with stock from here. We used to load up at Busselton first with a light load because the water was shallow there and then go to Bunbury and top up the load with timber there, big timber, jarrah, you know, and big sleepers and things and take them around and unload them in Sydney.

**Is this actually after the war or still during the war?**

No this was during the war from about the beginning of

35:00 1945 I think I went on to it. It's not even on my papers and there's nothing on my papers to say I was in Z Force or anything like that. They just sent your papers round from depot to depot and when they paid deferred pay at the end of the war and sent me a small amount that you got if you were only in depots I had to remind them that I wasn't in the depots so I got another cheque. The army was

35:30 all right, their papers and pay book went with them wherever they went but with us it didn't, your papers stayed at the depot or whatever ship you were on. Of course the Z crowd never had ours, they never had much idea how the navy did things I don't think. I used to get called 'Acting AB' and my initials were changed to A.M.W and all this sort of thing and an acting AB is a sailor that's been in the

36:00 navy for twelve months but never been to sea. You got an AB's pay but you were still classed as an acting AB - you could be like it for years if you never went to sea. You had to have the sea-time then to become an AB. And of course that's a little bit of a slur really that I had been to sea.

**You certainly had.**

And this is what they have you know, in the write-ups they put Acting AB because the other boys were Acting ABs for quite a while before they went on the Krait

36:30 so they just classed you all together. And Andy Hewson's initials were A.M.W. and so they put A.M.W. for mine and mine are A.W.J. you know.

**I hoped you fixed that quick smart. How did you feel about hauling cargo up and down the coast to West Australia after what you'd been through?**

Well, it was quite a good job. It was a complete change from the navy because you were given bunks and a

37:00 cabin and sheets and pillow slips and some of them, you ate in the ward room, when the officers finished you went in and sat in the ward room and ate good meals. But you kept a lot of long watches and it was pretty bleak when you went down south, you know, about the level of Tasmania, lower than Tassie, when you went across the Bight.

**Well even the D'Entrecasteaux sort of area is pretty rough?**

Yes, I know, the Bight can be very rough and you can get days when it's beautiful. But other days

37:30 when you get up on the bow of it and some of the rollers that are going across there, god they look a mile down when you look down on them. You rise up on a high one and look down and see them, it doesn't pay to do that too long you get seasick. No, it was quite a change and I enjoyed it.

**What was your reaction to hearing about the A Bomb being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?**

Very pleased, yes, very pleased. I mean a lot of lives were saved, I know Japanese lives

38:00 weren't, but I know a lot of our lives were obviously saved and it brought an end to the war which we badly wanted.

**And what were you doing when you found out about the end of the war?**

I was still at sea for a few days and going across the Bight actually when we heard about it. Then we got to Sydney there were celebrations. Then I stayed on the ship, we were only there a few days to reload it and it came back west so I stayed on it until it got back to

38:30 Fremantle and then I was sent to the Leeuwin Depot and I stayed with the navy then until - in May 1946 the crowd that I - what they called the DEMS gunners, defence merchant ship gunners, had a depot in Fremantle and as the merchant ships came in we had the job of unloading ammunition and taking the guns and lockers and that off. So it was like a day job to us, we went

39:00 home every night and didn't have to keep watches and that sort of thing.

**That would have been a change?**

Yes, it was good.

**So did you fairly enjoy that time in Leeuwin?**

Yes, it was good and you were back with your family, you know. Two of the brothers were back, one of them was the army and the other one was air force, the younger one. And another was army, he was stationed somewhere down Karrakatta way, wherever the army barracks were

39:30 and he got out soon afterwards. So, yes, we got back into civvy street.

**And what did you decide to do when you got back to civvy street?**

Well everyone had the option of going back to where they worked pre-war days and I went back to Charlie Carter's and the grocery business.

**I imagine that would have been quite difficult to go back to Charlie Carter's and the grocery business?**

I didn't stay long, no. I stayed there 12 months and then I eventually got, through the rehab department, you could take a trade if you never had a

40:00 trade. So my brother was in commercial, in engraving, process engraving, quite a big firm, Gibney's. And he said, "There's an opening in there if you want to come round," and so I went round and saw them and stayed there for 33 years. 33 years in the one job.

**And what sort of thing were you doing in that job?**

I was in a section that used engraving machines and did the proofing of all the

40:30 plates that were made, colour work and black and white and all those sort of things as they came through from photography, the printing down room and the etching section. Then they came into the finishing room and I would have to trim them for size and all this part of thing as a part of the job and then proof them and then all the proofs were checked and then double checked before they were then - newspaper ones, newspaper plates and full page ones, double-paged spreads you would send down to

41:00 The West or Sunday Times or whoever they were for. They were unmounted but anything that went to the printers were mostly mounted on bases, wooden bases or sometimes stereo metal bases, solid bases, and that was what I did for 33 years, Oh God.

### **Why is it Oh God?**

Yes, I cursed afterwards because I originally wanted to be a carpenter. I thought carpentry would be a good trade and a handy thing and a handy trade to

41:30 have but you had to wait for years because everyone wanted to be a carpenter or a builder or some sort and you had to wait for years to get in it. By this time I'd married, we were married, so this came up so I thought oh well I'll take it, it's a job. Then family started to come along and along and along and along.

**Not a good time to change trade. We'll just pause there for a moment because we're right on the end of the tape.**

## **Tape 8**

00:30 **So we just got up to the bit where you met your wife. Can you tell me how you met?**

She was working at Charlie Carter's when I went back after the war. And we met up, when did we marry 1947.

**So there was a good reason for you to be working at Charlie Carter's?**

Oh yes.

**How long were you dating before you got married?**

Good question. Went home in

01:00 '46 about May I met her - probably about 12 months a little over twelve months.

**That's quite quick and how old were you at this point when you got married?**

About 25.

**Which is still pretty young?**

Yes.

**And where were you living together after you were married?**

We lived with some people down in Bicton for a

01:30 while and then we lived in a caravan for a little while on my mother's property. She had a big block on the Canning River still, a new house built up where the old one was and then we built on the block behind Mum's at Canning Bridge. Well, we called it Canning Bridge but Mount Pleasant now. It used to be Canning Bridge in the old days and it became Mount Pleasant after that. So we built there in about

02:00 1951 and stayed there until 1980 and by that time the house was too small for all the girls because you could only build a small house when we built that in '51 you couldn't build a big house and you had to get a permit to build and wait for the housing commission to give you a permit. And you couldn't even build a brick house because there weren't enough bricks. You'd have to wait for a couple of years after you'd got your

02:30 permit before you could build. So we wanted to build straight away so we built an asbestos tile place there.

**There was a lack of bricks?**

Oh yes, well everyone was building - building, building, building. You know, it went ahead soon after the war so probably they didn't have the brick works capable of turning them out, they weren't used to having a rush on like that. Anyhow, we built,

03:00 had a comfortable house built there but only small and of course then by 1980 the girls were getting bigger and they were only in little sleep-outs on the back veranda and that sort of thing so we took the opportunity of moving to Leeming to a 5 bedroom 2 bathroom house and a bigger house so everyone had a room and that sort of thing. Had we stayed in Mount Pleasant where we were I could be just about a millionaire now because it was a half-acre block up on a

03:30 rise overlooking the river but at the time it was only valued at about - I had a couple of valuations \$47/48,000 was the highest valuation I could get for it. So in those days it was still a working man's area but now it's gone on to be almost elite now, they're building mansions worth millions of dollars.

**But still you had to make a decision at the time?**

I did and it was the better for the family, probably we would have been better

04:00 off and then we moved to this bigger house in Leeming and the family all decided to go overseas for



holidays and we were left, Joy and I, more or less on our own then in a 5 bedroom house, a big house. So, financially, and the fact that we wanted a smaller house, we moved over here. We made a few pounds out of it, a few dollars out of it, at Leeming, but not really enough

04:30 really. I realise that now, you know, we weren't looked after with superannuation and that sort of thing.

**Well, it's only recently just started to get better?**

We lived all right, we've got a good family and we live according to what we get so we're quite happy.

**What sort of, I was going to say RSL [Returned and Services League] but you've got a special club that you're part of that's part of Z?**

Yes Z Association WA. Yes, we -

05:00 not so much now, we've sort of eased off now, we used to have regular meetings and barbecues and go out on picnics up to paddocks up in the hills and that sort of thing but we're getting on now - and our children all used to go and enjoy it then but they're different now they've got their own lives now. They still come to some of our barbecues and everyone is still very close. There's only about twelve of us in our association now but they're all - all my family, they

05:30 still call say Ted Duggan, Uncle Ted, and Bob Long, Uncle Bob, and they have from kids so, you know, the respect is still there amongst all the families of the Z people so they're still pretty close, you know.

**How much did you actually tell your family about your exploits in the war?**

Nothing. Nothing. When the book The Heroes came out they've all got a

06:00 copy of that now but, no, I know they were proud of Dad and he used to get a write-up now and again but I had to tell them, "I'm no damned hero. I was just doing a job," and not to go boasting about it as kids do, you know, "My Dad's a hero," or something, I thought, "That's not very nice." No, very little, they didn't seem to worry about asking me I don't think

06:30 too much about it. Kids aren't that interested in the war really it's only when they get a bit older that they get more interested.

**Did they get more interested as they got older?**

Yes, more so - they're all different. Julie, down south, she's very interested in it, she used to go to all the - when we had get-togethers in Sydney and Melbourne she used to often come over and she used to enjoy that. And she's

07:00 pretty close and friendly with most of all the families. And Peter, the youngest boy, he's always interested in it and he spent a bit of time in Sydney and he used to go down to the Krait and he used to go to all their meetings and their dos over in Sydney, the Z crowd, he was always made welcome. And he's always the first one to volunteer to go to these, the barbecues and things.

**What do you personally get from getting together with the Z crowd?**

07:30 Out of?

**What do you personally get out of it?**

We're still very good friends and they'll do anything. Ted will always say, "What can I do for you?" because he's pretty knowledgeable up in the insurance game and with the RSL and all that sort of thing and if you want help he'll always give you help, you know, and everything like that. And they used to, not so much now because everyone's sort of older and settled, but they used to help one another with busy bees on

08:00 the properties and their houses, you know. And if anyone took sick they used to give them a hand out. One fellow down in Bunbury he was out of work and I think he was sick so they took up a collection and used some of the club money and bought him refrigerators and things like that and we took it down and had a busy-bee clearing his property. Yes, helping one another, yes, it's quite good.

**So the camaraderie still continues?**

Yes, and the women, the

08:30 women still like to keep in touch too. They all like to get together and have a yarn and talk babies and have a few drinks. The friendship is still there.

**We were talking to Bob yesterday who's also a mate of yours and he was saying that like as part of his training they did not want best mates to be together as part within a group because they did not want you to spend time trying to save your mate?**

09:00 **Did you have anything like that?**

No but it's a different sort of thing being on the Krait and things like that it's totally different to being where he was, you know. For that reason they very seldom would let brothers go together on the same

ship. I believe they would always separate them because something like that might happen at the same time and another thing is that you would lose two in the one family if the ship went

09:30 down which was another thing. But, no, that sort of never came up with our operation, it was totally different. I think they had a pretty hard time really in Borneo, harder than we did I think. It mightn't have been quite as - but we didn't have to get around except when we were in the canoes and we had to get out in the mangrove mud and that sort of thing but that was only for a couple of weeks and we were back on board and you could have a

10:00 salt-water shower, a bucket tipped over you.

**I think you're way too humble. So do you think that your training actually increased the mateship quality of the people that you were going to be working with?**

Oh, I would think so, I would think so, yes, we all became very close and there's a funny thing about Queenslanders, they were nearly all Queenslanders - I don't know

10:30 how it turned out that way, maybe they were all picked from one class I don't know, at Flinders, I never asked them that but it turned out that most of them were, nearly all of them were Queenslanders. And I've always found that during the war whatever ships I've been on, if you had Queenslanders, WA fellows seemed to cobber up with Queenslanders - there's something between the two states that are very similar I think, the lifestyle.

11:00 Whereas the cities like Melbourne and Sydney that a lot of them came from they were different, I thought they were different, a lot of them were smart Alecs too I thought. Yes, they were different people, I thought the people from Queensland, the fellows, were more sort of homely and similar to Western

11:30 Australians.

**How important is mateship and looking after everybody else's back when you're on a mission such as what you did with Jaywick?**

Well once again, once you got into the canoes you had to look after yourself more or less. Nothing ever came up that you sort of had to go to the rescue of the other canoe or get them out of

12:00 trouble or anything like that so that didn't sort of come up like it would say on the land army and in the jungle and that sort of thing, you would have to look after someone's back there. But we were always in a boat or a canoe so that sort of thing didn't crop up. But, you know, naturally you would expect that if anything did come up they would all be behind you.

**What would you say would have been your**

12:30 **greatest fear throughout your career?**

That destroyer up in Lombok Straits probably - even worse than being up in the canoes and putting the limpets on - we were all sort of confident that we could do that - I wasn't too confident that we'd get away but then to have this destroyer come up and start pacing you and then do it a second time, we thought we were gone then.

13:00 Probably that would be the time I think that you felt it more than anything. You didn't sort of worry in the canoes about being caught. You were too busy paddling and keeping a look out and your nerves were on edge - you were on edge all the time of course for any little thing that might (UNCLEAR) that or anything that would happen, you were always on the

13:30 alert but I don't remember feeling any fear while you were doing it, you know, and I think we were all confident that we were going to get away with it. As I said to Wally Falls one day when we were overlooking the harbour the day before, he said to me, "What do you reckon, Joe, do you think we're going to get away with it, that we can do it?" And I said, "I'm sure we can do it,

14:00 we've done it, we've done it in Cairns and got away with it." But I thought that our escape route might be blocked up that they might have covered that. I'm surprised they didn't but of course then they didn't know what was going on and they were gone before they probably realised and sent divers down to have a look at the damage and ascertain whether it was torpedoes or whether it was mines or whatever it was that caused all the trouble so we were sort of well away from it by then

14:30 and the door would be too late to close I suppose. I would think that they probably thought that they would have been put on, a submarine would have involved in it. I don't think they would have ever thought that a vessel from Australia or anywhere else would have got right through up to there and been responsible. So it was surprise really that was one of the things that got us through.

15:00 **Do you know if there was any press that actually covered the fact that their ships were blown up in Singapore? I mean not saying who did it or who was responsible but was it actually publicised from the Japanese point of view or did they keep it a secret?**

I don't know. I didn't hear anything about it. I would doubt whether even they would let it out. Chaps that were POW in Singapore have

15:30 told that they heard the explosions and knew something was going on but they didn't know what it was all about. They were probably hoping that help was coming. No, I don't know, I've never heard any reaction from the Japanese, they probably wouldn't admit it anyhow.

**While you're on the subject of POW camps, can you tell me what happened to Lyons' wife and child, I'm just**

16:00 **curious?**

Yes, when the war was over - I've got an idea that she might have been, there was something to do with Australia but I'm not sure now whether that's getting mixed up with she came down to Australia from Singapore before the war and had the baby. I think she stayed with some people she knew that had a cattle station up around Onslow

16:30 so I believe but as soon as she had the baby and was well enough she hopped on the Nanking and went back. Obviously the war hadn't started by then but she was captured somewhere up there as soon as it started. I don't know where, I don't know whereabouts either because to be captured, the Nanking if it left here you would have thought the

17:00 passage direct would have been somewhere through Java way and the Japanese sort of didn't get control of that until around about March '42 I think the Perth was sunk, the Battle of Sunda Straits and so they wouldn't have had real control of Indonesia until after then.

17:30 So I don't really know where - she went back to England I know and I know she lived with Lyons' parents for quite some time. I think they sort of looked after her, she was French. Her parents were on an island somewhere up there, around the islands way, around (UNCLEAR) India somewhere and some French position there somewhere.

**So the ship that she was on was that some sort of passenger ship?**

18:00 Yes, the Nanking used to run from Fremantle up to Singapore and around about the islands.

**That's extraordinary. I also wanted to ask your opinion about this, there seems to be some sort of contention about whether the HMAS Sydney was sunk by the Germans or the Japanese, what do you think?**

I don't really know but the German ship was capable of doing it because she carried torpedoes which they

18:30 didn't know and wouldn't expect anyhow from a merchant ship. A bit like the Q Boats of World War I, they used to drop the sides down and expose the guns when they got right up near a ship. So she was capable of doing it and I also heard that she had 8-inch guns, probably not many of them, they were probably only single barrel guns, not twin guns like The Sydney had. The Sydney had 6-inch guns

19:00 but the range was that close anyhow that it didn't really matter whether they were 6-inch or 8-inch probably, if you got the first shots in you'd do the damage and this is what happened. But why she caught on fire, went over the horizon and caught on fire so the Germans said, I don't know. They must have inflicted the damage on it in close encounter and the Sydney turned away being badly damaged

19:30 but it would only take a fire to get down to a magazine and she would blow because the magazines are capable of having ammunition for the two forward guns and two aft guns so you would only need something to explode down there and it would be curtains. No, I don't really know I hear them talking about it, some of them saying that it could have been a Jap submarine as well, I don't know. When was that? November

20:00 '41. So whether the Germans knew the Japanese were coming in or whether they'd worked it out between them I don't really know.

**It's just an interesting point of contention that seems to be, you know, the length and breadth of a lot of the vets?**

And they have the coincidence of them both being there together unless they had a meeting place, they may have been meeting you know, the German boat might have been refuelling the Jap sub and that's why they were there together

20:30 if that was the case, you know. Yes, but it's all just surmising.

**It's interesting to philosophise?**

Yes, it's another thought.

**This is another piece of philosophy for you. You've had some incredible lucky breaks although a lot of what you've done is just pure skill and endurance, I'm thinking of the couple of the occasions that come to mind immediately is when you were transferred from the Perth to the Manoora?**

- 21:00 Yes, my action station was down in the shell handling room and when you're up on the mess deck they've got a hole in the deck about that square and there's a ladder that goes right down to the bottom of the ship. It's a long way down, they're very deep those ships, there's a lot of them under the water that you don't realise and you get half way down the ladder and there's a door there where you go in. Then it clangs shut behind you in action stations of course and
- 21:30 you know you're in a bad spot if anything happens. The last thing you're going to be able to do is get out or leave it or anything like that unless all the ammunition was gone and there was no use you staying down there but it was not a nice place to do. Yes, I was lucky because I heard – and I knew my mate was down there too, Georgie Ward, and quite a few others, WA fellows, and they never came back. So
- 22:00 according to one of the survivors, Arthur Bancroft, I've met a few times on Anzac Days and he was one of those that was on the Japanese ship that was taking them from Japan to Singapore and was torpedoed by an American sub and he was floating in the water for a couple of days and he was lucky to get picked up by the sub, the American sub. And yes he was telling me that there were very few survivors from that part of the ship.
- You've had a few**
- 22:30 **lucky decisions along those lines?**
- When we were on the Manoora we left the Bay of Bengal, the convoy work there and then the first one they went out – we never saw a ship of any sort except that one at night which wouldn't answer our signal and they put a shot across its bow, it was a Norwegian tanker heading for Calcutta it turned out but we never saw an enemy ship at all. You would have expected it that having Singapore taken over they would have had
- 23:00 ships up there. But that may have been the first time that they got enough together to send a force out and it coincided with the convoy that was going over there, one of those things.
- How do you explain all this good fortune to just literally avoid the big scrapes when you could have been there very easily?**
- Yes, just luck, just luck. And one of my brothers said the reason we're so healthy and lasted so long,
- 23:30 we used to live on mullet when we were kids out of the Canning River, a good oily fish. But, no, it's got to be luck, I could have easily stayed on the Perth but that chief petty officer and the regulating office had allowed me to switch over and that chap take my place.
- I'm just wondering if you have any belief systems that might align with that luck?**
- No, no, I wasn't superstitious or anything like that, just good luck.
- 24:00 **How do you think your experiences during the war changed you as a person?**
- I don't know, I don't know whether I've changed very much. I don't think it changed me very much. I don't think it makes you hard or anything like that or bitter, prisoners of war would probably be bitter, I have no doubt. But as I say I was lucky and everything went all right
- 24:30 for me and I used to hear some people say that they'd been trained to kill and, you know, a lot of them were always in trouble after the war and they could be dangerous and that sort of thing but it's not true I think you're probably more caring anyhow. You're used to living in an environment and looking after one another I suppose and you'll always find
- 25:00 if you go to one of our barbecues how happy the blokes are with one another and friendly. I don't think – it might have made you a better person in the way of caring and perhaps thinking about others, it could have done, I think I care a lot about others, I hope I do.
- I'm just wondering also how when you've gone through such an extreme**
- 25:30 **operation where you are under extreme pressure for an incredible period of time, you're on tiny rations and it's about endurance and you're really face to face with death and danger at every moment, how does that affect you when people come to you with a problem like they've got a scratch on their car?**
- Well all my grandkids used to bring their broken cars to me and I was called 'Mr Fix It': "Pa will fix it." I was called Mr Fix It, Pa will fix it.
- But you know that sort of**
- 26:00 **insignificance?**
- Yes, probably, and all the family, it's probably natural with your Dad anyhow.
- But does it frustrate you?**
- No, you like to be able to do it. You like to help them out. I'd sooner be down there helping them doing something than doing it at my own place. You know you're helping them, I prefer that.

**With Anzac Day everybody's got their own separate reasons for marching**

26:30 **so how do you celebrate Anzac Day?**

Well a lot of it is to be together with all the Z fellows again and, you know, you're sort of proud to be able to go and march and have the get together, the friendly get together with all the families afterwards. We always have a barbecue afterwards, out at Bob Long's place, we have been for the last few years and he's got a good parking area in the back yard and they're a

27:00 friendly family. We've always been very close to Bob's family, our wives. They've got about 7 kids and we've got 5 and we just about make up the Association on our own. No, we've always got along and we rather like getting together for our barbecues. I think it's nice to be able to go and march and take part in it.

27:30 We look forward to it.

**When it became public knowledge about your involvement with Singapore do people treat you any differently?**

I think they might, I think they do, when they know that I've been on that raid. I think they expect a little bit much of you really because I'm not really a talker and they want to know all the story and all this sort of thing. A lot of them come up and say how about giving a talk with

28:00 one of these clubs or something like that and I always knock them back. I'm no good at that sort of thing, you know. So they do expect a little bit of you and I think they're disappointed when I say no, I'm not into that sort of thing.

**How have you found the media, particularly, you mentioned the book "Heroes" when that came out?**

No, the media, they used to hound me a little bit, the

28:30 newspapers in Perth for stories and that sort of thing and it would be the same sort of thing over and over again and it was becoming a little bit, how shall I put it, a bit embarrassing because Jaywick was only one raid and there were dozens, hundreds of raids that they carried out and you don't hear mention of them except for perhaps one or two - Jaywick, Rimau and perhaps Jack Sou

29:00 in the news all the time, Jack with his book. Yes, it is embarrassing; I wish they wouldn't do it. I used to say just after the war when they came out, "Why don't you go and have a talk to Jack, you'll get a good story from Jack, I'm not into that sort of thing." And sometimes they used to write it anyhow from the book and then there'd be all sorts of wrong things

29:30 written and different things. But Jack would always give them a good story, he used to like the publicity. He used to have a dive shop and another shop in Perth and I think he liked the publicity, the write-ups about he's a member of Z Force, and Z Unit and into diving. Most people think that he used to do diving during the war and he only took it up after the war because there was no such thing as those diving suits they've got now and the equipment

30:00 and nearly everybody thinks he took part in the Singapore raids as well. They say "Oh, Jack Sou took part in that raid didn't he?" And you've got to put them right, you've got to tell them, no, he wasn't but the media sort of write it up because of his involvement with getting that model of the underwater craft made here and he used to go around giving talks on it as a matter of fact to schools and that. So people have got the idea that Jack was involved in both the raids

30:30 and I know he wouldn't say he was but the media get it and twist it around a bit and it's written so that it looks as if he was involved. So for that reason a lot of these Z fellows not only here but over in the eastern states are a little bit against it really, a little bit anti Jack in some ways, mainly because of that. But Jack himself is a nice person to talk to and we've always got on well together. But regardless, he lines up down there and

31:00 we line up down here but you usually go and have a bit of a talk to him before you fall in and march. We knew all his kids, he's got about 7 or 8 or them. Yes, no our kids sort of grew up with theirs as well.

**Do you feel that you've been badly represented by the media?**

No not badly represented, you know, too much.

**You've just been represented?**

Yes, too much, I don't like it, you know. I don't like being

31:30 in the public eye and thinking I did this and I did that and he's any sort of a hero because, you know, you're only doing your job and the other fellows are not getting a write up at all so I feel for them and I wonder how they feel because every Anzac Day, Jaywick will get a write-up or Rimau would get a write-up or something like that, you know. As a matter of fact one day a fellow said to me, "I always know when

32:00 Anzac Day's coming up because Jaywick gets a write-up or Rimau gets a write-up in the paper," but he was being a little bit facetious I suppose. But, no, they get too many write-ups for my liking. I'd like it just to die, fade away, the story anyhow, it's had enough writing up.

**Considering that we're recording a very long interview today in the nicest possible way**

32:30 **and this is going to be mastered in perpetuity so people 1,000 years from now can see this?**

That's all right. It will be history and it will always be there if they want to look back on it or rehash it or talk about it or make a film about it.

**You could make a film about it?**

Yes but you don't want Australian actors, I'm sorry, but they don't want Australian.

33:00 They should have, when they made that Heroes film they should have got good quality British actors to do it. They were kids doing it, you know, like a couple of them are on TV now, one of the brothers that's over in America.

**Are there any movies that you've seen that you think represent World War II in a way that was kind of real?**

33:30 Yes, I think a lot of those that were convoy ones that they put on early in the piece. They had a series of War at Sea, they were true, I think they were anyhow, I'm sure they were, because the Americans made one too, The Pacific War I think they called it. Yes, a lot of the films I thought they made them

34:00 fairly genuine, I think as real as you could get them. But the Heroes one, the conversations that were put in and skylarking around just out of Singapore there and running around in white singlets and things like that. I think you know the fellow that I mean he's got a couple of brothers that are in TV as well.

**Daddo?**

Yes. He rang me up here one night and he said, "Is that you," and I said

34:30 "Yes." He said, "I've just been given a part in The Heroes. He said. He said, "I'm very proud to be doing the part." He said, "Can you tell me things about it?" He said, "I'm in the process of reading the book." I said, "Now, tell them not to go putting any bullshit in it because it was hard work and everything's true." Mostly, The Heroes have got it fairly right, the book, except for conversations and where they said I was

35:00 'beer-loving and bawdy' in one of them. But it's fairly good and it's not overdone or anything like that. And the others that took part in it, he's on TV now in that series, medical series, he's just come back from England in the last year or two. I know we were young too, we were young, but they sort of acted as kids, you know, to me

35:30 and you wouldn't have got that with some of these English actors that were around at the time, you know, and I think they would have made a good job of it.

**You just think it was badly performed?**

I think so, yes, and also they, Lyons, they overdid his part. I know he was a little bit on the sidelines, but he was never rude or bad tempered or anything like that. He was just sort of quiet and

36:00 deep in thought himself in his own world but they made out that he was - and also Ted Carrs - they made out that he was argumentative and that sort of thing but he wasn't, he was not, he was quiet. He was a quiet fellow. He used to sit there in the wheel house and not say boo but you could go along and sit alongside of Ted, he was a navy lieutenant, and you could talk to him like you could your father. He was quite a nice person, you know.

36:30 I thought he was. He turned out to be a bit of an alcoholic after the war and I think it was his downfall. But they made the characters out - there was only one person that played the part real and good and that was the one that took Davidson's part and he played it seriously and well but the others, no.

**Who was playing you?**

Daddo, Cameron Daddo.

37:00 And I said, "You're totally different to me, Cameron, to what I would have expected." I would have thought they would have got somebody - knowing the people and photographs of them, they would have got somebody similar if they could to play the parts, you know, I would have thought so. I said, "You're different to me, you're tall, you're lanky, you're good looking and young." And he said, "You were young once yourself, you know." Yes, all around I didn't think that they played it very

37:30 well, I didn't think so.

**Did you get to meet him?**

38:00 No, no I didn't. He's probably a nice fellow isn't he?

**I'm just surprised that you weren't on the set as an advisor.**

No, they used to write over and ask you things about what went on and you tried to help out and put them right.

**Did you find that a bit of a frustrating process?**

When I saw the film, yes. They also had another one over there This is Your Life, we were on that one

38:30 but it was about the Krait. This is Your Life was on the Krait itself and I went over. They paid for me to go over; they wouldn't pay for Joy. And this is going back when that other fellow used to do it, you don't see him on television now, he is an English fellow.

**Yes, I think I know who you mean, this is like 15 years ago?**

Yes, he was doing it then and

39:00 who were the crowd that did it?

**It was a This is Your Life of all the guys?**

The ones that were still alive all went, they brought Taffy Morris out from England. He was the only one that came from overseas. There was Moss Merriman, Horrie Young, Cobber came from Queensland and

39:30 myself, that was about all. A few of them had died. Paddy McDowell had died, so had the cook Andy Crilly and Ted Carrs had died, that's right.

**Was it an enjoyable experience?**

Not really, not really. That's not up my

40:00 alley, I'm not very good at that sort of thing. I don't have the confidence to sort of carry out that sort of thing. Some of them were fairly good. Horrie Young, he's just gone back over home. He was back here for his son's birthday. His son was born about two days before we left Exmouth. He said at the time, he said

40:30 "I'm not bloody leaving here until I find out how Hazel is and whether the baby is born?" She was over in Sydney at the time and anyway, Lyons got the news through that he was born a couple of days before we left. And he was over here for his son's 60th birthday, it's 60 years ago now since that happened. Yes, I could have been over in Sydney by now but I didn't want to go and I wouldn't have gone because of Joy. If she can't go anywhere I won't go.

**Just, Arthur, some final words of wisdom, we've only got a little bit of tape left. Have you got any great philosophy about times of war?**

Yes, don't volunteer, just do your job, and don't put your head out. No, I don't think so, we all know it could be available and there shouldn't be any bloody wars. It doesn't achieve anything much except kill off thousands of people

41:00 which is probably all right for some countries, they can afford to do that. But no, I don't have any real philosophies; I've just gone along with life and been happy with my life.

**I'm kind of happy with your advice of "Don't volunteer."**

That used to be an old saying, particularly with the army fellows, 'Never volunteer'. and this is why they probably would be lucky why they came to Flinders because everyone was young.