

Australians at War Film Archive

Thomas Hamilton (Hammo or Tom) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

- 00:34 Right, my name's Tom Hamilton, I was born in Adelaide, in West end of Adelaide on October 28th, 1927 and I was the third child of Gertrude, Agnes Bailey and Thomas Harold Hamilton, they had seven boys and two girls and I was the third.
- 01:00 We lived in a place called Shannon Avenue, or Shannon Place it was called but Dad called it Shannon Avenue because he said it gave it a touch of class. It was actually a converted stable to be honest with you. They were coming into motor cars in those days, 1937, what have you. And so the council made them into little two room units and across the veranda where they used to walk the horse, they put
- 01:30 hessian across and that made two more bedrooms for us kids. So then in about 1936 my grandmother died and we moved into her big house in Gray Street in Adelaide, from then on. The war started, 1939, when I was twelve, so I was selling local papers for the local man. And I remember it, he knocked on my door about nine o'clock at night and said, "War's been declared, can I have a lend of Tom to sell papers?" and Dad said, "Yes, if you give him a penny
- 02:00 a paper instead of a ha'penny" so no worries. I went out got in his car, and it was the first ride I'd ever had in a car and I was twelve years old too by the way, and sold papers for the News. And during the war, the rest of the time I was frustrated because you know I wanted to be a hero like everybody else. Then when I was seventeen I went down to join up and the fellow laughed at me, the big sergeant and he said, "Yeah if they need you I'll get to Ayers Rock." so I said, "Stick your army."
- 02:30 So in August 1945 the war ended and I was working on night shift out at Glenn Osborne in a canning factory, and all of a sudden they shut the shop down, said the war's over, go home, sirens blaring. And I had to walk about five kilometres home so I went through the centre of Adelaide, and I was the only kid, only person that was angry because it was over, I swear. So then I went down and joined up and had to wait
- 03:00 until February 1946, I joined the navy. I enjoyed the navy up until the last couple of years when some clown in Canberra decided that it was time to white glove the treatment for the young sailors instead of the old 'two badge man' [long serving veteran]. Like a 'two badge man' you get one Good Conduct Badge for every four years, as long as it's good conduct. So 'two badge man' and 'three badge man' were treated like dirt [didn't get due respect] so I decided that that was time to get out.
- 03:30 Then when I saw Margaret in 1955 I decided she was the one I was going to marry, and having got married in October, 1956, 20th October 1956 and on the 1st January 1957, being sent up north for ten months I wanted out. So I got out of the navy and started a rehabilitation course in carpentry, under the government 60/40 Scheme they called it. The government paid sixty per cent
- 04:00 of the wage and the boss paid forty. And I was a reluctant carpenter, I didn't know what I wanted to do, I think I should of stayed in the service, but I went on with it. And then after about eighteen months I felt so frustrated because I don't know if you know it but the navy talk a different language. We'd go up the pub, and the pub would shut at six o'clock in those days. So my brother who lived two doors up, ex air force and a couple
- 04:30 of veterans we'd go up pub for Catholic hour, happy hour. But I'd be talking and I'd have to translate what I'd say, so I said to Margaret, "I either go back in the regular or join the reserve navy." So I went back in the Fleet Reserve for five years and on the fourth year, 1963, a mate and I were looking at the world through the bottom of a flagon of red, and we said, I was talking about this
- 05:00 bloke telling me about Ayers Rock and I said, "Oh I wished I'd at least tried again." So we said, "We'll do it tomorrow." so two days later actually we went down to join up, Army Reserve, he got knocked back and I got in. So when I told Margaret, oh talk about a dummy spit [tantrum], she got quite upset until I mentioned that it was tax free money, and that was pre Paul Keating [Prime Minister] days by the way,

he stopped the tax free money. Anyway I went down and I was a brand new recruit

- 05:30 but I was thirty-six years of age and got down there in civilian clothes, at Preston Depot it was, 1 Battalion, Royal Victorian Regiment. And it was quite funny actually because were standing around waiting for our corporal to come and give us a lecture on the Bren gun [light machinegun] and he didn't turn up. So the bloke came out and he said, "Who's Hamilton?" and I put me hand up, he said, "You should know this." cause he'd obviously seen my record, he said, "You should know this." So there
- 06:00 I am in civvies [civilian clothes], a brand new recruit in the army teaching new recruits about the Bren. So from then on to cut it short I did the three months recruit training because you know the navy salutes like this and the army salutes like this. And when we come to attention we used to slide our feet together and the army would pick it up and crush the rocks and that sort of thing. So I voluntarily did a three month recruit course, at the end of that was made a lance corporal and went into an
- 06:30 instructional school and from then on three years I was a sergeant, substantive sergeant. Vietnam [War] started, so they were looking for senior NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] to go in and replace the soldiers, the regulars that were going to Vietnam. So it was a six month commission because they thought Vietnam would over by Christmas again. And the next thing I did six years in the regular army, then Vietnam started to wind
- 07:00 down so we come back out again. Oh in the second day in the regular army by the way I went off the edge of a cliff in a truck and got massive injuries in both shoulders, both knees, three vertebrae slightly crushed up here still, one displaced down the spine, so I couldn't go back to carpentry. So I went into security and I did fifteen and a half years down there in security. I come home one day, and Margaret said, oh I was back in the army
- 07:30 reserve until I was sixty by the way. And just before my sixtieth birthday I was working with an Army Instructional Techniques Group in those days for fifteen years. And I walked home one day and Margaret said, "We're going to Brisbane." I said, "Right." My daughter was up there, I said, "We're going to visit her." she said "No, we're going to shift." [move]. She said, "We'll put the house on the market." I said, "When?" she said, "Well, it's been on for a week." she tells me everything eventually.
- 08:00 So on my sixtieth birthday I retired from the workforce, retired from the Army Reserve and I'd say that was about November 1987 and in March of 1988 we were up here. And we lived just up the road a bit in Vansittart Road, big swimming pool the whole bit.
- 08:30 Very, very good. And after about a fortnight I was so cheesed off, bored and I was thinking to myself I've got all that knowledge about the military and it's just going to waste, and it was the only thing I was ever good at truly, was instructing. Everybody's good at one thing and I was a good instructor. And I spoke to my daughter and I spoke to my wife and I'd already rung the corps commandant of the cadets, and I more or less got them to think that they talked me
- 09:00 into going to apply for the cadets. So I did four years with the 11th Regional Cadet Unit as adjutant. And then I got out of that, Margaret held up the boots one day and said, "Hang them up." after forty-one years with the regular and the reserve and four years there. Oh, I didn't mention, I did four years as warrant officer of discipline with the air cadets when my son was in it. So I hung up the boots and started working two days a week in the city with the Naval Association
- 09:30 as State Membership Registrar, and that's when the RSL [Returned and Services League] asked me to go over to the Logan Cadet Unit to give them a talk on Anzac Day and from then on I became honorary colonel for them. And at this present moment I'm still working two days a week; my health is in pretty good condition. Last Monday I had forty-one sun spots and age spots burnt off, there's just one there right, and Margaret still
- 10:00 loves me, sometimes she doesn't, I still can't cook so there it is, there's my life.

That's fantastic. Now can you go back perhaps to your earliest memories of childhood?

The earliest memory I have as a child is in this place in Adelaide, this Shannon Place, it's just a small place. Anywhere in Adelaide you're only half a mile from the Town Hall, cause it's a mile square I think.

- 10:30 So Shannon Avenue was a little lane and the people with money, that was the people working for the Council, in the Depression years, they lived in houses that were real houses, even had little front verandas and fences on them across the road. But on this side was a long row of stables as I said. And so you had two big rooms about the size of this double garage, one was the main bedroom, Mum and Dad and the other
- 11:00 would be the lounge, kitchen dinning room the whole bit. And on the veranda, where the horses used to walk, it would have been about twelve foot wide, so Dad put a partition, from the front door of the house he put a partition across with hessian on one side. That was for myself, I think at that time I only had the five brothers, Jim, Stan, Jack and Des
- 11:30 and Ron, young Robby hadn't been born so there was five brothers and myself. We lived on one side and Mary my eldest sister was on that side, and my big memory was laying in bed of a night, we had candles and kerosene lanterns and all that sort of thing, and a radio. One of us used to sit on an old bike that Dad had rigged up and you'd pedal and it would charge the battery, so we'd

- 12:00 listen to The Green Door, "What's behind the Green Door?" [radio serial drama], did you ever hear that one? Oh you'd hear knock, knock and the door would just screech, its hinges would screech and all of a sudden this voice from the dead would say, "What's behind the green door?" and the candle would flutter. You know it was terrific. So then after that we'd got to bed. One night Dad would come in and sing us a song and the next night, oh
- 12:30 gees I'm getting choked up, good memories, God. So one night Dad would sing us a song and the next night Mum would, oh absolutely beautiful. And Dad was, I'll never forget him, he was probably about five foot eight but about that deep in the chest and slopey shoulders, not one of these big wide, but he had shoulders but they sort of sloped down because of the heavy duty work he used to do. And he was as bald as a badger,
- 13:00 bald as a billiard ball from about the time he was eighteen he was bald. And the door into the house was only, he was only five foot eight but the door must have been five foot seven because every time he walked in he'd shin bark, you know he'd ring bark himself [hit himself]. So he'd walk in and he never drank, he couldn't afford to, but he smoked, oh rolled his own. And when he rolled them he used to sort of roll them and sway from one side to the other
- 13:30 and then give them a bit of a lick and then hang them. And then he'd start singing you know, "abba dabba dabba dabba", he'd sing that and Mum would come in the next night and it was her turn, and she'd sing, oh beautiful songs.

Do you know what sort of songs?

I can still see them.

What songs did she used to sing?

Wait till I settle down a bit, this is a drink of water time, they're both gone. What she used to sing her favourite, I always remember it,

- 14:00 she'd sing - if I can get through it, sweetest song I've ever heard, oh shit sorry. Anyhow it was the sweetest song I've ever heard my mother sang was when I was one year old; she sang it oh so pleasingly it seemed to me, oh boy....
- 14:30 haven't thought about this for a long time. Jesus.....I didn't realize I'd miss her so much....anyhow you've got the idea, that's the sort of song she'd sing. But she had a voice sweet, sweet voice, soft. And Mum was short and rotund, she had water
- 15:00 retention problems we found out in later years. And she used to sit on a chair, and I don't know how, she was only about five foot, but she could tuck one leg underneath and she'd sit on it. And she'd sit there and if you looked through the family album you'll see her, she was cuddly. You could always go up and lean on her, oh God I think I'd sooner talk about war than this actually. But that was the good days and one thing in particular
- 15:30 another thing that reminded me, the front yard would have been about thirty foot long and the size, the width of two garages like this. So there was a path down the centre and Dad had vegetable gardens on both side and there was an apricot tree there and a plum tree on that side. And right down the front, only just inside the front door was the dunny [toilet],
- 16:00 the old outdoor dunny, so that the honey pot man [waste collector] could come and collect. And I'll never forget it, in the front yard Dad had made a space and he'd made a big, what we called a swinging boat, was like a rocking boat and four could sit in it. So we'd be playing down there and one day me elder brother Jim, who would have been about fourteen at the time, he's four years older than me, no I was twelve, it was before the war that's right, I was about
- 16:30 eight or nine I suppose so he was four years older. And he used to give me a hard time, really did, and this particular day I spat the dummy and I started chasing him, handful of rocks, oh and I took off after him. So he ran up Gray Street, up Shannon Avenue turned left into Weymouth Street, and down the bottom end during the war there's a, I suppose today they'd call it a ghetto, it was if you can imagine two, two storey houses
- 17:00 there and two here and there linked at the top so there were two more rooms above and there was this alley way that went down into a lane. And the government in their wisdom got the aboriginal people from the stations and bought the men down to work in the ammunition factories and cause the ladies, well you know they were always there. And anyway they used to sit outside, and I went to school with the boys. So this particular day we ran around a corner and they'd sit out the front on the footpath,
- 17:30 in a little circle. And Jim started, turned around and give me a mouthful of cheek [abuse], because I couldn't catch him, so I threw a stone, and it hit the deck and scooby doo up [bounced up] and hit one of the aboriginal blokes and of course they all started charging down the street at me. So I ran in and I got in the dunny and I'm hiding there and I can hear them and there outside the door, "Mr Hamilton, Mr Hamilton!" and I'm shaking. And all of a sudden the swinging boat's swinging,
- 18:00 just barely moving and the young one, one of me mates, one of the kids said, "Oh Dad, can I have a

swing in the swinging boat?" and I'm terrified because if he comes in there he can see me, hear me and I'm peeping through a crack in the wall, and it was quite funny. And I'm thinking, oh God they're going to kill me, they'll eat me, I didn't know what Aboriginals did in those days. So anyway the dad said, "No, no it wouldn't be nice, Mr Hamilton wouldn't like that." so they went away, "We'll be back."

- 18:30 So I sat there on the thunder box [the toilet] for I don't know how long, and oh Jesus, so eventually I came out. Talking of the thunder box, it used to be funny the little old ladies that walked past, you'd go, "Morning Mrs Brown." and Mrs Brown would stop, "Where's that voice coming from?" I remember it. And I think the most traumatic one from my childhood was we had a big, white rabbit, how we never ever ate it I don't know because the Depression was on. And
- 19:00 when Grandma Hamilton died we moved into their house, or just around the corner to Gray Street and the rest of the family reckon I was carrying the rabbit and lost it, it got away. But I personally think that when we got into the new house we had rabbit stew for dinner that night to celebrate. That's was traumatic for me actually. But to this day they still reckon I killed the rabbit, or lost it. So what else?
- 19:30 **In what ways did the Depression affect normal day to day life for you?**
- Well as a child I went to a Catholic School, with the nuns, I won't get started on the nuns cause I've never met crueller women in all my life, it's a fact. I've had arguments with friends of mine who went to convents and Catholic schools and said it was great, and I thought it was alright too.
- 20:00 But the system was in those days there were Greeks, Lebanese, Italians and all the other people, but they owned all the shops so consequently they had all the money, if I sound cynical it's only because I am. They had the money so they could pay church fees and school funds, so those kids got silk treatment. So there was a couple in particular, I won't mention names because a couple of them finished up as top dollar in Adelaide
- 20:30 and they're probably still alive today. But they were real bullies and they used to thump up on the young kids. So Johnny Summerton and myself, there was actually Johnny Summerton, Tony Barber, Bruno Stognaella and oh, one other, it will come, but there was about four of us. And when these other kids would thump these little kids we'd go and sort them out, so the nuns would call Tommy Hamilton in because they reckoned I was the leader, but I wasn't, but they'd
- 21:00 call me in. And I never forget it, Mother Darichie, oh wow, she was only short, about the same size as my mother but she was like that and she'd get these, she'd go to the big cupboard, and you'd have to stand there with your hand out, and she'd get out the canes. Have you ever seen these canes, there about the size of that finger and they're about that long and you can bend them right in halves and they swish? And she'd go back and she'd put it back behind her shoulder like that and bring it down
- 21:30 swish, and stop it just above your hand like that, and it's there, so that's the end of the cane, so it would stop there, wouldn't hit, just stop. No, not good enough, so she'd take a slight pace back and she'd come back like that, and it was pride, you wouldn't move, you'd stand there just looking straight at her. And then she'd come down and it would just stop there so it would touch the edge of the palm of the hand and then she'd go, you'd hear tap, tap. Once she tapped it on the deck you knew it
- 22:00 was coming, tap, tap, whoop slap. So one day I got six of the best in both hands, so I just closed my fist up and I refused point blank to cry, and I think I would have been... probably about eight, eight or nine. And I walked home, we only lived about, look I'm still clenching my fist, we only lived about five hundred yards from the school, from the convent so I walked home. As soon as I saw Mum, woo woo, cried, showed her,
- 22:30 cause it did hurt, but I wasn't going to show her. So Mum, oh wow, she took off like a hairy goat and down we went and she stormed into the convent, and you had to walk through huge, big doors, I'm not kidding, you can still go to Adelaide and see the walls, the walls are that wide and I now know that they're only about as high as that, about six foot high but broken glass on the top. Now I don't know whether they were trying to keep us in or others out. And the gate used to lead up about fifty metres,
- 23:00 big hedges on either side and that's where the sacristy was, where the nuns used to stay. So Mum stormed in and she went down to my classroom, "Mother Darichie, Mother Darichie!" she suddenly decided she had to take a prayer meeting. And my mother walked in, "Where's your classroom?" she took me over to my classroom and she said, "Where's all the canes?" and there were no nuns around. And all the kids are, "In there Mrs Hamilton." open the big wardrobe, about as big as this and there's all the canes laid out. So she
- 23:30 pulled it out, now if you can imagine a little, short, very angry lady trying to break a cane, zroom, zroom. So she finished up she jammed it in the door and pulled it back and oh, so what she couldn't break she took with her. And as she was walking out a poor innocent nun walked in and Mum bailed her up [challenged her]. And Mum used to move mountains by turning her bum to the thing and giving it a bump,
- 24:00 I've seen her move a big wardrobe filled with clothes, that me and my brothers couldn't move and she'd go boom, boom. So she went up to this nun and she went boom and bang crashed her back against the wall and then she said, "Rah, rah, rah." which I think being freely translated, "If you ever touch my kid again I'll rip your arms off." So from then on when I got the cane it was just a...you know they were genuine ones, you could feel them, but what the hell. The worst was the

- 24:30 rulers they used to have a bit of metal in the ruler, you ever seen them? You get one across the knuckles, alright well you can see I'm not terribly impressed, I made a promise to myself if I ever got married and had children they would not, repeat not, be bought up as Catholic. I'm a Catholic but a backslider, I'm all in favour of religion, anyone that's been to sea believes in something, trust me I know, you believe in something.
- 25:00 But Margaret was.....Uniting I think, Uniting Church and I said to her, "Whatever you want the children to be, they'll be. You want them christened, baptised." which they all were. So I believe, I'm not a heathen total or an atheist or whatever. So anyhow as far as the nuns were concerned - I remember I was in the navy, joined the navy and when I went back home
- 25:30 and my sister Shirley she was born in 1947, so this must have been about - probably 1952 when I first came back from Korea. And Mum said, "Take Shirley down to the school." no sorry she was born in 1947 she was only about six so it would have been 1951, 1952, "Go down and see Shirley's teacher." So I took her down, Shirley down, took her down, Shirley Anne. Took her down, walked in and she's as proud as punch with her big six foot two sailor,
- 26:00 her brother, we walk in and her nun was Sister Mary Patrick who was my nun, tall, to me in those days, tall skinny with fingernails, fingers that were that long and she'd flick them back and this knuckle would come out. And we all had chilblains in those days cause it was cold, with scabs on them cause you couldn't help bumping them and she'd go flick, flick on the ear until she made them bleed.
- 26:30 So when I walked down and I met Shirley's nun, Sister Mary Patrick, and I looked down at her, because it turned out she wasn't six foot tall she was only about, a bit shorter than me. And she says, "Oh you're Tom, yes I remember you Tom." she said, "How's Bruno?" I said, "He works in a hospital." because Bruno had taken on boxing and he'd got punch drunk, cause we all used to do a bit of boxing,
- 27:00 and he did it too hard and got punch drunk, so he was in the local mental hospital. So I said, "He's working in the hospital." "And where's Tony?" I said, "Well Tony works for the government." which he did because at one stage Myers stores, Moore's which was like Myers store, had a fire so they called anyone with a truck to grab the stuff and take it to another store, but he was taking it home and he got lumbered
- 27:30 so he was a guest of the Government. And she said, "And where's Johnny?" and I said, "Oh John's in the hotel business." and he was because he was the barman and he was sleeping with the barmaid, the hotel owner's wife and she said "Yes." and then she said, "And you're in the navy." in other words the ultimate put down, "So you're in the navy." Oh look, I went this close to flattening her. So I went, oh I said, "Yes Sister Mary Patrick I remember you too."
- 28:00 and I said, "If I ever hear that you hurt her." I said, "I'll come back and see you." threatening a nun would you believe, I don't believe it but it's true. But anyway went back, but they were sad times, that was a bad time, very bad time. As a kid we went to a place called Osborne Hall from when I was fourteen onwards, and my sister Mary was a brilliant ballroom dancer and I used to dance with her.
- 28:30 I wasn't bad, I was a bit light on the foot too. And my best mate at the school was Freddie, Freddie Winter who finished up marrying Mary my sister, but we used to go to the Osborne Hall dancing, ballroom dancing and it was excellent, terrific. And it was always funny, big veranda, I'll never forget it, big veranda and we'd all go out there too, in between dances. And across the road was another two storey place and Americans soldiers used to be there and it's funny they had the most
- 29:00 beautiful uniform you'd ever seen in your life and they all seemed very, very happy and romantic, "How you going?" they were good days. And then so street fights, each street had gangs, no guns or weapons like that you had wooden swords, you'd fight with wooden swords or you'd say, "Right, the hockey ball game." You'd get a ball and you'd each get
- 29:30 on a bike and you had a stick and you'd play hockey on bikes, and it was slightly illegal but you'd stick your puck through their wheel and break a few spokes and things like that. And naturally that would lead to slashing at each other and the only casualty that I can remember is....

Sorry Tom we might just stop... Oh that's right the street fights?

Well

- 30:00 with the street gangs just down the road from us, you know Adelaide and there's parklands all the way around, well the West End parkland was just, well only half a mile away, everything's close, quarter of a mile away. And the local council had their tip, or dump actually, it was sort of a storage place for their gravel and rocks and the huge big water pipes and that, and oh
- 30:30 boy was that ever a place to play, you could have a real - you know one of the gangs would upset you, one of the streets and you'd say, "See you down at the dump." and you knew it was on. So you'd sneak down early and you'd get, playing soldiers actually, and you'd get yourself tucked into a corner waiting to ambush them and when they come we'd start throwing big goolies at them, rocks as big as we could handle. And it's a wonder nobody got killed but we'd have rock fights. And
- 31:00 you'd take shelter in these thingos and there was slit trenches all around the parks as well, air raid

shelters and things like that. So we'd be in and out of them throwing rocks at each other and you'd occasionally get hit, but it was good clean living I suppose. But we never ever, one thing about it in those days you never ever did anything to other people's property, you never damaged property, or never really apart from times like that

31:30 did anything that would hurt anyone other than yourself really. So the fights used to go on and this particular day we were having a bit of a you know, I'm bigger than you, I'm bigger than you, just a stand off in the street with the Gray Street gang. No we were the Gray Street gang and they were the Weymouth Street gang, and they're just sort of fronting up to us and one lad had a piece of iron pipe, you know the hose pipe and he slammed it down, he didn't mean to but

32:00 he hit my brother Stan's toe and nearly chopped it off. Well you've never seen anything like it, blood everywhere and we all turned pale, screamed home. This kid took off and I think he must have left the state actually I don't know, but poor old Stan that was the end of him but it didn't stop him getting in the air force to serve in Malaya and Vietnam. So that was the only real casualty and sadness from childhood was two very, very bad

32:30 ones actually. Down the local parklands there used to be bowls, the outdoor bowls, and obviously they used to mow the lawns a lot, and we used to play down there, and this particular day there was a sort of a mullock heap of all the grass cuttings and it gets spontaneous combustion cause it's simmering underneath, but you don't realize it. We didn't realize it, we were only kids then

33:00 but one of the young boys he ran into it to chase after the ball we were playing with and it was on fire underneath and he started screaming cause his feet were burning. And his sister who was about twelve she raced in and grabbed him and lifted him up but then she got stuck and she couldn't move and she was standing there with her feet literally burning and screaming. So my uncle, what was it, Uncle George

33:30 was the curator around the area so I raced off and screamed out to him and he ran in with his big boots and got her out. But her legs were pretty bad, to us they were just black. But she passed away actually and... sad thing about it I don't even remember her name. But I can remember we walked in...

34:00 we walked in to see her to say goodbye to her, she's laying there with the Holy Communion veil. Well we got over that and then of all things about six months later another mate's young brother, you know kid, picked up his father's pistol that was in the house, World War I pistol,

34:30 playing with it and shot his sister in the head and killed her. She was only about seven; they stick in your mind. I'm always sad about kids dying, really adults or old drunks or things like that, they've had their lives but kids. And then there was Pam, oh God if I'd have been a man I'd have killed her father. But her,

35:00 one of her uncles he used to run the shop, I'm not sure where they come from, some country in Europe, used to run the local grocer shop and Pam was like a little angel. We were up around thirteen or fourteen at the time and to us even then she looked like a little angel, she was only a kid. And this uncle came from overseas and raped her, so he was put in Adelaide Gaol, and in those days they had a good system, they used to whip them, give them the cane,

35:30 or lashes across the back, and very, very few of them re-offended. And the stupid father got him out and took him back into the house so the bastard did it again, so I must have been around fourteen at the time, so Stan my brother, he grabbed a shovel and I grabbed an axe and Johnny grabbed something else and we armed ourselves and we went up after him. You know we,

36:00 not the parents, but we went up after this bloke and the mongrel father hid him, kept him away from us and so the coppers, he called the coppers and the local policeman rode down on his bike and he for a change, he used to give you a kick in the bum and say, "Go home." but this time he just said very quietly "Go home, leave it with me." And the next thing, we didn't go home we walked away and he got out and he had this bloke,

36:30 how they hold their hand like this and that's the first time I've ever seen it, I think he was breaking his arm but he took him away again. But the father, that shop went broke because nobody would go near it again, see there are things I remember as a kid and I hadn't thought about them for fifty, sixty years, never thought why am I thinking now. I know you asked me about childhood, but you wanted happy days didn't you?

No, no just everything,

37:00 **and other things and the shop and the Depression and food and things like that?**

Well one of my aunties I can remember she came over from, I can never put an actual age on these things, but I can remember Auntie Kit from Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, you know out in the goldfield? She married a fellow who was the local publican and he had two pubs in the town and he set up a little

37:30 a bus thing that ran all the way into Perth and back again, so he was worth a few shillings. He must have been worth money if she could travel in war time all the way from there to visit us. But she was a

heavy smoker, first time I'd seen a lady smoking actually, and cigarettes were rationed and of course the Italian shops they could always get smokes. So Auntie Kit would say, "Who's going over to get me a pack of smokes?" and Mum would say, "Oh Jim, would you go over?" or Stan and Auntie Kit would say, "No, no send him, he looks like a little wog himself."

- 38:00 So she'd send me off. Bear in mind that wogs and spicks and niggers in those days that was not bad language, that was, we were whiteys, you know what I mean. So I'd go over cause she reckoned I looked like one of them and I usually managed to come back with the cigarettes, she was lovely but she died. We didn't know at the time but it was, nowadays you'd know she had cancer. She was, I remember she was thin - the sad thing following onto Auntie Kit
- 38:30 was that when I was on the [HMAS] Warramunga in 1952 going to Korea we called into Fremantle and I'd already contacted Normie and his sister that I was going to meet them. So when we get there the sister's waiting on the wharf and I said, "Where's Norm?" and she said two days before, he was a volunteer fireman, he'd been doing an exercise, you know rescue operation,
- 39:00 and he'd scratched himself on a nail and he'd died of tetanus two days before. And that was Auntie Kit's son, so God, maybe they weren't such good days after all. See people got sick and you died, diphtheria, a couple of my mates were crippled the rest of their life, diphtheria and flu and stuff like that. But in a way it was better because we never
- 39:30 worried, you never worried about sickness cause if you got sick you either got better or you died. But nowadays they give you this tablet, they give you that tablet, I don't know sometimes I wonder. And they do keep people alive too long, sick people, I'm digressing a bit here I can tell, but sore point.

Tape 2

- 00:31 **So can you perhaps tell us how the Depression affected the food situation in your home?**

Well the food, the thing I remember mostly, we had shifted into Gray Street which was actually a double fronted house with a little picket fence, we'd finally graduated to the picket fence. And Dad had got, you went down to the timber yards

- 01:00 and you get the - when they cut the bark off the trees and it's about six inches wide, I'm talking inches and feet cause I'm more at home with it, about six inches wide and he'd get them flat and he'd make a chair, the chair come back with a backrest and he'd make seats. So there were, I remember there were two of them out on the front veranda and you could sit there and always talk to the neighbours, "G'day Mrs. Brown." this sort of thing. So then there was the front room,
- 01:30 the front bedroom as you're walking, passage right through, front room, lounge room, master bedroom Mum and Dad, another bedroom which was my sister's, Mary's, another bedroom there which was like a dormitory, there was about six of us boys in there, five of us boys in there, there was six boys of us in there at that time. Oh no Jim, Jim was there for a while and then he joined the army, put his age up and went in the army. Then there was a kitchen and on this side it was the bathroom,
- 02:00 but it was a big veranda like I've got out there, and out the back, oh the kitchen was there, and behind that was another little narrow room which was an L shaped room which was a beast of a thing. You'd go in this room and it was only a little bedroom about ten foot wide and it went down and then there was like a little lane, and that was a blank spot. And that was only there because they'd whacked a dunny next door to it; they'd put a brick wall up and put a dunny there. An indoor dunny whoa, so
- 02:30 anyway my room was in there with my brother Jim and there were two beds, but there was another bed around the back there and it was pitch black, there was no light used to get into there, and that's where they used to put me and my brother Jim. He used to give me a hard time, and he used to talk about spiders and snakes and I got a fear of spiders. Because if you'd like to go back to Shannon Avenue when I'm laying in bed each night and where the roof comes down,
- 03:00 there's a gap from the roof and the top of the brick. And as true as I sit here, every night in the candlelight I'd look up, and I still call them trianti wolly wong dong the big triantelope [spider]. And I'd look up and there's bloody big tranti wolly wong dong would come out and I swear the big sod used to look at me and rub his hands. And I'd plead with Dad, "Kill him, kill oh Dad please kill him Dad!" and he'd say, "No, no they bring bad luck." You'd kill a triantelope and it brings bad luck, he's
- 03:30 in the middle of a Depression with seven children and he's out of work and he didn't want to kill a spider because it would give him bad luck! That's my Dad; you got the message, that's my philosophy in life too. So he never killed it, the lights, the candle would go out, Mum would finish her song, or he'd finish, the candle would go out and one of the brothers would say, "I can see him Tom, he's coming down, oh wow by God he's big, oh Jesus he's bought his brother with him!"
- 04:00 and I'd be terrified and I still hate spiders. I remember only about a year before last we were sitting out there at Christmas with the family and my son David who's thirty-four now and him and his wife Lynn are bird watchers, they love the animals. At one stage Lynn was the senior publicity officer over at

- 04:30 Lone Pine and she's now going to be a primary school teacher. But were sitting out there and I don't know if you had a good enough look but there's plants along there and I had a look there, I'm sitting on this side of the table and I have a look and there's a bloody big trianti wolly wong dong come there and he's just standing there. And I swear he was looking at me, so I said, "Sit still don't move, don't move!" and I picked up a thong [sandal] and I gave him the thong treatment, cha bong! and David's saying,
- 05:00 "Don't kill him, don't kill him you'll upset his karma!" and I said, "Upset his karma?" I said, "There's only two things upset my karma, there's a big trianti wong dong and a North Korean shooting at me and I can get at him!" so David has never forgiven me for zapping this spider I'll tell you. But here where we are in the bedroom, when the weather changes, I don't know exactly when, but you can guarantee there'd be at least two or three come into the house.
- 05:30 And Margaret's terrified of things, but I've got it all down, zap, zap, whack, grab, throw no problem, I'm upsetting their karma so that's gone to spiders. So where were we back with?

With food and things?

Food. Now as far as food was concerned in the kitchen, that's what I was actually starting to get at, the big wood fire there and it would be about truthfully one hundred and forty degrees

- 06:00 in our temperature, in Adelaide it used to get up there, and there'd be this big log fire and Mum would be in there, you could always get spuds [potatoes], there'd be a big tray about that big and it would be filled with spuds cut in half, roast potatoes you know. And what you didn't eat for meals were put in the fridge cold and we never ever took them, we could have taken them but that was like fruit to us. And always a garden, Dad started a garden and tomatoes, beautiful tomatoes
- 06:30 that was like fruit, we ate them like apples. In fact I can't remember ever eating a banana when I was a kid I don't think I ever saw one. But anyway as far as bread, Mum used to make bread so we could get that. And us kids we'd go up to the shops, down to the cafés towards the end of the day and ask for any stale cakes because they couldn't keep them till the next day, so we'd get these left over cakes. And there was
- 07:00 a place called, I think it was Cowley's. Cowley's used to make crumpets, ruddy beautiful, absolutely beautiful, well we couldn't afford them, but we found how if you climbed up the back of the shed you could get through the skylight, you could stuff your shirt full of crumpets after they'd just come out of the thing. So we'd fill our shirts, back out again and race home and I still remember Mum, strict Catholic, very strict Catholic my mother and we'd say, "Here Mum,
- 07:30 the man said they were yesterdays." and they'd still be hot and Mum would go oh....I don't know whether she was saying I'm sorry Lord or what. And then another way we used to get tucker [food] was just down the road a bit was the Police Barracks and they had olive trees in them. And Dad would come home, he'd watch when they were ripe ready for picking, and he'd come back and go, "Stan, Tom you know..."
- 08:00 You know these backpacks we have now, well in those days they used to be a seventy pound sugar bag about that big and you tie both corners and put a loop around the neck and you'd got a forerunner to the backpack. So he'd throw his old sugar bag on the back and away we'd go, have a look around like this and he'd stay at the bottom. We'd get up and drop the olives down to him, and once the bag was full,
- 08:30 when I think about it now it was always just as the bag got full and Dad put the slip knot on, the big policeman would come out, "What are you doing in there?" and he'd start chasing us. So we'd run away this way and Dad would ride home, but it was always coincidental that it was always when the bag was full. So then he could sell that for ten shillings, ten shillings mind you, to the local cafés and that. And with that you could get a stack of bread, jam, plum jam, you used get the
- 09:00 two pound tin of plum jam. Which brings to mind my Dad. Look my Dad was as straight as a die, he really was. And it was 'susso' they called it, sustenance [welfare], and it's the most degrading thing that I've ever seen but they should do it now. Each man that had children he was given a couple of shillings to buy tobacco but he was given food,
- 09:30 or food vouchers. So Dad would go up, you had to walk up to this door, up to this window it was like the railway, when you go up to the railways with the barred windows. And I'll never forget this, and I was about ten or eleven, old enough to remember at this time, and there's all these blokes lining up. And I went with Dad to help him carry it and you walk up and they say, "How many children?" and you say, "I've got four children." they'd say "Oh yes, well that's four loaves of bread and
- 10:00 two tins of jam." or one tin of jam. And the loaf of bread in those days was that big, and that was a half a loaf of bread and it was square, so that would have been a loaf of bread and that's half a loaf. So they'd say four, Dad went up and he'd say "six" and this bloke made a smart aleck comment or seven he said, six or seven whatever. And this, you could always pick the people that had money, true, I'm talking true and
- 10:30 this is not imagination because they used to look down on the workers. And this bloke obviously had a job behind the bars and he made some smart aleck comment to Dad, probably about being a good Catholic boy and all this sort of thing, cause that was the standing insult in those days. So I'll never

forget it, Dad had got the bread and I was holding it in my arms like this and then he puts it in the sugar bag, and he got two tins of jam and the tin of jam

- 11:00 was that big. And whatever the fellow went and said Dad picked up this tin of jam, bear in mind Dad's hand, I've got a very small hand, Dad's hand was exactly the same size except the fingers were thicker, my son's nearly six foot, same size hand but thicker fingers. So anyhow Dad picked up this tin and smash, and if it had not hit the bars and bent the bars, it would have killed the fellow. And the big policeman,
- 11:30 there's always a policeman there and he come over and he said, he knew Dad, they used to call him Ickle, he was short, one of his Norwegian friends as a kid used to call him Little Tom but he couldn't get Little out he called him Ickle. And this big copper come over and he said, "It's alright Ickle, it's alright." and he said, "You open the door." and he said, "Not while he's here, not while he's here." so this policeman said "Replace the damaged tin and put in an extra one." so we got an extra
- 12:00 tin and he said, "Go home Ickle." so he sent us home. Then he opened the door and went in with the bloke so I don't know what he did, if had of been me I'd have kicked his head in. But Dad was a - anyway that was tucker. I remember one time we were having a birthday party and Dad, Dad used to work seasonal, you could get seasonal work and he used to work at Barrett Brothers Malt House it was. If you know Adelaide
- 12:30 you look right down Rundle Street and there's the big towers of the old silos, well that was Barrett & Brothers Malt House and Barrett in that time was the Mayor of Adelaide. Well Dad used to work there I think it was seven months of the year or something and then he'd get a job in the brick yard. And he would, oh lost track...

About your dad's work that he did? The type of work that he did?

- 13:00 Well that's it, that's what it was. This is what killed him too, and I used to go down and watch him. You get the malt and a huge, big floor and the malt would be there and it would have to be turned regularly with a big wooden handle shovel like that. This is why my Dad was so powerful, you can imagine shovelling this and just turning it, just sort of shovel it from there behind you and you gradually turned the thing. And the dust flowing all the time, so that with
- 13:30 the cigarettes killed him, he retired at sixty-five, died at sixty-seven. But he used to work there on and off; at times he'd get a job in the brickyard. In fact that was my first job when I was fourteen. When you went to school, at the convent you'd get to grade six and that was all the convent did, Dominican Convent it was. And then for grade seven which was like I think the equivalent to year
- 14:00 one now, we went to St Patrick's, which was the same system, same group, Dominicans but they were good nuns, they were what I called outside nuns, they left the convent and had to go to the school and meet people. And they were human and I loved it in the last year, and you had to do this QC, Qualifying Certificate to get a job actually in those days, if you didn't have it - that's how I got in the navy cause I had a QC, I could do maths and that. So
- 14:30 the nuns there were good, they were really good - so what were we talking about tucker though weren't we, well why did I get onto the nuns?

Tucker and work. You started off with your dad getting the tucker for sustenance.

So anyhow back to the tucker, another way we used to do, the brothers and I, we always had a set of boxing gloves, with six boys you always had a set of boxing gloves hanging behind the door, and they were like big pillows. And if you got into an argument,

- 15:00 put them on and... so anyway, cut it short, a couple of the brothers and I would go down and we'd get outside the local pub and put the gloves on and have a fight and old blokes would come out and they'd drop the pennies in the hat and all that sort of thing. So we'd get that, take that back and give it to Mum. Oh there was money. So that's how we used to eat. I cannot ever remember going hungry but I'm sure there were times
- 15:30 when Mum and Dad didn't have any, cause I used to say, "When are you going to have yours Mum?" "Oh we'll have it later, we'll have it later." So there were times when they did go without, because there were times when Dad couldn't get a job, and this was pre-war. And it was, you could always tell, it's funny I remember the World War I blokes, Dad's mates, Dad was
- 16:00 too young. At the age of fourteen in World War I every kid had to do cadet training preparation and so Dad's mates like him were doing the training and a number of them bigger than him were able to get into the army early, big lads, maybe fifteen, sixteen. And I never forget one
- 16:30 of them in 1937, so I was ten years old, brother Jim said, no, it was earlier than 1937 I was only about eight, Dad had a little wooden seat he'd made on the bar of his bike with a footrest and he said to my brother Jim he said, "Come on, we're going out see Patty." It was his mate, one of the young fellows who had gone to war when he was sixteen. And he went over in 1915 this bloke, so this must have been
- 17:00 about 1935, and Dad said to Jim, "Right come on." he said. "No Dad I don't want to go, I don't want to go. Give Tom a ride it's Tom's turn." I said "Oh beauty!" hopped on the bike. So we got on the bike and

we went out to what they called Dawes Road Military Hospital and hospitals in those days smelt, what I now know to be ether and the human body smells, and hospitals had a terrible smell, and we walked into this room

- 17:30 one single little room, shit... and there was this sixteen year old in 1915 and here it is now 1935, 1936 something like that, there's no legs and there's no arms. And as soon as we walked in he started saying "Do it, come on do it!" crying, put the pillow on him you know, can you imagine it?
- 18:00 My Dad crying, oh he was crying and I could, you could smell it and I looked at this, just the trunk and all the way home Dad wouldn't talk, wouldn't talk. So I made sure I didn't want to go back again, so the next time my brother Stan went, he was younger so he could put up with it. But then I started taking notice of the others of Dad's mates and there was, I can't
- 18:30 think of their names now but there was the fellow that had no legs from there, just below there, so he had, it was like a little rocker, kneeling down and had pads on the hands and he used to push himself along like that. But he used to drink wine out of a flagon, how the hell he used to carry it, he used to sort of balance it between his legs and away he'd go, away he'd go like that. Then there was 'the Count', and they called him 'the Count' because he was so upright and I reckon he was
- 19:00 an educated man. 'The Count', I'll never forget him, he was oh, a brilliant man, you could see it, tall and real military but alcoholic, that was the only way out for them, they couldn't get money for food, they couldn't get food but you could always get a bottle of cheap red, or methylated spirits, they even drank metho [methylated spirits]. And that was why I didn't drink a great deal too. 'The Count' and then there was Freddie, Uncle George, my Uncle George had lost his right
- 19:30 leg when he was thirteen in an accident at work, he started work when he was twelve and Freddie had lost his leg in the war, the left leg in the war when he was young and he was about the same size as Uncle George. So Uncle George had lost this leg and Freddie had lost this leg and they both used to have an ale or two and the coppers would come along and pick them up and they'd grab Fred and call him George or they'd grab George and call him Fred and then they'd have
- 20:00 to let them go cause it was wrongful arrest you know, call the wrong names. I remember these things. But we used to do messages, we used to get pennies and ha'pennies for that, and always gave it to Mum. No, as far as food's concerned I can't really remember ever being hungry.

Can you remember birthdays and Christmas, things like that?

I remember cordial, that was the time we used to get cordial for soft drink for birthdays.

- 20:30 Christmas I can remember being so small, we went around there in 1936 in Gray Street, so what, 1927 to 1936, I was nine. And I can remember we'd all go to bed Christmas Eve and you could hear the singing and laughing up in the city, up the town hall, especially New Year's Eve and all this sort of thing and Christmas, and you could hear them singing there. We'd go to New Year's first and then
- 21:00 about quarter to twelve Mum and Dad would come and get us out of bed and we'd pull our dressing gowns on and we'd go and sit out on the front gutter, it was always clean because Mum used to bloody near scrub the gutter, I'm talking true. So we'd sit there and we'd listen and then all of a sudden there'd be silence and you could hear them counting down. As soon as the bell struck twelve you could hear it, bong, bong.
- 21:30 'Happy New Year!' and a glass of cordial and a biscuit, homemade biscuit, now get to bed. And Christmas the whole family used to get together, the whole family even as after they got older they'd all get back together. And we sat around and we used to make presents for each other. I remember brother Jim, I never forget it, he had started work
- 22:00 in a automotive shop, he's a damn good mechanic to this day, and he made a car, the model of a car and it was big enough, with wheels, that the littlest of the kids could sit on it and we could drag them around. I'll never forget that. And I used to write little notes, that's all I could do, tell them how much I loved them and that. I still do that with me kids.
- 22:30 But I never ever remember any sadness at Christmas, we all used to believe in Christ born and all that sort of thing, even though I was a backsliding Catholic we still believed in it. And so did Mum right up until the time I was about fourteen or fifteen and the local priest was here, Father Fitzpatrick, was Mum's cousin, so he would always come down and have a cup of tea and this sort of thing. And then Father Fitzpatrick must of got too old because he got replaced by this
- 23:00 young priest. And this particular day I was about fifteen, he knocked on the door, and I got up, "Good oh father, come in come in." "No, no I can't enter this house where's your mother, where's your mother?" and I said, "What?" He said, "Where's your mother, get your mother, Mrs Hamilton." and out comes Mum I said, "Oh Mum the new priest is here he won't come in he wants you out there." So Mum walked out and before she could say, oh she said, "Hello Father." and she'd had the apron on and she's wiping her hands, she'd been cooking or something.
- 23:30 Never forget it, and he said, "Mrs Hamilton are you aware that all of your children are bastards?" and my mother never swore and to be said that, she said, "What do you mean?" he said, "Your husband is

not a Catholic so therefore all of your children are illegitimate." and he didn't say illegitimate he said, "Your kids are bastards." And Mum went like this and the broom was there and she grabbed the broom and she chased

- 24:00 this padre up the street and that night, we had the big table, we used to all sit around and we all sit down and say the grace before we had meals. And you weren't allowed to talk while you were eating, you could talk when you finished eating. So were sitting there and were looking at Mum and she's stewing inside, and Dad come in and said something and he looked at her and so he shut up too. And we're sitting there and Mum said, "Now listen in." she said, "As of
- 24:30 now if you want to go to church you can, if you don't want to go to church you don't have to." She switched total like that. And I looked at my brother Stan and said, "Beauty!" cause we had to go to church, it must have been while I was at school actually, no I couldn't have been fifteen I must have been younger cause I was still at school, must have been earlier. That's a sign of age; I'm getting me ages mixed up. It's your fault
- 25:00 because I haven't talked about this stuff for a long time. So we were still at school. So anyway I said to Stan, "I'm not going to church tomorrow." and he said, "Neither am I." so we didn't. So when we got to school and were sitting down and the first thing you have in a Catholic school of a morning is a summary of what the church service was about, you say your prayers and then you have your summary and you spend all morning doing Catholics' religion, and then you get your lessons after. So what's the first thing they asked, the nuns knew we weren't there, they asked us what the sermon was about.
- 25:30 I guessed wrong. I got a smack on the lug [face], I got a whack across the knuckles and I got six on that hand, and six on that hand. And she called Stan out; no he was in a different class so he got it in his class, so I went back to church. But we still all used to go also, oh there was another source of food, we used to go to the Salvation Army. And we used to join, doing gymnasium so they would give you, actually give you sandals and
- 26:00 socks, sandals and socks and a little shirt and all this. And then you'd always after you did the exercises, you'd have a bit of a talk on religion and then they'd give you something to eat. I'll never forget it; you'd go to church on Sunday at the Catholic Church in the morning and then the afternoon to the Salvation Army. It was great, but they never ever asked you for anything, you never had to pay anything back, and to this day I love the Salvos. We come into Kure [Japan] in 1952 just
- 26:30 in the middle of the night it was, we'd left the Korean coast, we'd had a pretty heavy time, and it was a misty foggy night in Kure and we'd pulled in alongside the wharf which is actually a old battleship that had been sunk in the war and they filled it with concrete and it was the wharf. And I was one of the tying up parties, so you have a couple jump ashore to take the ropes to hook the ship on. And I'm looking at the end of the pier and I could see a light. I thought, "That's unusual, it's never there."
- 27:00 So I went drifting up. And would you believe it, it was a little caravan and there's a Salvation Army bloke there, "Hello sailor." he said, "Here you are." and he gave me a cup of coffee and a doughnut and I said, "Thank you very much." and I drifted back to the ship. And the officer of the day said, "Hamilton, what have you got there?" and I said, "It's a cup of coffee and a doughnut from the Salvation Army." "How did he know we were coming in?" The Salvation
- 27:30 Army always knew more about when we were coming and going than we did, that's the Salvation Army, they never asked for anything, loved them, I loved them. So as far as food's concerned in the Depression maybe Dad and Mum went hungry but we always managed to battle on. And I think the saddest day of the family actually was the day my brother Jim disappeared when he was about seventeen and a bit.
- 28:00 Just disappeared, six months later we got a phone call, not a phone call he must of, he did, he must of rung the pub and the pub sent somebody down to tell us he's down at the Loveday, or some Plumpton Army Camp, come and get his washing, cause he'd sneaked away and joined the army. And he was eighteen then so we couldn't get him out. And he finished up serving in New Guinea,
- 28:30 but Jim he'll be eighty next January, getting old isn't he? What am I, fifty-fifth anniversary of me twenty-first birthday last, in October was mine, so I'm not as old as him. So ask me if I had a good life as a child, I can give you an example. My daughter Joanne is doing psychology in Monash University, when she got up and they have to, part of
- 29:00 the course I think is they have to talk about how much they hate their mum and dad or something, that's was the impression I got. And you have to bear in mind that I was an instructor at the Army Instructional Development Course and we used to teach people how to teach so you know... you know what a manic depressive is and schizophrenic, you get to know them cause they're types of leadership. So I used to pick up Joanne, she joined the army reserve
- 29:30 and I used to pick her up and take her to and from, to and from sort of thing. And she'd tell me about, she'd do her psychology on me, so I'd be a manic depressive today and just as she's starting to, or you could see her mentally writing it down all these manic depressive, I'd switch and I'd be schizophrenic or something else. So anyhow this particular day she got in the car and I said, "What's up?" She said, "They won't believe me, they won't believe me!" I said "What?" She said, "Well they call people
- 30:00 up, get up and they didn't like their mother or they didn't like their father or the father used to beat

them and the mother was cruel to them.” and when she got up, “What sort of a childhood did you have Joanne?” “Absolutely wonderful, my parents are the most wonderful people in the world.” “No that can’t be so you must dislike them, your father must have whipped you or beat you or something?” “No he didn’t.” and they would not believe that it was a happy childhood. Does that make sense? Doesn’t make sense to me

30:30 I don’t know what you’re nodding for.

I know the way people carry on.

That was the way it was. I always worked, I said to my Dad before I got married, when I was thinking about it, I’ll tell you how I fell in love with Margaret later, but I was thinking about getting married and I said to him, he come over to visit us on a football trip, he was a coach in Adelaide. I said, “How do you know if you’re a successful parent?” and he said, “If

31:00 your children bring their friends home when they’re young to play and then when they do grow up and leave they come back and visit without you asking them, then you know you’re successful.” and he said “You teach them never do anything that will hurt anybody but themselves, think about it and be like that.”

31:30 I taught my kids exactly the same and it works and I must have done something right cause Margaret’s still with me after forty-seven years. But how I met her was I got posted down to a Recruit School Staff in Cerberus, HMAS Cerberus and they asked me would I play football with the local team and I said, “Not just yet, I’ve been at sea for a while I need to get a bit fit.” Cause you can keep fit

32:00 at sea but not running fit, so anyway after about a month I decided okay, let’s have a game. So I ran onto the field and I heard these girls cheering as I ran over and I had a look over and there’s about six or seven of them, and they were the girls that were going with sailors, either married to them or engaged or just going with them and they were our local support team. And I looked and I saw this blonde girl and I thought, “I’m going to marry her.” I stopped, had a look at her, “I’m going to marry her.” cause I was

32:30 twenty-seven nearly and I ran on and played the game. And when we went back to the Sportsman’s Club after the girls come down and I said to my mate, “Do you know the little blonde?” And he said, “That’s Margaret.” I said, “Any chance of getting her over, I’d like to meet her?” I even got him to bring her to me instead of me going over. And I found out in later years, I thought she was absolutely ravishing and I decided that I was going to win her, and she thought I was an arrogant little twit,

33:00 bad judgement. But she had no hope though, really didn’t, but I was the best dancer, I taught Saint Vitus to dance, jitterbugging rocking and rolling. We used to have the big dances. But the main tactic is not the dancing or the beautiful smile and all that, I’ve got photos there of when I was eighteen, twenty and that, I was a good looker, even had hair. But the best way of winning her was that when we were at the Sportsman’s Club

33:30 and I’d see some Greek god come over and start to win her, I’d wait till he went to the toilet and I’d go out and I’d say to him casually, “The little blonde girls’ mine.” I said, “You either stay away from her or you’ll be face down in the urinal, alright?” And if they wanted her they’d fight for her but none of them did, they probably thought they’d be face down in the urinal. And I never told that Margaret that until we’d been married about thirty

34:00 years, she could have married a millionaire. And some of them were Greek gods too mate I’ll tell you. Oh well what’s Wayne Carey [football hero] got that I haven’t got except hair, money and six foot tall and a body like a Greek god, what else? So there it is, so that’s got nothing to do with food in the Depression. Have you got enough on that?

That’s alright, that’s enough of that. What sort of work did your dad do before the Depression do you know?

Before

34:30 the Depression, what I can remember of him, I can always remember him hopping on his bike and going down to the malt house. And then there’d be, before the Depression, must have been in the malt house he worked there, cause his trade was maltster, he must have been there right from the start. And then from there, in the good days, before the Depression, then he would work at the brickyard for the three or four months

35:00 off season and then he’d go back to the malt house. And then in the Depression because there were so many people, oh at one stage you know South Australia obviously, I’ve heard you say it. Up in Murray Bridge, you know the sustenance people built the Great Ocean Road in Victoria, well they also put all the water pipes, hand shovels, pick and shovel, the water pipe from the Murray River to every house in Murray Bridge.

35:30 So the truck would come and pick them all up and they’d go up to Murray Bridge and they’d sleep out under the stars for the week working, and that was the one time he used to be very, very bitter. There were a number of English migrants come over and they were prepared to work for half of what our people were working, Dad actually hated the Poms [British] in those days, really did. This is before the Depression days, cause they couldn’t get a job over there so they

- 36:00 either hire on as deckhands and come over. And they were prepared to work for less the English, not any other nationality. I don't think the Poms all love us, I'm sure they don't, oh they do now that they won the rugby. But anyhow he always used to be very angry. With this digging ditches you'd have doctors, lawyers, you'd have everyone who couldn't get a job digging ditches,
- 36:30 not so much doctors and lawyers but I'm talking professional people digging ditches. And while you're digging you had to keep working pick and shovel, pick and shovel, or banjos, they call a shovel a banjo, you swing a banjo. And standing along the top of the pit that you're digging, the track you're digging was all these people that were wanting work and you got paid by the hour, the time you worked.
- 37:00 And if you slackened off the foreman would say, "You bludger out!" and someone else would take your place. And Dad never ever lost a day. But they'd give them maybe five shillings or something for tobacco, but food vouchers so we were still eating but we wouldn't see him for a week and then he'd come back in. Can I stand up for a minute and show you? When he'd roll his cigarette, and if he was talking
- 37:30 in a bar or somewhere and he's talking and he'd be looking at this bloke, he's having an argument with you but he'd be looking, or the bloke would be arguing with him, he never argued with anyone. He'd look at this bloke because he knew this is the one that's going to throw the punch, not him, know what I mean? I'll never forget him, no Dad he was, oh God he was a good man, I'll show you a photo of him after. But no, I don't know the Depression as far as I can remember
- 38:00 it was a good experience, it was an experience I wouldn't want my kids to go through, but then on the other hand we were always happy. We used to sing, you never had records, you'd listen to the Green Door and The Search for the Golden Boomerang [radio children's program], which I've got the book in there, The Search for the Golden Boomerang. That was about a little Australian girl getting lost in the bush and this little Aboriginal boy found her
- 38:30 and he had to find this magic boomerang and that sort of thing. So we'd read, Mum would read to us and we'd have to read back to her and we'd tell stories, ghost stories and all that sort of thing, and singing, in particular singing, didn't we ever.

Tape 3

- 00:31 **You were quite young when war broke out. Tell us a little bit about when it did break out.**
- Well I was only twelve when it started and you'll have to appreciate that in those days right up as far as eighteen, actually when I was enlisted I was eighteen in age but in experience of the world I'd say I was still only about thirteen or fourteen. So I was twelve years old,
- 01:00 I was in a good family environment, no problems there and I turned fourteen and because I never had - Dad didn't work, well he was working casual and he never had money put it that way. If your family had money you went to high school at fourteen in those days, if you didn't have money you went to work. So my first job as I said was I went and I initially helped Dad, he was working in the brickyard at that time, so I
- 01:30 went down and became what they call a billy boy. And they didn't just blow great chunks out of a quarry, they used to have a track working its way up and they chopped it down and dropped it from layer to layer, that sort of thing. So my thing was I had to boil the billy [pan] down the bottom and put about half a dozen billies on a stick and walk up this track, up the side of this cliff face sort of thing and give the cups of tea, the billies of tea to the fellows working,
- 02:00 and usually got abused by the man at the top cause his would be nearly cold. And then from there I went into, what I'd do then, oh I took on an apprenticeship, I got an apprenticeship, but the problem was we were only getting about two shillings and sixpence a week and working hard, learning to be a car mechanic. And for some reason or other my heart wasn't in, not a mechanic, I don't know, it wasn't the getting the
- 02:30 hands dirty or anything like that but my heart wasn't into cars, and besides which, by the time I gave Mum the two and six it wasn't enough, it wasn't anything. And they had Manpower [Directorate] in those days, once the war started, you had to report in to get another job and you had to explain why you left your previous job. So I thought they're not going to worry about a kid so I just got myself another job as what they call a truck driver's offsider.
- 03:00 There was - no that was later, I got a job in a soft drink factory, a soft drink brewery and started working there. Now that's where, I'd always been doing exercises to build myself up and got to the brewery and it was a four storey place and we had to carry seventy pounds of sugar right up the top and all this sort of thing, up the steps - no it was three storeys. But you had to carry these bags up and I was only fourteen, only slight, but it got to the stage I was
- 03:30 doing it easy. And in fact I'll never forget when I first went there I walked in, and it's hard to imagine now but I was shy and actually retiring I suppose you could say, and I used to be a bit worried about

walking into a new group, so I joined this firm at lunch hour. And I walked in and I looked around, I stopped at the door and I looked at each one because from the days

- 04:00 with the gang fights and all this sort of thing you could look at a person and you could size them up, he's a problem, he could be the one to have a go, he's alright, he's alright, he's as frightened as I am, this sort of thing. So you pick your mark, and it's a habit I've still got actually, and I walked in and I looked at each one of them, deadpan, never said a word. And then one of the older fellows spoke, "Come on in." he asked who I was, so I sat down, it was alright. And it must have been about six months later
- 04:30 a couple of the young fellows I'd teamed up with they told me that when I first walked in and looked around at them they mentally made the thought, "Oh oh, watch this bloke he'll be a hard one." you know, so without knowing it I must have looked aggressive. But whatever, I never went looking for fights but I never walked away from them. So I learnt, working in there I built myself up as much as I could and then I kept on looking for jobs that had more money,
- 05:00 for Mum and Dad, because that was the first time we'd ever had money. Then I went from there to the canning factory, no went to, that wasn't the canning factory that was later again, that was the last one, then I went as a furniture removalist offsider, by this time I was about sixteen, seventeen. And in the meantime because we were boy scouts we were dispatch riders with the Air Raid Precaution, ARP Group and
- 05:30 we used to, they'd have blackouts and you'd have exercises, air raid exercise and all that sort of thing. No bombs fell but we were still there and it was all dead serious stuff. In fact there's a certificate up on my wall from the grateful government on the fiftieth anniversary for my services as a dispatch rider of all things. So then I got a job, oh the boss of the truck drivers, he expected a man's work from the offsider
- 06:00 which at sixteen that meant I had to carry pianos, one end of a piano as well. Now it's not really as hard as it sounds because you have a thick belt and you drape it over your shoulders to about that far from the ground, couple of inches from the ground. You tuck it underneath the legs of the piano, there's a fellow there, and when you stand up straight it's in the legs and you've got the weight there, and you push it away from you like that
- 06:30 so you're actually pushing with the shoulders and the weights in your legs. And then you walk off, he walks backward and you walk off. And it got to the stage after about two years I was carrying them upstairs, you know going up first sort of thing, carting grand pianos and all this. Sounds like I'm joking but I could, if I had a thick belt I'd give you a demo [demonstration] I could pick it up easy, I can still do it cause it's in my legs. So then I heard
- 07:00 on the grapevine that Angles Canning Factory out at Glen Osborne up in the foot hills of Adelaide, they used to make, they had a contract with the Americans for these Vienna sausages and other stuff for the American troops, canning, that they were paying good money for people for nightshift because they couldn't get enough people to do nightshift. So I said to Mum, I asked Dad what it was and it was good money about five or six pound a week, which was good money then, and not
- 07:30 only that, that any mistakes that were made with the cans they used to just dump out in the dump and you'd ride your bike home and you could pick up cans and cans of foodstuff. It was a guess what you got but that helped to feed the family too by the way. So I got a job out there and that in itself was interesting because me being young and don't smile, virginal, it was quite funny because the police used to clear the streets of the ladies
- 08:00 that were a bit too obvious and send them out there. So you can imagine I got an education from some of them - I was working on a sausage maker machine and these ladies used to have to twist them into the right size and you can imagine some of the comments that were coming from them. And I used to put me head down and I can still remember old Flossy or whatever her name was, "Look at him he's blushing, he's blushing!" and that was a bad move on my part because they used to try and make me blush. So some of the things these ladies, and they were beautiful ladies too, absolutely
- 08:30 lovely. And it was good working there and the money was good and as I said I had a little sugar bag on my back and you'd go home, and you learnt to read what the code number that was stamped on it so you knew whether they were Vienna sausages or steak, ground up steak or whatever. I used to take a selection of cans home, give them to Mum and she used to give them to some of the other old ladies around the place as well. You took a chance, like for example
- 09:00 a fellow that was mixing the meat for the sausages this time, frozen meat it is, and it's got two big blades, it's like a big tub with two big blades like this and he's working away and he's finished and he's washing his hand and whoops, two fingers missing, so they could be anywhere in amongst these cans. So this American, they used to have an American, what do they call it... quality control man, oh he went spastic [frenzied], he said, "Get rid of it, get rid of it!" so
- 09:30 he must have thrown out a thousand cans, all that batch went. So we took them home naturally because if the fingers were in they'd have been mashed up anyway so it didn't matter. But that's the sort of thing that happened. Or if you'd accidentally, someone would drop, the floor was continually being hosed, it was absolutely immaculate, but if someone dropped, you know when they were loading up the sausage and they dropped a bit of meat on the floor the American bloke he'd ban the whole lot. Oh, no messing

around.

10:00 So the tucker was good and it used to feed our family and a couple of others as well. And then as I said the war ended so I was shattered and then a couple of mates and I said, "Right let's join the....."

Were you, what sixteen by then?

No by this time when the war ended I was eighteen, the war ended in August 1945, yep so I was twelve when it started in 1939

10:30 and I was eighteen when it ended in 1945.

What kind of things did you hear throughout that period of time, about what was happening with the war?

Yes because of the security was I knew that we had troops in Tobruk and they were under siege because my uncle, Uncle Arthur Kelly he was in Tobruk with the 9th Division. And we knew that but we didn't know about the 8th Division fellows in Malaya, we knew they were fighting there

11:00 and to all intents and purposes we thought they were still fighting even when the Japanese took over. We were never ever told what was going on, we didn't know, you didn't know until practically the end of the war about the POW [Prisoner Of War] camps. We knew that we lost a lot of fellows in Greece and Crete and all that sort of thing and we knew we were getting hammered. We also knew that our 6th Division when they first went over there they actually were instrumental, one of the leading groups in pushing

11:30 the Italians all the way back to Derna and Bardia all those places. And people, we used to have VC [Victoria Cross] winners come to the factory and talk and he would talk, I can remember one bloke he got his VC, artillery man, he got his VC in Crete, I think it was Crete. And he was telling us that the Germans were coming, oh Greece, in Greece - the Germans were coming down over

12:00 the hills and they had the aircraft with them and the artillery would stop and set up in a paddock and fire a couple of rounds to delay them or blow up a bridge and then they'd hook up and take off again, and all this sort of thing. And this fellow's telling us this and blowing up and bombing up and he said all of a sudden the Germans got a bit too close so he became a coward; he just took off and ran, he said he took off like that. And we're looking at him, he's got the VC [Victoria Cross medal] on his chest, and he took off

12:30 he said, "And I must of covered about ten miles." he said. "And I pulled up to a halt and the commanding officer was there and he had a big smile on his face and he come up to me and he said, "Sergeant..." - whatever his name was, "That was the most magnificent thing I ever saw." he said, "You running down that track pulling two of those artillery pieces with all your men sitting on them." So you know he was making a joke of it, but what he had obviously done, and I've since read the book, is he was able to

13:00 extract his weapons and get them out and stayed back right until the very end. So we heard about things like that. We knew that rationing was on; we knew damn well what ration books were, you could only get a certain amount of butter and a certain amount of sugar. There were many times, we didn't have soft drinks, we didn't know what soft drinks were in those days, we knew what they were but we couldn't afford them. But rationing was

13:30 sometimes not quite enough to feed what you wanted and what you really needed. No lights in the city they were all blacked out, or they had what they called a brownout, no neon lights but just the odd light in the street there, up the shopping centres. In fact my sister Shirley Anne was born in 1945 and in 1946 when the lights went on it was a big night, a big celebration night and the whole

14:00 family, I was on leave, we all went up into Rundle Street and the countdown. And all this happened, bang all these neon lights come on, you had to, it's hard to imagine it now but after all the darkness to suddenly see these lights. And of course Shirley was beautiful. But as I said I can't remember being hungry but Mum and Dad might have been. Now the war itself, our bedroom

14:30 was a big room, about half as big, the size of a normal, well, bit bigger than a normal garage I think. And we had all these, for some reasons or other in despite of all the restrictions you used to be able to get plenty of colour photos of ships and tanks and guns and aircraft, everything. And we had them up on the walls and the Americans came over in 1942 and they were based, the 1st Marine Division were based up at

15:00 Woodside in Adelaide, they were up there. And on a Sunday, one Sunday I'll never forget it, I was sixteen or seventeen or something, fifteen or sixteen, and we were running out of milk, it was a Sunday and we were having roast dinner this day for some reason or other. And Mum said, "Go up and get some milk." billy can of milk, so I walked across, it was raining, so as I darted across to the milk shop I saw these two American soldiers there, just standing there. They were on leave and they'd wandered down to the West End

15:30 there was nothing there, the ladies who used to be waiting for them were inside out of the rain. So these two poor buggers were standing there and they were miserable and they could see the paddock down the end, the parklands so they couldn't go any further and if they looked that way they could see

parklands. So I went home and told Mum so she said, "Go back over." she said, "Go and ask them if they'd like to come in and join us for dinner."

- 16:00 for lunch, well we called it dinner then but it was lunch. So I went back and I said, "Hello, Mum said would you like to come down?" "Oh yes, yes." in they came and they sat down with us and had lunch with us and dinner with us, as I say, and stayed the rest of the afternoon. Then they headed back to camp, they had to be up at the Town Hall at a certain time to get the bus back to Woodside. So from then on every weekend we had a couple of American
- 16:30 Marines at our place for lunch and that. And my sister Mary, she was only very young of course, but she was a smasher, beauty, long black hair, in fact when I was in the navy I had a - I can remember as a kid when she used to brush her hair a hundred times, brush her hair. Beautiful black hair and there was a photo of her and my brother Robbie and whenever a young lady was getting too close and wanted marriage, you could see it in the eyes, I'd accidentally drop this photo of this, my wife and child.
- 17:00 It was a killer and she was a beauty. So the Americans used to write to her when they were away, they went over to Guadalcanal this mob, I remember that and I remember when they came back, when they were relieved. Out of the at least fifteen that used to come to our place there was only about five come back, and when we asked about the others, oh they've gone back home, so they've either gone back home in a box or a hospital ship
- 17:30 and they wouldn't talk about it. But a very vivid memory is for the bond raising, they used to have these War Bond drives and these American Marines had just come back and they were still in their filthy, mud splattered uniforms. They must have just shipped them straight off the ship, probably not enough water on the ship to clean up anyhow, and they marched through Adelaide. No drums, no band
- 18:00 just these battered diggers walking through the street and I'll tell you it was something, dead silence and then the five of them come back. Anyway, another incident was Adelaide Railway Station has these huge big steps going down and your may have heard about the Battle of Brisbane, where the Americans and the Australians fought, that happened in every state, every capital city in Australia.

18:30 **Were you involved?**

Not me no, no I saw it, we were close in. But in Adelaide as you go down these steps just to the left down below the steps were the phone boxes, there was about half a dozen phone boxes so the fight started, there was an Australian 9th Division fellow just come back, my uncle came back, but then they'd only been back a fortnight and they sent them straight up to New Guinea, up to Townsville to train for New Guinea. So they were going to

- 19:00 go out and the Yanks' train come in and some smart aleck Yank must of said, he did scream out, "It's alright Aussies, we'll look after your women." so the next thing it was on for young and old. So my brother and I we had gone down to say goodbye to Uncle Arthur and the next thing the soldiers' fighting everywhere and it's, you see on the screen now is nothing to what a real knockdown, drag out brawl is, especially with servicemen. So we
- 19:30 had to get out of the way so we jumped and it was from about here to there where the telephones, we jumped onto the tops of the telephone boxes, my brothers and I. And of course it was on all over, below us here, up here, down the stairs, and the fight went on for I don't know how long, it was absolutely terrible. And the next thing the American Military Police came in and I'll tell you they don't mess around, they've got a club that long and they hit heads, there's none of this please, like our
- 20:00 blokes would more or less try and talk to them but no they went in and they just flattened anyone that moved...

Both Australians and Americans?

Didn't matter, Australians, they stopped the fight and the fight - they went back onto the train one went out and they put all the Yanks back on and they sent their train out as well, it come back later but they sent them back out into the open country, kept them out there for a while until it all calmed down. So that was very horrific, so when

- 20:30 I heard about the one in, we didn't hear about the one in Brisbane until later, but it happened, I heard it happened in Melbourne, Western Australia, not so much Western Australia but it happened everywhere and definitely happened in Adelaide. I used to....

That...just on the Americans, that's so cheeky of them to yell out that they'll take care of the women, I mean that did happen a lot though didn't it?

What was this?

Say that they'll take care of the women?

They did.

Some women did

- 21:00 **prefer the Americans didn't they?**

I don't blame them, I really don't blame them. I feel saddened, I'm not going to say my Auntie Jean I'll say some lady I know that when this fellow came home, he had been over in Tobruk and all this sort of thing and he came home, and I saw him, oh it's me Uncle Arthur, I'll never forget him. He was the heavyweight champion of the 9th Division so he was a big man, a good fighter. So he came

- 21:30 home and, "Hello Uncle Arthur." cause I used to write him all the time and he gave me, I think it was a German helmet from Tobruk, and he bought me back a pair of Japanese two toed shoes from up in the islands and a belt of a thousand stitches that they put on for good luck, he took it off a dead Japanese. Anyway, somebody stole them when I went in the navy. But anyway he come home and he went over to find his wife and he knocked on the door and the lady next door said, "Oh
- 22:00 hello Arthur how are you." she said, "She's down the bowls shed with her boyfriend." So he went down the bowls shed and he opened the door and this little 4F they called them, he was physically unfit, he wasn't in the army, he was standing behind the door and as Arthur walked in he had a hammer in his hand and he drove him into the deck like a tack. And I went and saw Arthur in hospital and he couldn't
- 22:30 stop laughing and when it laughed it hurt his head and he couldn't get over that Rommel threw everything he could at him including tanks, strafed them, bombed them, all this, never got a scratch, he was with Tom Derrick when he got his VC, he was in his unit, no he got a Distinguished Service Medal over there and he was with Tom Derrick up in Tarakan when he got his VC up there, Sattelberg. But Arthur could not stop
- 23:00 laughing about the fact that it took a 4F as he called him with a hammer to drive him into the deck like a tack. But there was a lot of incidents where soldiers had gone through a lot like that, a mate of my brother's went to jump on a bus and missed, he'd been through all this sort of crap, and killed himself in the street trying to get on a bus.

What did Arthur say to his missus?

"Oh it's alright love." he said. "I know how you feel."

- 23:30 No see, not every man come back and beat crap out of his wife because not all of them were virgins when they were overseas anyway. And I get a bit cynical about a bloke that will really go crook about his wife playing up, look, put it this way when I got married and I went to Malaya, we got married on the 20th October 1956 and on the 1st January I was up north. But I received a letter from, I'm not going to say who
- 24:00 but it was a person I know saying that my wife was playing up, so I immediately sent her the letter and said, "I know who this is." And she knew too. "Next time you see him tell him I'll see him when I come home." cause I trusted her and she trusted me. And trust me I never ever played up from the moment, I never, I've never so much as kissed and I mean kissed properly, sexually kissed another women since I've met my wife.
- 24:30 Since I actually met her, the moment I saw her when I went on the football field I went home the following weekend to Adelaide and broke off with a girl I was going with and come back and I've never so much as touched another women since Margaret. So she trusted me and I trust her, it has to be, I don't give a stuff what happened before and neither does she, that's their life, her life and my life. So if a bloke plays up, it's not good him
- 25:00 going crook if his wife plays up. I can remember an American telling me in Sasebo in Japan, we were having a few beers and he laughed looking at his medal ribbons, I said, "You went right through World War II and you're still here for Korea and you're in the occupation of Japan." I said. "Did you ever go home?" and in an American accent which I won't try and copy, he said he got home and walked in and he saw some bloke in bed with his wife in a compromising position,
- 25:30 and I said, "What did you do, did you kick the crap out of him?" He said, "Nup." he said, "I pulled out a five dollar bill and I stuck it in the cheeks of his arse and smacked it and said go and get yourself a good piece." So now that's the way he looked at it and he just went back to the depot, back to his base and signed on for Japan. So a lot depends on the person, if you trust someone you trust them, if they break the trust you're not even friends again, you don't even know them, end of story.
- 26:00 In my life with Margaret there's been two people, friends that have hurt her, she has forgiven them but I still haven't, as far as I'm concerned I will tolerate them for her sake but I no longer respect them. One's a woman and one's a bloke.

Where did you get that value

- 26:30 **from?**

Where did I get that from, my parents. You've got to be, first of all you've got to be honest with yourself and you've got to know right from wrong, and this is why Jiminy Cricket [cartoon character] came into it. Whenever I thought of doing something really wrong, truthfully, and whether it was intentional or not I'd think of Jiminy Cricket, I'd think is this going to hurt anybody,

- 27:00 anyone but me, and if it was the slightest possibility of hurting someone else, in any way physically or mentally or whatever, I wouldn't do it. There are times when there are things that I wished I had done that, but there always things that were only for my own enjoyment or pleasure or whatever, not

necessarily, but so I've bought the kids up the same. I believe that Margaret trusts me, I trust her,

- 27:30 sometimes we're not particularly friendly with each other and any married man who says I've been married forty years and we've never had an argument he's a liar, he really is. If you've got children you've had arguments, not all of our married life has been peaches and cream, there's always been times when we, there's one house we left, before we left I had to turn the wardrobe doors around cause I'd punched every one of them in, but I'd never hit her. But I've been so angry well actually
- 28:00 swung a blow at her and at the last minute realised and punch there. But I put that down, I now know what it was, it was this stuff in the back burner, I was maybe a little bit crazy, maybe still am a little bit crazy but I've never struck her or any other women, wrong, wrong. I was at a dance, my Dad or my Mother always said, "Never hit a woman unless she hits you for no reason." and I said, "Dad explain it?" he
- 28:30 said, "Well some ladies just take a pleasure in just going whack." And I was at this dance, and in between dances I could hear this young girl I was very fond of actually talking to her friends and the other friend said, "Oh Tom thinks the sun shine's out of you." or words to that effect she said, "I could do anything and he wouldn't take a word." she said, "I could slap his face." and I thought, "Oh please don't, please don't." But she come over and she walked up, "Tom?" and in front of her friends
- 29:00 she went bang and she really whacked me, so I just leaned in and went bang, not hard but give her a smack back. And I said, "I already told you I never hit a women unless for no reason, don't do it again." and I walked away, that was the end of that romance, she wanted back again but I just refused point blank. If I was going with a girl we had an argument I said, "No." that would be the end, finish, I'd walk away, because if you're going to argue before you get married what's it going to
- 29:30 be like when you get married, that was my crazy, twisted, thinking. But hurting somebody I just don't believe in it, except unfortunately I know I've hurt Margaret and I know I've hurt the family by words and apparently if Margaret was here she'd tell you. I have an aggressive stance, I stand up straight, I've a warrant officer stance,
- 30:00 an aggressive stance, I have an aggressive face and I have an aggressive voice. She has said that and the kids believe it, I don't know truthfully don't think I have. I was instructing almost continuously from 1955 right up even to the present day, I still give lessons. I was a warrant officer for what, twenty-one years
- 30:30 so what am I supposed to do, walk up and say, "Hey how you going, oh look don't worry." I can't do that, I was trained. But I never swore at them, I didn't believe in swearing at the troops because I believe you don't need that. What you see in the movies about the Americans debasing their troops. The idea of getting recruits you've got to strip them away from all this civilian garbage,
- 31:00 you know. like I'll call the union manager if you don't do it right, you've got to train them hard because you've got to fight hard. You imagine if you were in the middle of an awkward situation and someone suddenly said. "Oh I don't like this." and walked away, someone's going to die. So probably the way I stand, example, I was walking to meet my son down at Woodridge one time and I had boots, working
- 31:30 boots with shorts on and a t-shirt and I always rolled the sleeves of the t-shirt up and always had a haircut like this. And I was walking up to my son and I was quite happy to see him and he said, he's watching me and he said, "Stop don't move, don't change, don't change the expression on your face, don't move a muscle!" and I thought someone's coming up behind me to have a go or there's something wrong. And he said, "Turn slowly
- 32:00 and look to your right." so I turned slowly and turned to my right and I nearly died because I'm not kidding, there was this bald headed, tattooed bloke I guarantee was straight out of Boggo Road Gaol and he was glaring at me and it was me, and I looked and I thought oh God, and David said, "I'll never ever be worried about you walking down the street on your own." So apparently it was
- 32:30 the way I look, I look like I'm aggressive. Would you, can you see this stick stand hanging up on the side of there, can you get that, that's part of this story, that's the one. David made that for me, it is in fact a talking walking stick, it starts up here....

You might need to hold it a little bit higher?

- 33:00 Alright. Yep it started up here, I can't even see it without the glasses, but the names of the ships I was on, it was for a sixtieth birthday which is now sixteen years ago. He took my service documents and he was worried that at that stage back in the, fifteen, sixteen years ago I used to get a train down at Woodridge and we had little groups of indigenous brothers who were beating up on old people, religiously every week there was at least
- 33:30 one or two old men or old women in hospital from these people. And the police couldn't do a thing about them for exactly who they were so he made this and he put all the ships that follow on all the way right down to the very bottom, from the first ship I was on to the last. And then he put up here he put the RAN anchor, forget the attachments,
- 34:00 asked me what was the thing that I remember most and had made most impression on my service life

and I said, "Without a doubt the minesweeping." The mine sweeping, two years minesweeping was so much harder than anything else I ever did including Korea, that it wasn't even funny. Put that on and then he put the, where are we, I've got to find it, there it is. King Neptune for crossing the Equator, cause we'd been over the Equator,

- 34:30 and all that sort of thing. And that's the balancing section there and then he'd put on here places I'd been, where I'd served, places I've served, Korea, Malaya, Far East Strategic Reserve, New Guinea and that sort of thing. And I put these ones on from places we walked in and then later on I put I served in three aircraft carriers, Sydney, Melbourne and Vengeance I served in destroyers Warramunga, Arunta
- 35:00 and Anzac and up here we've got other ships, just to represent other smaller ships I was in and I served in six years regular army and eighteen years reserve army for them. So basically it's a walking, talking stick, he made it for me for protection and I've never had to use it. Probably because I started to
- 35:30 walk with it as an old, like a walking stick and I thought that's not me, so I now carry it as a warrant officer carries it and I actually march with it. And I've had the time where a hand grabbed it there one day as I was marching and I looked and it was a police constable and he said, "What is it?" and I said, "It's my dog walloper, two legged and four legged." I said, "It's a walking talking stick." I said,
- 36:00 "If I get into trouble it will do the talking for me." and he looked at it and I told him what it was and he smiled and he said, "Make sure they throw the first blow." So on top of the stick I then went to Tai Kwan Do [martial art] for about three years to brush up on self-defence, I got my mate, ex Royal Marine commando to brush up on the stick fighting we used to do. You had a stick about so long and you can put a person down
- 36:30 with a walking stick or a normal stick. I was not aggressive, I never go looking for trouble but I was prepared. And for some reason or another nobody ever picked me, but that incident I told you with David when he said and I thought it was someone from Boggo Road Gaol I must look aggressive, which is where I wish more women could look aggressive and then they wouldn't get attacked. Cause anybody that's going to beat up on an old person or a woman will not pick someone who's
- 37:00 ready, they will not pick someone they think is a hard mark, that's a fact. So I don't really like talking about aggression and fighting because I don't like fighting but if I have to I will it's a simple as that. I hope I never ever have to use it but unfortunately you see, every week you see some old lady or some old man in hospital with split faces and that because some
- 37:30 young person has beat up on them. They don't have to beat up on them they've got their money anyway. So that's a bit of a digression isn't it all of this, sorry about that. No I've never, when I said I never went looking for a fight and I would walk back from it, physically and mentally I walk back from it, verbally I'll walk back, I'll try not to fight, but if I have to, you can only go back so far and that's been the story of me life. I've been sat on me bum many a time
- 38:00 in fact it was the only time my Dad ever lied to me, he said, "If ever you get into a fight with someone who's good and they sit you on your bum, smile at them, get up and attack them. And if they sit you on your bum again get up and smile or smile and get up and go back and they'll finally think, 'This bloke's mad I can't beat him'." So this particular day in one of the canteens in the navy
- 38:30 I had the knack of upsetting people, I don't know how, must have been my, there's that much difference between confidence and arrogance and people sometimes think because I'm confident I'm arrogant, you're smiling cause you agree don't you? You see, so anyhow I'm in the bar this time and I had the habit, I don't know, I had the knack of upsetting this big fellow and they call it arrogant little man syndrome they call it. And truthfully I've never suffered from it
- 39:00 because I never had to worry about it, but obviously he thought I did. So he said, "A man ought to give you a smack in the gob!" so I wouldn't care if Jack Johnson [famous prize-fighter] said he'd give me a smack in the gob I'd say, "Give it your best shot." cause if he's gonna hit me I may as well have a shot back. So sure enough bang down I went, so I smiled and leapt to me feet, bang, leapt to me feet again, bang, leapt to me feet again, or tried to get up again and he said, "Whoa, whoa what the hell's going on?" and I couldn't stop laughing I said, "My Dad lied
- 39:30 to me. He told me that after two or three smiles you'd stop hitting me." So he helped me to me feet and to this day we're good mates, really true.

Well it did work in a way then?

It worked in a way. No I always thought if you show people that you're prepared to have a go if you have to, especially if they've had a few beers cause they're just looking for something. And where I used to get out of a lot of fights, they used to think

- 40:00 I was crazy or good because of the hearing I could have someone walk up to me in a bar, and it's happened time and time again "Rarr, rarr" and they're calling me for everything and I don't know, my mates will tell me later that bloke wanted to rip your arms off, when it's all over and he'd be blasting at me, blasting at me and I'd say, "Right oh mate I'll just finish me beer and see you outside." And the mate told me one day you could see his eyes pull back and he thought oh he's either very good

40:30 or mad so he's walked away, so it's got me out of trouble too. But there it is that's life.

Tape 4

00:31 **I wanted to ask you when you were working and the war was on did any of your mates; did they have brothers that were in the war?**

Oh yes, yes.

Did that create... I don't know, a competitive thing, or did that ever cause any...?

No, no never, envy, if it caused anything it would have been envy. Cause I had a brother, Jim, who was in. But I can remember one of my mates

01:00 he was in a year older than me at school, Bruce Howes his name was, and Bruce joined the navy in the war. And when Darwin was bombed he was one of the boys that was helping - if you know about Darwin the big oil tanks went up and there were five soldiers, five navy or army, five troops very, very badly burned. In the Women's Weekly they actually called them the "burns boys" cause they were floating in formalin or something like that

01:30 because they were badly, badly burned. And the Women's Weekly made a thing about their progress because they hovered between life and death, well that was Bruce and he was only a year older than me and he went in. Another mate of mine joined the merchant navy as a kid, just got washed overboard one time, that was during the war, he got washed overboard he was only about my age. But he was able to get into the merchant navy and I never ever thought about the merchant

02:00 navy and he died. But it's like, it's a funny thing in the service what I've learnt, those children I told you that died when I was a child that did have an effect on me, more so I think than some of the mates that died during my military services. So if you're at sea, when you're at sea or when you're in the navy or army service, how can I explain? Oh I'll explain it this way, when I talk to schools I talk to them about what Anzac Day means to me and part

03:00 of the thing I say to them is the reason we go up to Anzac Day and November the eleventh is that because of the very nature of our job if we're doing our job, in other words if we're in action and one of our mates goes down we can't stop to help him, we've got to leave him, because if we stop and help him there will be more of us go down and we will not achieve our objective. So this is why when the thing is over, the job is done, he's gone,

03:30 if he's at sea well he's either in the sick bay or he's on a boat and gone to the bigger ship and he's gone, we may never ever hear of him again. Sometimes you don't even know if they're alive or dead, you just never hear of them. And we, you psych yourself up that he's gone, he's just posted to another ship. So when we go up there on Anzac Day it's a sad and happy day, it's a sad day, or happy day cause you walk in and you get a

04:00 smack between the shoulder blades and say, "G'day Hamilton you old so and so, good to see you!" that sort of thing and you see someone you haven't seen for years, but then you say, "How's this one?" "Died." "How's this one?" "Gone." On the other hand down in Frankston one time previously about four or five years previously, we knew on the ship that this bloke had been kicked to death by a shore patrol; there was a bad navy shore patrol in Sydney at the time.

04:30 Oh they were mongrels, navy blokes but they were animals. And they used to deliberately pick on a sailor and then get stuck into him. So anyway we heard that Darkie had been killed so I was in Frankston living there and I went into the bar one day and there he is standing there as large as life. And I went up to him and said, "It can't be, you're dead!" and he pinched himself and said, "No." he convinced me he wasn't. But he had been so badly injured that he'd spent months and months in hospital and then had to get discharged.

05:00 But we never ever know, we never ever knew, which is why you're sometimes talking to veterans and they sound a bit casual about someone who's died, trust me, deep down we feel it. I'm the state membership registrar for the Naval Association, this group the Naval Association of Australia, every week, we've got one thousand two hundred and fifty odd members and every week you can guarantee I have to write at least one of them off.

05:30 Now if you mourn them all you would never, you'd never get on with your work. We had a classic example, oh bloody near brings me to tears, this one really does almost bring tears to me eyes, is our secretary at the beginning of the year was the most beautiful lady named Ros Shrupner, and I'll say her name if this is going to be posterity and history. Ros Shrupner, she was an ex-WRAN [Women's Royal Australian Navy]

06:00 she'd worked in the Queensland University, had her own business, was an absolutely brilliant lady, she was just over sixty something like that. She rang that she was going to a function at lunch time that day with the WRANs, the ex-WRAN's, and she rang the president and she said, "I don't think I'll come cause I'm not feeling too well." This is somewhere about nine o'clock in the morning and they have worked

out that

06:30 less than a half an hour later she had a massive stroke and died, just like that. Now that went through the Naval Association like, it was like losing family cause Ros was such a beautiful lady, lovely person. And that one probably had more affect on me than any of the others. I've got a photo in there at a dining in night where I was dancing with her, I still loved dancing, nearly kills me cause I run out of breath, but

07:00 dancing with her. I thought oh wow, you see where I'm coming from, that if we stop and spend time thinking about them we'll never ever get anything else done. It's not good, it doesn't mean to say we don't think about it, but there it is. When I go, that's why I've got photos, there's photos of me everywhere, they finish up throwing them out, we don't need photos, how can you forget him

07:30 arrogant old twit.

Could you tell me about the day you enlisted?

Yep I went down, there was three of us went down and it would have been at the end of 1945 and at that time I had all the references. You had to have tons of references and at that time there was so many, the war had ended in August so there was so many people getting out of the navy or the army or the air force

08:00 and spending maybe a couple of months over Christmas and not liking civvie street [civilian life], cause trust me civilians were a strange breed. So they wanted to go back in and they didn't want to go back in the army, if he was army he'd want to go in the navy or something different. So because of the rush and the navy at that time were enlisting for twelve years and so I went down and had to wait till February. So anyway to go down for the recruiting we went down to HMAS, oh

08:30 speaking phone..... we had to go down to HMAS Torrens, it was the depot down at Birken Head in South Australia you'd know that one. So we go down and there's two mates of mine, both big fellows, and we go down and we're doing this medical and talk about embarrassed, had to strip off in front of people, bloody terrible. Bear in mind that I'd never been out of Adelaide. And anyhow we go down there and I pass this, oh we did a test

09:00 maths and tests and all this, maths and English first and then they started giving us the medical and I was fit, no two ways about that because I'd been playing football. I was playing with West Adelaide junior football and I was fit and healthy and all this sort of thing, except for two teeth I had kicked out playing football. I knocked a bloke down to get the ball off him and as I bent over him he kicked up and kicked me and I was only from here to the back door from the goal but instead of picking up the ball I chased him to thump him.

09:30 But anyway to get back to it I went down there and I passed everything except you had to be five foot two minimum to get in. And I'm never forgetting what I now know to be a navy medical petty officer, he said, "You're not reaching the bar son, you've got to reach the bar." and I said - I looked, I turned and looked at it and I thought, "Oh God." and I put me hand up here and there's fingers between me and the bar. And I'm

10:00 stretching and stretching and he said, "You've got to touch the bar." and I'm going ohh and I'm nearly crying, oh God, he said, "Do you really want to get in?" and then he's going up on his toes, he said, "Do you really want to get in?" and I went "Oh." and up on the toes and he said, "You're in, go." so I was in. And when I walk out to my mates big smile like this,

10:30 they're sitting down hanging, cause they both got knocked back. And I would have backed it in that they would get in because they could hold me out with one hand, big fellows they were.

Why'd they get knocked back?

They didn't have maths. See people think that the dregs go into the navy but I've got to tell you we're the cream of the crop, we really are. You had to have some sort of - nowadays I think you've got to have a degree to get in the navy but in those days you had to have at least the basic education, because the

11:00 training is intense and you've got to be. So anyhow so there it was, I passed they didn't.

Did you have to get your parents' signature?

Oh yes, yes.

What were.....?

Mum wasn't happy about it but Dad just said, "I wished I was going with you." cause they knew I wanted to go in before, wanted to be in it. Dad said, "I wished I was going with you." Cause, oh look I feel so sorry for him, he was young at the time in World War I just like I was and could not get in and then the war ended,

11:30 so he regretted it. And the day war was declared, the next day he went down to enlist and they knocked him back because he had so many children, and besides which he was in his forties and they had so many of these young people out of work, so all these young fit healthy people, they took them. And they

took ex service people, World War I blokes in as instructors. It sounds silly you'd think they're too old but it was only twenty-five years

12:00 and they could be Bren instructors and all this. So Dad missed out so he immediately joined what they call the Civil Defence Force, no not the Civil Defence Force, like a home guard, like our version of Dad's Army and I can still remember him they gave him a badge, volunteer, rejected volunteer's badge. So this is so people wouldn't give them white feathers, and bear in mind Dad was bald and he looked older. Did you ever see,

12:30 English comedian used to play a ukulele named George Formby? He used to sing these little songs

\n[Verse follows]\n 'Oh the blushing bride she looks divine,\n The bride groom he is doing fine\n I'd sooner have his job than mine\n When I'm cleaning windows"\n

That's George Formby. Well my Dad looks just like him, no kidding. So he got knocked back again, he couldn't get in again so he wanted me to go. Jim,

13:00 my brother Jim when he sneaked off Dad, he didn't worry.

How much time had passed from when you enlisted to when you first started training?

I passed in about, it must have been somewhere in December but they didn't want us in as I said, because they would have had to give us Christmas leave anyway. So in February 1946, twelfth of February 1946 I was called down and

13:30 signed on. And we signed on that day and then we went to the Adelaide Station that evening and we were about one thousand five hundred of us, or about one thousand from Adelaide and five hundred from Western Australia, one thousand five hundred of us on the train. I can still remember walking from my home in Gray Street; it was two blocks to Hindley Street where I had to turn to get the bus. And I can look back and I could see Mum still standing at the door,

14:00 giving the big wave, she was shattered. For some reason or other I was the favourite because apparently I had everything that could happen to a kid up till I was about eleven, everything that could happen to a kid I had it. Apparently when I was born I was declared dead, but Auntie Jean put me over her shoulder, and without realising I'd say, she's walking along, she used to read tea cups so she knew, she's walking and she's patting me on the back and the next thing I let out squealing, that's

14:30 when I was born. So apparently Auntie Jean knew, she first did at this resuscitation thing that they're now doing when you think about it. So everything that could happen to a kid, so I was a bit of a favourite I think, well my family reckon I am.

Did she give you anything when you left that day, your mum?

Did I?

Did your mum give you anything when you left that day?

Yes I'm hooked up so I can't get it but when we have our next break I'll get it for you. When I was in

15:00 grade three at school, the nuns gave me a little leather folding thing which had a baptismal, Christ with the heart and my First Communion medal and Mum kept it for me and all of this sort of thing, and folded it over and I kept that. And that is, have you heard people the old expression from England about

15:30 if a kid is born with a caul, you know over the head, they save that and keep it because that kid will never drown at sea, true that's old superstition. Well this was my caul, I never go anywhere without it. And Uncle Arthur when he came back he bought me a set of rosary beads from Jerusalem blessed by the priest in Jerusalem. So when I was going

16:00 Mum gave me this and grandmother gave me a little cross, my grandmother gave me a little cross that her grandmother had given her which was stitched in. One of Mum's friends gave a little medallion, a Christian medallion that her mother had given her and they're all in there. And to save the rosary beads Mum gave me from her father, or her grandfather, it was sort of a

16:30 almost like a bakelite sort of a thing that wax matches used to go in, so the rosary beads in my housewife [sewing kit], the rosary beads and this little thing, housewife, I never go anywhere without it, travel. If I pack a bag, we're going to Adelaide on the nineteenth of next month it will be the first thing that goes in the bag, apart from the housewife cause I think it's necessary to have a housewife with you. I don't mean a woman, I mean a sewing kit, did you think I meant Margaret?

17:00 **I just needed to clarify that.**

No, when I say a housewife I don't mean Margaret I mean the sewing kit. God crikey, I sew all the buttons on in this house. So that's what Mum gave me - hello this is starting to whistle - so I never go anywhere without it. Anyhow we walked down to the station and as I said fifteen hundred and we headed across and we got to, I can never think of the name

17:30 of the place in the middle of the morning, early, early morning, we stopped just over the Victorian

border and you had to see this to believe it. It was a freezing cold morning cause in those days February was a cold month, in Melbourne you get snow in those days, only light but you get snow, and it was freezing and on the platform was long, bear in mind fifteen hundred, long tables and

- 18:00 on it were fifteen hundred plates of sausages and eggs which had been there for about two hours. And I looked at it and it was this freezing cold glutinous mess and I looked at it, and one of the old veterans from World War II, older fellows, he must have taken me under his wing, thought I was young an innocent or something, I don't know. And I looked at it I said, "Oh good heavens." and he said, "Eat it son." he said "You never know when you
- 18:30 get your next meal." and I went bang, that's exactly what my father used to say, "Eat it now you never know when you get your next meal. If you're tired sit down, you never, and you've got the chance to sit down sit down and close your eyes even if it's only for ten minutes, you never know when you get the chance to do it again." So I got stuck into this and chewed on this, it was like eating an ice block of sausages and eggs, my first meal in the navy. We went to Melbourne
- 19:00 stopped there and they turned us loose and they said, "Be back here at seventeen hundred [5.00pm]." and I've got it in the diary, I thought what the hell is seventeen hundred, I never knew what seventeen hundred was so I thought well I'll stick with the big fellow. So we just wondered around and I can still remember there was up the side of a building there were these shoes walking, footsteps walking up the side. I don't know what the commercial was for, or the ad [advertisement] was for but it was shoes, footprints, probably some shoemaker. And I remember
- 19:30 Melbourne I thought wow, cause it was bigger than Adelaide. So then at five o'clock we went to Prince's Bridge Station and we joined this train that had to take us down to Cribb Point down in Victoria because at that time, now they've got a depot in the - railway station in the depot, naval depot but then you had to go to Cribb Point, right down on the Mornington Peninsula. And you cruise out through all these Chelsea, Mornington
- 20:00 Carrum, Bon Beach and so on, and you're going out in the middle of nowhere, in fact going up one hill the train stopped so the conductors come along and said, "Everybody out so we can get up this hill." So we had to walk up the hill so the train would get up the hill. And we pulled into this station, I'll never forget it, we got called out again and it's drizzly rain and these, you talk about Men in Black in the movie, these blokes with long, black capes, oh long, black coats and white caps
- 20:30 and big buttons come out and all I could see was teeth, the mouth screaming. And they were screaming and I thought, I'm thinking, "What the hell is this lot?" so I just... whatever everyone else did I did. And they turned us around and they marched us about two miles in through this gate which is got big carvings that used to be on the front of the ships. You know the ships' bows, the old sailing ships. Massive big iron gates and a fellow standing here with a bayonet and rattle.
- 21:00 And we marched two miles down and turned left go into this huge big open air canopy and then looking around, what the hell's this? And all of a sudden some bloke's walked in, and I think he must have been, he was going to tell us that God was coming cause he screamed out. I think he said something about 'nee how', which I found out later meant ship's company attention, you see but I didn't know it then.
- 21:30 And we stood still and he said, "If you so much as fart..." he said, "I'll have your guts for garters!" and I thought now God's coming and I looked and this little fellow with a different cap, he had some braid on the front, he was the commanding officer. He come in and he started "Rarr, rarr" and he called someone else and I have no idea what they were saying, all I could hear was the noise. And then another fellow got up and he said, "Listen in..." bear in mind there's about
- 22:00 two thousand people standing there at this stage in this covered in area, "Listen in for your name and your number, write them..." we all got issued a small piece of indelible pencil, lick your palm and write your number on when it comes, when you get your number, "Listen for your number, if you forget it you will be hung, drawn and quartered, I'll have your guts for garters!" Oh bloody hell, I've often wondered how you can have guts for garters but it must work. So
- 22:30 anyway I'm listening and I suddenly thought there's no good listening to the A's, B's, C's and D's cause my names H, cause they were doing it alphabetically. Then I'm listening and I heard, "Hamilton, Thomas Harold 29216." wrote it down, licked it, wrote it down, licked it and wrote it down, I had it in about five different places in case the rain washed it off. So that was me first number, 29216. If you go up on the
- 23:00 web site I answer questions, answers on medals and I sign it 29216. And so that was it, so then that was all done and they said, "Right, away we go." and we marched up, oh no from here to there, oh no they called names, "You, you and you you're in class fifty-one." That was fifty-first class of 1946, I said, "Right oh." away we go. March up and they take us into this dormitory and there's hammocks, oh they took us to a building
- 23:30 first and you get a hammock, we got our hammock and we took it up to the room. And I thought how I'm going to get up, the hammock's bar about six foot high and I'm about five foot two, so how I'm going to get the damn thing up there, how I'm going to get into it. So anyhow that was another story, and that was the start of it. So I learnt to sleep in a hammock, learnt how to get up into it.

How did you get up into it?

Oh well having been with, what do you call it, the

24:00 Salvation Army with the gymnasium, leapt up to the bar swung me feet, dropped me bum into the hammock, arse over head straight out, bang, tipped me straight on the floor. So I learnt swing up, don't move until such time as the hammock stops rocking and then you very gently scrunch yourself down, this is why I still sleep on me back to this day because you're sleeping bowed. But once you get in there and the hammock closes in around you, oh after

24:30 sleeping in a hammock you never sleep in anything, you wouldn't want to sleep in anything else again. Oh they are beautiful, it's the only place, you can imagine there's a hundred odd blokes all in the room, right near your head is a set of feet and right near your head there's a set of feet. Because the hammocks are strung there, and if you get out you bump this one or that one whatever, and oh no privacy, but oh what an experience. And I'm laying there I'm sound asleep and all of a sudden, I just go to sleep and I hear,

25:00 lights go on and this smack in the bum with a stick from underneath. "Wakey Wakey rise and shine, the morning's fine it taste like wine, heave ho, heave ho, let go of your cocks and pull on your socks, lash up and show a leg, Nelson was up an hour ago." and this bloke's screaming like that and I said, "Wow I'm out of bed what's going on, what's going on?" so I thought follow the leader. So I just followed the leader and from then on this is it I'm going to be a sailor wow and I was even trying to march. But if you can imagine five foot two with a

25:30 kit bag almost as big as himself trying to march like a sailor, bit difficult I'm telling you.

Just before you go on did he say that every morning when he'd come in, what you just said?

Oh there was a little bit about the WRANS [Women's Royal Australian Navy Service] not going to say that.

Can you repeat it a bit slower cause it's really good to get that?

Oh that's what they used to say. Normally this, when they say heave ho, heave ho, wake up and lash up and show a leg, show a leg, cause back in the old days

26:00 in the navy a limited number, in the British navy a limited number of ladies were allowed to, wives were allowed to go on board and they were in a hammock. So they'd say show a leg, so if it was a clean skinned leg she could stay in bed, she didn't have to get up when the sailors did. So he'd say "Wakey wakey rise and shine, the mornings fine it taste like wine, heave ho, heave ho, lash up and show Nelson was up an hour ago, let go of your cocks and pull on your socks, hit the deck

26:30 running." and all this sort of thing and that was it. So that was, and that, I can't play it, I've got a bosun's pipe in there but they had, there's a particular navy wakey wakey, not like the army wherever you go, dah, dah dah.....tat, tat.....dah, wakey wakey and up you go.

27:00 That's my introduction to the navy. Look I did, I loved it.

What were you thinking?

What was I thinking? I thought what the hell have I got myself in here. I had no trouble because I had discipline, the discipline was nothing, discipline in the navy was harder than the army and air force but it didn't matter to me because I'd come from a family where discipline was rife, we had to have discipline in a big family.

Why did you choose the navy?

27:30 Why'd I join the navy?

Why did you choose the navy as opposed to...?

Because when this big bloke told me that if at seventeen that if they had to take me he would go to Ayers Rock, do you think I was going to give him the privilege of going into his rotten army? I took me spite out and joined the navy for twelve years.

So that was it, that's what your decision was based on?

Actually yes, because the choice for the army at that time, and I'm such a fool when I think of it was two years

28:00 in Japan in the occupation force, two years in Japan and I said, "No." No I'll tell you why, it was rather strange why I chose the navy because I used to love going down the beach and watching storms and all this sort of thing, being there with the storm. And all of my kids I've taken them, when we were in Frankston I used to take them down and we stood on the foreshore and the spray coming over, and rugging up, to teach them not to be frightened. But I was down at the beach one time and there was hell of a storm running

28:30 and truly I could feel the ocean pulling me in and I was petrified, I wasn't a kid, I could feel it dragging me, I thought no, no I pulled away. The next thing I know I'm signing on in the navy.

What was that feeling like?

It was total terror is the only word I can put it. It felt as though

- 29:00 I could actually feel it, it had hold of me and when the water would run out it would come crashing in and then it would go out like that and I could feel it dragging me, actually feel it and I backed off, I backed off. As soon as I got out and let go I backed off, backed off got away and I stood looking at it and so I walked out, just to make sure, I walked out on to the edge of the jetty. And it was crashing over the edge of the jetty at the time so I went out as far as I could and I stood there and I could still feel it, not as bad so I thought. oh no I'm not
- 29:30 going near that. I walked away, never ever thought, this was before I went down the navy, the army first, I went after that, that's why I went to the army first, cause I wanted to be a soldier. But then I saw a sailor come in with a beard one time, fellow I used to sell papers with, his son was in the navy, he was on HMAS Kanimbla. He come on leave had a big beard, medals on the chest and a girl on each arm and I thought that's for Tom.
- 30:00 So I don't know I just, maybe I was just terrified of getting married and wanted to get out, maybe that could be it. But the funny part about it was when I went to, well three days later, two day later we went down to have a medic and the medical, thorough medical. So you can imagine, it's middle of winter and were all stark naked and it was cold I'll tell you. So Jimmy Henderson, he was an old commander, he had been in World War I
- 30:30 and they'd resurrected him for World War II. And he's sitting in a chair like this and he had a big long stick like a cane the teacher had and he said, "Next one." and he'd go turn around and slap them on the leg. We're watching this and the bloke would turn around and he'd go, "Bend over." and he'd go and he'd say "Get him out of my sight." So the next thing, and he's about five in front of me this fella and he says, "Turn around." and
- 31:00 he reached in with the stick and he lifted something up and he went, "Ahhh unclean, unclean!" and he threw the stick away, he said, "He's unclean, get him out of here, throw him out, throw him out!" And they dragged this kid into another room you see. So they gave Jimmy another stick, these others get around and he comes up to me and he just looked at me and he said, "Unclean." so I got thrown in with the unclean. And it turned out someone had come in with, not crabs, but scabies which are worse, you see
- 31:30 very infectious so the next thing, I didn't even know what they were but I'm unclean. I thought - see the mark on the leg there that's just scars from it. We got put in the infectious diseases ward. So and I said "What's this?" and they told me it's some, it's like, they're like crabs except they're a 'mechanised dandruff' they call them and they just burrow into the base of the hairs and oh bloody itch like anything.
- 32:00 So I'll never forget it, the medic used to come around everyday and he had what they called creamo benzilah benzowhatis, it was a pinkie thing like calamine lotion, but he had to apply it with a scrubbing brush. If you can imagine that, not what you call the most pleasant thing. And we were in there for about, actually we were only in that infectious diseases ward for about five days. And then on a visitor's day on a Sunday one of the girls come down to visit her
- 32:30 boyfriend or husband and she wanted to know what ward's this and he said, "The infectious diseases ward." and she said, "Oh that's for gonorrhoea and syphilis." she said "What are you doing in there, you haven't got that." And she went screaming off and demanded, this is on a Sunday, demanded to see the senior medical officer, and that same afternoon we were taken out into a normal ward, isolated but in a separate ward. But the days we did in it were the most interesting, very interesting
- 33:00 because that was where I first heard about the prisoners of war because these blokes were in there and they had hookworm. And believe it or not they used to get this disease, hookworm like a worm that hooked onto the bloodstream and you think I'm joking, they used to give them rum cause the worms would get drunk and slide out. No, they had all these problems that they - but what I remember about it mostly
- 33:30 is they used to talk and the thing they spoke about, cause people only heard about HMAS Sydney going down with all hands. They only heard about that at the end, later on and these fellows they'd only just heard about it. And bear in mind that they'd been sunk on the Perth and the Anzac, oh the, not the Anzac I'll think of the other one, but they'd been sunk of the, the Yarra. The Perth and the Yarra both got sunk and
- 34:00 they could not, and I guarantee that the day of their death they would not believe that you could sink a ship with six hundred and eighty men and there was nothing. No one survived not even a hammock, a hammock properly tied and rolled in damage control, in action it can block a hole in the ship's side. If it goes in the drink it will keep you afloat for twenty-four hours because it's waterproof, canvas almost. And they would not believe that the ship
- 34:30 could be sunk without any trace of anyone. When the Hood [British battleship] was blown up by the Bismarck [German battleship] and they were all below decks and got washed out, so out of the Hood there was wreckage and there was three [survivors]. So why was there none [when the German raider "Kornorant" sank the Australian cruiser "Sydney"?], because the people in the Kormorant lied and our government let them. Yep and when you wait and see, I'm cynical I told you that,

- 35:00 when all of the Kormorant officers in Germany are finally dead, when they all die I'll guarantee suddenly someone will say put up the money to find the Sydney, it's not here where the Kormorant people said it is. It will be up here somewhere and they'll find it, you want to know, you want to bet. You think about it you're younger than me, you'll be around longer than me, I'll guarantee one day they'll have a survey on the Sydney and there'll be a
- 35:30 totally different story come out. So cynical, I got that conviction from these prisoners of war. So anyway eventually I got out of the sick bay and went back but my class were too far ahead. You know about three weeks, so they put me in with sixty-one class, which was a bit of a bummer because they were all Victorians and I was only South Australian and I was a stranger, they'd all enlisted together.
- 36:00 So we started and being a bit small I used to get pushed around a bit until I suddenly thought this is no good, and remember that my brother Jim used to thump me regularly. He really did, every time he learnt a new trick in the army he used to come back and practice it on me, or twist my arm behind my back and punch me here and say say sir to him and I wouldn't. I'd be crying but I wouldn't. So I thought this is no good, I mean I don't look for trouble
- 36:30 but there's always some clown that wants a victory. So I went down, knocked off one day at four o'clock after training and I went down the PT [physical training] school and I looked in, walking around having a look and there's nobody there and I saw the vaulting horse, you know you run along and bounce and go over. And I had big boots and gaiters and me normal uniform with overalls on over the top. So I go pounding down and I'm going to leap over this and I jumped went to go over me toes got hooked up
- 37:00 so I went face over apex and I'm laying flat on me back and I hear clunk, clunk, clunk and I look and I saw black polished boots. And it comes up and it's black polished anklets and I go up and up and up and they're looking down like this, it's Mr. Saltmarsh. Mr. Saltmarsh was a physical training instructor who became a warrant officer which coming up from
- 37:30 the lower deck right through to the warrant officer rank, and he truthfully was over six foot tall. Anyway so you can imagine how he looked to me, "What are you doing?" I stood up and I said, "I'm tired of being thumped around Sir and I want to learn how to fight." he says "What do you mean?" and I told him about my brother thumping me and I want to sit him on his bum and I said, "Every time someone wants to have a victory they thump me." and I said, "I try but I get beaten." "Petty Officer Hoparound or
- 38:00 whatever your name is." out he come, "Yes Sir, yes Sir!" you have to see a physical training instructor to believe him, really they're a breed of their, oh yes sir, yes sir, he said, "Take this man from here on in every night in the dogs." the dog watch you know the watches are broken up in four hour shifts. But if you had the same, you only had four hour shifts you'd get the same shift everyday. Like you might be on from midnight till four every night, so they'd break the four in the evening till eight
- 38:30 at night into four to six, six to eight so it rotates. So anyhow he said, "In the dogs take this man and teach him." So from then on every night down to PT gear, run down, cause I could run plenty good, I was fit but started off with light weights, heavy weights, weight lifting. Started off doing the epee and the foil and finish up I'm swinging a big sabre, this is as the training went on. Finished me basic training went
- 39:00 into gunnery, gunnery course still doing the exercises. Every time someone picked me I'd get stuck into them and I was winning a few, I never went looking for trouble. But then I got to the stage where I stopped worrying and the other fellows realised I was fit, so "Don't pick him he's mad. Oh don't pick Hamilton he's mad." cause I'd just let go. So that's where it started. Where'd I go from there...
- 39:30 oh, I went to sea.

So you just got physical training and the gunnery training?

While you're doing your basic training first they teach you drill, and people go crook about drill but if you think back to the old days the drill is what won the, drill and discipline. First you've got to learn instantaneous obedience, instantaneous obedience otherwise someone

- 40:00 can die, if you hesitate, someone will die. So with drill you could have a squad of troops marching towards you like that, the enemy there and all of a sudden there's enemy, or they're marching up there and they see the enemy there, it's no good having ten men facing them. So they go on the left form squad and they march, still marching forward but next thing you've got a hundred men in ranks facing the enemy, that's instantaneous drill.
- 40:30 Or if they're facing that way and they scream out to get someone else comes they can swing that way, all strictly disciplined. If someone falls you blank up the hole that sort of thing. So drill is totally necessary in my book, I had trouble with the rifle cause with the bayonet on it was as big as I was, and we used to have to charge at these square wooden frames with bloomin canvas bag filled with straw. "Ahhhh!!!"
- 41:00 screaming, so I race up ran at it and I went whack and the bayonet hit a piece of wood in the middle jammed the rifle out of my hand and fell to the deck and I looked at it and a big petty officer patted me on the shoulder and he said, "Don't worry son." he said, "Thank God we've got an army." so he said, "They'd probably laugh to death over you." So that was it, so I was not a bayonet fighter you could say.

So then you do that, you do a bit of gunnery you do a bit of sail making, you do a bit of signals,

41:30 you do a little bit of each and whatever you're best at that's what your course is going to be. And for some reason or other gunnery I must have just had the knack for it. I wanted to be a sail maker but they made me a gunner.

Tape 5

00:31 **So your basic training, tell us about all the fun they put you through there?**

Well with the basics as I said it was no problem really to me because as I said, with having been in boy scouts and having been in a big family, the discipline. And the discipline was hard and one reason in particular was that when the war started, you know, the navy discipline was always heavy, and when the war started they got what they called rookies,

01:00 they were signed on for the duration of war and six months after. And consequently they'd do maybe a month's training and then they were at sea getting shot at and getting killed. And of course their idea of discipline was a little bit different than the old, they didn't use ropes then but they were pretty heavy. So by the time the war ended all these petty officers and chiefs, all the old sailors, they were frustrated. So as soon as we came in, fresh blood, they immediately reverted

01:30 to the old pre war discipline and I mean it was hard duty. There was one leading seaman in particular, his name was Stanley, they called him Gut Stanley, that was his last name but his nickname was Gut, he had a big tummy, and oh he was a sod, leading seaman. I remember he was in charge of the mess hall and you'd be lining up and he'd be walking along looking for something wrong, and he'd pick someone out wrong

02:00 and then he wouldn't just punish that fella, he'd call the whole squad, his whole class out and they would be punished. And it was what they called field punishment, advanced field punishment. You'd jog down to the parade ground, they'd give you a backpack filled with bricks and then a rifle and you'd jog around and around the drill hall until you dropped or until he thought you'd

02:30 had enough. And needless to say we kept going on and on... and one day he made the mistake of picking on a big New Zealander, big Maori, and called him, oh called him some name or rather, but the big Maori just turned around and went whack, decked him, put him in sickbay. And then the Maori just walked out the back gate and never ever saw him again, he just walked away, but he was an animal. But it didn't bother me, I could put up with it

03:00 because of my home training. So apparently I was better with gunnery and gunnery instructors, as drill instructors. When I went in the army the warrant officers were like pussies, they really were cause the navy drill instructors when they say jump, not why, how high. So again I liked it and apparently I had a good

03:30 eye to hand co-ordination. Like one thing you used to do, you used to hold two pieces of cord and you're looking down a long tunnel and on the ends of the strings are two sticks at the end and you had to line them up. You know it might be from here to that door so you'd have to pull the strings until you got them level that way while you're looking down, that type of thing. Or spotting things out the corner of your eye, so I seemed to have the knack for it so they reckon I'd be a good anti aircraft gunner.

04:00 Cause like if an aircraft's flying over and you're looking through, at that time it was a big circle with different rings, different speeds, so you'd look up recognise the aircraft top speed two hundred and fifty, so you'd put it on the two hundred and fifty line and you'd lead it. Cause if you shoot where it is you'll hit where it was, like leading a duck when you shoot. So I had the knack anyway, so I become a gunner so there it was. But then unfortunately

04:30 all my class fifty-one, or sixty-one they finished their basic and there was only myself and one other lad took gunnery and the rest went to sea on the Kanimbla. Straight away up to Japan, taking troops up to BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force], so I thought wow I can hardly wait until I get out. So my posting came to HMAS Swan and I thought where's that, up in New Guinea. So sure enough up to Sydney,

05:00 in fact I remember when we got off the train I was still pretty new and this driver of the truck that we had to climb into drove across to the other side, North Head, from Central Station. He gave us a big lecture about no shouting or swearing or spitting or throwing beer cans at empty low flying aeroplanes and all that sort of thing, or what again, he'd have our guts for garters. So we were there for about a week waiting for passage to get north

05:30 and finally we drove them crazy and they put us on the Duntroon, a big passenger ship. And it was taking evacuees back so we were first class passengers. Oh I have to tell you, the passengers sort of weren't very happy about sailors being first class passengers, until one day we were up on the upper deck and I saw this young mother. She had two little kids, oh, driving her crazy

- 06:00 and she was, mothers do get tired and she was like, so I just wandered over and started talking to the kids playing with the kids, and she watched on edge and then she relaxed. So I said to her, "Why don't you go and have a bit of a sleep." I said "We'll look after them." and she was a bit hesitant and then she sort of went away and I could see her out of the corner of me eye just standing inside the door. So we took the kids and we stopped them climbing up on the rails and looked after them, just played with them.
- 06:30 So the rest of the passengers accepted us, so we had a ball. Got up to Port Moresby and the Swan wasn't there it was around at Rabaul, so they put us in the Warnervale and that was a sudden change from a passenger ship to a minesweeper and next thing were over the ship's side. From being first class passengers after lunch we'd strip to the waist painting the ship's side. God damn it and then we went to sea
- 07:00 minesweeping. And that in itself, I'd have to show you in the book it's a bit difficult to explain but if you look in the photo album, or photos, you can understand it. But you tow a big wire behind the ship and the mine is moored with the wire and it runs back and at the end there's a couple of cutters and it cuts the wires and the mine pops to the surface, that's in theory. But if the wire doesn't cut the next mine that comes down and it explodes,
- 07:30 and it's only a couple of yards behind the ship so it lifts up the stern like that. So the first one I heard I was in the mess deck making a cup of tea and I tipped the spoon into the sugar, cause I used to take it then, and all of a sudden bang! And it was like being in a forty-four gallon drum with a lid on and someone hit it with a sledgehammer. The whole ship vibrated and the next thing I know I'm standing out on the upper deck and I've got the cup of tea in my hand,
- 08:00 casually as you like and I'm looking over the stern and there's this massive big wave, oh big water spout still coming down. Oh God, when I could find me voice I said to this bloke, "What the hell's that?" he said, oh casual like, "Oh it's a mine." he said, "It happens all the time." But trust me after two years you never get used to it, you never get used to it. So that was it we just got stuck into the minesweeping from then on.
- 08:30 Do you want me to keep going?

What did you think when they first sent you to minesweeping, did you have any idea what it was all about?

I had no idea at all. Talking minesweeping, I thought what the hell do you do, where do you sweep them, do you just brush them around the top till the dust settles or do you go down underground. I knew what mines were but I had no idea. But as soon as we got on board, it's hard, hard work and fortunately we were fit, we were all fit and they teach

- 09:00 you and you soon, you do mundane jobs until you learn. And then when you get, for example if you hook a mine and it's sort of heavy and it jams on a bit of coral, the wire starts singing, have you ever seen wire sing? And it's thick serrated wire about that and the wire sings. And the first time I heard it I looked at it and I thought what the hell is that and the big master or
- 09:30 buffer they call him, the buffer between the officers and the men, he was the chief petty officer, "Hit the deck!" and the next thing bang and it whipped across the upper deck. Now I'm not joking there was a metal locker on the deck and the wire hit it and cut it as clean as a whistle and took the guard rails, the whole lot straight over the side. So later years I saw one snap down and hit a Chinaman and finished up with his waist bone there. But
- 10:00 we got up at dawn, or before the watch on deck that was there from midnight or from four till eight they used to lay or the gear out and you'd be on the field in daylight hours. So then you'd start sweeping and you swept right up until just before it got dark and then you moved away from the field and dropped anchor, next day the same. And it just went on and on... sometimes you got them sometimes you didn't. I'd have to show you the photo album with them
- 10:30 but....

What else can you tell me about that sort of job because that's quite unique?

A different side of it, and there's photos of it sitting on the bench there, a different side of it was what they called RMS Party, render mine safe party. And the idea was, for example early 1947 we swept the Barrier Reef, now I don't know if you know it but we had a ship called the Bungaree and it was a mine layer.

- 11:00 So the Barrier Reef's got about eighteen hundred entrances to it, from Bundaberg right through to Cape York Peninsula, about eighteen hundred passages. So every passage had to be sown with mines, just Bungaree would go in and block them to stop Japanese vessels coming in the Barrier Reef. So when the war ended, oh and also German mine layers dropped them off the coast of New South Wales and Japanese submarines
- 11:30 dropped them off there cause there were a stack of ships hit and sunk and shot there people don't know about. So we got the Bungaree's charts and we would go for example a place called Ribreef Passage was the one that's jumped out. And we knew that they'd laid about sixty mines in it and because it was a

fast flowing, run in passage, the tide, we only got about four, so where are the rest? They're either

- 12:00 washed up in or out on the other islands. So render mine safe party, I was motor boat coxswain, so there'd be myself, a stern sheetsman, a bloke working in the stern sheet and an electrical officer and an electrical leading seaman, mine experts. So we'd go over the reefs and around the islands, Daydream Island, Hayman Island all of them, beautiful spots now but death traps then, and we would look for the mines,
- 12:30 and you could see them underwater in the coral. What it is, I will assume you don't know what it is - but a mine's got a huge block base about four foot square, now the mine itself is six foot tall and sits on it, there's an indent and it sits on it. On the bottom of the, inside the base there's a big reel of wire, special mooring wire, the mine sits on it and that wire is hooked onto the mine. So when they
- 13:00 push that off the back of the ship the whole lot drops down into the water, into the bottom of the ocean and when it hits it releases the mine. And you've already set this wire that if you know the depth of the water is about thirty fathoms, or say fifty fathoms; you know that the average draught of a ship is about twenty, thirty, forty feet deep, so you set the mine so it's up just below the water line. So the mine clicks, runs up and stays there just below the water line, there just like that,
- 13:30 ship comes along, bang. So what happens because of the continual wave movement it cuts the wire at the base and the mine drifts so it's still armed. So it could finish up anywhere and when it gets up on the reef the wire, trailing wire hooks so it might only be four or five feet underwater just hanging there, beautiful. So what we do we'd go out and we'd look, we'd spot one, so one of us,
- 14:00 take it in turns including the officers, they used to do it, in fact they showed us how to do it the officer and the leading seaman. You dive down and what you're looking for is to dive underneath the mine, duck dive under it, don't touch the horns of course, to see how badly it's hooked. If you can drag it clear no problem. Cause you can't delouse [disarm] them underwater you've got to get them out. So once you do, you can drag it, you
- 14:30 duck dive down, tie a rope onto one of the ring bolts on it and you start towing with the motorboat, tow it out. And when you get it out into deep water, by this time it's floated to the surface, and I used to call them BUB, big ugly buggers, and they used to pop along behind you on the motorboat. And there's a page of it there. And so what would happen we'd tow a dinghy with us so one fellow would stay in the boat, and I used to go out in the boat
- 15:00 meself all the time, oh no my stern sheetsman did and I objected cause I want to go on the rowboat. So he would get in and the two, oh the officer and the kellick [anchor] would be in the stern sheet and you'd back up to this mine. So the leading seaman would put his hands out between the horns and hold it and the officer would reach down and pull out a cold chisel and a hammer. Cause on the top of the mine there's a cover like a teapot lid and the coral's growing around it, but
- 15:30 he's got to get that coral off before he can unscrew that. Chip, chip, chip good stuff, so once he got the lid off, throw that away, put his hand in and extract the detonator, once you get rid of the fuse or the detonator, the mine is relatively safe. Cause what it is in the horn, it's about six inches long and it's about an inch in diameter and it's soft lead and it's got a glass phial in it.
- 16:00 So if you bend the horn it breaks the glass and it's got some sort of acid in it of some sort that, some chemical or something that when it drops down it hits two light fuses, it starts a fuse which kicks the old detonator and away you go. So first you've got to get the detonator out. And then once you've got that out tow it out into the deeper water where there's bigger fish,
- 16:30 set a seven minute fuse in, he turns around, and I've got the photo and he goes, "Right, get us out of here." so they climb back on board and away you go like the clappers. And get as far away as you can and all of a sudden boom, and the boat gets lifted up as you're revving along, you look back, and then you turn around and you head back, there's still fish falling everywhere cause they're stunned and you scoop them all in. Cause we were still on dehydrated rations. So you'd get as many fish as you could in and then go looking for another
- 17:00 mine. Then when you'd finish the day you'd have enough fish in there to feed the whole seven ships of the flotilla, seven minesweeping flotilla. But this particular day, one particular day, set the fuse and I kicked the motor over and she started off and she went poof and stopped. So kicking and pulling and punching and doing everything and all of a sudden, all the time this thing's clicking and fusing, so finally I got it going and we weren't too far away
- 17:30 because we damn near got driven underwater with it and the water was still coming down on us, and that was too close, too close. But you can see it was better than working your butt off on board the ship, it was more interesting.

Do you know what sort of blast radius they would have if detonated on the surface?

Well the blast rating is more designed for, I've seen, it's hard to describe cause when we've gone back the rings, circular rings, oh they cover a hundred, two hundred yards

- 18:00 by the time we get back to them. But it's designed so that it's like that and the ship comes along and the bow wave pushes the mine away under the water and it's pushed away from the bow and then it swings

back in and it will hit back, which usually where the engine room is. Or on the Warnervale which hit one, our corvette, it's directly under the bridge. So the bows go through like that, the mine swings back and whack, and it's designed

- 18:30 that it's four hundred and fifty pound of amatol which is bigger and better than TNT [Trinitrotoluene - explosive] and when it blows it just lifts the ship out of the water. When the Warnervale hit, that's another story but I was going up on watch at four o'clock, just before four in the afternoon and we were sweeping and the Warnervale was just behind the Swan, I was on the Swan. And I heard this whompha and it was a different sound, not as clear,
- 19:00 and I looked over my shoulder and you could see the Warnervale still up, the bow still clear of the water and she's thumped down and then the mast went back down, clumped down, and then she sort of drifted in, into the unswept waters again, this sort of thing. So I was boat's coxswain so I headed for the boat but by the time I got there Sid Bartlett, the other boat's coxswain, had beaten me. And then we had what they call harbour defence motor
- 19:30 launches, like motor torpedo boats working with us so they wanted extra troops to go on board to get the survivors off. So I naturally jumped on board that. And we went over to the poor old Warnervale and dragged the people out, got them on board and she sunk about an hour later. Everyone on board was hurt some way or other, four died and everyone else was injured, and I said to this chief, he said, "Get them on board, grab them grab them!"
- 20:00 Cause this is nature, it was dead flat calm until we went to pick them up and next thing one minute she's up, we're on the little boat, one minute we're looking up and the next minute we're looking down so as we pass we had to grab these injured. And I said to this old chief who had been in the war, I said, "How do we get them in without hurting them, if they're injured?" he said, "Bloody hard and bloody fast, you can look after them later." Grab them and of course they were a mess so we more or less grabbed
- 20:30 them and tossed on the deck and someone else was dragging them away that sort of thing. Not good, not good, and I remember clearly some officer on the Warnervale was walking around with a bloody movie camera taking photos instead of, the crew were dumping all the heavy weight to try and keep, all the sweeping gear to try and keep her afloat. And this clown, I can still see him walking around with a camera and finally
- 21:00 one of the blokes on board walked up to him and he grabbed the camera and threw it in the drink and he said, "Do your job you bastard, get on with it." I never saw the bloke again, but we saw one fellow hanging onto the fishing line over the side, directly under the stern. And I found out later his name was Lott, Signalman Lott and I asked the crew later why was he overboard and everyone else was on board
- 21:30 and he said, "Someone screamed out abandon ship." and he jumped over before he remembered he couldn't swim, truly, and he was hanging onto the wire and he went, the ship come down on him. So we got them all in, got them on board the Swan and immediately took them down to our mess deck, various mess decks and gave them our hammocks, cleaned and looked after them as much as we could.
- 22:00 And as far as we could we did everything we could for them cause we had to take them back to Cairns. So bear in mind that I'm only just about nineteen by this time and I didn't know anything, this is a rude awakening. So even though I'd finished I wasn't on watch, different time frame, I was off duty, everybody pitched in and someone had my hammock anyway and my gear. So we all had to help out so I asked, "What do you want me to do?"
- 22:30 and the Chief said...deep breath time, "Go down the sick bay and help them." and so I walked in and said, "Reporting for duty Chief." I said to the medic and everybody's flat out busy. And there's one big fella lying on the deck and there were three fellows holding him down and he
- 23:00 was puffed up like a balloon, he got the blast, blast puffs you up. And they said, Doc said, "Give him a hand." so I went over and the big fellow, leading seaman that was in charge of this three he said, "Kneel on his arm." so I had to kneel on his arm and someone was kneeling on that arm, he was dying. I said, "What are we doing, what are we doing?" he said "We're helping him to die with dignity." So,
- 23:30 I'll get it out... they put a dish of warm water, or hot water next to me and a ball of cotton wool... Jesus, and I had to wipe his eyes and ears, sort of blood coming out of everywhere and mucus and Christ knows what.
- 24:00 Keep him clean so he could die with dignity and they had to hold his hands cause for some reason or another when a man's in terrible pain, I didn't know, I didn't know nothing about this, they rip, go for the tenderest part and they mutilate themselves. They do it without realising, so there holding his hands and kneeling so he wouldn't hurt himself any further, he was dying. Well I don't know whether it was half an hour, an hour, two hours
- 24:30 and he said, the PO [petty officer] said, "Right oh." he said "He's gone." Cause this fellow, the bloke in charge, the big fella, he'd been in the war, he said, "Report back on deck." he said "Wash yourself up first." cause I was a bit of a mess. And I reported back on deck and it was no good
- 25:00 going down the mess deck cause you still had to help them, I can't remember from that time for about

three or four hours... sorry. And then they said, "Right oh you can go down as quarter deck sentry." so I went down on the quarter deck and said, "What am I?" I relieved the bloke that was down there, and this was midnight cause we'd stayed, they'd hit the mine at four o'clock.

- 25:30 And all of a sudden it was midnight, I don't know where the time went but I said, "What have I got to do?" he said, "You're corpse sentry." there were three of them tied down under canvas and they hadn't found Signalman Lott, or two of them hadn't found Signalman Lott and the fourth one died in Cairns hospital. I said, "What have I got to do?" he said, another lesson for Tom, he said, "You've to clean the mess that comes out from them
- 26:00 so it doesn't stain the deck, the wooden deck." Shit... oh... and... so I did for four hours. They kept bringing warm water and... I started thinking about Mum
- 26:30 talking to her... and I talked to her and I said, "I'm alright." ... and I knew the blokes under the canvas. And anyway finally I got relieved I think and next day we pulled into Cairns, it took a long time to get there and
- 27:00 we were going to unload, we unloaded the seriously injured but they kept the other injured on board, we got in at seven o'clock and we kept the other injured on board and I said, "What's going on, why?" and they said "Oh the Minister for the Navy is coming." And you can look in the books and see who was Minister for the Navy in 1947, he's an arsehole whoever he is. We're waiting for the Minister for the Navy to welcome the survivors as they come off.
- 27:30 And we got in at seven and he arrived, this car pulled in after nine o'clock and he jumps out in his bloody suit and his wife done up like she's going to the races and they're handing out cigarette packets and then the wounded could go off. Handing out cigarettes in packets and the cameras are flashing and Reardon, I think his name was Reardon. They got them off, he never come and spoke to us, got back in his car and took off again,
- 28:00 Minister for the Navy. So there was one other lad, one very, very sick so they got his fiancée to come up, they flew her up but he died so they buried him as well. And we immediately hosed down the decks and went back out and went to the same field and we got another eighty-three mines out of that bloody field. But from then on, from that moment on
- 28:30 I thought well stuff it, if it's going to happen it's going to happen, nothing I can do can change it. So I didn't worry anymore, truly, I did not worry anymore, I used to be frightened but I never worried. What the hell, so that's minesweeping. So we did that...
- Do you think that change in your attitude; do you think that was a good thing or a bad thing for you?**
- Good thing, I'd have never survived the rest of me service
- 29:00 if I hadn't. But the problem is times like now, I don't talk about that, I look at those photos and I you know, think about it but it's there, it's like a movie I've seen until I start talking about it. But I think it was, would have been only about five or six years ago that I first spoke about it, cause a mate of mine wrote up to me he had a bad turn and he wanted, the doctor
- 29:30 said write about whatever upset you and he wrote about his version. And he asked me what I thought so I sat down and I wrote to him. He was sitting on the upper deck, he was off watch, he was sitting on the upper deck and he saw it, he saw what happened. He jumped into one of the boats, lifeboats from the Mildura. HMAS Mildura had come over to us to get more troops so he jumped into that and went over, our lifeboat he jumped into and went over to get survivors in that. So he had
- 30:00 a different perspective than me but basically the same idea. Everybody sees it different. So talking to Mum as I said we kept on sweeping right through and then we eventually went home on leave and as soon as I got home, all the family's there and the brothers and the wives and that sort of thing. And one of my brothers come up and he was the first of four, but at least four of my brothers come up and told me the same story.
- 30:30 That she hit a mine, Warnervale hit the mine on the Thursday, on the Saturday just before four o'clock, a couple of minutes to four and it was in the papers down in Adelaide the next day, 'Minesweeper Strikes a Mine and Sinks', no names, four dead, and there was seventy in the crew, four dead, sixty- four injured, or sixty-six injured that sort of thing.
- 31:00 And anyhow they all started panicking about Mum so her sister come charging down from Hyde Park where she lived and this aunty come in and all making a fuss of Mum and for some reason the old battery radio broke down and there was no newspapers, there was a bloomin paper strike and all that sort of thing. And they finally, they're sitting down for lunch and she said, "It's funny..."
- 31:30 she said, "I know what you're doing but Tom's alright... cause he told me." and I did, I told her on that Saturday night... "I'm alright, don't worry about it." And I thought he was joking and then another brother told me and another brother told me,
- 32:00 cause I used to talk to Mum and Dad, I still talk to them now, oh God that's the easy part. So anyway of

course when we went home on leave she didn't want me to go back and a couple of the lads deserted and one lad accidentally shot himself in the foot, because the problem was once you got on minesweepers you were stuck, you couldn't get off cause you were trained, so two years of the bludgers.

- 32:30 And I didn't mind the hard work. So anyhow the first thing we did when we went back was the Swan went down to Jervis Bay and we got rigged up with a huge, big, pumping gear, diving gear and all that sort of thing, no we didn't go to Jervis Bay we got all the diving gear first, and we went back to where she was sunk on Cockburn Reef. And the hard hat divers had to go down
- 33:00 and get the cryptographic machine and the secret papers and all that sort of thing, cause they never had time to dump them you see. So this pumping on the air pump, you've seen it on the movies. Well the senior diver, myself and Mickey Pollard we were a team, my good mate, we pumped, and fortunately the diver, he was happy with the way we kept a steady beat
- 33:30 cause we were both fit and we could go on all day. So he used to say I don't want anyone but Tom and Mick on, so we used to stand and he'd be down, pumping him, pumping him. And they bought up the gear they wanted, the ship's bell and I got photos. And they bought up a bottle of beer from the officer's mess and Captain Wheatley having a drink on the upper deck of the Swan and that sort of thing. Cause a lot of the photos I've got are my own, my own camera
- 34:00 I had one of them folding Brownies and I used to get the medic to print the things and I found out the bludger was selling them, he even offered to sell me some photos, my own photos. So from then on I sent them home, but I've got photos there nobody's ever seen. So anyway we got what we had to, then they decided to get down to Jervis Bay and get a big
- 34:30 compressed air pump, make it easier for the divers and they went back and they got everything and did everything they could. Bought up stuff that they needed. And then I've since heard that a few years back, or about ten or fifteen years later she was salvaged for scrap iron which is very sad because she did a lot of work during the war. And Warnervale is actually classed as being the last of the war time sinkings, even though it was in 1947 and the war ended in
- 35:00 1945, it's a strange situation.

But how does the service, like as a minesweeper, how does the RSL [Returned and Services League], DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] etc view your minesweeping service?

Well we got a red and white ribbon for it, Navy General Service Medal. It's exactly the same as the army General Service Medal except its different colours. The army general service blokes were accepted for the RSL.

- 35:30 I come down - I got mine and it was for one hundred and eighty days actual sweeping, not time in harbour or steaming to or steaming from, actual sweeping, one hundred and eighty days and not many of us got it, not many of us got it. So when I go down back to Sydney on leave with my little red and white ribbon on and I went to go in the RSL the bloke said, "What's that?" I said, "Naval General Service Medal for minesweeping."
- 36:00 he said, "When'd you get that?" I said, "We earned it for one hundred and eighty days days sweeping and I was awarded, given it, presented with it in 1948, early 1948." and he said, "Oh go away and come back when you've been to a real war." But I since found out in 1957, or 1987 that, or on my documents, the first time I saw a copy of my documents, it would have got me the sixty, the retire at sixty service pension, no other benefits but just the service pension at sixty. But they
- 36:30 never tell you these things. But they just treated us like muck, the same when we came back from Korea, "Come back when you've been to a real war." But now they're taking people that have done six months, so I'm not really impressed with the RSL at that time, now I am, but not at that time. So we were just told come back later. So I didn't bother, I got angry but I didn't bother I went and joined the Naval Association, this one in 1949 actually I joined that. And it was,
- 37:00 you're talking to kindred spirits. And it was in 1948 we'd finished, what they said we'd finished the contact mines so then we got sent up to New Guinea, New Britain and New Island to get the magnetic mines which are lovely things. They're six foot long and about that round, diameter like this and the Americans dropped them in all the passages. And they have a
- 37:30 dial that they can set on them that anything up to seven ships can go over them, so say six ships can go without them going off. You have one set for one ship, boom so they're very careful and then all of a sudden four or five ships go, they send out dummy ships so up to seven ships boom, and away you go. For example Kavieng in New Britain, there's a channel thirteen miles long and there were thirteen ships sunk in that channel.
- 38:00 And the Japanese skippers when they got hit, it was only narrow; they swung them straight over onto the beach, so all the way along there's these ships, dead ships. But they've still got their cargoes cause they got them in. But we had to go looking for them and that was a different method of sweeping again, altogether different one. And that was bloody hard that, cause you had to have a huge, wooden ships to start with, a wooden ship. So they had what they called degaussing gear with an electrical

- 38:30 circuit going around it so you could neutralise the mine. But what they had they had this huge big drum, like the electricians' wire drums, but it would have been twelve foot high and the cable, there was one cable that big and another one that big and they sort of, the little ones hooked onto this one and right down the bottom there's two sparks. So they send a spark, two wires they send a spark down this one to that one and you're towing it about two hundred yards behind you, so it's
- 39:00 going zip, zip, whoomp, or three or four, two or three hundred yards. Which is all very well up and down up and down and you had to do at least seven or eight or nine times just to make sure. And then they'd say pull the wire in, now the winch wouldn't handle it so it had to be hand rolled and that's where, we had muscles in our muscles in those days truly.

Tape 6

- 00:32 **The thing I was going to ask you about, when you were talking about the magnetic mines how they could be sent so that the seventh ship passing would cop it. Would they know that that was a mine and not a torpedo?**

Because for a torpedo there'd have to be a ship they could see and the channel wasn't wide enough for torpedos or they'd know. In fact in 1949 I went back up north, I come home and then I got posted up north, it was either

- 01:00 1949, I got up there in the end of 1949 so it was early 1950. I was on a ninety foot diesel tug, like that one, the Forceful down in the river, about the same type too and it was called DT933 and after I left it they called it HMAS Mollymook, but that was not when I was on it. So what we were doing, we were going showing the flag and going around to the places where our coast watchers still were and our government had forgotten them.
- 01:30 So we were going into a place called Kieta in Bougainville and Lieutenant McBarnard, he'd been on the Swan the same time I was, and I was on the wheel, and it's beautiful, excellent, the wheel was over six foot tall and you had it behind you and you stood there with your feet apart and you flick with your hands, watching the compass, a little bit to starboard, to port. You know how the pilots fly by the seat of their pants they used to say, well
- 02:00 steering a ship you steer by the soles of your feet, you can feel the waves and that, beautiful. So we're heading in to Kieta and he says, "Able Hamilton." and I said, "Yes Sir." he said, "Do you remember the minesweeping, the magnetics?" I said, "Yes Sir very vividly." he said, "Did we ever do Kieta?" cause he knew I kept a diary, and I went, "No Sir we never did, we did the little island up the top but we never ever did Kieta."
- 02:30 and he said, "Oh that's interesting, because we are the first all steel ship to come into this harbour since the war ended." So we all stood on our toes and held our breath as we went in but nothing happened so it makes life interesting.
- Also can you explain to us if you know, the different types of the German mines and Japanese mines that were laid off the coast?**
- Basically they were all the same,
- 03:00 you probably saw the photo that the ship's got in wartime there, I'll tell you what, if you just nick over there and grab the top page you'll see a photo, a group of photos. Our mines are large and round and the Germans and the Japanese were mostly the same, the only difference with the Germans, Japanese, in particular the Germans when they started experimenting with these dropping bombs from aircraft and the mines. It's one of the ones on the back
- 03:30 I think, there. See what I mean about a big ugly bugger, that's one, that's the sequence I mentioned about when we'd hook them on and tow them out into the deep water. So my stern sheets man, Mick, took some of the photos and I took the others sort of thing. But with the magnetic mines they were long as I said, they'd be over six foot long and heavy. The German, Japanese and our basically all the same, they all sat on a
- 04:00 stand....so we were on about the magnetic mines?

The magnetic mines?

Well we did that in 1948 and probably the most interesting incident there we were doing sweeping around Kavieng where these ships were wrecked and officers are very social creatures, I think they're trained that as soon as you go to an outlying island you get the administrator and you get all the irks and

- 04:30 turks and bring them out and put a party on the quarterdeck. Even though in those days we were on dehydrated rations. But we had a big Catalina aircraft flying boat, in 1948, Catalina aircraft flying in fresh rations for the officers dining in night and all this sort of thing. So I was boat's coxswain and the commanding officer's boat was thirty-two foot long, it had a small cockpit up the front, just enough room to stand with the wheel and it went stop

- 05:00 forward and back, and that was the controls. And then there was a long cabin which was probably about twelve foot long, seats around it and then a huge big diesel marine engine there. And a small half deck where the stern sheets man could stand and then sit. So we were piped away, you know, 'away motor boat's crew', so away we go. About twelve, thirteen mile
- 05:30 from where we were into Kavieng and we pick up the boat load of civvies [civilians], bring them back and then go back and get another boat load, and they get stuck into it. So about, I don't know what time it was, it was after dark anyway, late, late, time for them to go home. So they think about this two trips, not on, we'll put them all in together. So I said, "Excuse me Sir." I was counting them in; just say for argument's sake we only had fifteen
- 06:00 and there's more coming, "Excuse me Sir, excuse me Sir." he said. "What?" I said. "Too many Sir." he said, "Take them all." I said, "Too dangerous Sir." cause the boat's coxswain is in charge. I said, "No, it's too dangerous." he said, "You don't argue with me Able Seaman Hamilton." I said, "Right oh Sir." And as we got away from the boat I slowed right down and I said, called me stern sheets man, there's only that much walking space as you come up, hanging on. So he come up and I said, "Mick, go back and find out
- 06:30 who is the senior officer and ask if he would stick his head over so I can talk to him." He went back and asked who was the senior officer, civilian, "Yes coxswain how can I help?" I said, "Well here's the situation Sir." I said. "There's too many on board, it is dangerous." I said, "You saw me ask the officer of the day." I said, "It is dangerous." I said, "I'm in charge, I'm responsible, will you take responsibility?" and he said, "Yes no worries, no worries." In we go
- 07:00 and I'm taking it easy. And Mick come back up and he said, "Tom ,we're shipping water." cause it was coming in the stern, flopping over and these clowns are standing in water in the cabin. And anyhow we kept on going, kept on going, and I thought any minute now we're going in. And in the same channel one of the natives only about two months before had had a leg taken by a shark,
- 07:30 when he was knee deep in water, thigh deep in water, fishing. So if we go in we're in the sharks, cause there was so many boats sunk in there. So anyhow we get alongside and I said, "Oh my God!" got them out and by this time they're up to just above the ankles in water, so we were so lucky. And as they climbed out this big, the senior bloke he stood there and he's, "Come on come on quick, quick!" and the women are going like this, "Come on!" and he's actually throwing them out.
- 08:00 Mind you the poor buggers are isolated and this is the only social turn they've had for yonks. So he threw them all out and he said, "Coxswain." he said, "I will get back to my office and I'll make a radio report to your ship, what the situation was here and why you are so delayed." cause we'd crept in. So sure enough when we get back on board, back to the ship, we bailed her out and we had to, there's a boom sticks out from the side of the
- 08:30 ship and you have to go up to it grab a rope, it's got a little ladder, Jacob's ladder hanging down. So you hook the boat on and then you climb up and walk back in along this boom, actually we used to run along it. But as soon as we get on board, "Able Seaman Hamilton report to the quarter deck." so down went Mick and I. We get down there and he started, this same officer started tearing strips off us. I said, "Yes Sir, no Sir, three bags full Sir." and the next morning we were called back down again and the same officer
- 09:00 apologised to us because the message had come through. So I got advised by the first lieutenant, that's the second most senior, first the captain and then the first lieutenant, he said, "Henceforth..." and he told all the coxswains, "You are in charge, all of the officers have been advised that you are in charge of the boat." Cause we could have lost them, lost the lot so it was interesting minesweeping, it's all part of the game.

Can you tell us did you have to do a coxswain's course or anything like that?

- 09:30 No, how I got to be motor boat coxswains was a master at arms fellow named Tassie Cuzack, World War II bloke, lovely fellow and he seemed to take me like a little father, in fact when he saw my first tattoo I thought he was going to put me over his knee and spank me. He said, "What are you doing?" he gave me a real roasting. Anyhow he said, "Right, you you'll be petty officers' mess man." I said, "I don't want to be petty officers'
- 10:00 mess man!" Petty officer's mess man is like a bloody servant to petty officers and they're only equal to WRANS, you can imagine. I said, "I don't want to be petty officers' mess man Sir." I said. "I'm a seaman, I want to be on the upper deck." He said, "You don't keep night watches, you get their breakfast, you clean up after they go to work, you get their lunch, you clean up after they come back, you get their dinner, clean up and then you're on your own." he said. "It's a good bludge [easy]." he thought he was doing me a favour. Not on, so what I did, I went down there,
- 10:30 the first time I was coming down the ladder, straight down the ladder with the dinner I dropped four plates on the deck as I went down, scooped them on and then put them on the table, which did not go down well, so I got a blast for that and I thought no, this is not going to work. So a couple of days later making a... they used to have what they called a fanny, a fanny of tea and it's like a big steel teapot and it's about that round and it's got an insert where all the tea leaves are.

- 11:00 And when the thing gets filled up with tea leaves you take it out and shake it out and put it in. So I'm pouring tea, pouring tea, "Oh good drop of tea, oh you make a good cup of tea Tom." I said, "No worries." I said, "Anymore?" They all said, "I'll have more." so they all had more and I said, "Oh hang on, what's this?" and I reach in and I pull out a dirty old sock I'd found under the locker, "Wow, Gor blimey!" and I made the mistake of smiling. So next thing they chased me up on the upper deck if they'd
- 11:30 of found me, if they'd have caught me, they'd have killed me so I was no longer petty officers' mess man. So Tassie Cuzack said, "Do you think you could drive the motor boat?" and I said, "Yes Sir." no hesitation cause if I'm shown something I can do it. He said, "I think you could too." he said, "Go and see Leading Seaman Buzzacott and he'll teach you." So the next thing there I am away from the ship. But that also bought me into the RMS Party which had another interesting, have you heard of
- 12:00 Low Island up in the Barrier Reef? It's off Cairns, when we were there it was a long low flat island with just a lighthouse on it, and right up that end was a couple of small shrubs and a log, huge big tree there. And there'd been a mine washed up onto the beach so RMS party plus a leading seaman and a couple of others that wanted to have a look, to see an actual mine,
- 12:30 away we went onto the beach. We decided that everybody gets down behind the log and the electrical officer and the leading electrician would go up, a hundred yards away, two hundred yards away, delouse the mine and then come back. So he said, "Able Seaman Hamilton I think you've earned a look at this, how it's done, you come with me." so the leading seaman stayed there. So away we go, and he showed me what he did, look in
- 13:00 and do this, do that and he said, "Well, set the fuse, no need to rush we'll just keep walking, keep walking." So were walking along and he went, he said, "Oh I think we've mistimed it a little, we'd better move." So the next thing we took off like hairy goats and as we dived over the log the thing went off. And as soon as it went over my boot hit Leading Seaman Allan Achurch and kicked him in the head and next thing he's screaming "Ahhh! I went through the bombing of bloody
- 13:30 Darwin.." he said, "I went through forty-seven convoys and I'm going to be killed by a mine!" I never ever did tell him I kicked him, but it was, oh boy oh boy we were close, cause the log rolled a bit and mud and dirt coming down, by God but I couldn't stop laughing. Poor old Allan Achurch, I never ever told him, never ever told him I kicked him. But that was part of that RMS Party.
- 14:00 **Did you get extra pay for being minesweepers?**
- Initially we got a shilling a day danger money and then the government, this Reardon again, in his wisdom decided it was not worth a shilling a day danger money and this was before the Warnervale went. So when we come back into Cairns with the survivors they eventually got off
- 14:30 and we hosed the upper deck, scrubbed and cleaned everything down. So we had a slack time so I was standing there talking to a mate of mine and the reporters come along and said, "What happened, what happened?" they wanted a real story. And we said, "Well, we can't tell you." "Why not?" We said, "Well it's all part of the job, nothing different, it's just part of the job." "Oh tell me, tell me." I said, "Well look..." I said, "We used to get a shilling a day danger money but the government said it's not worth it so
- 15:00 what's the good of talking about it, it's just part of the job." So he said, "What's a shilling a day?" and me mate told him, told him how the government said it wasn't dangerous and this fellow said, "You tell me about the minesweeping, what happened, and I'll write a story about the shilling a day." and he did and it was a ripper. And within less than a month we got all the back pay, shilling a day, which we were only getting three
- 15:30 pound a fortnight anyway, what's that, six dollars a fortnight anyway, but a shilling a day. The kids that went to the Gulf got one hundred and twenty dollars, one hundred and fifty dollars a day danger money and we got a shilling a day, your priorities at different times. We got something for it; we got that little red and white ribbon which I wouldn't swap for the world. Of all the ribbons I've got that's the one,
- 16:00 hard earned, I did two tours of Korea and yet that minesweeping left it for dead. Maybe I was a bit more old or cynical or a bit more resigned to it I don't know, but there it is. Like with the diesel tug in 1949 I went home from the sweeper and I went to the depot guard at HMAS Cerberus and I was the main gate sentry and all this sort of thing.
- 16:30 I didn't like it, I was there for ten months and I found all me uniforms were shrinking cause I was having a few ales and come off watch and have a big steak sandwich and that. So then one of my mates got a posting, he just got married and he got a posting to Dreger Harbour in New Guinea, what they call HMAS Taragau, and he didn't want to go so I said, "I'll swap you." so he said, "Right." So we put in the application and next thing I was on my way up north. And I went to Sydney and then
- 17:00 they put me, instead of giving me a ship like the Duntroon to go up again, they put me on HMAS Sydney the carrier, and we had to work our way up. So by the time we got there, there was an outbreak of measles and measles will kill the natives up in New Guinea, it goes through them like wildfire, so we were quarantined. So by the time we got there they put the five, only five of us, they put us in quarantine and after a fortnight,

- 17:30 we were isolated from everywhere. And after a fortnight we joined the ship's company and I walked into the mess the first night this bloke said, "Who's Able Seaman Hamilton?" I said, "Me." this little fellow with a beard and been there for about eight, nine months. And I said, "Me." and the next thing he's all over me like a rash trying to kill me, dumping me and punching me. And I grab hold of him, turn him over and twist him on his back and bent his leg and sat on it and kept him still
- 18:00 and he's thrashing and screaming, I said, "What's up, he's gone mad, sicko!" he was troppo [mad]. I said, "What's happened?" and one of his mates said, "He's been up here nine months." and there's a diesel tug up here like the Forceful DT933 and there's only ten on board so that means you've got to be very lucky to get on it. So when somebody's time is up, twelve months or fourteen months in my case, when the twelve months is up you've got to come off the tug a month before your
- 18:30 time is up and someone else gets it, and they draw the name out of a hat. And here I am in quarantine, this poor bugger's had his name in for eight months and my name come out, so I went on the diesel tug, I should have given it to him but no way, I was better off at sea and sure enough we were. So on the diesel tug we showed the flag, New Guinea, New Britain and Wewak, Salamaua everywhere, everywhere there were coast
- 19:00 watchers we cruised around the southwest Pacific.

You spoke about the coast watchers how they've been forgotten by the government, what was their reaction when you came across these fellows?

Oh I felt so terribly sorry in particular for the wives. They hadn't seen their wives, their base actually was in Rabaul but they just couldn't travel there, didn't travel there. So what we did when we found out about it, before we left on a cruise we collected all the newspapers

- 19:30 and the ladies' magazines, my Mum used to send me Reader's Digest and all this sort of thing. And we'd hold our beer ration, cause they were drinking this Three Horses stuff from Rabaul and you had to watch them cause the middle horse used to kick you after the next day. So when we go in, we go to the house and we take all the books and magazines and the wife, and it was obvious probably the first time they'd managed to get dressed
- 20:00 properly, bit of lipstick and that, whatever, to try and tidy up. And they always invited us to have a meal, all the ship's company and we used to leave a couple of the natives on board and we'd go up and they'd put on the dinner and she'd be the lady of the house for the first time. And it was so damn sad. And our government just left them; the war was over so what did they care about them? So they were still watching because at that time
- 20:30 there was a lot of trochus, the husk of the coconut which is apparently used for fibres or something, and all the Japanese, when they were in the islands they knew where all this stuff was so after the war they come back down and stole it. So that's what we were there for, we were an armed ship, we had one .303 [rifle] and a .38 pistol with a cracked barrel. Oh we got big time; we had the Australia flag so that would terrify them. So we used to go back to these,
- 21:00 and these people, I remember one lady she said, I wasn't a heavy drinker, so she said, "Come for a walk." myself and another lad, "I want to show you something." And we walked along the path and you could see where she'd regularly walked, and we got up on top of this, were on top of this knoll and it was a valley, you've seen orchids? Have you see a whole valley of orchids in bloom? You ain't seen nothing mate, it was beautiful. And then when it was
- 21:30 all over it was time to go back to the ship, normally the wife and husband were bloody near crying so we went to Kieta, Buin, Soraken or some damn thing, I'm forgetting names, Malaite, all these little out of the way places. In fact Malaite was a good place, we played the natives soccer and I was the only one that scored a goal cause we couldn't get past these
- 22:00 big natives, no it was rugby. I just grabbed the ball and jumped into the storm drain and run along it, climbed out and put the ball over so we scored a try that way. No, it was good times, I liked the tug, except we used to take the... in Rabaul the army had a bomb disposal group. It was only a bloke and about four troops and the natives or the white men they'd
- 22:30 find old bomb stacks, they'd notify these soldiers and they'd have to go and demolish them, so we used to take them. So you'd take them to the islands and after a while they would take us out with them, a couple at a time and show us what they were doing and wham. And you'd find stacks of grenades and stack of this and stacks of that and they'd blow them. But you had to be careful that you didn't damage the trees cause that was private property and that sort of thing.
- 23:00 So anyhow this particular day we were going to, back to Kavieng actually we were going from Rabaul to Kavieng and we got out of Rabaul Harbour into St George's Channel and we ran into the tail end of a real heavy storm and it was really, really heavy duty. And I was on the wheel, did my time and it was time for me to go below for a rest, it was too rough to go into the forehead mess deck, which I was on.
- 23:30 Next time you see the Forceful you'll think what I said, there's a mess deck up front and there's one down aft. So I headed back to the after mess deck and when you think about it on the quarterdeck right down the aft is, looks like a little cabin, a little box, you slide the roof back, you've seen it on yachts, you slide the roof back and open the door and when you shut the door you slide the roof and it claps down.

So I slide it back, get up in the top bunk

- 24:00 and I'm laying there and the ship's rocking and rolling like this and all of a sudden I've got a brilliant mind. I'm so quick like that. I thought, "That's funny, my right hand is wet." splash, splash and I thought interesting, quick again, I'm on the top bunk and I can feel water. So I leapt out and I'm up to here in water, the stern gland was leaking, you know the gland around the rudder,
- 24:30 the rudder sort of thing, the shaft for the rudder and I'm up to my waist in water. So I climb up this ladder and as I push the lid back it slid back again so I pushed it back again, bang it come back again and I thought, "The wind's not coming from aft, it's coming from forward." So I pushed back and tried to open the door and the door was kicked shut and the lid come back again so I did what everybody would do, we have a set
- 25:00 system, if in danger or in doubt run in circles and scream and shout, so I did. And I did a good exhibition of a panic, cause I'm up to me waist in water. So I pulled the knife off that we have and I'm hammering and screaming and panicking like nobody's business, it's funny now but it's not funny when I wake up in the middle of the night still doing it. So anyway it turns out that one of the, the bloke that we had he was terrified of the storm
- 25:30 so he'd made himself a raft out of biscuit boxes, a couple of biscuit tins and he had his dog tied to him, he had a dog, he had the dog tied to him and the biscuit barrels were tied to him and he was sitting on the top cause it was out of the water that was swishing over the deck, and every time I tried to get out he shut the door. So fortunately Lofty Hines, a stoker, he heard me screaming, I think they must have heard me in Kavieng too actually, so he just
- 26:00 threw the bloke off and pulled me out and slammed up. Well we were actually sinking so we kept plugging on plugging on.... we got alongside in Kavieng and we put on extra ropes and we were hull down I'll tell you. Ropes everywhere, we tried to pump and our pump wouldn't work cause it was underwater. So we got, the next morning all the civvies come down with all their automatic pumps and little mobile pumps and pumped us out and they fixed the gland and we were on our way again. But
- 26:30 I had this thing about being locked in, for years and years, I wouldn't go below decks and that was not good. But I had worse than that on the Sydney which we'll come too later, if we've still got time, we'll come to the Sydney later that was something worse there on that. But there it is, that was the diesel tug. So what are we up to 1950, the war in Korea started and we all volunteered up in HMAS Tarangau at Manus Island
- 27:00 and got knocked back cause they said, "You're already on active service so you stay." So from there I went down to Adelaide, I finally got a posting to Adelaide, my home depot and played football with West Adelaide seconds, Aussie Rules. And after about ten months it was time, you get the itches, so it was time to go again. And from the first day I walked into the depot
- 27:30 a fellow came up to me and he's nearly crying he said, "I'm a married man, I'm a married man." I said, "Yes if I was married I'd probably cry too, don't worry about it mate it'll end one day." He said, "No, no you don't understand, you don't understand." he said, "I've got to go and do a weekend's trip to Melbourne on the reserves ship." and I said. "What, you've got to do a weekend away from home?" And I've just done fourteen months up in the islands. He said, "You can go,
- 28:00 you're single, you can go, I've already spoken to the master at arms you can go." I said, "In your boot, I'm not going." Now that was the first day I got there, so as true as I'm here, in the ten months I was there, there was at least eight times I was shanghaied by married men to go and I fought it. And finally after ten months they said, "You're on posting Tom." I said, "Oh great, no worries." cause I was ready. Packed
- 28:30 me bongos and went over to Cerberus, back to Cerberus again as what they called blocks able seaman, the leading seaman in the instructors' mess. Meant that I just looked after the mess deck for the leading seaman so saved them any worries. And when I first walked into the police office to get booked in I said, "Able Seaman Hamilton booking in Master." and he said, "There's no Able Seaman Hamilton on posting here." I said, "Well, here's me movement orders from the
- 29:00 master at arms in Torrens." and he said, "Oh I know what it is." he said, "You're the bloke that did the swap for able seaman cry baby from ten months ago." The shifty bugger had gone back to the master and told him I'd agreed and I got shanghaied, so I said, "No worries, change the name and I'll stay." So I stayed there ten months, oh mate that was
- 29:30 no three months, I was there three months that time. And then I kept on putting in to go to Korea, go to Korea... this was 1951 it got to and sure enough I got a posting to HMAS Warramunga at the end of 1951. Bang. Then we started training, training for war, she'd already done one tour and she was going back. And training for war, you train hard to fight hard and it was an eye opener for me
- 30:00 cause I'd had relatively easy duties. So away we went up to Korea and that was an eye opener, my God that was an eye opener. Yep, so do you want me to keep on?

Was there any kind of show when you left Australia for Korea?

What do you mean show?

Like any sort of farewell?

Oh yes, yes, definitely a farewell I'll never forget it if I live to be a hundred. We

- 30:30 were tied up at Garden Island in Sydney and just off on the wharf there's huge big containers, shipping containers. So I went ashore, went to the movies, true I had a girlfriend there and I took her to the movies. Coming back on board and a place called Harry's Café De Wheels [food trolley] he was there, so I bought myself a meat pie and had a can of Coke. And as I was walking down, all of a sudden
- 31:00 I'm walking past a row of shipping containers and all of a sudden I swear there was ten or fifteen of them and nothing and all of a sudden right in front of me there's a young lady. And I thought right oh, I don't know what's in this can, and she said, "Come on Tom, come on Tom!" cause I knew her from the dancing, "Come on, come on!" I said, "What are you talking about?" The containers had been moved apart, these two, where she'd come out of and you walk
- 31:30 down and then you turn this way and then you turn that way and the containers had been made to make a room this big with others on top and there was the biggest Smokey Joe you've ever seen in your lives. Smokey Joe's a grog [alcohol] party. So the girls decided to all chip in and buy the beer and give us a party before we left so we had a Smokey Joe in amongst the containers, it was terrific. The next day we set sail and away we went. And that was good,
- 32:00 I said earlier about my cousin Normie dying when we got over there, he died before we got there. So we got to Korea, got to Japan went in alongside, there was no leave, we got there in the afternoon and we had to spend the night loading ammunition cause we were due to leave first thing next morning. No rest or nothing, just tie up, load up and out we went. And we went over, there was two coasts, you could go either the west coast which was where the British
- 32:30 carriers operated on and they had carriers, got no protection for submarines so they have destroyer escorts. And you worked two days as escorts and on the third day you had to refuel so they'd send you in shore to where a tanker was tied up at a friendly island and you'd reload, but then you had the rest of the night and the next day to do bombardment and what we call coaxing fire. Coaxing things, you'd steam dead
- 33:00 slow to get the enemy to shoot at you cause you didn't know where they were so you'd coax them, and this is my first day and I thought, oh wow. So we get there and all of a sudden, the first day they said, "The enemy have just taken Mayhapto, the island of Mayhapto and they've thrown the South Koreans off." So away we went, the Warramunga, a British ship and an American rocker launcher, it's like a landing ship with about six hundred
- 33:30 rockets in banks on board and they load them and they come in and they aim them at the target and press a button, it's choo choo choo choo and if you're in front of them, wish wish wish. Can you imagine all these flying over you and the Yanks didn't give a stuff as long as they landed up there. So anyway we went in and from then on it was all the gunnery training and all our training, you train hard to fight hard. And I don't know how long it lasted, three
- 34:00 days, no I think it lasted about two days before we were pulled back to reload, re-ammunition, but in the three or four days we did blow them off the island and they eventually evacuated. And on our citation from the... we got a citation from the American 7th Fleet that any ships up there were awarded this citation and Mayhapto gets a mention. You know that we drove them,
- 34:30 the woogies off, the South Koreans, we escorted the South Koreans back on again. And I thought if this is an introduction this is going to be an interesting tour and it was.

And you were back on the guns at this stage?

I was back on guns, I was an anti aircraft gunner which took me from anything from pistols to 30mm or the Browning machine gun or a 20mm Oerlikon gun which fired a 20mm shell. Or the 40mm Bofors or a four inch,

- 35:00 when I say the measurements it's the diameter, four inch which we used to use for star shells, the gun and 4.7's which were our heavy artillery. I just read a book where they said the Australian and British ships were firing five inch, they do now, but they're American ships that they're using, then we had 4.7 in diameter. I've got all the details of how many rounds of ammunition we fired in that tour but we fired a lot. We used
- 35:30 to, if your with the Brits on the west coast there was two islands, Sockto and Cho Do and it's north of Inchon if you think of Korea, Inchon, just further up, just north of Inchon is a, beyond the parallel Sockto, Cho Do and there must have been twenty thousand to thirty thousand angry men off there. And there were South Koreans on these two islands and they were weather islands, they could send back and all they had was say a company of
- 36:00 South Koreans with an American officer. And the angry me when the tide went out, the angry men used to try and come across and get them so we had to be there and it was interesting times. So we would get behind Sockto and we'd bombard, 'whiskey' and 'brandy' were our code names, we'd bombard all day, woomp woomp woomp. And then at night we'd move from Sockto up to Cho Do, so they'd be

shooting over at where we were, where we weren't and then the next day we'd do it from there

- 36:30 then come back down here. To give you an idea of what bombardment's all about in the time I was there in Korea the Americans got hit, eighty ships got hit, eighty ships got hit by incoming fire, we were lucky we didn't. And I often think that the reason we were lucky, cause we just didn't let fire at any think we got targets, selected targets
- 37:00 and we made sure we hit. But the Americans round on the east coast one time, place called Chongjin, way up near the Manchurian border almost, it's only about twenty miles from the Manchurian border, big horseshoe shaped harbour like Port Phillip Bay. You were not allowed to go past the northern end of it and on the northern end was a big lighthouse which they used as spotting as we come in, the enemy. So we'd come in this side
- 37:30 and we'd go in dead slow, cruise in, coaxing them. And when they opened up, you'd see the little winker light, like Randwick on a race day you're watching, winking light, you give the bearing, bang, you open back, once one started they all started. So we're cruising in and this particular time I'm not sure, I'm not a tactician but I believe the Americans wanted to give the impression they were going to send a landing in there, cause they had
- 38:00 minesweepers close inshore clearing the mines from close inshore. So all of a sudden some angry gunner he decided too good a target, so he opened up, and we had the USS Doyle with us, and Doyle was further in than us, we were going in like this and all of a sudden the gooks [Chinese] opened up on the minesweepers, and they immediately dropped smoke floats over the stern and slipped all their minesweeping
- 38:30 gear and took off. Cause they've only got a 40mm Bofors on board which is not much. So the Doyle immediately swung around and started blowing away with everything, firing after... firing everything, willy peter, a white phosphorous star shell and it's hitting the beaches, and we're behind it so we can't fire, we're firing to the sides. And you can see her shells landing on the beach, on the hill, on the beach, on
- 39:00 the water coming back toward us. And my mate told me later that our skipper sent Doyle a signal and said, "Cease firing or I'll turn my after guns on you!" so she buggered off and we went screaming in, got the sweepers past us and then rather than turn to make a wide target old Commander Ramsey, finished up as Governor Admiral Ramsey, Governor of Queensland, whacked her full astern. And that you've got to see, a destroyer going full
- 39:30 ahead is excellent but to see her full astern wow, and we're firing all the time. And bloody Lofty standing there, "Come on, here I am!" when we couldn't bring our guns to bearing, "Here I am, hit me hit me!" And all of a sudden Mickey let out screaming, "Ahhh Jesus!" "What's up Mick?" "Oh I've been hit, I've been hit!" So Lofty fell off, he was standing up on a seat, he fell off, "Is that right, is that right?" And that's where I found out my other mate was a coward, cause I tried to get under this two inch locker and he wouldn't let me
- 40:00 get under there. But anyhow Mickey got this hit in the leg...what you run out again?

Yes just about to.

Tape 7

- 00:31 Right, well what happened when they were firing the shell burst alongside and around either side and you always get a bit of shrapnel in and it sprinkles around. Anyhow Mick got hit in the leg and you'll have to appreciate it was pretty cold. So we had a couple of pair of nylon socks and a pair of ladies' nylon stockings for warmth and jockeys wear
- 01:00 them, and I'm telling you, they're warm, nylon stockings and then you had a couple of pairs of sea boot socks, thick white socks and then a pair of sea boots which were half inch thick leather, like the German Gestapo boots and then you had your heavy duty fearnaught [woollen] clothing for warmth and then a waterproof one over the top of that, over the top of your normal overalls. So you were like little teddy bears and of course Mick hits the deck and we start peeling off the boots, peeling off the socks, we were out by this, peeling off the socks,
- 01:30 give him a rubbishing about wearing nylon stockings, we all had them on but we didn't let on. And we're "Where is it, where is it?" and it had just gone through and just pierced the skin and broke the skin, so the boots had stopped it. And anyhow next thing we got on the phone, "Mickey's been hit." so we give him name and number and all that, Mickey's been hit and next thing the first lieutenant came running down. And he's a fellow that had a Distinguished Service Order at the Battle of Matapan
- 02:00 in World War II, a real heavy duty battle and he was offered a DSO [Distinguished Service Order] for our service up there and he said, "Oh no, give it to someone who hasn't got one." So that's the sort of man he was but he wanted that piece of shrapnel as a souvenir, so Mickey said, "No." and he said, "Oh but." So one of the lads picked up a chipping hammer and we had these Carley rafts, they're made of

cork, thank Christ we never had to use them cause when we got back to Sydney we hooked a rope on one and tossed it over the side and it sunk,

02:30 there was so much paint on it. So anyway he picked up the hammer and he went whack and he said, "Here's a piece, here's a piece here." so this officer said, "Give us a knife, give us a knife." so we gave him a knife and he's hacking and cutting away looking for this bit of shrapnel. And then he woke up that we'd taken it out of him, he was not impressed I'll tell you. So Mick was alright and then another fellow, because we took off at steam the funnel very rarely made black smoke, we had

03:00 good stokers but it threw out a lot of cinders at one stage and one of the leading stokers who was so surprised at seeing it he looked up and he got a couple of hot cinders in his eye. So he was the only casualty, but we were so lucky, oh God we were so lucky. Bataan the other destroyer, she took a shell straight through the captain's cabin and it wrecked his dinner suit and hit his golf clubs and went straight out the other side, didn't explode, lucky nobody...

03:30 You know he's screaming and ranting and raving about it and that was when I said, did we say before about the lad picking up the chip and hammer and chopped a hole into the life raft and that sort of thing? He never did get his souvenir piece of shrapnel. So with this incident with the Doyle, she took off when she come out, we got the minesweepers out,

04:00 the Doyle took off and headed back to Sasebo and we stayed and refuelled from a tanker and the hose broke and sprayed oil all over our upper decks and the bridge and that. So we still stayed doing our job and used the steam hoses where we could to clean it off. We stayed at this island of Yangdo which we had to patrol around regularly because the angry man tried to get it. And then when we headed back to Sasebo about three or four days later

04:30 we looked pretty messy. And as we steamed into Sasebo Harbour all the ships started tooting us, rah rah alright oh God lad. So when we went ashore that night, free beer, they were buying us, they used to get two dozen cans in a slab [a case] all punched cause you're not allowed to have unopened cans. And I finished up I asked one lad, one American I said, "What's all this for?" "Doyle

05:00 told us about your incredible battle and we could see all the damage and you guys still stayed out there." all this sort of thing. Cause she'd headed straight back and said we'd been in a ferocious battle. This is why, I've just found out a couple of days ago that the American 7th Fleet also got the Presidential Unit, Naval Unit Commendation, so we got another medal when our government eventually says we can wear it. It took us

05:30 nearly thirty, forty years, thirty years to get permission to wear the South Korean citation but we can wear it now. Bloody medals, they're like coat hangers, you put one in your jar and they all come.

I just wanted to take a bit of a step back. When you were up around New Guinea and New Britain and minesweeping up there, what did you do on leave?

If we were near Rabaul we'd go ashore into the hotels there,

06:00 there was one hotel there or there was a swimming pool. A lot of locals and we used to run swimming competitions against them, that sort of thing. In fact we used to have one in particular who could stay under water longest and old what was his name, Snoz O'May. Snoz was winning, he won hands down until we found out that he'd gone to sleep down the bottom so we had to dive in and drag him out. He was half full [drunk] and he got down and forgot to come up.

06:30 So we got him, so no more deep diving. But then there was the manger of the Burns Philp store there, we teamed up with him and he had access to a vehicle so if there was only three or four of us we could get in the jeep and he took us up into the base of Matabi, the volcano that erupted a couple of years back. And the Japanese had the most incredible hot springs there that you've ever seen in your life,

07:00 it was incredible, a spa from the hot springs coming out of the volcano. And then of course it erupted but what else, oh used to go bush walking. That was interesting because the Japanese still had stacks of ammunition; they used to have patrol boats that would come down a ramp from the tunnel up on the hill,

07:30 when they'd finish patrolling pull them up and the Yanks would come in bomb everything, the boats are still there, out they'd come. Oh incredible. Oh God I'm glad they dropped that bomb, the atomic bomb we'd have been there, we'd have lost more than a million that's for sure. But the lot of them didn't know right up until 1960 some of them, in some of the islands; they still found Japanese soldiers still living there in the jungle. It's incredible, nobody told them

08:00 to lay down their arms, that's true. But I found the Japanese, oh well we're not at Japan yet. As far as the leave was concerned that was it, the only swimming we did was in the swimming pool because if you swam in the water, because of the amount of people that had died in the harbour the sharks were everywhere around and also like in Manus Island, Seeadler Harbour at Manus, crocodiles.

08:30 In fact I swear to this day I nearly got taken by a croc because this diesel tug was in dry dock and you had to have one of us on board, as duty all the time. So it was my turn so I went down into the bottom of the dock, about thirty, forty, fifty feet down, climbed down the ladder, went down the bottom. And right up the end near the end of the dock there's a big log about that wide and that high, right across

- 09:00 to steady her and also stop the water sloshing in. So I'm sitting on it and on the seaboard side was a footrest about that wide, so I'm sitting there and I'm just looking out and in the middle are these huge big mooring buoys. And I'm not joking, they were as big in diameter as this room is and they used to tie battleships up to them cause it was a massive harbour. And there was one over there, there was one directly opposite me and it was down like that and the crocodiles used to get up on it and sun,
- 09:30 the sea crocs, saltwater crocodiles. So I was sitting there watching this big fellow this day and mind, I learnt by this time how to switch off, if you sit there thinking about things all the time you go crazy so you just turn the mind off and let the body relax, and I can still do it. In fact that's the only thing stopping me going to ward eight. So anyway this thing's sitting there and I'm sitting there looking at him and all of a sudden,
- 10:00 I don't know what it was but I sense, felt something coming up from underneath, I just felt something, knew something was coming and I threw myself back, just threw myself back and rolled and hit the deck running. And I was halfway up this ladder and I heard this horrific crash and I swung around and I looked, I didn't see anything, a crash and then a splash, but by the time I looked back the
- 10:30 water rings almost instantaneous, the water rings were as far away as that street down there, so I believe it was a crocodile coming at me, it had seen me, not that one cause it was still there but another one. And I oh, I knew just whatever it was, instinct. See when you're on a ship and when you're in action I can't explain it but you tend to sense,
- 11:00 you sometimes even now I know don't go there, or don't do this you just know. But that, that's only one of a couple, do you want to hear something really weird? On the Warramunga off the coast of Korea I had spare time, I was off watch. I went down onto what they call X deck, you have your fo'c'sle end there, the sharp end there and you come along the bridge and all that and you have the deck runs level like that and then there's a lower deck, that's the quarter deck and up here's
- 11:30 X deck and there's a gun there. And on there we used to have bags of spuds [potatoes] tied down. So I got up, hooked the arms in through the ropes and the legs, in case the ship rolled if she had to do a sharp turn and I was just laying there and two things happened on the same day and it was quite incredible. And I was laying there eyes closed and it was a overcast day, a very dull, overcast day, the sun was not as hot, or as bright as that
- 12:00 but it was just a little orb, little glow. And I had the weirdest feeling that I was in a bottle, because you couldn't see any horizon or anything it was just, I was in a bottle and something or someone was looking at me, can you figure that? And I went oh, I sat up and I'm looking around, oh no I'm on board the ship, so I went back and I went into nodsville [asleep] again. And then the next thing, as true as I'm sitting here
- 12:30 I was above the ship, I could see it, I could see the ship below me, dead flat clam, I could see me laying on the spuds, and I can still see it clear as day now, and I could see my mate Jock Paton walking along. I thought, "Oh no Jock don't!" and I could see him climb up the gangway, up the ladder to me and shake my leg, "Here you go old bugger where you been hiding" and I was there,
- 13:00 I was back with him. But I actually saw him walking and coming; now you figure that out. I told you, at sea it's strange, there's anybody who thinks a man could make something like that it's crazy, there's got to be someone or something out there. And oh dear or dear but...

What do you mean a man who could make something?

Who could make a hand, who could make a body so perfect. I don't mean me now but

- 13:30 you know what I'm saying?

You talking about some kind of spiritual...?

What I'm saying is there's got to be something or someone before us. Maybe I may not be the most religious person in the world but when you're at sea you have to believe in something. I used to talk to my Dad and I still do, and Mum, still do, and I think I still pray too actually, I don't know, maybe I do maybe I don't in my own way. But I believe in something but I don't know what. But I've seen so many, I've seen miracles

- 14:00 and you can accept them. I saw the [USS] Arizona, a huge big battleship on the water there and another one upside down on top of it like that, on the horizon, if you took a photo you wouldn't see it cause it wouldn't come out, but it's just a mirage. I've seen, we were off the coast of Chonjin, the biggest industrial port in North Korea where we'd just been bombarding. We moved out to resupply, a couple of other ships went in and I could see upside
- 14:30 down the town and you could see the bomb burst upside down, reflection in the sky or mirage in the sky. So am I crazy I don't know who knows? You been driving on the road one day when it's a hot day and you can see mirror, water, there's no water there so that's it.

Do you think the sea had the same kind of effect on other men?

Do other men see it?

Do you think the sea had the same kind of effect on other men?

Everyone, anyone that goes to sea

15:00 how can I say it? There are three kinds of people, those that are alive, those that are dead and those that are at sea and your life begins and ends at the gangway. Cause once you get on board that ship and the lines are cast off it's a different world, totally and complete. It's not good worrying about whether your wife can pay the rent or anything like that, you can't do anything, you can't go anywhere.

15:30 When a sailor dies, when one of our mates dies we say, 'he's crossed the bar', when you're in a harbour you cross the bar to go out to sea and you're on a completely different voyage. Well one of our mates dies he's crossed the bar and he's on the long voyage, wherever he's going. And we are superstitious, there's no two ways about that. And we believe in things that nobody else even thinks about, it's hard to explain, I can't

16:00 explain it.

Were there any rituals or anything or...?

Oh only crossing the Equator that sort of thing. Oh no we had another one, we had puns, every time someone said you had to make a pun and whoever made the best one for the day got the belt. We had a belt made up, a web belt with badges on it. Then we had another one that anybody that happened to drop a piece of rubbish on the deck was 'a scungy bastard' so he wore the dirty belt and he had to wear it until he caught someone

16:30 else. Little rituals, things like that but they're just time breakers because when you're at sea and in a mess deck you got very little to read, you got very little to do. They play records but they're always the same records and you don't hear them all the time anyway. And it's no good talking to your mates, or you talk but you know everything there is to know about him and he knows everything there is to know about you so you just - it's no good saying

17:00 where can we go? Anyone who goes to sea has got my total complete admiration. If you're in the army or the air force you can step ashore, you can go into the local pub. At sea as I said a bag of spuds up on the upper deck, that's all you can do. This is why I'd say ninety per cent of us, it's why I can sit in a crowded room, just sit there and go... boom and I'm gone.

17:30 I can't hear anything, I can't see anything, and yet I'm wide awake, alert and yet the volume goes down, I'm quiet, as long, if I'm in - well when Margaret and I go overseas and she goes shopping I just sit outside the shop. She becomes "JAM" [just a minute] and I become "POM" [patient old man], I become POM, she is, "Just a minute, I'll nick into this shop, won't be long." so I become a patient old man. I just sit there

18:00 and inevitably I'm talking to someone before five minutes, there's another husband sitting there. One day in particular Margaret raced into a shop in Bond Street and I was having this conversation with this fellow for about thirty minutes before his wife and mine come out. And it was only then that I realised that his wife was Japanese and so was he and he couldn't understand a word of English and I couldn't understand a word of Japanese. But we'd been talking with gestures and facial expressions and pointing for half an hour.

So if you're a POM

18:30 **what does JAM stand for?**

Just a minute. 'Just a minute I'll just have a quick look in here.' No I believe very strongly in our first years of married life we did not have two pennies to rub together for so long. We were buying and paying off a house, we got a war veteran's home loan, we were on short money, very short money for seven months, the first seven months after I got out of the

19:00 navy, while I was doing this rehabilitation course. And then even when we went in to big money we had the first baby and that takes money and I couldn't afford to buy a bottle of beer. Worse still Margaret couldn't afford the ingredients to make a cake, I'm talking true. Our first furniture were boxes, and I've still got some of our first crockery set down there,

19:30 with the Australian coat of arms from the navy, I've still got some of them down there. So we had stolen navy crockery. So she did it hard because when I did join the navy I was away a lot. First twelve months, I was in six years, first twelve months I was away eleven months and from then on it was an average of five months a year and she raised the kids. So I swore blind to her that when I got out whatever

20:00 she wanted she could have, if I could, if we could afford it and I don't care if we can't afford it, I'd go back to work if I had to. So that's why I go quiet to her, some people think I'm henpecked, I love her so much, or love, I don't know whether it's love but I would be absolutely completely stuffed without her, I mean it. Not because, just because I can't cook, you can't eat porridge all the time, but truly,

20:30 if she's away too long and I don't know where she is I get angry at her for not telling me, I miss her. I come in, when I go into the office two days a week and I always bash on the door twice so she'll put the kettle on and if I get home before two o'clock she blasts me cause that's her quiet time. So we don't talk, I go into the den but I'm happy because I'm home. I push this door up and if I push it up and the

car's missing I feel like turning around and going out again,

21:00 truly I miss her, but I can't tell her that otherwise she'll take advantage of it. But anyhow this is not about my heroic naval career. No, we did it hard we are comfortable now and I, well it's part of my story, is that I fought hard about going to [the Department of] Veterans' Affairs about PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] because I did not believe I had it.

21:30 But then I thought it was just naturally bad tempered but I now accept that I've got a problem, I'm happy I'm contented now but apparently I can turn, which I don't realise I'm doing like that. So she's put up with a lot, the kids have put up with a lot.

Have you told them much about some of the things, for example like you've told us today, have you...?

They won't listen, the kids are not interested and I mean you can't talk, and

22:00 Margaret's got her own problems, Margaret's got, I hope she comes home in time before you go, she's got osteoporosis and you can see her back is already turning, she's ten years younger than me. And she's got osteoporosis and her legs and arms and bones are aching something shocking. She bought me, three days four days ago she bought me one of them new, magic, little, thin, electric pillow cushion things, have you see them? And she gave it to me cause of my crook neck and after two days she thought

22:30 she'd try it for her leg and it works, it actually eases the pain in her leg so I've told her to buy a mattress, the full mattress for her bed. She suffers but she doesn't complain about it, she just leaves it go. And when she does get sick she just goes in and shuts the door and I keep the phone away from her, I won't let anyone ring her but I get angry because I can't do anything about it.

23:00 And that's all part of my bloody service, but at least I'm alive. Being deaf doesn't help, or half deaf, doesn't help but what the hell anyway.

Just before we were talking about superstitions, I wanted to ask you, was there anything you could do on a ship that would be bad luck?

Whistle, because if you whistle on a ship, you get.... 'do hear there, do hear there

23:30 all those proceeding on draft abath the aftermast with gas masks before proceeding on draft'... So if someone's whistling you don't know whether it's a bosun's pipe you know...away sea boats' crew, see that's where it comes from, bad luck. You whistle you can guarantee a petty officer will hear you and you'll be in deep trouble so that is bad luck. That's just a superstition, that's why albatrosses are the souls of dead sailors

24:00 this is why if anyone was to shoot an albatross he'd probably be thrown over the side, superstition. There's any amount of superstitions in the navy, you don't whistle, you don't do that, like I don't go anywhere, I never went anywhere without that thing which I was going to show you and I'll show you later. That housewife thing, the little Christian things that Mum gave me. On the walking stick

24:30 is a St Christopher badge that Mum gave me when I first went in, it used to fit in the wallet, in the housewife as well, but I put it on that stick. That's superstitious, I feel if I haven't got the stick now, I've got the stick now, if I haven't got that I feel lost, truly and not because I want to use it against anyone. I mean I made a promise to myself and I hope that I can keep it, that if I get attacked and I don't care if it's seven or seventy, if they attack

25:00 me I will respond to the best of my ability. And when they put on their, say three or four kids get stuck into me, and I attack them, when we got to court and they've got their school uniforms on and the padre gets up and says what good kids they are, I'll have a different walking stick, I'll have both hearing aids in, tri focal glasses and I'll be bent over like a seventy-six year old man and I know who will win. You don't know whether I'm true or not do you?

25:30 No look, I don't go looking for trouble but unfortunately, apparently there's something about my, when Margaret, see in the navy and in the army you tell a joke you keep a deadpan face, you don't laugh at yourself, you don't laugh at the joke. When a comedian laughs at a joke he's a failure in my book. And I was an instructor as I said for a long time, so when

26:00 you're talking to people you have to keep serious, even if you don't believe what you're saying you've got to be proved that you do. But for some reason or other Margaret seems to think occasionally that my expression, or when she asks me a question and I'm deep in a book. And I work on the principle that if I'm reading a book I become part of that book, I become into it. So if someone says something to you and you don't hear them you say "What?" so that's an aggressive

26:30 voice according to Margaret so I'm in trouble you see so I try not to do that. There are times when I damn near have to bite on my tongue not to answer back because most ladies like to have the last word of course, so do I. But apart from that I try my hardest not to upset her but I know I've hurt her and I know, I've never physically hurt her, and I didn't have to physically have to hurt the kids,

- 27:00 if I told them to do something, they did it. Quite the contrary they've done a lot to upset us. But I kept a diary from the time we were married, every little incident, every little ache and pain and that the kids had I kept a, I've still got a medical record there of the kids from the day they were born. And every good thing and bad thing they ever done was in this diary year by year by year. And then one day Margaret saw me writing,
- 27:30 she said, "What are you writing?" I said, "Oh I'm just writing what's going on." so she picked up, there was a stack of the diaries, these year diaries, picked them up, opened them up. And she made the mistake of opening it at a time where my eldest girl was going through a bad stage, she ran away from home and I wrote what I felt in it. And Margaret objected very strongly that if Tracey happen to see that one day it would upset her, so forget how much it
- 28:00 tore my guts out and Margaret's guts out, we don't want to upset Tracey now she's a grown woman and got kids of her own, know where I'm coming from? So I got so angry I said, "What do you want me to bloody well do?" she said, "Tear them up." and without thinking I tore every one of them up. So the only history we've got of our family now are these photo albums and that's one thing I won't forget. I'm really angry about it because
- 28:30 my kids, every one of them, the three of them did something that was not good but because they were trained right. Like if you want to know how to judge a kid... and thing about a child, a homing torpedo. If you fire a homing torpedo at a ship it will drift off but it will realise it's lost the target and go 'beep beep beep' and it will come back on course again, it will drift off 'beep
- 29:00 beep beep', it will come back on course until it finally reaches it objective. A kid's the same if it's trained right, it will drift off and back on they come again, they will drift off and back off. I'm fortunate that all mine have turned out excellent, you see where I'm coming from? I'm strange I know, I know that.

No, no that's good.

But my biggest worry or not worry so much is regret, is the way I've hurt them without knowing it.

- 29:30 That's why when the doctor suggested the Zoltok tablets I think they send, the modern version of Valium to calm me down, cause I've been having the twitches again lately, that's why I took them. So when she picks them up tomorrow I'll have a couple just to calm down to give her some good time. Anyway what's this, a castigate Tom time?

We were talking a

- 30:00 **bit about the leave that you had on the ship and you had a lot of, well some spare time and what did you do for entertainment on the ships?**

Well depended on the ship. Oh if we were anchored we'd fish or just bat the breeze [talk], talk about things we'd already talked about. Or just sit and let the mind go, rather like a television channel if you get something that you don't like it's

- 30:30 not nice, you just press a button and it will go, just let the mind go. If you ever get time in your own life, just sit down quietly, with nobody around, and just switch off, and every time something, one of your problems come up, put it away, get rid of it and just let your mind go where it wants to and that's what we do, just let it go, let it go. And we did a lot of that, play Backgammon, what they used to call Mah-jong, the Chinese game.
- 31:00 What is it?.. you know fifteen, two, fifteen, four not checkers, chess, checkers, anyway that sort of game. But in the navy in particular we had a game they call Uckers U-C-K-E-R-S, it's Ludo, but the board is a big as this square and you roll the dice in a bucket and this ship will play that ship and there are tournaments
- 31:30 with Uckers, Ludo, that sort of thing. Played chess, I used to make rug mats which would be four foot long by three foot wide with a push needle, I'd take a whole bundle of wool to work with me, to the sea with me and make it and then stitch canvas, or material on the back roll it up and present it to one of the family, wedding and birthday presents that sort of thing.
- 32:00 I've done silk sewing, what do you call it silk work, sewing I used to love sewing, still do, that sort of thing.
- The navy has a bit of a reputation for homosexual activity, what are your thoughts about that?**
- I would say they're on a par with civilian street, same as the army, navy and air force, they've all got them.
- 32:30 In one particular ship I was in there were a group of them and the master at arms put them all in the same mess deck. They all did their job, as far as I'm concerned I didn't give a stuff what race, colour, creed or sexual preference a man is as long as he's there when we need him, as long as he didn't come onto me or my family. I'm anti-homosexual and all that sort of thing but if
- 33:00 that's what he wants and as long as he does his job and you know, there no problem. Margaret doesn't know it but some of her girlfriends, some of her very good friends, girlfriends' brothers, a couple of

them were in the navy with me and they were both homosexual, but she doesn't know it, I wouldn't tell her. But they were in a different mess of their own. As far as I'm concerned this nowadays with the incidents of AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome] and all this sort of thing I would not like to have

- 33:30 a homosexual in a wartime situation with me purely and simply because of the blood problem. And if that's being selfish, well you've got enough problems to worry without being shot without getting a blood donation or getting blood splattered on you from someone like that, I know that's selfish. So I believe, I don't care what they do as long as it's not with me or mine.

So they were put together in the same accommodation?

We tolerate them as long as they keep to themselves, look I'll give you an incident.

- 34:00 Now on the Sydney, HMAS Sydney, a big carrier, we were back in Korea for my second tour, 1953, 1954. Now when you go into a combat zone you've got big blackout curtains, sort of around that door would be a big hoop and there'd be a blackout curtain there and you go in behind that curtain before you open the door so no light gets out, it's got a canopy on the top and all that. Now we used to sleep in hammocks and all of a sudden
- 34:30 there was, now you'll have to pardon the expressions here, all of a sudden we got a phantom wanker. Now he used to sneak around the ship in pitch blackness and he'd sneak up to someone in his hammock and titivate him a bit and it would cause a hell of a storm. You know people would scream and this bloke would run, and he would run everywhere and nobody could catch him and he become quite a feature on board the ship. There used to be notices on the board.
- 35:00 'Dear Phantom Wanker come down to mess G3, second hammock from the right I need you.' this sort of thing, but this was - and when we finally caught him it turned out I was on this side, starboard side of the ship down aft here and this fellow lived on the portside, forward of an aircraft carrier, huge big thing, one thousand three hundred men, they finally caught him. And he was a married man but he just had this strange twisted thing so what do you do with them, you can't throw them over the side, just
- 35:30 watch him, someone kept an eye on him all the time. As far as the homosexuals are concerned as I said as long as they kept away from us. They usually used to put them all in the same, not that they were, well I suppose they did isolate them. But every little mess, especially if you were a guns' crew, like this was my mess deck, right outside was my gun position, so their mess deck was here, that was their gun position. They lived, breathed, and probably slept together there; it didn't matter as long as their gun was in action
- 36:00 when we needed it. And if you went ashore and got into trouble they were always there anyway, all sailors helped each other, so nobody took any notice of them really. But it's just that the newspapers make such a big thing about it, they're in the navy, they're in the army and they're in the air force. There's more in the officers' corps than there is in anywhere else, I'm not joking I'm talking true, but that's a no, no you can't talk about that. Oh that's on record now isn't it?

There is a bit stigma about it isn't there?

- 36:30 Hmm, there is a big stigma now. It's just that, it's this AIDS problem that's causing all the worry with them. And you take it with the men and women on board ship I'm so anti-women on board ship. Now I believe they're doing an excellent job but I am totally completely utterly against women on board ship and I'll tell you what, I'm not blaming the girls. There's a web site called the 'gun plot' and it is where all sailors go and
- 37:00 talk and they spin their dits [stories], tell their tales, all this sort of thing and the owner of the web site is a fellow named Russ Graystone who is still a currently serving chief petty officer in the navy. He's out of the navy but he's a reservist and he's got to be a brilliant man because he's continually called in for three, four, six months to Canberra to work on web sites and things like that. Now one of the dits that went onto there,
- 37:30 and the sailors were so disgusted with it that one of our ships went up to, he owns two Thai restaurants, one in Thailand and one down in Melbourne this bloke, he married a Thai girl. But the story in the dit was that these fellows were so disgusted that they saw a chief petty officer ashore in a compromising situation with a girl, young sailor who was old, could have been his daughter.
- 38:00 And this dirty old man had this girl in, I don't know if he was even touching her or whatever, but she was probably... the chief's said it's alright so it's got to be alright, you know. In another case there was some sheila [woman] hung in her undies, they held her over the side because she got drunk on board with a couple of sailors. They blasted the girl and the sailors got out, she got thrown out of the navy. The ship was at sea and they hung her
- 38:30 over the side in her undies by the legs, she was drunk and they were drunk. She got thrown out of the navy and they just got blasted, lost a Good Conduct Badge, so to me too much trouble, too much trouble. They do the job, I remember seeing when the Sydney, the destroyer was over there in the Gulf, in the First Gulf War and they were checking these big cargo carriers
- 39:00 and they come up on this ship, went ashore, went over in the little boat. Sailors raced up the ladder, two

of them raced up, one raced up the second store, you know the top flight what do they call them... container. The big sailor on this side hung on one hand ripped the door open, threw that one back that way and

- 39:30 swung over and got him, did the check and beat the other fellow. And it wasn't until they come down that this one was a girl, I saw this one was a girl and she was doing the job. And there's other girls, who was John Howard's, one of his security guards up in Timor? Was a girl soldier with an M16 [rifle]. So I mean they can do the job but they shouldn't be at sea because at sea there's no privacy at all,
- 40:00 on the shore you can but at sea there's absolutely no privacy at all. I have some papers in there that an American admiral wrote that the first group of ladies that went to sea in the American Navy cost the navy over a million and a half dollars on shipping because they had to have separate toilets, they had to have virtually separate accommodation and all this sort of thing. And the problems and
- 40:30 the strange thing about it is the first female sailors that went to sea, the first two were discharged from the navy for homosexuals, they got together, they were on their own who else can they go with, so they got thrown out. So I'm not blaming the girls, but not at sea. At sea on a ship is... my God it's a world of its own, it really is, it's hard to explain it really is. For one thing
- 41:00 a gunnery expression is still, if a gunner or someone screams out 'still' you stop dead, doesn't matter what you're doing, you could be firing a gun and the gun will misfire. You take a 40mm Bofors, it misfires so he screams out 'still' and you don't move cause anything up to three minutes that shell in the gun, which was right alongside my ear by the way in my case, it could explode any minute.
- 41:30 So you sit and you freeze and then after about three minutes they put a lever on it and eject it and it comes out red hot into someone's arms and they drop it over the side and then you breathe again, you find you've been holding your breath all the time. Or there could be lowering a boat, a sea boat. I got a scare here, I had one down here, I had a big gash, big bruise bang on the chest and I got crushed fingers here cause I was in a motor boat that was being hoisted up
- 42:00 this is not a girl this is an incident where lack of...

Tape 8

- 00:31 Now I was coxswain of a boat and there was what they call a cutter, and it was thirty-two foot long heavy thing, and it's pretty choppy and we're going alongside the Sydney, the aircraft carrier. Now you come along and they have, I won't try and even describe how you steer it but you have to be very careful and you've got to be quick, gentle touch, treat it like a baby, you really do. So there's two big ropes
- 01:00 hanging down from the hoist with a huge big block, a metal block that you hook on, in the front of the boat there's a hook and in the back of the boat there's a hook, and you've got to hook this on and as soon as you hook it on the officer, there's an officer up top watching and he's giving instructions to the man on the winch who can't see you. And he's saying hoist up, lower away, hoist up, you know to keep the block as near to you as possible. So as coxswain I'm down aft and as soon as I think it's right I say,
- 01:30 "Hook on forward." and my mate up front will hook on and I hook on after him and he's going, "Hooked on forward." "Hooked on aft." "Hoist away." and the officer of the day will say, "Hoist away." Well this day we're up on the top of the thing and the ropes up and we're up, going up. But instead of that wham, my block smacks me in the face here, it cut across the finger there and it bruised the ribs, blood everywhere. And my mate got his fingers
- 02:00 jammed and all that sort of thing so we had to back away, we couldn't go away cause were swinging, we went down and the waves hit up, smashed the bottom of the boat and up and then we were trying to miss this big block. You can imagine, I'm talking it's that thick and it's swinging at us so were cowering away from it and finally the bottom fell out of the ocean and the boat dropped and come to a shuddering halt and all of a sudden it started coming up. There's screaming up on the upper deck, more so than us in the boat.
- 02:30 And of course as we come up I'm glaring cause I know it's got to be the winch driver and when I come up I'm looking at him and I said, "What went on Sir?" and he said, "Him, him." So I had to concentrate on the boat, was still pretty difficult. They had to hoist it right up until the top block and the bottom come together and then you pass a rope around it lean back and hold it tight and then they hoist, pull the boat, pull, the arms are like that,
- 03:00 they pull them back so the boat comes in and it can be lowered. Do that and I said, "What happened Sir?" when it was all secure in the boat, I said, "What happened?" my mate said, "He was reading a stick book [pornography]." the sailor on the winch was reading a dirty book and wasn't listening to what went on. We were bleeding like stuffed pigs so I wouldn't take my eyes off him. As soon as the boat was in I said, "Clear the boat." the officer said, "Clear the boat." so I leapt out and I took off
- 03:30 after this clown and you can imagine me covered in blood chasing this kid and he went straight down to

the stokers' mess screaming, by this time he was terrified. And a big stoker mate of mine, he stepped in, he was the leading seaman in charge of the mess he said, "Stop, stop, Goddamn Tom what's up with you?" and I said, "He was reading a stick book when he was on the hoist and I copped this and Charlie's got damage also."

- 04:00 He said, "Will you leave it with me?" and I said, "Yes." So that kid would have got the biggest thrashing he ever got in his life, but we could have got killed so if, I'm not saying a girl would be any different. I believe personally that women telegraphers, women on radio is the best thing since zip top cans, I found that out in the army because their voice is clear and you can understand it. And they are so attentive
- 04:30 to detail, women are so much better in my book. But again we're getting back to it sea time, I just don't know I've got that thing. But there's always, you can always find something to do, we used to iron, we only had one iron in the mess deck and when it was your turn, we used to wash our shoelaces and press them, we used to press our underwear. You press your handkerchief; I used to press my in corners like a little sheila, just to make do with the time on the iron,
- 05:00 that's why Margaret bought me a birthday present and it's a big, king size ironing board. So next door both work so I do their ironing, every Sunday night they do it in and I do the ironing, I love it, stand here, lift these up, the mind goes off on its own, no worries. You don't have to be crazy but it helps.

I wish you were my neighbour. What did you know

- 05:30 **about Korea at the time of when that all started, what did you know?**

Well in 1950 when the North Koreans crossed the border I didn't know a damn thing about it, I was in Manus Island; I didn't even know where Korea was truthfully. At that time I hadn't even been to Japan so I didn't even know where Korea but then I knew about the United Nations and I knew that for the first time they were going to stand up to -

- 06:00 people don't realise just how bad, how much we were terrified of the red Communist threat. For example in 1948 when the Malayan War [Emergency] started in about fifteen other countries in the world and outbreak of war started, small firefights, Communists in spite, it was a world wide thing. And then 1950 with Korea the same thing, there was a war
- 06:30 in Italy and there was one in Greece, the Communists were going to take over the world. There's no two ways about it, the red peril.

So you volunteered straight away even though you didn't know anything about it?

Yes, oh yes, well it was a chance to get into, well I'd been trained as a gunner and I wanted to see if I could be a gunner or how I would react and act in wartime. I volunteered up there, didn't get it, I went down south I did my time at home and then I went over to the

- 07:00 recruit school staff and from the day I arrived in depot I requested to see the commanding officer every week until I wore him down and he posted me to, I got posted to the Warramunga. And I went up there and I'll never forget it, the biggest fright I got was not on our first patrol where we hit Mayhapto were we got into the Mayhapto punch up, but when we got over to the coast
- 07:30 we had to link up with an American, or later that wasn't the first time. When we next patrolled, after twenty-one days we went back to Kure and refuelled and ammunition for a few days and then went out to the east coast with the Americans. Now it was foggy weather and we knew that there was a ship out there somewhere, well we didn't from where we were down back aft on the after deck the gun decks. But on the bridge they knew that we we're going to rendezvous with a big American cruiser
- 08:00 big American battleship, cruiser or whatever it was. We didn't know that, we didn't know where we were going, we knew we were heading for the Korean coast. Now anybody that knows the Americans or has heard of the Americans know that they are notoriously trigger happy, they believe in, what they called in Vietnam, 'reconnaissance by fire'. They never sent troops out to check the jungle; they levelled it with artillery fire. If in doubt shoot,
- 08:30 they dropped napalm on one of our army battalions, one of our headquarters' battalions. They were the ones that invented friendly fire, killed by friendly fire, you see. Anyhow you can picture the scene that it's dead set quiet and foggy where you can't see from here to the end of the street, and were all closed up at action stations, cause were off the coast of Korea. And then all of a sudden
- 09:00 the fog lifted and I'm not joking from here I'd say up to Vansitart Road, I'd say about five hundred yards away from us was this massive great grey wall, an American cruiser and every gun on the port side was pointing at us, the big guns the little guns and they're pointing at us. They knew we were coming but they were closed up at action stations. Now my little gun position
- 09:30 was a Bofors gun, if you ever go to the War Museum go to the Korean section and you'll see a little Bofors gun and it looks like a motorbike side car on the side. And I sit in it like this, there's the trigger, two little handles, that turns it, the barrel, and that lifts and raises the barrel, so I went like that. And I'm looking at this big grey thing and I can see all these guns looking at us. Now the Yanks, it only needed someone to

- 10:00 drop a empty cartridge case or something like that, and I swear blind that was the most frightening experience I had in the Korean War was just looking at those guns. And we were there for what was maybe half an hour and I swear none of us moved and our ship was dead silent. Everybody on the gun deck, nobody in the bridge or on the bridge or anywhere else had the brains to tell us what was going on. And nobody on that bloody
- 10:30 American ship had the brains to tell them to raise their guns off us. And when we steamed away I wasn't happy until she disappeared in the fog and that, oh look fear your guts tighten up. You can't crap your pants, cause, excuse the expression, your arsehole freezes, it does really do. Your stomach, I get tight in the tummy now
- 11:00 just thinking about it, you can't breathe, your stomach's so tight and you're just sitting there frightened to make a move and that was our allies. That was why the North Koreans weren't a problem because you could shoot back at them. When I said they dropped napalm on one of our, one of our battalions, the 3rd Battalion, they took a hill and they put out the recognition panels, this is us, a big cross, this is us.
- 11:30 The American pilots knew the code signals, our boys were on this hill, the enemy were on that hill so the Americans dropped the napalm bomb on our boys, could not miss the other hill but they hit our lads. Now there were about four killed. You read a book on Korea and you'll read about this fella who's on, he's in one of the forward lookout posts and he's sitting there, he wrote the book, cause I've got the book in there that
- 12:00 it's called 'Korea Remember'. I wrote a story and sent it in, but this fellow wrote the story about this napalm thing. He's sitting in the forward position and he looked up, saw the bomb and it missed him and he looked up and he saw this, just a, was a body walking, no clothes, skin peeling off and it was his mate.....oh Jesus
- 12:30friendly fire, Yanks. Yanks are good but I don't like them alongside me. I like them if they go right ahead with their arms, ammunition, bomb, shells the whole bloody lot, as long as they're way up in front of me, not behind. We were doing a bombardment one day and this lazy little LST [Landing Ship Tank] cruising in,
- 13:00 cruising in and it was just cruising up and down the coast looking for targets of opportunities, it was one of these rocket things. And he come in and dropped the anchor behind us, dropped the anchor here and the tide swings them around and they adjust it with the engines and then they stop pointing at where we were pointing. The problem is they're three hundred or four hundred yards behind us there and then they start.....I had this big
- 13:30 flaming things going over the top, I was like that and our guns even stopped firing it frightened crap out of everyone. And there's eight hundred, six hundred shells landed, rockets landed, they up anchor and just casually sauntered off, see you later, looking for someone else to frighten, that's the Americans, oh mamma, my God. It was

- 14:00 interesting but I don't think I'll ever be as frightened as I was that day with those guns pointing at me.

Did you ever land?

Lend?

Land?

Oh no, no.

You stayed on the boat?

Only, I went ashore on a, they had a raffle, not a raffle but they had, we went into Inchon to pick up some admiral or something so they put on three buses, three forty seater buses, now bear in mind there's twelve hundred on

- 14:30 board the Sydney at the time, twelve hundred or thirteen hundred. So they drew names out of the hat to fill the bus, oh the usual officers and chief petty officers and that sort of thing so there was one bus left for the other ranks. It would have been eight hundred of us so they give forty of us a bus ticket and my name come out. So I rugged up, went ashore over to Inchon and just one heap of mud it was, one heap of mud and the bus took us up past Kimpo Airfield
- 15:00 where our 77 Squadron was and we went into Pusan. And Pusan was a total complete and utter wreck and the big, you know the trip I just did in that book totally different now, it's all rebuilt, you would not credit. And I just could not believe it when I got there in July this year that the amount of work they've done in fifty years. And the big building, their Government House or whatever they call it,
- 15:30 the dome had been blown off, the building was gutted, just the walls and the second time there it is it's bright and sparky. There's more cars, the roads are bigger and every person in the place I'm sure has got two cars, two telephones, two cell phones and they used them both when they're driving, I think they steer with their feet. I'm not kidding, there's an incredible amount of work gone on. So I went ashore that day
- 16:00 but it was a wreck, I'm getting me trips mixed but....

What were the reactions of the Koreans towards you?

They loved the Australians. They loved the Australians and this was confirmed in that book there that when we got up there as soon as we got off the plane in, just in July this year we were met by a senior South Korean official and he said "Kamsa hamnida" which means thank you very much. And we found out, every time we bumped into someone in the street, meet someone in the street,

16:30 older people, "Kamsa hamnida." And they were thanking us for being there in 1950, or there they would have been like they're a million or so people on the other side of the world, their friends. It's in a war, it's a war zone now, up there, they're on a knife edge. We went up to the DMZ [Demilitarised Zone] on that trip, this trip and you go up the Han River and you're only a short

17:00 distance out of Seoul and you've got signs with mine fields on both sides of the roads and you've got bunkers and pill boxes and goodness knows what all. They're on a war footing, but the people up there loved us then and love us now, the Australians that is, don't ask me why, maybe because we were there. I like them, like the kids, the kids

17:30 are beautiful, like kids everywhere.

What about correspondence with your family?

Oh usually a bit of a delay. I wasn't married then, my family were not prolific letter writers, in fact the only time I ever got any letters from my Dad was one just after the Warnervale, I went home after the Warnervale went down and Dad wrote me a letter cause I had a good talk with him

18:00 when I was down there. He wrote me a letter, he only wrote that one. And when this item was in the paper about Warramunga being in a three month gun battle he wrote me a letter then. So mail, correspondence, oh we had pen friends but I never got a lot of mail, no. Mum used to write, but not very often.

We haven't talked about Japan?

Japan?

Hmm?

Was good.

18:30 What years were you there?

The first year I was there was 1950 and the Occupation was still on, oh 1952 and the Occupation was still on. It didn't actually officially end until about July 1952 and then we ceased being the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces Japan and we became British Commonwealth Forces Korea, just overnight. In fact I was on watch, quartermaster on the

19:00 eight o'clock to midnight watch on the gangway, and we had, only had midnight leave, so before they stepped ashore the commanding officer of what they call clear lower deck, everybody gets down on the quarter deck and the captain gets up. They harness and unharness and say stand still and the captain gives us a talk and he said, "As of midnight or as of midday today the peace treaty was signed with Japan." he said, "As of

19:30 that moment, we are no longer British Commonwealth Occupation Forces Japan, we are British Commonwealth Forces Korea." So what you did last night and got away with, some of the whackers used to push the old people off the footpath and all this sort of thing and play up no end and the Japanese Police wouldn't touch them. He said, "If you do something wrong and the Japanese Police catch you..." he said, "I can guarantee you there will not be an international incident, you will

20:00 go to a Japanese Court and do your time in a Japanese gaol, the Australian Government will not do a thing for you." There were two Brits, I don't remember any Australians but at least two British fellows did three or four years in a Japanese prison, the same night. So when he said, "If you feel like thumping anybody come back and thump the quartermaster because at least you won't get into trouble." and I knew I was on when they come back, so I said, "Oh thanks very much

20:30 Sir." and he turned his hand and he must have asked the first lieutenant who the hell was that. And he would have said, "Able Seaman Hamilton, he's quartermaster tonight." he said, "Oh sorry about that Able Seaman Hamilton." So sure enough from about eleven o'clock onwards they start trickling back. "The skipper said I could throw a punch at you." that sort of thing. So if as I said you can pick your mark so I watched them, if they were serious I would deal with it serious

21:00 and it's quite simply actually, you just grab them and smash them into the door, slam 'em up against the wall and it sort of stops them laughing in church too I'll tell you. But if they're joking, you let them throw a punch and just block it that sort of thing. And there was only about three out of the whole lot that wanted to throw a blow, but it was, I've got to tell you, but some of them joking you know, throwing a blow and that sort of thing. But the officer of the day he kept out of the way because if he sees it and witnesses it, which he was but

- 21:30 he was out of the way, good officer, if they threw a punch at him they get three years in Stewart's Creek Gaol in Townsville, that's where they used to send them. So it was an interesting night but nobody actually hit me, I didn't really hit anybody but mostly you calm them down and send them on there way rejoicing. And when it was last man come in and my relief came, the lousy bugger, he waited back right until midnight, he's suppose to relieve me at ten to, but he waited back,
- 22:00 the officer of the day said "No Hamilton's doing alright, leave him." So I didn't even notice the time and he come and I said, "You mongrel." I said, "Where have you been?" and he said, "Oh, having a ball." And the officer come out and said, "Well done Able Seaman Hamilton, well done." and off he went, wrote it up in the log. And then from then on they had to be very careful because I saw when I first got there, I was walking along looking and it was still a mess, Korea and Japan were still a mess
- 22:30 then in 1952. And the best thing in the world that happened to them was the Korean War because of the influx of troops that built up. They started out with prostitution of course but making souvenirs and nick-knacks all that sort of thing and it bought up their economy no end, the Korean War it's the best thing that could have happened. So I walking ashore this day a place called Nakadori, the main street, looking for,
- 23:00 just having a look the first day and I saw this young soldier, couldn't have been more than nineteen or twenty, something like that, young fella who had not been in during the war but was obviously going to go to Korea, but had a few beers and the conquering hero and he pushed this old Japanese man and woman off the footpath into the gutter. And I went up to him and I went whammo, whacked him and just sat him on his bum in the
- 23:30 gutter and helped them up and I made a promise to myself that as long as I live I will never force anybody off the road to make way for me, nor will I get off the footpath for anybody else. If it was a lady or anybody like that sure I would, but I will never let a, and it's been put to the test with the young people, they try to force you off the road. I've seen them coming a couple of times and I've just eyeballed
- 24:00 them, got a good firm grip on the stick, and I swear to God I would have used it, but they seem to sense it and they veered around. But that young fellow I'd say it was his first or second day in the country and didn't know any better. This was before the actual truce was signed. Oh, some of the blokes did stupid thing, they used to think it was funny to some poor bugger driving along with a three wheeler cart, it was a three wheeler bike and it would be loaded up with baskets and pots and pans
- 24:30 so they'd tip him over, thought it was funny. But once the truce was signed, oh mate that was good. So it didn't make any difference to the way we were shooting at the enemy or they were shooting at us.

How did the Japanese treat you?

Oh they always treated us, oh great. I'll give you a classic, the navy has as you know bell bottom trousers and there's four buttons across here, there's actually like a flap that comes across there, there was three or four buttons under

- 25:00 and then this other flap comes up top and it buttons there. Now we had a habit of getting our wallet and you hook it, you actually hook it in there so it's half out and you never lose it. In fact when I go overseas I do it now, cause the weight of your tummy forcing onto the wallet it can't fall out cause half's hanging there and half's in there. So this particular night I'd bought a beer and I decided to go to the toilet, and with the toilets you have to straddle them like that
- 25:30 there's a hole in the ground. So I walk in and straddle it, drop the flap and I'd made the mistake of just hooking it on the front part of the flap, cause I went happy days and I went plop and I turned cold. I thought I was going to be the last and most amazing accident that ever could happen to a man, that it had fallen off. And I thought oh my God, and it took me nearly two minutes to look down to find that it was me wallet sitting down the bottom there, nothing else. So I laid
- 26:00 down and I'm trying to reach it to get it and I can't because my arms to short and mamasan come out, "Oh chotamati, chotamati." what I said, "The wallet." "Oh okay you go back, you go back." So I go in wash my hands go back in, cold bottle of beer, frosted bottle in a glass and after about maybe an hour I thought I wonder what's going on and I walk out into the kitchen and there's the whole family, they'd gotten my whole wallet out of the toilet and they'd washed everything
- 26:30 including the photos and there was about five children, mum and dad and the whole family and they got a candle each and one's holding a ten yen note, which was a threepence, another's holding a photo and they were drying them over the photo. So I said, "Oh beautiful." so I sat down at the table with them and started, they put a candle there and I was helping them. So when I was going, we were going back next day so I took every penny that I had in my wallet and plonked it on the table and mama, "No, no,
- 27:00 never happen, never happen." I said, "Chotamati, Chotamati." I said, "Baby son come on here." over he come, I rolled it up and put it in his hand, "Number one." he said, "Oh number one." little kid, mum wasn't going to take it out of his hand so I went away, "Oh you come back, you come back moustache son." Moustache son they called me, big moustache, "Oh you come back moustache son." "Yes mamasan where we going?" she says, "Korea, Korea." they knew before we did. So I always used to go back to the same beer

- 27:30 hall, "Oh moustache son you come back." No, I loved the Japanese, I really did. And not only for the beer and that sort of thing, I don't know, they were an occupied country and they were totally and completely devastated. Did you know there were more people killed in the fire bomb raids in Tokyo than there were in Hiroshima, trust me it's true. There were more people killed in the fire bomb raid in Tokyo than there were in Hiroshima, the
- 28:00 Americans didn't mess around I'm telling you. I went into Hiroshima and the whole place was levelled, flattened, the only thing standing were the remnants of the brick buildings. And when you walk through the dust it was about three or four inches thick but if you could imagine it, didn't stir or float, it was like walking through Johnson's baby powder
- 28:30 the talcum powder, it didn't float it just sort of swirled. It just sort of - and it was the most eerie feeling everything was powder and wrecks. The only thing were the brick buildings, and oh God it was a mess, the poor buggers. But we went to Hiroshima to buy toys for the orphanages on the islands, the kids' orphanages. We used to spend ninety per cent of our money would go to toys for the kids. HMAS Shoalhaven was the first one up there
- 29:00 and she found this orphanage with the kids in it and adopted her and used to hand her over to whatever ship took over. So we went back to Korea and there was a movie on and it was Japanese, no this was later in 1954. I went into this Japanese movie about Hiroshima and a lot of it was actual footage. And we sat there and the people, we were right up the front they give us a seat,
- 29:30 but you could hear the people stirring and rumbling cause it was the most horrific thing I've ever seen in my life. And it was photos taken after the bomb had gone and we had to get out and go cause you could hear the people rumbling, we were the only Europeans there, we got out and left. But it was absolutely horrific, oh God damn, but I'm glad it happened otherwise there would have been over a million of our people killed. But
- 30:00 never ever think that the atomic bomb was the worst thing in the world, fire bombs, bloody hell. Was Tokyo ever a mess too, the whole country was nearly wiped out. In 1952 as I said we actually got, or MacArthur [General] got permission to use their minesweepers, they were still clearing their own harbours.
- 30:30 What's that, seven years after the war ended and they were still clearing mines from their own harbours. They had nothing poor buggers, they had nothing until the Korean War started and then they started to pick up which was oh man. So when I went up on that trip I could have gone to Japan for a couple of days, it was part of the tour but I got the bursary from Greenback RSL and I didn't want to push
- 31:00 my luck so I did nine days in Korea and I didn't go to Japan. And I don't really regret it because I prefer to remember it as it was, how the people were helping each other. And our boys were helping them too believe me.

You probably wouldn't recognise it?

Oh look I could show you on the first page of that Pusan as I saw it and then Pusan this time. The difference, I

- 31:30 was in a forty-one storey building, a five star hotel and that's where our accommodation was this time and in the book there, five star in 1952, 1953 was a hammock that was slung over a mess deck table, and I'm sitting up in bed reading.

So what was that like when you did go ashore at Korea cause you're kind of isolated on the ship away from seeing direct contact?

It was good to be walking, is that what

- 32:00 you mean?

I guess I'm trying to ask you about like what was going on in your head, you're away, you're off shore, you're in your ship....?

Oh once you leave the ship?

And then when you get on shore and see what's been happening there, what was that like?

Well first and foremost like when I first walked into Inchon for example was

- 32:30 amazement, not really amazement cause I'd already seen the problems that had happened in Japan, but sad that it had to happen in the first place. Then I realised that it's happened all over the world except in Australia.

And what about in Korea?

Oh in Korea well when I saw Pusan and the way it was I thought well it's no real

- 33:00 difference now because the North Koreans are still waving the sabres, so it could happen again. The

North Koreans have one hundred and forty artillery pieces, Seoul is only forty, fifty kilometres, forty kilometres away from the DMZ [demilitarized zone] and they've got one hundred and forty artillery pieces aimed at Korea which can reach Korea, Seoul I mean and wipe it off the map in two minutes, three or four minutes. Truly

- 33:30 the North Koreans still feel that they're going to come across. They only count that there's four tunnels that have been located, but that's not so, there's forty tunnels but there's four they talk about. The Yanks and the South Koreans have located forty tunnels that start from about five miles back from the North Korean side, the one we went into, in tunnel three. Five miles back on their side and it is
- 34:00 sloping up, right, sloping back toward the North Korean side. And you know why? No I'll tell you because the tunnels drip, they're granite and they drip water so they sloped them down so the water would run back into the North Korean side so these people wouldn't know about it, South wouldn't know about it. The one we went into, tunnel three, it was a North Korean engineer defected and told the South about it, so they did
- 34:30 probes and they drilled down, drilled down and then they pumped in millions of gallons of water into these holes on a particular hill say, and where water came up they knew they'd struck oil sort of thing, they'd struck a tunnel. So it's gone down in this one and come up that one sort of thing. So what they've done in tunnel three, on an angle like that they actually made another tunnel about three hundred and fifty metres long and it's a little, it's only, you can reach out both sides and
- 35:00 touch it, you've got to keep your arms inside. Like they have in the tunnel of love, those little trains, you sit in one of them and you go down this three hundred and fifty metres and it's seventy-three metres straight down and when you get to the tunnel it is two metres wide and two metres high. This is only a small one, this is more or less like a reccie [reconnoitre] tunnel. Some of them are big enough that trucks can go through; truck loads of troops can go through. So anyhow what we did, we walked about three hundred and fifty metres along, and a fellow, Yankee
- 35:30 bloke telling us what's going on and then we came to a huge big concrete block there and it was supposedly four metres thick but they had a camera fixed in it, observation camera. Two hundred metres past that was another one and then another two hundred metres was another one of these blocks and there's these cameras fixed. If a camera goes out they
- 36:00 immediately go on full alert, if one camera goes – and there's cameras all along and it's twenty-four hours surveillance, if one camera goes out they're immediately on alert. The American 7th Cavalry, where we had lunch is only a matter of about five kilometres away from the tunnels. The American 1st Division where we had dinner, a bit further around, is within spitting distance and they're on virtually full alert all the time.
- 36:30 Or not full alert, what do you call it, you have condition red, blue and green, so they'd be on maybe second degree or first degree or third degree or whatever, but they're there, there's always troops ready to roll.

Can you remember when you heard the news about Seoul falling?

About who?

Seoul?

Seoul, oh about it falling? No all I heard, see Seoul fell in the first few days.

- 37:00 We were in Dreger Harbour and all we heard was there was a war in Korea and we didn't know where it was, we had to look in a map to find out where it was. And we knew that our ship, the Shoalhaven and the Warramunga were the first ones up there. And our government actually put them in first; our navy fired the first angry shot. The air force was next and then the army by the time they'd prepared them and sorted them out they arrived about a month later. But
- 37:30 they got their first casualty the very next day, because by this time the North Koreans were right down to the Pusan Peninsula, right down the bottom. But I didn't know where it was, I'd never heard of the place, I just wanted to go there cause I'd been trained as a gunner and the only time I'd ever put it into effect was when we were minesweeping and we used the Bofors for sinking the mines, and the 20mm Oerlikon gun. So I wanted to see
- 38:00 I don't know maybe just to see if I was a man probably, or what is it the crossing over from a boy to a man. And the day that Yankee carrier came up out of the fog I changed from a boy to a man I can tell you. No I'll be honest, the day I turned from a boy to man was when I helped to hold the poor bugger down to die with dignity. You never go back, you can never go back, you can never forget.
- 38:30 But Korea was, in fact it's a funny thing when I came back on the Warramunga I volunteered to go back, so they put us on, all of us that volunteered. We come back and the old Warramunga she was dying the poor old bugger, she'd been everywhere, patches everywhere. In fact before we left Korea to come home we went into dry dock in Kure and they welded squares like that over the holes in the ships side. We weren't allowed to chip the decks
- 39:00 because the chipping hammers would go through the rust. So we got back home, I'll never forget it, and all the, what they called the natives, all the people who lived in Sydney they go home on leave first and

us foreigners that lived interstate we wait until they come back. So were standing there, the mate's standing there rolling the cigarette and this wharfie come along, he was an ex-navy he says, "God damn it mate." he said, "You blokes must have been in some trouble!" with all these holes that had been

- 39:30 patched on the ship's side, he didn't know they were rust holes. Me mate went "Oh ." he said, "It's all part of the job." and this bloke went, "Oh wow, wow, I was in it meself once you know." So they decided that we were getting paid off the Waramunga and the Arunta had just been refurbished so they transferred every one of us, she was going to go back, they transferred all of us that volunteered over to the Arunta.
- 40:00 So we worked for five months getting her ready to go to Korea and then they decided that the Vengeance was going to go not the Arunta so we were transferred to the Vengeance. Now this is musical ships here, so she was a bit of a wreck so we spend five months working her up. Now this sounds easy but working up a ship means you've got to get it totally, spotlessly clean inside
- 40:30 and out, you've got to check that all the electrical wiring is good, you've got to check that the guns fire. So you're at sea, you come in each night but you go out every day to sea and you're doing exercises and you are working your butt off. So we did that for five months with the Arunta and then switched to the Vengeance for five months and then they found that the flight deck was stuffed and it couldn't handle aircraft in an operational sense. So it went out to sea
- 41:00 and the Sydney would come up behind us so the aircraft flew off the Vengeance come round and landed on the Sydney like that. We went back into harbour and they said, "Pack your bag and hammock." so we, those that were going back to Korea. So we packed our bags and hammock and they said, "All number one mess." up they get and went over to number one mess on the Vengeance, on the Sydney, two messes and so on, we just changed over. And then we worked up again
- 41:30 so then we went back to Korea, but you've got to work, by God do you ever have to work.

Tape 9

- 00:31 **So moving right along can you tell us about your second tour of Korea?**

Well I'll have to tell you I didn't really enjoy that as much because when we were down south, when we were working up with the Sydney, we suddenly got word that the Americans had put in a hell of a lot of, terrific heavy duty attack on Chongjin which we'd been involved in... we'd been involved with one of them previously with the Americans. You know with the

- 01:00 hundred aircraft and all this sort of thing and the big [battleship USS] Iowa blasting away and us destroyers. So when we were down there we heard that they put in another big massive big thing, and the truce talks were on. And oh that was bloody, oh... ignorant officers and politicians arguing while brave men were dying. Because the North Koreans, while the talks were on they wanted to gain as much territory as they could and the Americans were determined they were not going to,
- 01:30 so a lot of men died. Anyway we heard that they put in a hell of a push against Chongjin and were disappointed that we weren't there of course, and all of sudden we heard the truce has been signed. And that was in 1953 so we thought oh God what's the good in going back? And then we realised that the truce is just that, it's only a truce, it means it can be broken at any time. So when you think about it, Korea today
- 02:00 is the longest war since, oh no the one hundred year war beat it, but it's been going on for fifty years, so it's still virtually war. So anyhow we went back, I thought oh well we're still going back, but the second trip to me was possibly harder than the first because we were not allowed to cross the line, thirty-eighth parallel cause they decided on it.
- 02:30 And it was signed on the 27th July 1953, oh 1953. So our tour was from 1953, we got back there in August 1953, so it was after the truce was signed and we were still there until 1954. But what we had to do was we were on the line, don't you cross and I won't. And there was always incidents, stirring and the possible, and they were still trying to gain
- 03:00 something. And it was more or less on edge, we were still closed up to action stations every time we went to sea, and the difference was the carrier, we were further off shore and we never got ashore to go in and do a bombardment or anything like that. So it was just exercising all the time, our own aircraft would come in and beat up on us and as gunners we were closed up and we had to really be ready and all that sort of thing. And it was continual training but when I think
- 03:30 back now it was probably the same when I was with SEATO [South East Asia Treaty Organization] exercises, ANZUS [Australia, New Zealand, United States Alliance] all those exercises, Korea the second trip was rather like that. Training for war cause it could of come at any minute, someone only had to do the wrong thing. So in a way in that respect it was worse, but in another respect because it was a carrier we got to go to Yokohama and Kobe and Tokyo,

- 04:00 which we couldn't do with the destroyer we only went to Kure and Sasebo. But by then we went to, you'd get leave, I was still motor boat coxswain and a watchkeeper, quartermaster. So I would knock off one morning say at nine o'clock and my mate and I would be able to go ashore and catch a train, well if we were in Kobe, catch a train to Tokyo or Yokohama or whatever. Or just get on a train and think this will do and we'll get off at a little out of the way
- 04:30 place. And as soon as we'd get off the train we'd be mobbed by someone, "Oh hello, how are you, come on home." and it was good, we saw the countryside which we hadn't seen the first time. So in that respect it was good. But the total intensive training with the knowledge that it wasn't going to happen, nobody would be stupid enough to start again; in that respect it was hard. And for a lot
- 05:00 of the lads it was worse cause on the first trip we got the United Nations Medal and the British Korean Medal. So when we went back the second time because it was only a United Nations Peacekeeping Force they only got the United Nations Medal, Korea. So a lot of the boys dipped out on war service, and yet they were still undergoing the same tension and threats that we were. Didn't bother me because I already had it but I felt so sorry for them.
- 05:30 And because actually our boys were still there right up until what, about 1974, the Australian Service Medal now with Korea, that's the second tour they were still there clearing minefields and all that. And that's no matter what you say to sit up on a gun and wait for something to happen is worse than actually doing it. So the first trip was better
- 06:00 because we actually saw action, the second one was better because we saw more places.

How did you cope on ship with regard to how the ship was fitted out and the climatic conditions?

Take the Warramunga, you got a room about as big as this double garage, it's divided into two messes, ours starts about here, twelve foot wide

- 06:30 and that side slopes in and that's sides got a bank of lockers like that there, metal lockers. Your actual mess deck space is only from there to here, what's that about a metre and a half, two metres or something. So you've got a table there, bolted to the deck and there's a cushion seat there. Now I was unfortunate that my, and some of the lockers, I didn't get on board early enough to get a metal locker, I had a seat locker. Now
- 07:00 when it was snowing and when it was cold if I wanted to get clothes out of my seat locker first I had to wait, usually wait until there was no one sitting there or ask them would they mind moving while I got something. And then I would have to lift up the long cushion, which was always freezing cold because I don't know what it is, it was like a plastic sort of thing. Anyway you'd lift that up and then you'd lift the lid and the locker was about so wide
- 07:30 and that high and about that deep, you'd lift the lid and there would be a film of ice about maybe quarter of an inch thick right across the top of my clothes. And to get to your clothes, that's the condensation and the dripping and all that, so you've got to get another mate, couple of mate's knife in each corner. You'd sort of go around it to cut it, then you'd wriggle it up till you could get your fingers on it and just drop it on the deck.
- 08:00 Because as I said before, to Kylie [interviewer] before, was that to imagine, from about a foot up the bulkhead to a foot out is just solid ice where's condensations melted down. If you have a look at the photo in there in my hammock, that will give you a classic idea. The deckhead just above my head and it's continually dripping the condensation. So when I went to sleep I used to tie a rope from the top to the bottom on my spare hammock went over
- 08:30 it like a little tent to stop it dripping. And then when you lashed up your hammock the next morning when you got up, which you had to do, you put this wet hammock back in with your blankets which meant they were wet all the time so you had wet blankets. The blokes that would come off watch would have snow or sleet or rain or whatever on them, so you had to hang them somewhere, so they'd be hanging in the mess deck so there's always the dampness. You couldn't wash
- 09:00 because it was too bloody cold, you had a bird bath anyway, so your wet towel, there was a big piece of wire hanging along, so your wet towels had to be neatly folded all ship shape and shiny sort of thing, had to be all neatly folded so they couldn't dry out. So the dampness was there all the time and oh cold, you could never get warm. We used to, if we knew we were going, we'd go to one
- 09:30 of the local tailors and you'd buy, if you were going for twenty-one days you'd buy twenty-one sets of underwear, twenty-one underpants, twenty-one singlets and twenty-one pairs of socks. And in particular in Hong Kong and that you'd stock up large because they were only, they'd only cost you a threepence each cause they were made, not of paper but almost like paper, and we used to dump them after we used them anyway. Cause you couldn't wash them. Oh the smell,
- 10:00 the mess deck, the smokers, the smoke used to be, well my hammock if you have a look is just about three feet down from the deck and the smoke was a solid wall, another ceiling, two foot, I'm talking true. Two feet of smoke swirling and the coughing and the farting and the spewing and the wet clothes
- 10:30 and the smell, the bad breath and the smell, this is why I said earlier, I get Margaret's breakfast every

morning because you could not talk to anybody. You'd be laying there, you'd come off watch say for argument's sake at midnight, or come off at say eight o'clock and you went to bed as soon as you could to get some shut eye. And then about twenty minutes to midnight you'd hear the whistle, "All the blue watch

- 11:00 all the blue watch, blue watch to starboard life boat, ten minutes time." then there'd be the bumping and knocking while someone got up. And then again at ten to four, oh at six o'clock you got up anyway, see what I'm saying. So you're continuously broken sleep and yet we used to switch off, boom, and even if you only got ten minutes it was deep, it was so deep. That's why I can still do it thank God. You'd
- 11:30 go up on the upper deck as soon as you got out of bed, put your clothes on, you'd have to rig yourself fully booted and spurred, because it was too cold. And you'd go up on the upper deck, big deep breathes, clear your head and go in and do the old what we used to call a Pommy wash. Wash your eyes and rinse your mouth out, sometimes if you ran out of toothpaste and there was nothing in the canteen so you use salt, salt for toothpaste. And then you'd go back in the mess deck, or by this time there
- 12:00 was one man for each mess was allocated as cook, mess cook, he didn't cook it but he used to have to go and get it. And the first thing you wanted was that big cup of tea and you'd get that cup of tea in, and in most cases I used to take mine up on the upper deck and drink it out in the open. And then you'd come in and say, "G'day how you going, what's happened last night?" this sort of thing and then you start talking. And it was years and years after I got out of the navy that I could talk to anyone in the morning. I still
- 12:30 like to have my breakfast on my own, really I'm talking true. And you walk from the upper deck where the crisp coldness is absolutely beautiful really and then you walk into this, you feel like you actually have to push yourself into the, what's the expression, fug, F-U-G, you have to push yourself to get into the mess deck. Cause of the stink and the smell. Well for example is that when we come back
- 13:00 from Korea in the Warramunga and we all transferred to the Arunta, three months later there were thirteen cases of TB [tuberculosis], they were suspected TB and they checked us and there were thirteen actual cases of TB and I have the newspaper clipping in my big album, that's down there. Thirteen cases of TB, we all got checked and one bloke in particular, I can't think of his name, we'll say Petty Officer James, Petty Officer James
- 13:30 was a positive case and was sent to Balmoral Hospital and then to the infectious diseases ward and that sort of thing. And his family were shattered, cause we'd been away a long time and then three weeks later they found out it wasn't Petty Officer James, it was Leading Seaman James, a different bloke. So they had to go to this fellow and tell him that he'd just done
- 14:00 three weeks of his life worrying himself sick for nothing. And the navy said, "Think yourself lucky, go." and he went home and this other poor bugger, who could have spread it to his family, you see what I'm saying? Navy, she's a hard taskmaster the navy but I tell you what I don't regret it I really don't. But the living conditions on the carrier was a little bit better. Because for one thing, the heaters
- 14:30 never worked in the Warramunga, the punka louvres did [method of ventilation], the cold weather ones, they blew, oh bloody hell did they blow. And the carriers were a bit warmer, we had better gear. When we went on the Warramunga I bought a leather jacket, I did not on the Warramunga but all they issued us with was a duffle coat and I fortunately bought some long johns [underwear] before I went and they did issue us with string vests, they're like a singlet,
- 15:00 plaited like a fish net. And they actually rub against the skin and generate heat, they're good too I'll tell you. They're romance killers, you strip off in a Japanese house and you suddenly appear with big submarine socks up to here and a pair of long johns and string vest it's difficult for little Tarooko not to burst out laughing. So I mean it's a real romance killer. But when we went back on the Sydney I had bought myself a
- 15:30 leather jacket that come down to there, fur lined, true fur lined leather jacket and I got a bigger size so I could wear jumpers under it. Now I would go on watch from eight o'clock in the evening until midnight and say for argument sake Lenny Henshaw would come out and I'd give him the jacket and he'd wear it until four o'clock in the morning and he'd give it to Shortie Allen, and Shortie would wear it and then I would come out and get it from him. And that jacket was doing twenty-four hours a day and it lasted
- 16:00 fifteen years after I come back I was still using it. But that jacket it paid for itself really. First trip I went to a disposal store and bought an American combat jacket and an old army blanket. I folded the blanket into about four different ways and then I measured the back of the jacket and cut it out, 4 layers, measured the sides and I actually stitched it in and padded it with four layers of blanket. I paid five pound for it and I sold
- 16:30 it for fifteen, as soon as I got back I sold it for fifteen but I made one of them for meself before we went up on the first trip, but it was so cold, oh. And then in the summer the summer was so hot, it's worse than here cause it was a dead steamy heat and we had a doctor on board. We had to be closed up in the guns, we had to have everything sleeves down, big fearnaught gloves,
- 17:00 fearnaught, asbestos sort of thing, there's another one asbestos hoods and that for flashes from the guns. And quite often you'd be sitting on the upper deck and you're thinking about taking your shirt off

to have a bit of sun, get a bit of the sun when it come and all of a sudden you hear somebody scream, and you know bloody well the mad doctor was around. He'd come along and see somebody with a shirt off, puff on the cigarette and just stick it on your back and he'd say, "That's nothing

- 17:30 to what you'd feel if you got a back flash." If you're close up to action stations it's a lesson learnt and it was true. Then it was the other weather, we're talking about the weather of course aren't we, weather and conditions? And then you'd get what they call the month of the yellow winds. The winds would blow in a certain period across Siberia and it would blow this dust and it was yellow, blow it out to sea, into the Sea of Japan and that. And it was
- 18:00 just a yellow haze everywhere, you could not see the horizon, the sky or the horizon or the sea, cause it was on the ocean you could only see the ship. I got a partial plate where I had teeth kicked out playing football; it would get under the plate. The cooks would make sandwiches while you were closed up at the gun station, you'd bite into it and it was in the sandwiches. You'd get your mug of what they called kai, it's hot chocolate
- 18:30 with tons of sugar in it and you can drink that down and you can feel it warming you up, I'm not joking, it's absolutely beautiful. Forget about the high blood pressure and all that sort of thing, but you'd get that but you'd have a hand over to try and sip it, but you could feel the dust going down your throat. That was the month of the yellow winds. Another time that, go back to the cold, I'll never forget this, was we were up on X deck on the Warramunga, go back one trip,
- 19:00 and it was so cold, absolutely freezing and we'd left the coast, night time we'd gone out and on the after deck there's what they call a coming, you've seen them on all ships. Like a big funnel just sitting on the deck to get the air coming out of the engine room or the cool air in. And one of the big lads lent on it, it was up to my neck, but he lent on it like that and he went.....and it was about seventeen
- 19:30 below zero then. And in the navy you have what they call a chill factor, for every knot of wind the temperature drops one degree, so if it's ten degrees below zero that makes twenty degrees below zero with that wind factor, so it's cold. And Lofty, "Hey," he said, "Who's the smallest?" "Me, Tom." rope around the waist tied it to a ring bolt on the deck said, "With one young sailor, load, load." so they picked me up
- 20:00 and fed me down into this thing. And I dropped me arms over the entrance like that and the rope's tied, they took up the slack. Within five minutes the hot air coming up from the engine room, oh mate I was as warm as toast, I said, "I'm done." out and we all took our turn and it was bloody lovely. And then all of a sudden someone says, "God stuff me what's that?" and we turned and looked back and there's a ladder coming up from the quarter deck. And there's this apparition in a black
- 20:30 combination overalls and it's pale, but it's trying to talk and it's shaking like a dog shitting razor blades, oh I'm sorry, and he says, "What this?" So we tied the rope around him and threw him in and let him cool out and as he cooled out his language come out and it was the petty officer from the engine room and he was screaming that the ice melting off our cloths was dirtying and wetting his
- 21:00 good clean engine room and he was spitting the dummy. So we pulled him out, we got orders not to do it again. And the very next day they'd put a metal cover on it so we couldn't get back in there again. So that's the weather.

What about when you were you on the Sydney in the typhoon?

No that was in the first crew. In fact every time you go to sea and you run into...

- 21:30 I was in the Warramunga and we ran before a cyclone and typhoons and all that sort of thing. Every ship that was up there it was typhoon season. And every time you go to sea and you get rough weather you say God damn it that was hard, there's always some clown says, "Yeah but you should have been here when Cyclone Ruth was here." or, "You should have been here with this..." The ship would hit, and you swear it's going to hit the bottom, it goes up and it comes down and you swear it, boom in rough weather say, "My God I
- 22:00 thought we hit the bottom." "You should have been here last cruise mate, she went boom boom." But no we weren't there and that was a sad thing about what the navy wrote in this, with the army in Korea, "Voices of Korea" or 'Korean Voices'. The army wrote most of their stories, the air force wrote a few, the nurses got a mention with about two, nobody thought about writing,
- 22:30 so the biggest story about the navy is the Sydney, Cyclone Ruth. Which I thought was sad; it didn't say anything at all about the thingo. I got asked two years ago now by the Korean Veterans' Association would I go and talk at Anzac Square on Anzac Day about the navy's part in the Korean War. So I got up and I spoke about
- 23:00 blockading and patrolling and what it actually was and I started out by saying I just read a story by a naval historian, an officer who said that on such a such a day Warramunga was involved in the battle of Mayhapto, and the rest of her patrol was normal patrolling and activity. And I said anyone that says that has never been there this is what it's all about. And then I went and told them what patrolling and bombarding was.

- 23:30 It's not as simple as that. At the end of the Korean War the commanding general of the North Korean forces made the statement that had it not been for the blockading of the coast, if he could have provided his troops from the sea the war would still be on. But because they couldn't get supplies with the aircraft bombing them and navy blockading them. When I was back there this time the only time I had a bad time
- 24:00 was we were working our way up the east coast from Pusan right up north, up the top. And we pulled into a stop for a cup of tea and that sort of thing and it was absolutely beautiful, on the coast, beautiful day, and I walked from this, got a mug of coffee. Walked out onto this little knoll and it was overlooking a beautiful little bay and an inlet and I stood there and I was looking at it and I thought oh, that's absolutely beautiful. Then I looked out to sea and I could see a couple of fishing boats and
- 24:30 it was almost instant transition, I thought to myself yep, there would be fishing boats on the shore there, now that's where the fisherman live, there'd be a gun position there, there'd be one where I am, there'd be one over there, right now we'll take those boats out, this sort of thing. And it was the only flashback I had. Speaking of flashbacks Margaret and I went down to Melbourne one time and we were coming back and we called into Coonabarabran
- 25:00 and the car blew up so we were stuck there for a week. So we got into this caravan park and it was beautiful night, absolutely beautiful, and the caravans were double deckers almost. And I'm laying there on the bottom bunk, I'm looking out and I can see another caravan over there and there's grandma, grandpa, husband, wife and two little kids and they're running around playing all this sort of thing, happy go lucky and it's a beautiful clear night, moonlight night, good gunner's night it was.
- 25:30 And all of a sudden mum said, "Alright grandpa leave them, it's time they were in bed." So they all went into bed and I was laying, whooo.....and it made me realise when I was shooting gunners... you know what I'm saying, the family, I didn't know, I never thought about it.
- 26:00 That was a hard one that one. I didn't realise I was crying and Margaret woke up and wanted to know why... but I, you never think about it, you do your job and if you can think about it you never fire your gun. But that was the first time it ever occurred to me that there were others, other - when we sunk the, shoot up the boats, the fishing boats, they're running out of tucker
- 26:30 because were blocking supplies and that. You shoot up the guns, the gunners and they can't man the guns and shoot back at you, but you forget that they're living with their families, so the family go too. We even shot, one day there was a cow running along on this hill so the commanding officer, who finished up being the Governor of Victoria, oh Queensland, he said, "Oh there's a target for your guns." So he ordered myself
- 27:00 and another gun to shoot at this cow, so we obviously deliberately aimed behind it and it was oh, very, very funny this cow running along with 40mm Bofors shells behind it. We could have hit it but why shoot a cow, so the Communists won't have milk in their coffee or something, that's the sort of thing that went on. After the winter the sun would come up and it would be beautiful and you'd look and see up on the hillside,
- 27:30 we were that close in you could see them. And one fellow would come up out of his trench, North Korean and he'd sort of sit up there and undo his jacket and sit in the sun and nobody would shoot and then more and more and more and when they were all totally and completely relaxed then we'd open up. Is that war, not really is it, but it is. So they probably did the same to us, so but
- 28:00 that's - oh it had its good times, it had its bad times.

Can you tell us about that incident where you were doing bombardments and there were actual observers in one of the bunkers you were targeting?

That was when we were doing exercises in 1957 with HMAS Anzac, actually that wasn't in Korea. But that was, the boys

- 28:30 in the Far East Strategic Reserve bit they never got any recognition. Because when we were all ordered up there in 1955, the army, navy and air force for the Far East Strategic Reserve we were all allotted for service which meant army and air force went up there and one day ashore they got the General Service Medal and all war benefits and all that. And then our government suddenly realised that they needed to buy an airfield, to help the Brits
- 29:00 build an airfield and they needed money for accommodation for our troops and their families, the army and air force. So they had no money so they had a midnight meeting and un-allotted the navy. Now thirty years later when our navy started asking why we don't get anything and they got it, we were doing the same job on the same allotment, one of our blokes, Doctor Gibbs, is a
- 29:30 brilliant, there are some brilliant men in amongst the FESR [Far East Strategic Reserve] mob and the Vietnam logistics mob. He got freedom of information and one of our top men up here, Noel Payne, was a lobbyist in Canberra for twenty-five years so he knew everybody and he knew all the lurks. So those two got freedom on information and found out about this. Oh what was his name, Brigadier General Cope I think it was,
- 30:00 the fellow just died, the judge, the High Court judge, he did the investigation into it. And finally when

they got all this information, they interviewed us all why we should get it, why were we training for war and all of that stupid thing. So eventually the kids got their medals. And I took part in it because I already had medals, I've got more than I need but, so I kept fighting also. So anyway to cut it short back to this thing

- 30:30 in Korea and back up there we used to go in and do bombardments and I was in the Anzac, I was in the director right up the top and I was the layer, I used to lay the guns. What they do, all the guns would be switched to director so when I lifted my sight up and down every gun on the ship lifted up and down. When my mate the trainer, trained it they all turned, when we were on target I'd say "Layer on" he'd say "Trainer on" and they'd say "Fire" and all of those guns would hit the target.
- 31:00 Now we went into Subic Bay and we were doing a massive exercise with the Yanks and there were a series of bunkers, say one, two, three, four, five, six at least and what had happened there was a mob of reservists there from every country, national country reserve, either a SEATO, ANZUS or Anzac or something like that. And anyhow we get the range, bearing and they give us range,
- 31:30 target bearing and I said "Layer on." me mate said "Trainer on." and I'm peering through these big glasses and I saw someone moving so I screamed out, "Still, still!" I said "There's movement on the target, cease fire, cease fire!" Told them not to fire, and my officer who was the safety officer he started abusing me up hill and down dale. And it turned out when they called the
- 32:00 targets from the bridge to him he had misread them or misheard them and instead of aiming at the target up the top, all these blokes had come out of their bunker because they knew we were going to hit the furthest one away, but he'd given the co-ordinates for this one. And we were just about to open up with six guns, or what three, six, nine oh no yeah six guns we were going to open up on all these admirals and brigadiers and all that. So he's
- 32:30 screaming and the captain, oh did he ever go off the planet and I was called down cause I screamed halt and I said "Movement, movement!" and then I got, oh they started blasting me and then they realised it wasn't me and then this officer got pulled down, he was my divisional officer too and he hated my guts after that. He was one of the reasons I got out of the navy actually, he started bearing down just too much. Anyway we stopped firing and the officers were angry because each ship's officers
- 33:00 and petty officers had a bet with the other ship who would win the, get the best shot, a couple of stubbies, couple of blocks of beer or something like that, you know what I mean, just a prestige thing. So we had to cease fire, we couldn't fire, we drove past and we missed that shoot. Oh did it hit the fan, my God almighty there was people jumping up and down and they were checking co-ordinates. And fortunately the bloke on the bridge
- 33:30 had logged it in correctly and when this bloke up top in the gun had logged it in he'd written in wrong and that was the only thing that saved Snoz Fletcher and myself, he was the trainer and I was the aimer. You've got to believe this, this director is only about say probably twelve foot in diameter and it's a metal box and you're right up the top and it was one hundred and forty degrees inside.
- 34:00 forty degrees, and we would do eighteen hours a day in that training for war, that was in Malaya, and this particular day, boy oh boy. And I said to this officer couple of days later, "Excuse me Sir, we don't get home until June next year." this was in 1957, I said, "We don't get home to June next year but I'm due to pay off in February next year." And he gave me
- 34:30 such a tongue lashing, "You will stay with the ship and we will pay you if we have to, if you earn it." and he give me a terrible lambasting, this is later you know. So I was hesitant about whether I'd stay in or get out and then I said, "Well stuff you too Sir." mentally didn't say it out loud. So I said to the petty officer "When we get out of here today take me down, I want to see the commanding officer and I want to put in for a discharge." cause I had what they call a Section 25A.
- 35:00 If you signed on for twelve years under the age of twenty-one you had to be discharged on the day before your thirtieth birthday and my discharge date was three months, was actually three months after my birthday, so they had to let me go. But if it hadn't been for him I'd have probably stayed in the navy. I don't think Margaret would have been too happy. But the training for South East Asia, Malaya was just as rigorous
- 35:30 and as hard as it was for Korea. We did the time in the turret and mama mia, was it ever heavy duty, but well that's it that was the gun shoot, we never did get to fire that day.

But you did the right thing?

Yes.

Did anybody ever recognise that fact?

Oh they never ever said it to me; nobody ever said it to me or to Snoz. Because he immediately said, he screamed out too, "Still, still!" cause he saw it just a split second after I did,

- 36:00 and nobody ever said anything. But this officer oh and you can imagine being enclosed in this thing eighteen hours a day with someone who's sitting up directly behind you that hates your guts, just waiting for you to make a mistake, it was not good, not good, that was why I got out, I wanted out. And the navy had the last dig, we went and did exercises, there was SEATO exercises there was ANZUS

exercises and there was oh God there was every type. And we went to Manila

- 36:30 and we went up to Hong Kong and we were in Hong Kong and I'd packed me bag cause I knew I was eventually going. So the day before the Anzac was due to leave Hong Kong, Melbourne was on the other side of the wharf I got a call, "Leading Seaman Hamilton, report to the ship's office." And I go down and the master at arms says, "Pack your bag and hammock, the Melbourne's leaving in an hour you've got to
- 37:00 catch her." See what they did, one hour, but I already had me kit packed and I was off that ship within ten minutes. Joined the Melbourne, went on board and they had a full crew and there was about six of us and we were all surplus, surplus to unit requirement so they had no job for us and they just said, "Do what you want to." So I went up to what they call a captain, the top, the ship's divided into sections, port, starboard, little sections and one petty
- 37:30 officer's in charge of each top. So I said, "I need to do something, I'll go crazy." And he said, "If you will take men under punishment every night?" anyone that does anything wrong they work in the dog watches from four to six when everybody else knocks off, chipping and scraping and painting, and you've got to have a leading seaman in charge of them. He said "You take that." he said, "For the rest of the trip that's all you have to do." and he said, "I'll write you a chit [order] so that you can stay." You're not allowed to
- 38:00 stay in the mess deck during the day and that sort of thing. "You can stay in the mess, you can go where you like, do what you like." I said, "Yep." That would free one of his regular navy you see, one of his regular crew. So I took it on and I was seriously thinking about staying in cause they'd offered me, oh as soon as you get down there, "We'll put you on a petty officer's course and you'll be a petty officer and you'll have no worries." So and I'm thinking about it seriously cause the money had just started to get good too.
- 38:30 So then I was watching this kid and he's laying there, red-headed slug I'll never forget him, and he's laying there he's going clunk, clunk and swearing something shocking. So I moved in and I said, "Knock off the swearing and get to work." and the next thing I feel the hand on the shoulder and I turn around and it's a navy lieutenant commander, a pilot and I said, "Excuse me Sir." and he said, "It's alright leading seaman I'll look after him." And he knelt down and he put his hand on this slug
- 39:00 and he said, "What's the matter Blue?" and Blue turned around and gave a mouthful of the foulest language you know, it's people like you and bloody navy and all this and he's abusing this officer and I said, "Shut up!" So this pig stood up, the officer, this is what we used to call them, bad ones, he stood up and he blasted me in front of a junior rank. And I looked at him and I thought, "This man, he can't be serious."
- 39:30 so anyhow he took off and went away. And as soon as he did shit for brains, oh sorry Kylie, he looked up at me and he went big smirk. So I stepped in and grabbed him and pulled him to his feet and bent him backwards over the rail and said, "Look at me." and he looked at me, he's looking down and I said, "Look at me." I said, "My name's Leading Seaman Hamilton. I've got men under punishment for the rest of this cruise." I said, "You and the rest of your mates
- 40:00 ever step on my toes again look." and the water's beating along, I said "You will be in there." Then I threw him back down, chip, chip, chip....it was like the flight of the bumble bee the way he was tapping it out and I never had anymore trouble with men under punishment. But my mind went bang, I'm out of this Mickey Mouse force, cause that's what it had become, a Mickey Mouse and that was, I didn't want to but I was angry at myself for cutting my time short for not finishing a contract.
- 40:30 To this day I still feel it but I did the right thing because I had time with Margaret, got a good job, went in the army.

Tape 10

00:31 Okay what's the stand out memory of being on the Sydney?

Well, on the second tour in Korea with the Sydney we had been into Sasebo or into Kure and we were steaming out through the Shimoshenki Straits which is actually the straits going over to the west coast of Korea and it's a hundred mile long through little islands and that sort of thing. And at that time I was the leading seaman on

- 01:00 what they called the bosun's party, and without blowing me bags the best seaman were put in the bosun's party because we were responsible for all the rigging on the ship. So my task entering and leaving harbour, we used to take it in turns, I had to be in the cable locker which was right up in the bows of the ship. Now the bows of the ship, there's the flight deck on the carrier and the next deck down is the cable deck where all the anchors and cables are and below that is the, actually the forwards.

- 01:30 And it's pointy like that and there's a row of thunderboxes [toilets] around both sides here and then right up in that corner is a deep pit where the starboard anchor goes into and on that side another big

pit where the port anchor goes into. And my task was as were steaming through the straits, the main clips on the anchor on the upper deck have been taken off, but there's only one here. So I have to stand there with a sledge hammer

- 02:00 and in the event of them dropping port anchor or dropping starboard anchor, I'd have to knock off the slip on this one, so you had to be there. So were cruising along through the channel and I'm just standing there and all of a sudden I hear, "Stand by collision stations, stand by collision stations, this is not an exercise, this is not an exercise, close all XY opens and doors and scuttles below the upper in deck." you know to in fact get watertight
- 02:30 integrity. And I looked at the bows of the ship and I thought, "Oh my God if we hit anything it's coming in on me!" and I didn't know what to do. And I'm running around in circles and I thought, "I can't go up the hawser pipe where the cable comes down, it's too small." and I raced around and I went to open the door behind me, but there was a mate of mine out there and his task was to keep the door shut. So as I tried to move one, they call them dogs, little handles, as I lifted one off he hammered it down and I heard bang, bang as he hammered them shut.
- 03:00 And I was stuck and I was running around, running around in circles looking and I could hear this little dog whimpering, as true as I'm here and I suddenly realised it was me. I was absolutely terrified and finally I stood back as far as I could from the bows of the ship and I stood watching it and waiting and I could hear the swish of the water and I just stood there, just stood there. And then I heard, "Stand down from collision stations, stand down collision stations." and I went, "Ohhhh."
- 03:30 just sat down, and I sat on one of the thunderboxes and I was shaking. And then all of a sudden I hear, "Standby collision stations this is not an exercise, this is not an exercise." So this time I just sprung to me feet and I stood there on edge, I couldn't go anywhere or do anything. I don't know how long it was, it seemed like forever and then they said, "Stand down." So by this time I was shaking, actually terrified and I'm trying to get control of myself, and
- 04:00 would you believe, third time, "Stand by collision stations." And I thought, "Stuff it!" I'd been through this sort of situation before where I said stuff it, "If I'm going to die, I'm going to die." so I sat on a thunderbox, picked up one of the magazines that's always there and as true as I'm here I sat there reading. And I suppose, actually I thought I didn't give a stuff but I probably switched off totally, I was terrified. And then again they said, "Stand down." and then the
- 04:30 worst thing about it nobody told me what had gone on and I was locked in there while we did that hundred mile through the Shimoshenki Straits and by the time I got out I couldn't talk I was, incredible. I got out and I ran up to the upper deck and my leading seaman in charge of me, oh no, I was still an AB [Able Seaman] then I think, but this leading seaman in charge of me said, "Where you going Tom?" I said, "Up in the uppers, up in the uppers." And I went up into the uppers and he realised I was in a bad way and
- 05:00 he come up and said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I was in the forwards and I get three times standby collision stations!" and he said, "Oh God damn it nobody told you." What had happened, there were three LSTs [Landing Ship Tank] going along, Yankees, lining ahead and they come up alongside the Sydney and they were going just that fraction faster and the first one cut across our bows and course, stand by collision stations. And then the second one and the third one and
- 05:30 they were lieutenant JGs [Junior Grades] from the American Army, American Navy, and nobody told me. And then I said to the bosun who was in charge of the rigging party I said, "I don't want to do cable party again." I said, "I can't go back down." and I wouldn't go back down, I refused to go below decks. Dinner in the cafeteria, excuse me - every husband has one.
- 06:00 And I couldn't go back below deck so I used to make sandwiches, if we had a roast dinner I'd make a sandwich and sit on the upper deck and I don't think I ever went below decks to eat again really. So the bosun he understood and he put me on a different job on the upper deck. So I got over that eventually and then would you believe in 1964 I was in the army, Army Reserve and I'm on parade and the commanding officer come out and he said, "Recruit Hamilton." because I went in as a recruit,
- 06:30 even though I was thirty-six. He said, "Come in I want to talk to you." he said "HMAS Melbourne has just run over HMAS Voyager." and he said, "You can go home if you want." I said, I didn't really want to cause there was nothing I could do, but I thought he wanted so much for me to go home I said, "Okay Sir." So away I went and the next morning I saw, next time you see a photo of the Melbourne's bows, that's the forward toilets where I was, and that's where it hit me.
- 07:00 And it was just after I saw that photo in 1964 that I really went to water and I still, can still hear, 'standby collision station'. I know it's silly I appreciate that, but that was bad.

How did that army officer know?

Oh it was in the newspapers. See when they eventually released it, he knew I'd been in the navy, he said "Did you know anybody?" he said, "The Melbourne just run over the Voyager do you know anybody on it?"

- 07:30 and I did, we all knew each other.

But he didn't know that that accident...?

No he didn't know about that accident.

Would it have taken you back to what happened to you?

No he didn't know that, he just thought because I would have mates on both ships he thought, I thought he was being nice really and I didn't have the heart to tell him no. So I was driving home and while I was thinking about it and I thought if Melbourne hit the Voyager that means that just below the cable deck

- 08:00 and the forehead mess decks would have been taken out so that started to hit me. And when I got up next morning and saw the photo in the paper, oh mate, that was heavy duty. And I still occasionally I wake up, not only for that but if I'm in a room or something like that. See when I go to the RSL [Returned and Services League] I suddenly occasionally feel like I'm closed in, I've got to get out, I've got to get out, so I go out, but it doesn't happen all the time.
- 08:30 I mean I've learnt to live with it now, put them on the back burner again, forget the psychiatrists; I put all my problems back on the back burner again. And this is why I'm starting to have bad dreams but I don't know what I'm dreaming about, that's the funny thing about it, I wake up and I don't know why but I'm cold. So I've been talking to Doctor Smith about it anyway, so there it is, that was it. So anyhow to speed up to get to the army, that's what you want, after I got out of the
- 09:00 navy. As I said the mate and I were watching and we both went down, through the flagon of red wine and we both went down to join up and he missed out so I was signed on. And they said, "You were a leading seaman in the navy, and instructor you can be, come in as a corporal." and I said "No, different sort of saluting, army, navy and air force that sort of thing." and I said, "I'll go in as a recruit." And it was good, only problem was
- 09:30 when I lined up as thirty-six year old recruit I didn't have medal ribbons on, I left them off, but for example we were doing fixed and unfixed bayonets, bang fix, unfix. And the sergeant that was teaching us he got it all wrong, but I didn't say anything because I thought it might have been the army way of doing it, slightly different. But I must have looked at him and he come over and he's damn near spitting on me, spitting
- 10:00 and spewing and abusing crap out of me you know "Rah, rah, rah." And I couldn't even understand what he was saying so I back off and from then on I was very, very careful that I never looked at them if I thought they made a mistake or something. So then I did teach the sergeant, oh I'd already taught the sergeant a lesson. So as soon as we went up to Jamieson Valley for two weeks exercise, graduation. A week of final exercises and drill where my
- 10:30 tent mate said he had problem doing shoulder and order arms so I said, "Come out the back." so I started teaching him shoulder and order arms. Someone else said, "I can't do reverse arms." so I said "Come here." so I had one doing this and one doing that. And by the time the week ended, every night I'd be doing two hours out there with half a dozen blokes and someone told the warrant officer, RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major]. So just before we graduated, on the Saturday, I got called to report to
- 11:00 the master at arms, not master at arms, warrant officer, RSM and I got down and he looked at me and he said, "You have been teaching people up on the hill." and I said, "Oh sorry Sir" he said, "Corporal so and so, your corporal said that you do better than some of the corporals that we've got." he said, "When you finish this graduation and do this next week's exercise you will be going to 1st Battalion over at Essendon." and I said, "Oh." I said, "What as?" he said, "Lance corporal,
- 11:30 assistant instructor." So I went over there and that started it. So I immediately went on a corporal's course, seven months later was the course and I came second, so then I did the Sergeants' Course, picked that up by three years I was substantive sergeant so they asked me to go, when Vietnam was on to go into full time duty, only for six months. So I, with 3 Cadet Brigade in Victoria
- 12:00 because the cadets were big things in those days, that's where all the officers came from. So I said, "Yes, sure, no worries." better than being a carpenter which I wasn't terribly happy about because I was a carpenter in the Army Reserve and also a bouncer in a drive-in theatre, I was working three jobs, and the weekend I was working, off weekends from the army I was working as a chippie [carpenter], making fences and things like that, so I was doing four jobs. So I thought
- 12:30 the army couldn't be any worse so I did it. Immediately got temporary money for warrant officer, which was better than the carpenter's pay and it just went on from there, for six years until Vietnam cut out, so I got out. But most of the time, oh then I stayed back in the Army Reserve and then Paul Keating [Prime Minister] got in and him and his cronies decided they'd destroy, totally destroy the army and the Army Reserve, so
- 13:00 they cut the money. So a lot of the senior NCOs got out because they didn't want to work for nothing so what they did they got about one hundred and twenty NCOs, there weren't enough units and they put them all in one place over at South Melbourne in the Signals Depot and said, "You are going to be the 3rd Brigade." oh what did they call it,
- 13:30 training school or something like that. "And what will happen is we'll have names drawn out of a hat

who will be instructors." Six were instructors and the rest will be students. So they pulled out names and my name, oh they pulled out about twenty first and we had to do a lesson, a couple of teaching lessons, so I was one that was selected. So a lot of the old regimental sergeant majors, RSMs, ones and twos had taught some of the people like me, when we went in as

- 14:00 recruits and they couldn't see why they shouldn't have been selected, so they pulled the pin [resigned] which is what Keating wanted. So we buckled in and hung in and he cut the pay altogether and we stayed and we were doing over a hundred, we were going out to various units, doing one hundred hours a week without pay. So he got onto that so they said, "You're not covered by insurance." you see what they were doing. So anyway we hung in there and I did
- 14:30 when was it, from 1972 to 1987 as an instructor there, thoroughly, totally enjoyed it. I used to love getting out instructing and teaching and the actual studying itself, I used to love the studying, the mind was going on. And then I went to work one day as a security officer, still in the Army Reserve, oh I'd got out of the six years and got back in the reserves. And I
- 15:00 went in this day and I had an Irish security chief and Pat did not know whether he should have been looking after us or the firm and I was the union delegate. And they used to keep changing, we were on seven shifts roster and you set your roster and your whole family life is adjusted around your roster, night shift, day shift, afternoon. You just settle in and they change it to four shifts, you'd just settle in and they'd change it
- 15:30 to something else. So then finally the boys said, "That's the end Tom, no more." So I went up and I started negotiation I said, "No, no more." I said, "If you want to lose all of us we'll walk out now." "Oh, no, no!" so it was solved. So were sitting there and I'm waiting this particular day and the personnel manager come in and he leaned out his car and I was just lifting the boom gate, and my boss walked out and the boom gate's going up and
- 16:00 Pat spoke to him and he laughed, must have told him I spat the dummy [lost my temper]. Anyway and the personnel manager went like that, you know, the sword of Damocles, you know if you don't do it we'll get someone who will. So I dropped the boom gate on the bonnet of his car and I went out and gave him a mouthful and I said, "When you get up there make up my pay, I'm out of this Mickey Mouse outfit I've had enough of you. And you open your mouth again and I'll flatten you." this is my boss. And then I said, "I'm going for a walk." so I went in, the boss Pat, took the
- 16:30 thingo, the job and I walked around the perimeter and I come back and I'm feeling cool, calm and collected so Pat bugged out. The next thing a car pulls into the car park and this attractive young lady got out and she went to walk past, and didn't even say hello you know. I said, "Excuse me where you going?" "I'm going to see the personnel manager." I said, "Not quite yet, who are you?" she said, "I'm the union delegate." I said, "But for who, which union?"
- 17:00 She said "The security." I said, "No you're not." I said, "That's Jimmy Jackson." She said, "I've taken his place." I said, "You're not going anywhere, come here while I contact the personnel manager." and I spoke to him and he said, "Yeah bring her up." So we had to walk about five hundred yards up to the office and, oh Pat, I got Pat to stay back and I walked her up. And I told her I said, "It's alright it's all solved, it's already been solved." So she walked in and the
- 17:30 personnel manager said, "Would you like a cup of coffee?" and this little twit walked in and she went, hit the desk and she said, "My members demand the status quo!" I'll never forget. We were shocked so I grabbed her arm and I dragged her back out, pushed her into her car, took her to her car and I said, "Get off and stay off!" so that's three clashes I'd had in one day. And I went home, rang the [Department of] Veterans' Affairs and said, "I did two years minesweeping, two tours of Korea,
- 18:00 SEATO, ANZUS, ANZAC and Malaya, do I qualify for a service pension at sixty?" and I was fifty-eight and she said, "Well you'll have to send in your papers first Mr Hamilton but going on that, yes." So the next thing I know I'm going to get a service pension in two years so I didn't give a stuff, I just did me job. So anyway we went in the army, what happened then, no I got out of the army then I went home
- 18:30 and Margaret said, "Your birthday's in October." and I said, "Yes." and she said, "I want you to get out of the Army Reserve." and I said, "Yeah why?" and she said, "Because we're going to Brisbane." and I said well I didn't know about that she said, "Well I've told you didn't I." I said, "When are we going?" she said, "Well the house is on the market." I said, "When did it go on the market?" she said, "Last week." Boom in March, that was in October, in
- 19:00 March we were up here and I was out of the army, out of the security, out of the cadets, working. And I was up here and the first week was good, the second week was good, it was a holiday and then I thought hey this is bad. So I contacted the Army Cadet Units and said, "Could you use a good warrant officer instructor?" and he said, "Yes we'll send you to Churchie School." and I said, "What's that?" and
- 19:30 he said, "They're the best in the state." I said, "No I don't want the best in the state, I want one that needs instructors." and he said, "Oh there's Woodridge State High 11RCU [Regional Cadet Unit], they're not a good area, socially not." I said, "Well that will do me." So I got the name of the commanding officer, smartened myself up went around, made an appointment to see them and walked in saw them and said, "Can you use a warrant officer?" "Yeah no worries."

- 20:00 so I signed on and about six months later they made me a lieutenant, Lieutenant Tom. So I stayed with them for four years and then it was a bit of a problem, I was having personality clashes with two people which I still meet. They thought it was their army and they ran it their way and truthfully they were robbing it blind, I'm not going to say their names but they were robbing it blind. So I went overseas with Margaret and when I come back all my gear had been packed away
- 20:30 so they wanted me out so I said, "Alright I'll leave, but only after I acquit the books and solve all the problems." I was adjutant, handling the money. Which I did, handed over to the commanding officer and retired and I got out. So then I thought well now what am I going to do, so I got two days a week in the Naval Association Office as state membership registrar and
- 21:00 I was at the RSL one day and they wanted somebody, this new unit, Logan City Cadet Unit, wanted somebody to talk on Anzac Day so I said, "Yeah sure, no worries, I'll go." So they asked me to come back and teach a lesson on customs of the service or something like that, so I did, I went back again and I went back again and then I said to them, "Well I can't come regularly, because I don't want to commit myself." So the next thing I know I was called up before them, by the
- 21:30 committee, they had a parents' committee and they asked me if I'd do them the honour of being Honorary Colonel, Honorary Colonel like. So I said, "But I've got to get permission from the RSL first." because I had to think about it and Tommy McGee was the president and he burst out laughing he said, "Yeah right." he said, "I mentioned to them about that." he'd put them up to it, they were looking for a colonel and he put me onto it. So here I am two days a week I work
- 22:00 to get out of Margaret's hair, Honorary Colonel which I still go to and I can still get into the uniform I was in back in 1957 so what else do you need to know there's my life.

What was the stand out difference between the army and the navy?

The difference was, when I walked into problems, when I first walked into the recruit school staff, I teamed up with another older fellow straight away and I marched

- 22:30 up to this officer and I'm a brand new recruit, thirty-six years old and I never wore the medal ribbons until the last march out parade. I march up to this officer and I salute him like this and my mate was standing behind him and he's going, so I went oh. So what actually happened I marched up, slammed me feet together and the salute went like this... not to the officer but to me mate. And of course he looked over his shoulder to see what went on
- 23:00 that was the start of that. So the drill was different, the weapons were different; the whole context was different that it was no problem. The dress and bearing was no problem for me and that's how I was a corporal, made corporal, made sergeant. And then in 1959 as I said I joined the Fleet Reserve and joined
- 23:30 the Army Reserve in 1963 but my last reserve weekend, or fortnight was in 1954, so in March of 1954 I did a recruit camp with the army and in about October, July, oh no about October I go down to Cerberus for Recruit School and normally they put me in the Recruit School in the rigging shed for the previous four years. But this year
- 24:00 the petty officer said, "You're going over to gunnery school." I said "Whatever for?" he said, "Report to the gunnery school." And I went down there and there was this gunnery officer sitting there and, Tony Synot finished up as admiral, absolute gentleman, lovely officer, and he said, "Oh Leading Seaman Hamilton, you're going over to West Head." which is where all the gunnery was, he said, "You'll be doing the last fourteen days of a quartermaster gunner course." And I said, "I don't want to go over there Sir."
- 24:30 he said, "What?" Telling a gunnery officer you didn't want to do a gunnery course was like telling the sun that you didn't want it to come up tomorrow. So over I went and I had, when I'd gone into the Army Reserve I spoke a foreign language, navy, so I had to subconsciously suppress all this navy jargon and then I got in the army and I couldn't remember the army terminology. And
- 25:00 the last fourteen days was just, you get on a gun that's set with a camera, an aircraft comes in doing patterns and weaves and you had to track it and shoot, and it beeped if you hit, that sort of thing. So I got excellent with that no problem, but then when we went into the classroom, one of my ex-mates, who is now a petty officer and he was an instructor he asked me a question, blank I couldn't think, could not think and he thought I was kidding. And when I salute I'm saluting
- 25:30 like this instead of like that and they thought I was kidding. We come to attention and the navy goes flip and the army goes slop, so they call it usually in the navy, ship's company attention, they come out as Nee Haa in the navy so you shift, bang and they thought I was kidding so for three days I was in dead set trouble to such an extent they took me up before the commanding officer. He could not accept that I was
- 26:00 a substantive corporal in the Army Reserve and I was not going to sign on in the Navy Reserve. So I went through the worst fourteen days of my life and I swear to this day my mates still think I was trying to take the mickey out of them, but I wasn't, I passed the course. And the killer was at the end of the course the quartermaster, the gun layer class two that I was on, it's crossed guns with a star above, it's about that big, with a star above and star below

- 26:30 with GL [gun layer] on it and the quartermaster gunner is just two big guns with QMG [quartermaster gunner]. He said, "Take that and put it up." and I said "I'm not going to put that up Sir I'm not a quartermaster gunner, I'm a gun layer class two." and I'm talking to a gunnery officer like this, oh God was I ever in trouble, it's a wonder I never finished up in cells. So anyway I marched out of the depot, or I went to the wet canteen and had a last drink, marched out the next day and gave me uniform away as I was walking
- 27:00 out the door, didn't want the navy and then I stayed in the army. And that's how I went, through the cadets and when I had to get out of the cadets I went back to 6 Battalion Royal Victorian Regiment, again I was instructing so I stayed there. And then Keating again, there were three battalions, one, three and five, yeah one, five and six, so he cut that many
- 27:30 out that they had to amalgamate it to five and six battalions and one battalion was just wiped out, still trying to cut them out. So I was lucky enough to get a, then he made this academy, NCO academy it was and then he cut it out even more so senior NCOs were superfluous so that's how we went to this academy. Got in with them, passed the test, spent fifteen years with them and so it was, that's the end of my story and I got out.

28:00 So there it is, that was a bit jumbled and garbled but it's probably because I'm trying to race it.

Did you ever have a tiddly suit in the....?

Oh did I ever have a tiddly suit, look everybody had to get a tiddly suit because it was beautiful material and you only knew it was a good one is when - to try and get it off, you couldn't get it off yourself you had to lean forward and put your hand on the knee of your mate and he'd grab the end and peel it off like a second skin. And this is where the ego comes

28:30 into it you had to stay slim, you had to keep fit because if you got fat you couldn't get into your uniform and it was the ego thing that's kept on with me all my life that's why I still get into the clothes that I had in 1957 because it's pure simple ego. But tiddly suit big white collars oh boy, I was what they called a Jack's crop mate. Yeah I've got photos over there of me in the uniform, classic before and after.

29:00 **When you were a dispatch rider as a young fellow did you have to....**

When I was a which?

Dispatch rider?

No.

When you were a young bloke in the Scouts?

Oh yes. Yes as a scout what we used to do in Adelaide they had blackouts, everybody did cause the Japanese were definitely close, maybe not to Adelaide but to us they were. So what we used to do, the sirens would go and we'd hop on our bikes and go screaming down to the,

29:30 actually it was the church, what did they call it where the priest used to live, anyhow but the little house that he had and we'd report to him, that was where the headquarter were of the ARP [Air Raid Protection] post. And then the other civilian, the other people would come in the wardens and they'd allocate one dispatch rider with a warden and he'd have to patrol this little sector and someone else. And if they wanted a message run, like for example a big exercise was that we had to get

30:00 a message from our base, every section in Adelaide, had to get a message from their base to a headquarters which was in the centre of the Adelaide Oval and they had security guards to prevent you doing it. And it was like playing war games so my brother and I, Stan, we hopped on our bikes and we both had the messages and to get there. So we'd played these war games since

30:30 we were kids, so we got to the oval and we left our bikes about two hundred yards from there, hid them and sneaked up and the other kids were riding up to the door thinking they could run in. Stan and I just crept up, sneaked into the oval, had a look around and saw where most of the shadow was, got into the shadow and crawled, and I don't know how long it took us, by then we were only from here to the door away and the nearest

31:00 guard was down by the corner. So we just stood up, walked in and both handed our letters in, so our post got a star of some sort, but that the sort of thing we used to do. Or we'd go in with the security officers, we'd have to go up to the top of a massive big skyscraper, maybe to us, just to check that there were no lights left on in the building and all that. And it was all, it was all dead serious because if you talk to a Brit bloke like my office manager he

31:30 was a child, the same age he was in London during the Blitz, so you can imagine I'm telling him about my war games and he was bombed nightly. But they were all dead set serious and I've got the certificate on the wall, I don't know who signed it, which prime minister, but it was an appreciation for your service during World War II in the duties as a dispatch rider. But

32:00 lot of people didn't take it serious, when the warden said, "Put out the lights!" they thought it was a joke. But all they would have needed, like Sydney, was one shell to land in the place and that's where

Sydney learnt to put their lights out. You only need to be shot at once and you never ever do it wrong again. But that was it, that was interesting stuff actually.

Can you tell us about the relationship between tattoos and navy fellows?

Well yeah if you go back

- 32:30 to Captain Cook, tattoos, reference tattoos for the navy, and this is fact actually. Captain Cook when he went up to the Tahitian Islands and New Zealand and that sort of thing his men saw the natives with all their tattoos and designs on so having nothing else to do they took it on. Got tattoos on the arms and that sort of thing. And when they got back to England eventually other people saw it,
- 33:00 oh that's a darn good idea, so they got tattoos on. And I went to, oh I can't think of it, it's right down the Thames River and it's where all Nelson's memorabilia is, but when I went down there last time they were having a big tattoo exhibition that's how I know. So anyhow it started out that the sailors took it back there and it got to the stage where every ship
- 33:30 had a sailor who could pick the needle and they dip it into Indian ink and just flick it. And there's an absolutely terrific photo of a little boy, a cabin boy with his arm like this and there's an old bearded sailor and it's got the first tattoo and he's like this. And that's where it actually started and initially when I went in it was only sailors and soldiers that ever had tattoos in those days and I don't know, I think it was
- 34:00 a rite of passage I suppose. When I got the little swallow I thought now I'm, I'd done me basic training I got a gunnery rate on this arm, right arm rate, I've got rate on there all I needed was a tattoo and find the nerve to win a girl. So I got the tattoo but I never did get around to winning a girl for the first few years.
- 34:30 And then from then on it just become lopsided so I put this one on and the eagle and the snake were a bit too big for this so I put the ring around it and I put the butterflies on because the Japanese girls, they used to call me a butterfly boy. "Ah moustache son, you butterfly boy." you know I flipped from girl to girl, so I got them on down there like that and so it went on.

Well what about that myth of a girl in every port for navy fellows?

Rephrase it as a port in every girl

- 35:00 and you'd probably get it right. We never had them in every port, God we never went to every port, but those we did, I mean how could they resist really, I mean when you think about it, ha, ha....

How toey do you get?

Beg yours?

How toey do you get when you're out a sea for so long?

I have no idea, no I'm not joking, really to me I don't know cause we were always exercising. We used to every night when

- 35:30 we finished, we worked hard bloody hard, talking minesweeping, but every night we dropped anchor we boxed, we used sabres, we did weight lifting, and you were too tired anyway. Because if you're working eight hours a day and then you have a meal and then you've got to do four hours on watch and you get to sleep and something else will come up. Like we had a particular heavy weather one time and
- 36:00 a ship called the Bonaventure run aground up in the northern islands, up on the reef somewhere, up on the northern Queensland coast, so we had to up anchor and charge through this storm. This was our two day rest and we headed up and by the time we got there she'd got off, she'd worked her way off so then we had to go all the way back and by the time we got back our rest time had gone. We dropped the pick one time and went ashore on a place, I think was Hayman Island, we'd swept
- 36:30 around it, as we moved up the coast all these fishing boats followed us, not the fishing boats the Hayman Islanders and Whitsunday Passage things, people who had bought the island. So we'd finished Hayman Island and we'd gone a bit further and it was such a beautiful beach that the skipper said, "We'll go back." so we went back and we had a two days break, because you couldn't work all the time. And when we went to go, first boat landed and next thing this irate civvie comes charging out and he's waving
- 37:00 his arms and spitting his chips and ordered us off the island. So when we went back and told the officer of the day he told the skipper. So the next thing away captain's boat, away I go, I immediately took the boat and took this officer ashore and he walked up to this bloke and he's got a piece of paper in his hand and he handed it to him and the bloke read it, and threw it on the deck. So the officer picked it up and went...
- 37:30 like this which freely translated means do what this says. And what it was is the captain told him that the island hadn't been cleared and come back in three weeks time, so he threw the owner off his own island, made him get away. So Hayman was still left for another three weeks before he could go there. The fisherman used to tell us about the mines, if they saw any floaters, we'd go and get them. One time we'd just got home on Christmas leave and

- 38:00 all of a sudden a fisherman up off Townsville got blown up by a mine, so we immediately got recalled from leave and went back screaming up there. And oh when we tried to go into Townsville to get re-supplied and ammunition, recreation, we got ordered out, the major and everything, the papers they hated us cause this poor fisherman had killed himself, so they couldn't stop us going to the pier. So we were allowed to go on leave ashore to the pub
- 38:30 which was like an old batwing door pub, just on the edge of the pier at Townsville and when we walked in the civvies [civilians] would always want a punch up so I'd sit back and watch, we were very careful, we didn't irate them and that sort of thing, and after a couple of blues [fights] they sort of backed off a bit cause they were losing, not us. So I was sitting down there on the side seat one day cause I was still only a shandy [beer mixed with lemonade] drinker then, sitting there and this old fella sitting next to me said, "I've had enough, I've had enough." and
- 39:00 he said, "Don't look at me, don't look at me." I said, "What?" He said, "Don't look at me, listen in." He said, "I've had a gut full about this." whatever the fellow's name was, of him blowing himself up, he said, "That fool." he said, "He knew the mine was there, he was using it as a marker for a good fishing spot." and he said, "He must of miscalculated and drifted over on it and blew." All they found was his beanie, the rest was history, he said, "I've
- 39:30 had enough." and I said, "Well sir, if I went back and got an officer and got him to come outside into the toilet there, will you tell him, cause they won't believe me." and he said, "Yes mate, yes I will." So I got up and left me cap as though I was just going to the toilet and ran back to the ship and as I rang up the gangway this officer's mouth started, "Wah, wah" where's me cap and he was going to have my guts for garters for not having me cap on. I said, "Excuse me Sir, excuse me Sir." and he wouldn't listen, I finished up I said, "Shut up!"
- 40:00 and he was so shocked and I said, "Sir, the situation is this..." and I told him and I knew I'd done wrong I'd be in trouble here, and I told him and I said, "It needs an officer to go, wait out in the toilet, I will go back inside and the man will come out and tell you." And he said, "Just a minute." and he immediately raced up to the commanding officer's cabin, so the commanding officer got a different officer to come down, Captain Wheatley it was as the commanding officer, lovely fellow.
- 40:30 And he come down, not him but an officer and I said, "I'll go ahead Sir." and I said, "I'll go to the toilet me self and I'll wait till you catch up to me." so I ran ahead and when he was almost there I went into the toilet and come out and then I watched him and he went in and I went into the bar sat down alongside the fellow and I said, "He's there." So he finished his beer and he went outside and the next day in the paper an apology from the mayor,
- 41:00 a total apology from the mayor we were totally welcome at any time. We even had a café that had 'dogs and sailors not allowed' written on it until someone put a house brick through it. I'm talking true they hated us, but it wasn't our fault it was theirs so there it is.

INTERVIEW ENDS