Australians at War Film Archive

Philip Scott (Earle) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 2nd December 2003

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1242

Some parts of this interview have been embargoed.

The embargoed portions are noted in the transcript and video.

Tape 1

00:41 **Could you give me a brief summation of the major points in your life?**

Yes, well I was born in 1924, here in Adelaide. It wasn't the Depression then, but it gradually went to the Depression. I was

01:00 an only son. I went to kindergarten when I was five, of course. It was a local school here at Westmore Park. Then I did that to the qualifying certificate, then I went to Scotch College for three years, up to Intermediate stage, and I got six subjects and missed English. I used to think I was pretty good at English, but anyway…Mother said then, "I can't send you

01:30 any more. I can't afford it. Fees have gone up to ten pounds a term." She said, "So, you'll have to get a job." So I got a job in the railways. Then I went on and did part-time for the English, and I got my intermediate certificate. I got a job in the railways, here in Adelaide, and I was there for two years. I put in to go and join the navy, I got my mother's and

02:00 father's consent. I didn't know whether they would give it or not, but they did. I took a day's leave, I didn't tell the railways, I took a day's leave and had the medical, then I got the call-up and off I went. I went over to Flinders to train, I was just eighteen. I joined up in June, I turned eighteen in April, and then I went on to Flinders

02:30 Naval Depot, for train as a signalman. I got in fairly quickly because they wanted signalmen and signalmen had to have an intermediate certificate. So that's how I got in. I got in before all my pals. So I was the first one in, more or less. Then I was up to New Guinea for I suppose about eighteen months. Then I joined the [HMAS] Townsville, which is a corvette. I served in that until I was discharged. And then we took the surrender, or actually

03:00 swept Rabaul Harbour for mines, before the HMAS Glory, the aircraft carrier came in and took the surrender, then we swept all the mines down the East Coats of Australia, after the war. That's why we were in for about twelve months or so after peace was declared. Then I was discharged after an accident on board, actually, with a knee, and had a medical discharge.

03:30 After the war, on board, I did a bit of correspondence studies and when I came back I was able to get a scholarship with the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, marvellous scheme. So I joined up for architecture, but I had to do my leaving certificate to get matriculated.

04:00 So we had a special year to do the leaving, then had six years as a Bachelor of Engineering, at the university, and then I was working a little bit, part-time, during that time, then I got another job with Jackman Gooden, it was Garlic and Jackman then. I joined them and I went right through until I retired in 1992. I finished up as chairman, and then I retired. So I still do

04:30 a little bit. And I always carry on for clients that I made, followed on with. During that time of being an architect, I was an arbitrator and then an immediator, and here I am now, retired.

Can we go right back to perhaps your earliest memories as a child? What do you remember?

Well, the earliest things that I can remember, and

05:00 and it's funny how things do stick in your mind, but I used to remember going out to the…I was an only child and I used to be around the streets everywhere, this was when I was three and half, I suppose, but I used to go out to the gas box, take off my shoes, put them in the gas box and out I'd go bare foot. There were just metal roads, no sealed roads. Then I was out with anybody that I could find

05:30 then I would come home for lunch, then be off again, and home for tea at night. The suburb was fairly new and there were other people the same age as me, so we palled up gradually, as we went on. We had a pretty good time, really. As the Depression came on, we didn't have

06:00 any pocket money. We had to make our own fun. Being an only child, I used to be out most of the time. Mother didn't seem to mind. I think she was probably glad to get rid of me, really. I made friends with different lads that were around. One of my friends, who was younger than me, and he had two other elder brothers,

06:30 and his father was a baker's oven builder. In the back of his yard, they had bricks and all sorts of building materials lying around. We used to do all sorts of things with these things. Then we started to make a village. We had little houses, we put bricks together and made up mud and made roofs, slopped the roofs on the top, then we made little fences and little gardens and made a real suburb.

07:02 We made little trucks with a piece of timber cut out, and a tobacco tin for the tray and so forth. We used to play that for hours, really. That was passing the time. The other things in that same area, we made a track.

07:32 We made a circuit and we got pram wheels and put a piece of reinforcing rod, which was around there, and a little bit of hose on the side, and we used to run around with these, with our hands on the wheels and tear around and have races, in a circuit. It was funny, I don't know why we did it, but we did it at night. And we had an old tyre and lit the tyre and we got that tyre burning, and we had a Grand Prix

08:00 at night. In the dusk, more or less.

Was there a lot more freedom for children back then? You were talking about being a young child and you're out all day, well, that wouldn't happen now, would it?

No. You wouldn't dare now. You would be frightened. But there was no thought whatsoever. All the kids used to come out.

08:30 I think some of the other children were more restricted than I was, but being an only son, I suppose…I was only there when I was wanted.

Was that unusual in those days, to be an only child?

Ahh, well, I think it was a little bit unusual. There were mostly twos. A brother and a sister, the pigeon pair. That was the usual one, except for the Shields…

09:02 Mason, he had three sons and they were older, and they used to lead us astray a little bit. Then we went to kindergarten. It was funny that the first day of kindergarten, mother took me up, and I can remember going up to the back of the class, and there were too many students, too many children wanting to go in, and I wasn't keen to go in. But

09:30 as I was up the back, standing up there, they said he could stay. So I stayed there, and it was a very good little kindergarten. It started with another chappie who is still a friend of mine, he still plays golf with me, we were just five. And his birthday, he's six days older than me. And we've remained friends all of our lives. It's quite unique, actually.

10:01 We'd go apart and come back again, and it was just as if we had been going all the time. It was very nice. The only thing I can remember about kindergarten is going outside, standing outside, in recess, and saying our tables. Two twos are four, three fours are twelve….Then we went into the higher school, of course, for grades three, four, five, six and seven.

10:32 But that was a very good school, Westmore Park. I didn't have any problems, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed most of the company of the lads. It was coming up to 1932, '33. And there were all the problems about Russia and about the Germans, this was all discussed. The teachers gave a certain….

11:00 We used to discuss it a little bit, what was going on, until we had what they then called the QC [Qualifying Certificate], which was grade seven. That was a public examination, and it was out of seven hundred points, and I think there was six or seven subjects.

You said earlier that the area was relatively new,

11:31 **was the school also a new school?**

A fairly new school. I think it had only been going about two or three years. It was a growing area, out there. It only went out to the edge of the suburbs, because out further along at Hollywood, that just became farms. So it was quite primitive as far as that was concerned. But they had the tram. And I used

to ride my bike or

12:00 or get on the tram. It was either way, depending on whether it was wet, or so forth. And the interesting thing was that in the grade five, six and seven, they each had a little galvanised iron hut, about three metres by three metres. With a little seat all the way around, no windows, it was open at one end and closed all around. And there you had your lunch and got together and talked and yarned and so forth.

12:30 If it was raining, you got to sit in there. I remember, I don't know why, we were in grade seven and we had a lady teacher, and she was very good. She lived just around the street. And I can remember coming down in recess and all the blokes in grade seven were saying, "Scott the squats! Scott the squats!"

13:00 And I didn't realise that I was squatting very much, I can't remember doing anything special. But I just remember that.

Were you trying to impress the lady teacher?

No, not really, no. I think it was…I suppose being an only son, I used to just do it, I didn't worry too much about who the teacher was, really.

Do you remember what games you played at school?

13:30 Yes, we used to have a game of cricket and throwing the ball around. That's about all. We did have a little oval further down the street where they played team cricket, but I never got in the team.

And as you were growing up, did you have much knowledge of World War I? Did you know much about that war?

Yes, a little bit. Although, I had an uncle, two uncles, who were in France.

14:01 One was at Gallipoli, went to France. The other one was in the Middle East, and they were river boat captains. But they never said very much at all. I used to see quite a lot of them. But they were very reticent as far as what it was like. I can imagine they were, too, it was pretty horrible. Nothing like the navy.

They were river boat captains?

Yes, they were. And my grandfather, Louis, he's buried up here at Mitcham, in the Anglican

14:30 cemetery, he was a skipper and leased or owned a boat, and they used to go up and take wool. So mother was very interested in the Murray, of course, because she lived up on the Murray. She was born up at Morgan, and they went to Mildura, and she lived at Mildura for quite a while. The two brothers, her two brothers, she was from

15:00 a family of seven, I think there was. And the two brothers got their tickets and became river boat captains.

That would have been hard work?

Oh, yes. My grandfather went through the hoop, as they say, he went bankrupt, then started again. Because the seasons, always, they come and go. You get a bad season, and the boat gets tied up with low water, and you couldn't get anything….

15:38 He was pretty hard. He came to live with us, when I was at Westmore Park. And we had a little sleep-out, out the back. We had two beds out there, and he slept in one and I slept in the other. For about twelve months. Actually he died when I was there. I never went to the funeral. Mother was rather funny…

16:01 They didn't want me to go to the funeral, or anything else. I didn't mind, as far as that's concerned, but I thought it would have been appropriate if I had of gone, but they sort of had a funny feeling. I don't know what it was, but anyway.

So your mum and your uncles grew up on the river, in the river area?

That's right. And she had four other sisters, a couple went to New Zealand, and she went across to

16:31 see them a couple of times. Pop and I, we batched at home. It's a funny story. Mother went across in the summer, in the holidays, to New Zealand, she went by ship, she was away about four weeks. And she left an account with the grocer for us to go down and get our groceries and with the butcher. And it was so hot for the whole time,

17:00 it must have been in January, that father and I got a very strong liking for sardines. So anyway, when she came home and she got the bill come in from the grocer, there was thirty five tins of sardines, little tins of sardines, on there. Well, we heard about that for a long time after that. Anyway, while she was away, we were in charge. And that was while I was at Westmore Park.

17:31 I never went across to New Zealand to see them, until later on. Until after the war.

And what did your father do?

He was an engineer. He was born up in Tonundah, and he came from Poland and his name was Schulz, and when he came down, he came down and lived at Prospect, that's where they lived, and he was in a

18:02 push bike factory, in North Adelaide, and he did his apprenticeship, then he got into the railways as an apprentice. He did his fitting and turning, then he became an engineer. He was in the railways all his life. I think he might have been a bit of a help in me getting a job there, because I tried very hard, after I left Scotch, to get a job. I went to all the banks, and all I got was a, "We'll let you know," but they never let me know. But anyway, I finally got

18:30 into the railways. He was a draftsman.

And did he move out here when he was a child? Or was the family already here.

He was born here. And I don't know the full story, and I've never known the full story, because they were very reticent about it. But apparently, mother's grandfather said he wouldn't give his permission for mother to marry, unless he changed

19:00 his name, because it was at that time…It was 1919 when they were married. During the First World War, there was terrible tension as far as German names. They changed town's names and all sorts of things. So he changed his name. He became Paul Oswald Scott, anyway, instead of Paul Oswald Schulz. It was put

19:30 in the public notices that he changed his name. So that's how I became Scott. But I never knew why it was. I finally got the family tree of mother, and she's got…Schrieberger, a real German name, on her family tree. So, it's rather intriguing. So I can't answer that, because I don't know. I really

20:00 just don't know. And they were very reticent about their past, unfortunately, which I think is sad, because I would have liked to have known a lot more. But I did find out, even after she died. An auntie told me, that she picked out the name Earl, because her name was Searls. And so she dropped the two S's off and made it Earl, so she would have some connection with her family name of Searls. She was very proud of Searls.

20:30 My uncles and my grandfather, she liked that very much, I'm sure.

She sounds like quite an independent thinking woman?

She was. She was very forceful and we had all our jobs to do. She was very nice, though, all the same. We used to get a little bit tired, sometimes. She had a way of getting us to do things, and she would keep on and on, and we used to do it.

21:01 It was just sort of giving in, more or less.

When you say us, do you mean you and your father?

Yes. It was funny at that time, she used to read all the social notes, and know everything that was going on. And she used to go to bridge. It was that era, I think, they used to love that. She used to know all the gossip and everything that was going on.

21:30 **And how did your mum and dad meet?**

Well, I don't know. I have no idea. I just know that they were married in 1919 at the St Peter's Cathedral, and how they met I haven't any idea. They had quite a wide circle of friends. They had a lot of musical friends.

22:02 And they were quite….Because I didn't know anything about this, I wasn't born, but mother tells me there were these people who were violinists, and they would have concerts in towns. They were very accomplished musicians. And they had a car called a Sparna Swizzer, it was an imported car.

22:30 You could hear them coming, when it was very open and clear, they'd hear them coming, so they would be all ready when they came. They used to take them out for trips. So they were very friendly with those, and other people from Sydney. That's another thing that I remember. When I was about six, I must have been in about grade three or four, we went to Sydney to see the Jeans, which were friends of theirs, and

23:00 because father was in the railways, we got free travel, so it was very nice. We went to Melbourne, then from Melbourne to Sydney. On the Sydney station, because when they arrived everyone was greeting everybody, I wandered off down to have a look at the engine, to see all the steam coming out of it. And they were paging over the microphone, looking for a little boy of about five. Anyway, they finally found me and off we went.

23:32 And the other thing that I will never forget is that they lived in an apartment on the North Shore, and the Sydney Harbour Bridge was being built, and the two arches were coming together for about the last span. There were two cranes on either side. I used to stand outside and watch this and think, "How are they going to get that to join up?" It was fascinating.

24:00 **Your parents sound like they were quite worldly people?**

Yes, I suppose they were. Although they never used to go away very much, other than mother went across to New Zealand. They didn't go overseas until father was just seventy. They went by ship across to England and back again. But other than that they weren't….Father went to Mount Kosciusko,

24:30 he was a skier. They went skiing with these timber skis. I don't know when that was. I presume he went across by train. They had their honeymoon at Mount Buffalo, in the chalet at the top there. And Maisey and I had our honeymoon there. We decided we'd go there for a fortnight. That was run

25:00 by the railways, and everything you wanted to do, play tennis in the tournament or something, you had a ticket. It was a railway ticket. So everything was run by railway tickets, but it was a very nice fortnight. I suppose it was a bit like being on board ship, because you were isolated, and so you had to make your friends with the people who were there.

25:30 **Were you quite close to your father?**

Very close. Although he was a bit, what could I say? Aloof. I never had a real strong attachment, but I always admired him. He could do things, build things…I remember, it used to frustrate me, he'd be working away and he'd put one section of whatever he was building in one place, and another one… Everything would be there

26:00 and all in pieces. And the next thing, it was all done. So he used to plan it very well. It fascinated me, and it helped me, actually, because that's what you have to do in architecture when you're building something. You have to get it all ready and go through it.

So you started off building suburbs in the back yard?

Yes, I had no idea. I wanted to be a farmer, really. That's what I would have loved to be. That was my first choice. But I

26:30 didn't have any resources to be a farmer, or anything else.

So you finished primary school, then you went on to Scotch College?

Scotch College. And I didn't have a very good start there, either, because mother and father, always on Sunday, used to have a snooze for an hour. They'd flake out, lie down and have a snooze, then come out. We had an appointment with the head master, the day before school started, it started on a Monday,

27:00 on a Sunday with Norm Gratten, who was the headmaster of Scotch College, and we had an interview. I was quite excited about this, going up to see the headmaster, and we had a garage, we had a driveway and a Morris car. And the garage, at the end, alongside the house, turned slightly, about ten degrees on the angle, and when you pushed the car out you had to sort of turn the wheel to get it straight again.

27:31 And father said, "You must never use the steering wheel to move the wheels. You've got to get down and move the wheels, so you don't strain the steering wheel." So, I was a 'glunt', and I decided to get the car out. So I pushed the car out and got down to straighten up the wheels, so it would go straight up the drive, and it rolled forward and then I put my hands on the mudguard

28:00 and there was blood running all down…I looked at my finger. My finger had run through….On the inside of the front wheel they had a cog and then another cog, and that was the speedometer, and it went through the cogs. So I put a hanky around it and I didn't feel it. It was as if it didn't happen. And then it started to throb, then, because I went inside and they rang up and they took me around to the doctor, and he

28:31 cleaned it up, as best he could, and then I had this great big thing on my thumb. Then we had to go up and see the headmaster Norm Gratten. Then I had to go back, in the next two or three days, they had to go back and give me an anaesthetic to put it back properly, and clean it up and stitch it and so forth. So I wasn't able to play sports, so I didn't get started in the cricket until later. So that was a bit of a draw back. But it was a very

29:00 fine experience at Scotch [College]. I absolutely, thoroughly enjoyed it. We made friends. Last Monday week, we had what we call the Black Label Club. We didn't know what to call it, but all the older scholars in the Gratten era, that is pre-war, we have a luncheon every three months up at the Edinburgh, and we're still all very good friends.

Can you describe the layout of Scotch?

29:30 Well, it was like going into the country. There was Torrance House, of course the building, that's the house the (UNCLEAR), it's a most beautiful building. And then there was a couple of temporary classrooms, which we were in, and that was all that was there. There was two ovals. Well, there was sort of one oval, the main oval, which was quite a nice oval with a picket fence around it, then the other oval was the second over, that didn't have any cover, and that was a bit rough. That was really a

30:00 a seconds oval, I suppose. And there was all trees and it was just like going away. You were just isolated completely, going to school. We had excellent teachers and we had assembly every morning. The

headmaster, old Norm Gratten, used to get up on a parapet and tell us what we were to do for the day. We were underneath two huge tress…They were

30:30 trees that dropped leaves that you could make a smell out of. You could crush them up and they gave off a nasty smell. We had assembly every day, and we just did our normal Math 1, Math 2, Physics, Chem [chemistry] and French and Latin. I had never done any French or Latin before and I found that most difficult. I couldn't seem to latch on that,

31:00 but…

Is that the school with the old theatre?

Yes, that's been done up.

What were they using that theatre for?

That was our assembly. We had that once a week, on Fridays, but during the week we'd have a morning assembly just outside the building, all together. There was about a hundred and ten, I think, students So it was very small and you knew everybody. Very personal.

31:30 And Norm Gratten was…He was very, very stern, but I think there was a bit of humanity underneath it quite well.

Was it a private school, then?

Yes. It started at Kiah College, actually, in about 1921. In about 1923, they purchased the property up at Barsmith, and started then. Norman Gratten

32:00 was headmaster for about fifty three years, he went through. He was still headmaster when I left, then he went on to about 1956, I think he retired. They made us work. They had a terrible system. They had what they called a card system. And if you misbehaved during class they'd say, "Scott, you're on a card next week."

32:30 And they'd give you a card on Friday, and after every lesson, you had to get it initialled by the teacher, and if he didn't think you were up to scratch, he put a cross. And then you had to go and see the headmaster after lunch, about half past twelve, up in his classroom. And if you got a couple of crosses, well you got six across the behind. I got two or three of those. But they really made you work. And you had

33:00 to work to get it without any crosses for about three weeks before they'd take you off again. So it was a terrific incentive, I reckon, to make you work.

So you got six across the backside a few times?

Oh yes. Because it was pretty hard to go a whole week without misbehaving, once or twice. That made it very difficult.

It was a private school,

33:32 **what kind of families did the other boys come from?**

It was a good strong boarding school, and they were mostly farmer's sons, and….They made up the boarding school, most of them, those that could attend. Then there was day boarders, who were there for other than the weekend. And then there was boarders that went and had a lunch there.

34:01 They could have lunch every day, in with the boarders. That was very good fare, but we said grace and you all sat down and all ate together. It was very formal. When mother went away to New Zealand, this is another time, I think she went there twice, I was a day boarder, so I had lunch every day. It was good, actually, but it was very strict and

34:30 very proper.

Did that set you apart from your neighbourhood friends, the fact that you went to a private school?

It did a bit, I think. Although we used to….In a way it did, and in another way it didn't. Because while I was at Scotch, we became very friendly, Graham and I, with the lads that lived…He lived in Clarence Park, which is not very far Millswood, and he had

35:00 a group of friends there that we used to join in with. We went away camping once, on our own. There was about four of us, his cousin and a couple of his neighbours. The first time, we went down to Moana, The only thing that was there was the eight sided little kiosk, and the sand hills. So we didn't know how to do it, so I said, "Look, I will make a tent." So I asked my mother could I have some old sheets. And

35:30 she said, "Oh yes, you can have those." So I got a sewing machine and I made a tent out of sheets. Not waterproof, because it was summer. This was January, while we were on holidays. So we took this tent, and father the tent down, and we rode our bikes down. I think we had about four or five days there. We had a wonderful time. We swam everyday and surfed.

36:00 It was just lovely. We slept and we walked into Noarlunga [Port Norlunga], one night, and back again, just for something to do.

What distances are we talking here?

I suppose it was about ten or twelve ks [kilometres] into Noarlunga, I suppose, and down to Moana, I don't know how many miles that is, it must be about fifty ks.

And you rode your push bike down?

Yes.

36:32 Then Mrs Walton, that is my friend's mother, she was so horrified that she brought Graham a new tent, so he had a proper canvas tent after that. We went down again, after that. But we just made our own fun, camping.

And I suppose your push bike would have been a big part of your growing up years?

Yes, father got me a push bike, which was a full size one, and

37:00 I could just reach the pedals. It was one he had made up, it wasn't a new one, but it was very good. So we used to be on our bikes all the time. We used to ride up to Windy Point and down again. Down Shepherds Hill Road.

Without any gears?

No, we had free wheel, and you sort of reversed to put the break on.

37:34 **And this is during the Depression years now?**

Yes. This is right in the Depression. This would 1930 to '33.

And how did that impact on your family, if at all?

Well, as I say, we didn't have any pocket money, we didn't spend anything, we just had our meals.

38:00 I used to get, I think it was sixpence to go to the afternoon matinee, to the pictures, if I had been a good boy. That was about the only thing we had, really. And I used to have a little wireless set, a Crystal set, that was given to me. And it was on a little board about two feet

38:30 long and about nine inches wide. Then it had a cylinder, with a little wire prong that you put on, then it had a pair of black earphones, to put on my ears. I used to listen to 'Kangaroos On Parade' and 'Gladys Moncrete', they used to come on. A terrible lot, because I understand she didn't have any rights, any copyrights, apparently at that time, so she used to come on about every second time.

39:02 But that was another interesting one that you could listen into.

What was Kangaroos On Parade?

Oh, that was a Juniors [club] that we joined up. I think it was through the papers, and you could write in and become a member. And then they used to have competitions for sketching and colouring-in. Something similar to what's in 'The Mail' now, for the children.

Do you remember the Depression having an

39:30 **impact on other families? Was it something that you noticed?**

Well, we were all the same, really. I think I was lucky that my father was employed. Most of them around there were employed, but their wages were very low. They didn't have any spare, to pay off the mortgage and so forth. They just had enough to get by. So there wasn't very much for extras.

40:00 That's how I remember it.

We'll change tapes.

Tape 2

00:41 **Can you tell me when you left school, and the circumstances surrounding the end of your school years?**

Yes. Well, at the end of the intermediate, I went to the railways, and I went in as a temporary clerk, an office assistant, I think it was,

01:02 so I wasn't on the permanent staff. I went as casual staff, more or less. I worked in the typing area and I used to go up the banks and do the banking at two o'clock, then come back again, and do all the odd

jobs, posting and did general errands and that sort of thing. Then I was sent to the Revenue Department. And the Revenue Department had a section,

01:31 where they used to sort and check the tickets. They had four personnel. There was the suburban lines, then it went into southern lines, then they had a northern line, then they had an interstate. And for each, there was a young bloke in charge. And we had to go through all the tickets that came in, that they collected, and mainly, sort them out so that they

02:00 could work for the statistics, I suppose. It was good employment, I suppose. Bu they sorted all the tickets that went from different stations, and checked…I presume it was checking on the station issuing tickets, I suppose. And in my particular, I was first onto the suburban line and I had to through and pick out all the tickets that had, say, Kilkenny blank. Then they'd write on the bottom of

02:30 the Kilkenny ticket where it was going. It might be Kilkenny to Murray Bridge. So I would collect those up and sort them into order, so they could then, I presume…We'd pass those further up and they would check them out, apparently. I used to have a big bale on the edge of the deck, and they'd send all the tickets that came in from the suburban branch, they were in black tins, about eighteen inches

03:00 by eighteen inches by about a high. It had a slit in the top and that's where they would put all the tickets. So you had to pick out anything that might be used as tickets, and sort those out. And you got hard pieces of plaster, and apple cores and twenty cents occasionally, and all this sort of stuff that they would put in those things. And I was there nearly twelve months doing that. And it was a terribly

03:30 tedious sort of job. I'd have to go down in the morning and pick it up and do that. But once I got right through it, in the afternoon, then they'd give you odd jobs to do to fill out the rest of the day.

Were you enjoying that job?

Well, I was enjoying the income, because that was the first time I ever got any money coming in. I think it was about fifteen shillings, when it started. I think I gave

04:00 mum ten shillings, and kept the rest myself. But it was really boring, more than anything else. And then, as it got on, some of the staff I think went away to the war. This was 1940 and '41…

04:33 They were leaving to overseas, all those who joined up, so the staff got short, so the next thing I'm doing the southern lines, sorting those tickets. I was on that for about six months. Then I was on the northern line for about another six months, then I went to the interstate line, then after that I joined up in the navy.

And why had you gone to work

05:00 **for the rail? Why were you still not at school?**

Oh, well, mother didn't have enough money to send me, that was all. She said, "I can't send you to school any more." So I had to go and get a job. I don't say I was resentful, but I didn't like it very much. But you accepted it. Things were tough. This was before it got better.

05:30 **Did you find it preferable to school, at that age?**

No, I think I would have rather gone on at school. Although I didn't mind really, in a way. I just felt that there was no other alternative, and that's what I'd do. I never looked forward too far into the future, I think I just looked to the day.

06:02 Going back to at school, mother used to send me off to Sunday School, at three o'clock, every Sunday, with thripence to be put into the collection. I think that started it off. Anyway, in the first year I was with Scotch, I decided that I would become confirmed. I was originally baptised at Goodwood,

06:30 so I was baptised. So I took off to night classes and became confirmed. And I think that helped me. I don't why or how it came about or what made up my mind, but I just decided I would do it. And it's been with me ever since. It's been a great comfort, and it was a comfort during the war, in that perhaps you could say a few prayers, because there were times when you didn't know what was

07:00 going to happen. It sort of came up. Even from then on, I think it helped if I was going into a very ticklish problem, I might say a few prayers beforehand and it seemed to help, anyway. And Graham, my great friend, he was confirmed at Scotch. I didn't go into that, I don't know why. But anyway, I took off myself and did it. I think I've had that comfort ever since.

So you were confirmed in the Anglican Church?

Yes, at St Columba

07:30 down here in Hawthorn.

And what do you remember of your confirmation classes, because I'm sure they've changed, throughout the years. The content…

Well, they were mostly adults, because it was in the evening, you see. So I think I was probably the only

young one there. The only twelve year old, anyway. But then, in St Columba, we had a very good Boys' Society, and we were, I think there must have been about fifteen of us altogether.

08:02 And we had a great time. They were just lovely lads. I actually thoroughly enjoyed that. We used to have activities. They had a 'Fathers and Sons' breakfast', every year, more or less. We went to camps. We had a camp down at Safalfan, we went down on the train.

08:31 They provided tents for us. For a weekend, we had a very good weekend. We went down by train. And I'm still friendly with them, in at Legacy, John Marshall and a few of the others that are still there, who were in the Boys' Society. And I was best man for another lad who was in the Boys' Society. So I found that very good in making friends. No girls up to

09:00 that stage, or even until after the war, so…And the other thing, I went to the 1936 Centenary Jubilee Scouts Jamboree, up in Blair. That was with the Forestville troop. I joined the Forestville Scouts and we had this in January, and they had people

09:30 from all over the world. And it was a wonderful camp. We did walking and we did exercises and run sports. I think the governor came up. It was very, very good. We were up in Blair National Park, near the railway reservoir. We used to swim in that. You're not allowed to now, of course. We had a swim in that, because it was pretty hot. And I remember

10:00 one very unfortunate incident. They put swings on these huge trees. And one of the lads, I wasn't there at the time, I didn't see this, but he was swinging and the branch broke, and it came down and hit him on the head and he was killed. So we had to have

10:30 a memorial service there, and I remember that very clearly. That affected us very much. But it was one of those things that happened. I enjoyed the Scouts very much. And there's another very funny episode that I remember, was that when I joined the Scouts…I think one summer, we went across early in the morning, immediately after breakfast, and they

11:00 said, "Let's walk down the Brownhill Creek." Now the Brownhill Creek comes through from the foothills here of Torrens Park, and finishes up at Henley Beach. So we left our shoes in the Forestville Scout Hall, which was near the Goodwood Station. So we left our shoes there and we walked barefoot down the creek, which was just running slowly,

11:30 right down and finished up down at Henley Beach. So we had a bit of a play around there, then walked all the way back. And I remember we didn't get back until eight o'clock at night. And I was in fear and trembling, I thought, "I'm going to get into terrible trouble when I get home, for being so late." Anyway, when I got home, I said I said, "I'm sorry we're so late." And I told her where we had been. And she said, "Well, you go and get into bed." And so I get in and I thought, "Well, somebody's going to come in with a strap pretty soon."

12:00 Anyway, mother came in with a couple of boiled eggs, for me to have my tea, and then put me to bed. And I thought that was the nicest thing she had ever done for me, when I was expecting get the biggest thrashing of my life. So that was one thing I thought she was very kind, I thought, on that. So that was during the year at Scotch. '36 was last year

12:30 at Westmore Park, then '37, '38, '39 were at Scotch. Then it was '40, '41 until the beginning of '42 when I joined the navy, and I went away.

Were you often physically punished, and if that was the norm?

13:00 No, that didn't very often happen. I had to be very, very naughty to ever get…My father used to get a ruler, more or less. But that didn't happen very often. No, I think the most discipline I got was really verbal discipline, rather than the physical one. But that didn't happen very often. It's funny though, you remember those things. You remember when you really get a hiding.

13:30 So I suppose there's something good in that, I don't know. But I didn't get punished very much.

You joined to do your own confirmation classes independently. So it was kind of off your own back. What sort of questions were you trying to find answers to at that time? What were

14:00 **you, as a child, interested in that…**

Well, I think I was interested in anything, really, and I can't tell you why. For the life of me, why? Why did I suddenly go off and take confirmation? But, I don't know. It was just, I suppose, going to Sunday school….

14:30 I think I was the only one who ever got the cane at Sunday school. And every month, we would have a service in the church. Rather than going up to the Sunday school itself, and sitting in the little classes, we'd go to church and have a service. And this was in the summer again, and we were down in the front of the church, and I was in the front, and they had kneelers that were made by the ladies of the church, I suppose. And the sun was streaming through the windows,

15:00 right on us. We were kneeling and saying our prayers. When I got down on the kneeler, a dust came up an I started patting it and dust came up. I was fascinated by this, so I was patting this. Then the Rector,

who was a very stern rector, said, “Now you go up the vestry.” I stayed till the end of the service, then he came up and he had a little cane about

15:30 about nine inches long, and he gave me three cuts…It didn’t hurt me at all. Then down I went. I think he was just making a statement, I suppose, but that was just one thing you remember. I suppose you remember when you get punished.

Were your parents regular church attendants?

No, not really. Father did, because he was Lutheran background, so he didn’t go. Mother went, she used to go about once a month, I suppose.

16:01 We had a very good rector, the Cannon Swan, and he, more or less, ran the Boys’ Society and we had a terrific congregation there, it was very good. A lot of young people, so our Boys’ Society was very good. We’d meet on Saturdays, and we’d go and do working bees, and do all sorts of things. It was very good companionship.

What sort of working bee

Oh, gardening and cleaning up the church

16:30 and the hall, and sweeping out the hall. That was part of it, anyway, it wasn’t all the time. Actually there, a turning point in my life was, at Scotch College, in the sub-intermediate, we had a teacher called Willsmore.

17:00 He was a great cricketer, he played for South Australia. He took us for Math. I was good at arithmetic, I suppose, that’s all. He called out during the class, “Scott, you’re talking. You’re not paying attention, come up to the front.” So I came up to the front and sat next to another chappie, and we did our examination, and

17:30 I got a credit. And I was absolutely flabbergasted at this, that I could do so well. But I think it was because I was up the front, and I really concentrated. After that I loved Math, and that’s helped me all through my career, and it helped me to get to university. And I got my children to follow Math,

18:00 much to their disagreement, but I thought that they should know something about Math. Everything is sort of built on Math. But that was really a turning point, because after that I was….I can just say it was a turning point.

18:30 And I loved it ever since.

You mentioned that you were doing English part-time while you were working at the rails. How were you doing that?

Well, the first year…I don’t know how it was, but mother, one of her bridge friends was a tutor, so I used to go down to Hollywood, it’s not called Hollywood now, but it’s down a little further east, I used go down on evenings, twice a week. And I sat again,

19:00 That would be in 1940, and I failed. And I thought, “This is terrible.” So I was really down about this. So then I decided I would go to the technical college in town, which was the Adelaide Technical College, which was part of the South Australian School of Mines and Industries. And I went to the class there in English, and I passed that without any problems. Because

19:30 it was a proper classroom. I think I didn’t have any trouble. So that’s how I got my English, and then I joined up, and got in fairly quickly after that, as soon as I turned eighteen.

When you joined up the war had already started…

Well, it was ’39 it started, then the Japanese came in fairly soon after that.

20:00 They came in ’40. Then it wasn’t until I was eighteen in April, of 1942, and so I had my medical then, then I was called up in June.

What did you know about the war situation then? Because it had been going on for a while. Did you have any good information as to what was happening?

No, only what you heard on the wireless or

20:30 in the paper. It was mainly about the Middle East, then it became the Japanese coming down, and they seemed to be unstoppable. Then there was the sinking of the Prince of Wales, and that’s when it became very, very close. So it was what you read in the paper, but I think they kept a lot…

21:00 They didn’t tell everybody what was really going on. They sort of used their discretion as far as the news was concerned. But I learned more, after I joined up. You sort of realise then.

Did you feel under pressure to join up?

No, not really. I dug an

21:31 air-raid shelter for mother and father, before I left, out under the shrubbery. And put a galvanised iron roof on top of that, and earth and so on. I thought I should leave them with a little safety, or somewhere to go. That was quite fun, really, digging it.

Can you tell me about it?

Well, I just got a shovel and a pick.…We had a house

22:00 in Millswood, which was a funny shape. It wasn't a square or a rectangular block, it had a long frontage, with almost like a semi-circle coming back, and out on the side of the semi-circle was what they called the shrubbery. It had trees there. It had a lovely gum tree that I used to climb up, and sit up there and contemplate. Look around the district. There was just shrubs everywhere, so I picked a nice spot out there, and dug this

22:30 air-raid shelter, which I suppose was about eight feet long and about four feet wide, with a bit of a shelf on it. I got down to as far as I could, where there was no water coming in, then I got some galvanised iron and covered that in an arch shape, then put a lot of the earth back alongside and put a lot of the earth back alongside it, and built the earth up as high with a little bit over the top. I don't think it would have been very successful.

23:00 I think the main thing was getting down deep. I discovered later on, up at Milne Bay, that it was the depth that you got that was the most important. So I left them that, and off I went.

Were they happy with that?

Oh, I think so. I think they probably thought it would never come.

23:30 When you're leaving here, in such a wonderful state, you think that it's such a long way away and that it will never happen here. Anyway, they were grateful, I think.

To join up you needed the medical and your parents' permission, is that right?

You had to get your signed parents' permission. I think they might have been a bit reluctant about it, but they finally did. Then I had the medical and that was all okay.

24:00 But before that, I had an army medical, up here in Unaley, and I think that was everybody. Before your eighteenth birthday, I think I was only seventeen and a half, or something like that. You had a medical just to make sure that you were there and available, I presume, to be called up. If it was necessary.

And do you know why you joined the navy?

24:30 **Why you didn't go to the army?**

Well, I don't know. I just felt that I didn't want to go to the air force, and I didn't want to go to the army. I felt the army, even then I had an idea from what my uncles in France, their experiences in World War I, not that they told me much, but I got the very strong impression that they were very difficult and very hard. I was always interested

25:00 in the navy. Ships and battleships and those sorts of things. So I thought, "The navy is the one for me," so that's what I did.

You didn't want to end up in the trenches?

No. That would have been very, very difficult I think. I think they were very, very brave myself.

In retrospect, are you glad you joined the navy?

Yes, I am, very much. They were very, very organised. And I was very

25:30 lucky, being a signalman, because…this is going ahead a bit, on board ship. We had a mess of ten, four signalmen, four telegraphists and two coders. We were right at the forward of the ship and down below, in a separate little mess deck. And we looked after ourselves. So you got to know those, and you worked together and you had to live together, and your routine was very strict. And that was

26:00 very good, really. You didn't have to worry about what you do, you knew exactly what you had to do. And you did it.

Is there some comfort in relinquishing control?

How do you mean?

In letting the navy decide…

Oh, no, I think it helps you. You don't know what's going to happen. You're there, you might get torpedoed at any tick of the clock and you might never know when. So,

26:30 that's the biggest doubt, but other than that it was very good. It was disciplined and you felt that you were doing the right thing. You were organised. Being a signalman, you knew everything that was coming or going. You were up on the bridge, so you were right where the action was, more or less. And

you were in the open, and it was very thrilling, really.

Let's go back to your enlistment.

27:02 **Do you remember the first day you went?**

Very clearly, yes, and I don't know why, but mother and father, I said, "Well, I'm (UNCLEAR) going to meet one of the officers in the Adelaide Railway Station," and so I went off my own. They didn't come in with me. My great friend Graham's mother, she was the station, because her

27:31 nephew was going into the air force. So we went in and met, and got on the train, which left at seven o'clock. We were in our civvies, of course. So off we went, overnight, and we got talking, of course. There were blokes that came from Uluru [Ayres Rock], which I got friendly with. We went through the college together. There were other people, from South Australia mostly.

28:00 And we got to Melbourne in the morning. It was fairly late, I think. Anyway, they said, "Your train leaves for Crib Point," which is on the way down to HMAS Cerberus, at about four, "so you have to be back here at four o'clock." So we sort of walked around Melbourne,

28:32 and came back and got on the train and went down to Frankston and through to Crib Point. It seemed to take a terrible time. We didn't have tea or anything, they didn't feed us. We had a bit of afternoon tea in the town. And then we went into buses and, of course, they then take a terrible time checking you off, answering and making sure they've got the right number of every one on the bus.

29:02 Then they bussed us down to Flinders Naval Depot, HMAS Cerberus, and I suppose we got there about two o'clock, half past one, two o'clock in the morning. And they got us together at the barracks. And it was a long barracks, it was two stories and they were in rectangular blocks.

29:31 They took us in and gave us a hammock, this was in the middle of the night. And on the floor of the building, it was divided off into sections, and there'd be about I suppose twenty to twenty five personnel in each room, which opened up the doors out onto the oval, and they had pipes, two inch

30:00 pipes, suspended from the ceiling, which you suspended your hammock on. So you got your hammock and undid and swung it right down low, and had a bit of a sleep. About half past five the bugle goes, then its off into the showers, then down to breakfast and back again. Then we started our training then. First of all, we had to be kitted out, so we had to go down to the kit store, and line up, and they'd

30:30 try a hat on to see what size, and then they would give you black shoes, and they gave you two uniforms. A blue uniform and a canvas uniform. They gave you underclothes, singlets. You had a white shirt with a blue edging on it, which was a square top. And a

31:01 Lenyard, that's right, and a scarf. Then they took you away and I think they showed you a bit about how to put it on. Then they took away your civvies. I don't know what happened to them, but they went, I never saw those again. Then we started. We started marching, that was the first thing we did, marching, and doing drill up and down and turning and so forth.

31:33 Then we had lessons on weaponry, three oh three rifles and machine-guns and grenades. Then we sat in classes and did Morse code. We had to practice Morse code and write it.

32:04 Learning tactics, in a way, of how they did the fleet work. They used to give us an exercise, at night, at dusk, just on sunset, they had a signal light on top of the mast, by the oval, and we had another signalman with us.

32:32 They would give a message and he would have to write the message, we would dictate it to him. And then we would changeover and they would give another message, and I'd write it down for him. So that's how we learnt our Morse Code. So we did it every night, and that got us familiar with it. Then we practised our semaphore, we used to send messages with semaphore. Which is a …

33:00 a very rapid way of signalling. You put your hand out to the left, is A, then another quarter is B, then the top one is C, then it goes, D, E, F, and it goes through the alphabet that you use. But you can actually send it very quickly, quicker than you can with Morse. So then we had flag exercises and we had

33:30 learn the meaning of all the flags. They had two sets of flags. They had a navy set of flags, and then they had an international set of flags, and they differed, and you had to learn those. So that just proceeded… I suppose I was there until the end of November.

How does the flag system work?

That was by hoisting flags, and they had different

34:00 flags for what you were doing. Whether you were coming alongside, whether you were mine-sweeping, whether you were quarantined. Every conceivable situation that you could be in, there was a flag to tell everybody else what you were doing. Whether you were under steam or…All sorts of things, I've forgotten them now, but there was one for every operation that you could possibly think of.

Is it conceivable that you might have more than flag up at a time?

Oh, yes. They

34:30 usually went is a series of three. They might have one, two, or three, sometimes four, but I think that was the maximum. And you used that, of course, when you were sailing, with a flotilla, that was when it was mainly used. And we were all paraded, and we went up to Melbourne and marched. I think it was mainly for…

35:05 what's the word?

PR?

I suppose, letting the people know what they were doing, and encouraging people to join up, I suppose. Another way of recruitment, I should think. I enjoyed that, I used to like marching.

35:30 It was quite emotional, in a way, certainly. We didn't get much leave. We had an occasional weekend leave, I think we had about three. And I remember, we went to see the Caulfield Cup, which was at the end of November. And I had my friend that I joined up with me, Kevin Meldrum, he came from Uluru. We went up and I said to him…

36:00 We had friends, his mother was friendly with people named Biggle, who were two or three doors down from us in Millswood. And they had two daughters, about my age. And they moved away, and they moved to Melbourne. So I went to see them when I was in Melbourne, went there for a weekend. And I said to Kevin, "Would you like to go to the Caulfield Cup,

36:30 and take these two girls?" He said, "Yeah, I'll be in that." So we did. We met them up in town and took them, and I think we had to pay something like seven pounds to get them in. And we were completely broke when we got inside, from taking the two girls there. Anyway, it was very nice. So took them and put them on the tram and then we had to come back to…Kevin went somewhere else, and I went to see my cousin.

37:00 That's another story. I had a cousin, Gertrude, and she was older than me, and she was my cousin, my first cousin, and she was married, and her husband was taken prisoner of war in Singapore. And she and mother's sister lived at Brighton and I used to go and stay with them. And poor Gertrude,

37:32 she didn't know whether her husband was alive or dead. I don't know whether I was a trail to them, but anyway, I went to them and they were very, very good to me. I used to go and stay with them, when I had an odd weekend's leave. She was a wonderful person. He came back again, and they were reunited.

38:02 But she was a real stoic, and I admire her very much. So that was the training. When I finished the training, they sent me up to Port Melbourne, which was HMAS Port Melbourne, I think was the name of it, I'm not too sure.

38:32 And it was a depot down near St Kilda, and they said, "Tomorrow, you're off. There's a convoy leaving tomorrow. You're going to be in with the commodore." And the commodore was in charge of the convoy, and he had three signalmen to do his signalling. We went out and

39:00 got on board the ship which was going to be the commodore's ship. And they picked the slowest ship they could because it wouldn't drag behind. So that set the pace of the convoy. It was the filthiest ship I had been on. It was absolutely…Everything you touched was dirty. We were just on there for a little while, and the cook came and said

39:30 "Youse are not sailing with us." He said with the four of us being on board, it took his compliment up to thirty two. And his commission was thirty. So they didn't know what to do, so they went away and they decided what they'd do, and they finally signalled around, and we left and went onto another ship, which was a Swedish ship. And it was like going into the dining room of the Hotel Adelaide.

40:01 It was absolutely spotless. So we went on the Swedish ship, and we sailed at sunset. We had two corvettes with us, I think [HMAS] Wagga was one. I'm not sure of the other name. And we sailed around, out into Bass Strait, then went up to Newcastle. That's where they went, from Melbourne to Newcastle.

40:31 They were very concerned with us, because they had lost thirty five ships, all together, on the East Coast, with the Japanese submarines. I didn't know anything about this, until I joined the navy, really. They didn't tell us here what was happening. I was given the middle watch, which was from twelve to four, and I was on watch about an hour and the Wagga signalled up to say

40:41 "I'm about to engage the enemy, dropping depth charges."

We've got to stop there, I'm afraid.

Tape 3

00:38 **You were telling us about dropping depth charges?**

On the convoy from Melbourne to Newcastle. Well, I just got the signal, so I had to call the commodore. They didn't do anything, they just kept

01:00 going of course, and finally it came back, and they said they didn't know, they were unsuccessful. They never found the submarine, but whether they scared him off or not, I don't know. Then we sailed on. So it was quite good, we did our watches. The thing that suddenly came up, we came off Sydney, and the ship was bound for Sydney, it wasn't

01:30 bound for Newcastle. Whether they mixed it up or whether they were the only ship that they could get to be commodore, I don't know, but we left the convoy and sailed. And it was about, I will never forget, it was about eight o'clock in the morning and we sailed into Sydney Harbour. And all the red roofs on Bondi [Beach] were standing out, and we sailed up Sydney Harbour, in beautiful sunshine. It was absolutely breathtaking.

02:02 **Did you feel quite proud to be part of the navy at that stage?**

Oh, yes, I suppose I was a bit excited because it was all completely new experience to me. So then we docked, and we got then on the train to Newcastle, and went up to Newcastle. And I was expecting to come back with another convoy to Melbourne, but then I was

02:30 told I was to go back to Sydney. So I went back on the train to Sydney, I seemed to be travelling about fifty per cent of the whole time, I think. Anyway, I went back to Sydney, and I was there for a couple of days and they said, "You're being posted to New Guinea." So they put me on a troop train, to go up to Brisbane, and that took about two days. It was quite slow, because they were shunted off every time.

03:00 I remember, the people were wonderful in the towns, we'd stop and they'd come out with what we used to call bangers and mash, which was sausages and mashed potato. But very good fare. So we got to Brisbane, and I was taken out to the, I think it was, the Napier, I'm not absolutely sure of the name, but it was a destroyer. They said, "You're sailing off

03:31 to Milne Bay." So we took off. When you're a passenger on a naval ship, you're a nothing, you're just in the way, actually, more than anything else. It was really the first time that I had been to sea in a navy ship. We got going out into the Coral Sea. Because the routine always

04:00 with ships is that they have action stations, at dawn and at dusk. So action stations came up, right at dusk, and I was shot down forad [forward] to the communications' mess, which was the same as on corvettes, it was right up forad, down below. And I was in there, and they shut the hatch over the top, and off we went.

04:30 Anyway, that was all right, they'd finished action stations. I just had to stay and do nothing until we came up to Port Moresby, sailed into Port Moresby. This ship on its side, and we went past that, and tied up. We went ashore, and they sent me up to the Naval depot, and they said, "Go and see the intelligence officer." So they sent me to into the intelligence officer, and he said

05:00 "I'm sending you up to Milne Bay," he said. "You'll only be there about four weeks, they're all dying of typhus and typhoid and malaria. But," he said, "do the best you can and look after yourself if you can." So then they put me back on a corvette, the Wagga, and we sailed from Port Moresby around to Milne Bay. And Milne Bay is right at the eastern end of New Guinea Island, and it's a bay that comes in from east to west.

05:33 We were sailing into the harbour, and suddenly there's a shot across our bows, and we do a U-turn and great crashings and bangings. We had come past an American torpedo boat station, and they had challenged, and the Wagga gave the wrong challenge reply.

06:02 We got a terrible shock, really.

If you had been legitimately part of the crew, would you have been signalling? Would that have normally been you?

Oh yes, but I was just a passenger.

So you would have got that right?

Oh, yes, I hope so.

I just wanted to go back a bit to your training as a signaller, when you are in Port Melbourne. Firstly, why did you decide to go into that area?

To be a signalman?

06:31 When I went to the recruiting chap, he said, "We are wanting signalmen, and you have the qualifications, we'd like you to be a signalman." And I said, "Okay." So it wasn't my choice, but I didn't mind what it was. I had no idea of what it was going to be, and it turned out afterwards that I enjoyed it very much. Because when I went to sea, the signalman was supposed to see and report everything,

07:00 even before the crow's nest. He was supposed to be the eyes and ears of the ship, that was one of his duties. It was just a tradition they'd worked up. You had to be alert. You were on the bridge, and I took it very seriously. With binoculars, looking around and seeing what was on and so forth.

Can you talk us through a typical day, during your training? What that would entail,

07:30 **training as a signalman and as a navy?**

As a signalman, at Cerberus, you would be woken up, "Wakey wakey, rise and shine," you would have a wash or a shower, if you had time. Then you would be all dressed up in your uniform. Which was a blue uniform, bellboy trousers and a square

08:00 shirt, and you would have a jacket on, depending on the weather. They'd always have a rig of the day, they'd call it out, what the rig of the day was. You'd have breakfast, then you would have assembly, then you would do some marching for a couple of hours, and then possibly go to a lecture, for an hour or so, then you would have some lunch. Then after lunch, you would do some more drill, and some more lectures, then you would finish up probably about

08:30 half past four. Then you would have a little bit of free time. Then you would have tea, and we would then come out and do our exercise on the mast. Then the evening was free, mostly. Then it was light's out about nine thirty. Then ten to six in the morning, you were up again. So that was the routine, for about three months. I was there until

09:00 about the end of November.

And during that training period, in Port Melbourne, you were trained in the use of weapons?

In the Cerberus, down at Flinders, yes, we were taught how to assemble, put together guns and rifles and Bren [machine] guns. And also hand grenades, which was just a normal process. And at Flinders, also, before

09:30 we could graduate, we had to swim in the pool with our uniform. That was the starched canvas uniform. We dived in and swim, and it used to be good for the first few metres or so, then suddenly it got heavier and heavier, and you were almost vertical by the time you got there, but you had to swim the length of the pool. That was the requirement before you could graduate.

10:01 While we were, you will be interested to know because you are a smoker, they had a strike for cigarettes, and you couldn't get cigarettes at all, anywhere. Some strike. But on the Sunday, the Salvation Army came down to Flinders and put on a concert. And they distributed cigarettes, they came along and broke them in halves, and everyone had half a cigarette.

10:30 Beautiful Salvos, they are absolutely wonderful.

What was camaraderie like in training, with the other men, boys?

It was very good. We had to sort of live together, and we kept busy most of the time, and in time off, we were reminiscing, mostly, talking about home and what we were doing, and that sort of thing.

Were they all around your age?

11:00 Yeah, they were all about the same age, mostly eighteen.

Because I've heard other stories of people finding that particular training to be quite harsh, in the way they were treated by instructors and older boys.

They were very, very strict, and they made you jump to it. You got pretty tired. But that was good exercise as well. Before you went into the marching, you had to do exercise. They had you doing drill.

11:30 Physical PT, they called it. Which was bending down and all the rest of the usual thing.

And the fact that you ended up going to New Guinea, did you feel like that training had any bearing on where you ended up going?

No. The training come in more when I went on the ship, when I joined the Townsville. But ashore, it was really mostly Aldis Lamp.

12:00 An Aldis Lamp was a cylinder, more or less, which had a removable mirror behind. The light was on continuously. As you pressed the trigger, the mirror moved, so you could make the light flash. That's how you used Morse. That's mostly what we did, Morse. There wasn't much flags, it was mostly Morse, all the time, practically.

You were saying then, when you were on the Townsville, that's when you got more specific training?

That's right, that was the real navy training.

12:33 That was the whole box and dice. Flags and reporting and doing a squadron, lining up abreast, line ahead, and all the rest of it.

Can you expand a little more, on the training that you had at that period? In some more specific detail? Later on, when you said you had the true navy training?

13:00 Well, yes, I was thrown in because I was sent up…I picked up the Townsville in Morotai, which is north of New Guinea. The [HMAS] Platypus was the name of the ship that I got up to. Anyway I joined the Townsville, and we had our mess up forad, down below, right underneath where the ASDIC [the under water sound detection device, the forerunner of SONAR] dropped down,

13:30 below the ship. They used to put that down when they turned the ASDIC on. I was fairly green, of course, but we had watches. They had watches from eight o'clock to twelve, twelve to four, then they had what they called two dog watches, which was from four to six, then from six to eight. Then from eight to twelve.

14:00 The middle watch was twelve to four. The morning watch then was from four to eight. The idea of the two dog watches, was that it changed the times. So you weren't on the middle watch all the time. The officers stayed static. I think it was the second lieutenant was always on the middle watch, and that was their routine, but we changed al the time. So if you were on the evening watch,

14:31 one night, on the next night it would be the evening watch, then the following night it would be the morning watch and so the routine went on. We had a little box with a light on it, and a cover, so you couldn't see it at night, for writing our messages. The bridge was a square bridge.

15:00 Initially it had a steel roof on it, and it had two wings out either side. We had Aldis Lamps on either side, and a big searchlight just above, then the crow's nest was directly behind that. Then behind the bridge was the flag locker. They were in like a grid, all A to Z. The flags were there. Then the halliads came down, and I

15:30 think there was three or four on either side. The flags had a knuckle on the top. You undid the knuckle, put the top and the bottom in, then hoisted them up. That was the flags. So mainly, a lot of it was boring. When I say boring, nothing was happening. You were just keeping watch,

16:00 more or less. Looking around the horizon, seeing what was there. Our work, mainly, was convoying. We'd pick up ships and convoy them along further north, and so forth. A bit of mine-sweeping.

You would have had to have been very good at your craft, given that if there was an emergency, you would have had to get those messages out, or receive messages, very quickly.

That's right. And then the telegraphists,

16:30 they were down on the deck below, and they were just out of the seaman's mess. And the decoders were there as well. So they were there, when necessary.

So what was the process for a message coming in? Could you talk us through the process?

Oh yes, well they would call up. Each ship had a call sing, so they would call up and then they would say they were having

17:00 trouble with a certain engine, they had to slow down, all sorts, whatever was happening. And you'd just report it to the officer of the watch, and say that was it. You would make a note of it and record it and that would go down in the log, any messages that you received. And sent. If the skipper was there, he might say, depending on where he was, he wanted to report to the senior officer, he'd say, "I want to you to send this message," and he'd either give it you verbally

17:30 or he would give you a written message. If verbally, you just make a note of it, that you've sent it off. Once you got confirmation, you report back that the message was received, sent and received.

And what were decoders doing?

Well, any message that came in that was in code, they had to decode them. And then they had to give them to the signalmen, and we gave them to the officers. They got a lot of coded messages.

18:00 **Would it often be the case that you wouldn't understand the messages you were sending or receiving?**

No, you didn't. You had to just take them down accurately as you received them. Usually they'd tell you there was a coded message, and so you'd know that you had to be very careful, that it was exactly the right letters and the right numerals. So we were a very combined mess.

18:30 It was a small mess, it was five or six metres wide, and four or five metres deep, with a ladder coming down. Then there was a bench, with seats either side, that about six or eight could sit at. Then there was a small locker that held Worchester sauce tomato sauce,

19:00 which used to always get knocked in a storm, and then you could always smell it terribly. I never liked the smell much. Then they had a boarded in section, about two metres by two metres, where all the hammocks were. You always had to tie up your hammocks everyday, and put them away, tidy. They were used in case of emergency, as packing or if there was a leak, or anything else.

19:34 You each had a locker about two feet by two feet by about a couple of feet depth. That was the whole thing. We used to then, the galley was up in the seamen's mess, up on the next deck, and we would go and get our meal, on a big baking dish, which had meat and vegetables,

20:00 bring it down, then we would share them out. We had crockery plates, not plastic, knives and forks and cups of tea. There would be detail who would be the mess of the day, he would be responsible to go and pick it up, clean up the dishes and take them up again.

20:30 Afternoon tea was always quite important, because that was before the dog watches, so they had to go on for quite a long time. We'd get a can of tea, which was about a foot or eighteen inches high, and about nine inch diameter, with a big sieve in the middle, with a few handfuls of tea. There was always a loaf of bread, a tin of jam,

21:00 and a pound of butter. And that used to go between the lot of us, that was afternoon tea.

No trouble with sea sickness?

If I was ashore, then moving out, the first time out I would get a bit queasy, but as long as you had your three meals a day, you were all right. We had one chappie come on, as soon as the anchor started up,

21:30 he was sick. We had to take him off, he couldn't stand it. Unfortunately.

So that must have been quite exciting as a young man, to be on a ship sailing up to New Guinea. What did you know of New Guinea at that stage?

Nothing at all. I had no idea.

What did you think you were going to?

Well, you see I went ashore first, so I didn't really get to the ship. Going up,

22:00 from when I left Sydney, to go north….And when we got to Milne Bay, I was sent down….a little shed in the tree, that was our station, and we had two tents, and they had an army battery just along, camouflaged, and they had tents. And that was for our meals.

22:34 There was a little creek that came down, with water running through, just gently walking out to the sea. We put a few rocks down, and we used like an ice-cream carton and scooped the water up and had our showers. We lived in the tents. We'd take the signals of all the ships coming in and going out, sending signals and so forth.

23:00 They were reported by phone through to the head office, or the Naval Depot.

23:32 It was very good. The army men were excellent. We joined in quite well and joined up together. We had eight of us in this station, four in each tent. We had the same watches all the way through. I was there about a month. Then they sent with a yeoman – a yeoman is really petty officer

24:00 signalman – and they said, "You're going out to a little island, called Meemeearah." Which was out of the north eastern corner of Milne Bay, before you went further north. It was a little island, just off the coast, there was a channel between them. And we went on a timber boat, a very small boat, and they were dropping things off on the way up,

24:32 We got there in darkness, and they went into the reef and we just had to jump off and get into the reef, take our stuff and walk through the water to the shore, around the shore to a little hut, they had a little hut there. Then up on the top of the hill they had another camouflaged hut, and we had a lookout, and we had a radio connection

25:00 to the NIOC [Naval Officer In Charge], back in Milne Bay. We had to report aircraft or shipping. Anything that was moving north, or anything that was coming down. Because at that time I don't think they were sure if the Japs had really been stopped coming down. They didn't know. Because Rabaul wasn't that far, further north. It's part of New Guinea now. So I was there for about a month, then we came back into Milne Bay itself again,

25:35 until about the end of the year. I was given leave then, I was sent back to Australia.

When you were in New Guinea, what did you know of what was going on in that country? What had you heard was going on?

Well, the only thing we heard was the signals. So we'd know where ships were going, so we had some

26:00 idea of what was going on. We used to get news bulletins, because the Australian navy, the [HMAS] Australia, and the [HMAS] Warramunga, (UNCLEAR) destroyers, they were joining up with the Americans. Milne Bay was the staging point really, getting ready to go in for the landings, further on. That was the big activity.

That must have been quite impressive to see?

Yes, there were lots of ships,

26:30 in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Then there was a torpedo boat station, which was the American one.

So that was a very safe place?

Well, they were still cleaning up in Buna, that was the Kokoda Trail. Buna was more or less the beachhead, with the Kokoda Trail on the north side.

27:00 Of course, the south side of the Kokoda Trail is Port Moresby. Orokolo Bay, where I went afterwards, after I came back from leave, in December, Orokolo Bay was really the cleaning up of Buna. Just along the side of Buna beach.

When you say cleaning up, what do you mean?

Well, they were cleaning up the last of the Japanese,

27:30 clearing them completely out, and that was the Australians. That was their mission, to get rid of the Japanese altogether. They eventually worked their way up the coast to Lae, and all the way up the north coast of New Guinea. That was their task.

Did you have any association with the soldiers who were fighting in those areas?

Yes, in Milne Bay, the Ninth Division came up

28:00 and they did exercises through where our little station was, across the bay, and they brought in what they called landing craft personnel. And they looked a bit like a submarine, and they came into shore with the bow first, and they had two ladders on other side of the bow that dropped down, and the personnel used to go and come off. And they kept them there for,

28:30 I suppose it must have been ten days. And all they were doing was coming down and going on and coming off again, keeping the routine. It was terrible, really, for the poor old army blokes, but that's what they did. It kept them occupied, I suppose. They were getting ready to go up to land further on, of course.

Did you know of anything that was going on with the battles?

Only what we heard on the news, the media. There was no special

29:00 media reports to us, just what we could hear, what news we could get.

And did you have any interaction with the American troops?

We had a bit of interaction with the New Guinea natives. They helped us. They built a hut eventually and put on a thatched roof, just for some bully beef and a feed. But they were very lovely people. The Milne Bay area were

29:30 delightful ones. And even out at the Meemeearah, there was a village across the channel. They supplied us with fresh fruit and fresh vegetables, sweet potatoes. They organised for a young lad to come across and he helped us out and we helped him clean his teeth, and look after him. He was very nice. They were very, very good.

30:00 **How did you communicate?**

Oh, we could use pidgin English. I didn't know the pidgin too much, but you could always get the idea. You could always gesticulate. You could communicate quite well.

Do you remember any pidgin English?

No, I don't.

And they were obviously pro the Allies?

I think so, yes. Well, you don't know,

30:30 but they were very, very helpful.

It sounds like you, in your position as signalman, had quite a bit to do with them, or had occasion to have quite a bit to do with them?

Only just that they were there, really. We didn't have any official communication to do with them. They were just there and they accepted us, and I think they were grateful, in a way. They were always very, very good.

31:04 **What was your understanding of their culture?**

Well, I thought they were very good. They were very clean, their village was very set out, very nicely. They had their vegetable plots that they had. It was all very nice and clean and organised. It was excellent.

And did you interact with the women at all?

No.

31:30 No, we didn't. I think we interacted a bit with the chief, and that was about all. It was also on that station, there was an army unit of only about four of five people. They were there. They had a battery. But I think they eventually went, as we went further north.

32:01 **So what was your daily routine when you were at Milne Bay? What was the procedure there?**

The procedure there was very similar to watch-keeping. You had to take all messages. Again, it was all in Aldis Lamp and Morse. Take messages and send messages. There was no real lookout, in Milne Bay itself, we were there purely a as a communications unit.

32:31 **And you were operating from the beach?**

Yes, we were on the beach, all the time. The climate up there was very regular. Four o'clock used to come up for the storm. The storm would come up in the Bay and it would rain, then six o'clock it would be gone. It was very, very stable, weather-wise.

And you were told there was a lot of denghi fever and

33:00 **malaria?**

Yes, and there was. None of us, fortunately, didn't get sick. But some of them did. And there was nothing they could do. It was a matter of hygiene.

And were the navy required to take anti-malaria tablets?

Yes. We had to take Atabrin everyday, and we became quite a yellow colour. We had to have those everyday.

33:32 I can't remember so much in Milne Bay, but on board they were very strict. We used to have very strong juice, every day. It was really like….It was a lemon juice, anyway. And I know that we had very galvanised

34:00 iron jugs they'd put it in, and it used to eat the galvanising on the inside after a while.

What was the juice for?

What the sailors used to get when they didn't have enough green vegetables….Scurvy.

34:30 That type of thing, keeping your diets right, that was the main thing.

So why were you shifted from Milne Bay? Did new people come in to take your positions?

They must have because I was sent down, I went down on an American cruiser to Brisbane. Then a train down to Adelaide. I was home three days and I collapsed. I got malaria, and I was sent down to the

35:00 repat hospital here, at Daws Road, and I was there a fortnight. The first four or five days was terrible. It's like having about six kinds of flu altogether. It's terrible. Fortunately I only had it once, and I've never had it since. So then I was sent back and I finished the rest of my leave, then I was sent back again. When I got back to Milne Bay, they had shifted out of the

35:30 little shed. They had built a proper tower for them. I was posted up to Orokolo Bay. That was interesting. We went on a Fairmile, and the Fairmile went out…First of all it had to go out into the Coral Sea, because one of those Liberty ships [specially built, lightly armoured US cargo ships] had gone on the reef. And they were

36:00 sending out a captain, who was very experienced in getting ships off reefs and so forth. He was the chappie in charge of the Niagara, It was the ship with the gold on it that was sunk off New Zealand, off Auckland somewhere. So we took him out there

36:30 and came back again. We also had, which just ties up, we had a Captain Armstrong on the ship. He was a full captain, permanent navy, and he was going further up past Orokolo Bay. We ran into a cyclone and it was the roughest trip I think I've ever had. Being a passenger, they said,

37:00 "Will you set up the officers' table at the mess?" I said, "All right." So I went down and I had to put out all the cutlery and so forth. But I'd go down and get all wheezy and I'd have to tear up top. Then get myself together and go down again. This Captain Armstrong was just sitting down there the whole time, reading a book. As if he was absolutely completely unconcerned of the weather or the ship or anything else.

37:30 So that's how I went up to Orokolo Bay.

In a cyclone.

Through a cyclone, yes.

Was anyone worried?

I don't think so. I don't think you worried too much.

To get up to Orokolo Bay, you had to go through the Coral Sea?

No, the Coral Sea is on the south, Orokolo Bay is on the north, so you go out through the Milne Bay, turn around and go north. Or north-west, actually.

38:00 Orokolo Bay is a bay that comes in, there is mountains on either side. It was a sheltered bay where they could unload. Because the beach, they couldn't unload much on the Buna beach. So that's why it was in the little bay.

They couldn't unload?

They could, but it was much easier for ships to unload in the bay, the sheltered bay. They would have to use landing craft, and that wasn't suitable for all of this stuff that was coming ashore.

So now you're at Orokolo Bay, what is the set up there?

38:30 Well, that's very similar to Milne Bay. We were a signal station. And we had an officers' mess. It was exactly the same. Then I was posted back to Adelaide, posted back home again. I was here in Adelaide for a month, or so. Then I was sent up to pick up the Townsville. So I had to go all the way back up to New Guinea, past that,

39:02 to pick up the Townsville.

So over this period of time, are you hearing news of the progress of the war?

Yes, but only what the media gave out, as they were going north, gradually.

What did you hear?

Well, we heard about the sinking of the [HMS] Prince of Wales, out of Singapore. We heard about the

39:35 war in Burma, that was proceeding. Of course, they had taken Hong Kong, the Japanese. That was all that was in the media, really, there was nothing anything special.

And what was the feeling amongst the troops, the navy, about how Australia was going in the war?

40:00 **Was there concern?**

I think there was concern, but again, you didn't have much time to think about it. But it was improving all the time, that was the main thing.

Tape 4

00:42 **Can you tell us what it was like going through the cyclone?**

Well, it was very hard to keep your feet. That was the hardest thing. I had a telegraphist that was coming with me

01:00 to the Orokolo Bay, but his name was Leek, I remember that. But eventually, we called him, his name was 'Sprungah'. But he just collapsed. He lay down on the side of the upper deck, which was only about eighteen inches wide to the handrail, and he just stretched out on there and stayed there. It's the funny thing about sea sickness,

01:30 as soon as you come ashore, you're as bright as a button. It just seems to be the motion that seems to upset you. But he stayed there the whole time. You just keep your feet. I wouldn't say I was frightened at all. It was just an experience that you went through.

Were you busy with your job?

No, I was only a passenger. The only job I had to do was doing the officers' mess.

02:00 Otherwise I just had to stand around. I didn't have any duties, because I was only a passenger going up in this particular instance. Passengers are just there to go along. There are no duties or anything else.

When you are a passenger, and you're a navy man as well, do you have a battle position?

Not usually, no. No, there's nothing.

02:31 You're just a passenger. It was interesting. When I came back from Milne Bay, on leave, I came back on an American cruiser, which is bigger than a destroyer. And we had the [HMAS] Warramunga and the [HMAS] Arunta, coming back with us. And it was a beautiful cruiser, and went along at thirty knots.

03:00 You could almost hardly stand up outside, against the wind. Thirty knots is very fast. A knot is bigger than a mile, so thirty knots must be something like sixty kilometres an hour. So you're really moving through the water. All the American crew were in the present teenage dress. Well, not just teenage dress, in that they had white dungarees. They were

03:30 blue dungarees which were washed as hard as they could, so they were getting towards a white. They were a very light blue, and the whole ship was in uniform, of dungarees, denim, which is very popular today. But it was a beautiful ship. We hit another storm in the Coral Sea, on the way down. And the ship was just going along,

04:00 it was as steady as a rock. But the poor old destroyers, the Warramunga and Arunta. I picked up a signal that came in, asking whether they could reduce speed. Because you could hardly see them. They were just in amongst a fog of sea spray. They were almost disappeared. And they would have terribly rough on a destroyer, as they travel fast, and just go through everything. But they must have been jumping around. They did reduce speed slightly,

04:30 to give them some assistance.

So what happened when you got to the HMAS Townsville?

Townsville? I was waiting on the Platypus, out at Morotai, and it came in just after lunch, and I was dumped aboard, and off they went. I was taken down to the telecommunications mess and

05:00 I think then I was put on the dog watch, from six until eight, and getting to know the corvette, because I hadn't been on one before, it was new. Then I just had to get into the routine. Then you learnt things as they came up, that was all.

05:31 **What was the Townsville doing there?**

They had to escort a ship, further north. We escorted it and when we got to….I'm not sure where it was, but it was another staging point further on, above Manus it was. We took the ship in and then had to do a mine

06:00 sweeping outside the harbour, continuously, we'd just go up and down outside, to keep watch, in case of any submarines that might come in. Before we got another ship to convoy back again. The corvettes were a bit of a dogs body, they would do anything that was available, that had to be done.

06:37 **Did you ever do any troop carrying?**

Yes, we took a few troops on to take them further north, and they didn't like it very much on board, and I don't blame them, really, I suppose. It's strange, you're a bit like a passenger. We did that, and we used to do…We picked up one ship,

07:00 and we were going up from Morotai, and the ship could do about twenty knots, and we could only do about fifteen, that was absolutely flat-out. Our normal cruising speed was twelve knots. So they said, "We're leaving you, we don't want any protection." So they sailed off, and we just sort of had to follow them at a slower speed. But

07:30 they got there all right, fortunately, so they were all right.

So it was on the Townsville that you were learning more about what it means to be a signalman at sea?

Yes, that's right. That covered all the duties of a signalman. And you had to keep a log, and you had to check up on…All the signals were sent out by telegraph, and that went out, and you had to pick out if there was a signal there, particularly, for the Townsville.

08:03 A lot of them are general messages. Just saying what the weather is and what was happening, and just general information to the fleet, generally throughout the area, not particularly the Townsville only.

Who would be signalling these to you?

They would be from Australia, I suppose. They were just general signals that were sent out, under the navy, as the navy.

08:30 You also had the American ones as well. You had to keep a bit of an eye on those. Just to see what they were doing, and if it affected you or not. Usually it didn't affect us.

What did you do with any spare time you had on the Townsville? Did you have any spare time?

Oh, yes. While you were off watch, you had to eat….

09:01 There were all sorts of things that you had to do. We had to keep up, for argument's sake, and make sure the flags were all right, and keep them in trim, so they didn't disintegrate. You had to tidy them up, if they needed repairs or something. You had to look through all the equipment and keep that up to date. You had to look after your own personal things. You were either on duty, in the mess, looking after the food on the day,

09:30 or you had to look after your own things and keep your clothes and so forth clean and tidy and washed. You got an allowance, six pence or a shilling a week, and you were required to…You weren't issued with any new uniform or anything else, you had to buy those, and live on that allowance you had every week, in your pay. You had to

10:01 present yourself reasonably well, on the bridge, so that…We weren't necessarily in uniform all the time, because it was Tropics, so it was mostly shorts and a shirt, and a cap, of course. You had to have a cap on. And the gear at action stations, all the water proof gear and also the anti-flash gear. Which

10:30 you could put on so that you wouldn't get burnt, if there were any explosions or anything else like that. So you had to look after yourself, as far as that was concerned. And then, inclement weather, you had the Dryzabone [waterproof] coats, to keep the water out, more or less. They had gumboots there, that were available on the bridge.

11:02 There was always a lot of signals as far as your position, as far as from the navigation officer, saying where you are and where you're going and what time you were supposed to be there. So they were all types of signals that were coming through. But time went. We didn't have much time to get board.

11:30 **Did you find it difficult working seven days a week without any…**

No. It just went on. You didn't really distinguish that much.…Excepting that as far as the food was concerned, you knew that Monday was sausages, and Tuesday was something else, and Wednesday was stew. That was fairly routine, as far as that was concerned. It was very nice after leaving harbour,

12:00 we would get eggs for the first week, then they'd go off and we wouldn't see an egg until we came in again.

So you were actually getting quite a variety of food?

I guess so. And they'd bake every day. The cooks used to bake the bread, so that was always fresh bread which was very nice.

When you had previously been at Milne Bay, in your

12:30 **hut in the trees, and later the hut on the ground, was the food similar then or….**

Yes, it was mostly bully beef. After we were billeted with the army, we look after ourselves. And the navy has a tradition of having roast pork on Sundays. And after we were at Milne Bay for a while, while the army battery was still there, we got a leg of lamb for one Sunday.

13:01 We invited them all over to dinner, to have their midday meal, and they thought we were being really spoilt. So we had a lovely, huge big leg of lamb. We finally got an oven, and a cook top, which was gas, so we could cook things. So we really had to look after ourselves most of the time, at Milne Bay.

Where were you getting supplies from?

13:30 They'd come in NIC [?], the depot would send up the tins of bully beef and other stuff. We'd get some fresh vegetables when we were really lucky. Probably some bananas and a few of the tropical fruits.

Did you know at that stage what the infantry was eating?

No, only what we were eating. Again, they were just stews and

14:00 they did have some vegetables. But mostly stews. They had a camp oven, I suppose you would call it, a camp stove. They were all in tents. They looked after themselves reasonably. But it was pretty stable fare, it wasn't much variety.

So it was probably better on board?

I think so. I think we were very well looked after,

14:30 because having a ship, is bit like a home, rather than a tent, being on the move all the time. I think we were lucky in that way.

So you say that you got an allowance? Was that your pay?

Yes. It was added onto the pay. We also used to get an allowance for crockery and stuff, every three months. While were waiting to get our issue, after three months,

15:02 everyone would have to be sharing cups and plates, because they would all get broken. Or you would get a storm and you would lose quite a few. Then we would get the new ones, and we'd toss the old ones out then, and start off with nice new cups and plates and so forth. So they were very good, the navy, in that way.

And what about your pay? Do you remember how much you were being paid?

I think it was about six or seven shillings a day.

15:30 It was about the same as the army, really, but they didn't pay you on board, excepting when you came into shore. That was all put away.

Did any get sent home or…

Oh, I made an allotment home to my mother, and the rest of it was just there for me when I wanted it, when we came back and were going ashore. So we had a bank account…

16:04 **Why did you make an allotment for your mother?**

I don't know, I just thought there should be…I didn't give it that much thought, actually. But I just felt… I'm sure she put it away for me, so she had some when I came back. Some had wives, and they had allotments to them.

16:33 They got more pay, of course.

Was there any gambling on board?

Oh, there was probably a little bit, not very much. Very small. They used to play a bit of pontoon, sometimes, when things were quiet. Not

17:00 on any active duty, more or less. And more so perhaps after peace was declared. We were around waiting before we joined the flotilla to do the mine sweeping down the East Coast. There was more leisure time then, of course. But it would mainly be possibly if we sent ashore, if we came down to Australia. Well, you couldn't all go ashore at once. You had to be on board, and so

17:30 so you had to pass the time. There'd be a bit then, but there wasn't any substantial amounts. It was only peanuts, just an interest, I suppose.

What are your fondest memories on the Townsville?

Going along in the Tropics, at sunset, at action stations, it was just beautiful, really.

18:00 If it was a calm sea going along. Particularly if you were on your own, going somewhere, where you didn't have anybody with you, it was very good. The weather was excellent, other than the storms. Cyclones would come in occasionally. The other thing was the islands up there, mostly islands, were all fairly thick jungle islands, and

18:30 and the jungle seemed to go right down into the sea. It was rather eerie, sombre feeling. You could just feel as though you were in another world, almost.

Did you have the chance to have another dip? In in the sea.

19:00 Yes, we did. We used to put escape nets over the side, which were a mesh of rope, put those over the side and you could get down and have a swim in the sea. We used to keep watch because we were a bit scared of any sharks that might be about. We had a snake come up once. I think we swam pretty quickly. I remember climbing up the anchor chain to get out,

19:30 because we were up near the bow. We were given bathers, they were in our issue. Which were a bit like a bikini, but still a bit more material than a bikini, for swimming.

Did you see much interesting aquatic life, from the ship? Did you see many sharks or…?

No, we used to see…

20:00 The worst thing was the dolphins, because they would come in and you would think it was a torpedo. They were mistaken quite a number of times. They would come tearing in, along the side, towards the bow and then they would go underneath and follow down underneath the ship. They loved the moving ships. They love anything that's moving. And they move along very fast.

20:31 **So you thought they were torpedoes, sometimes?**

And we used to spot a few whales sometimes, in the Coral Sea, there would be a few whales coming along, moving up. And they'd take a little bit before they were identified as to what they were.

You had a few experiences before the Townsville being a signalman, but this was probably the first time when you were on

21:00 **an actual ship, and you had your quarters and so on. Were you bonding with the other men? Was it a different feel?**

Yes, it was much closer, certainly much closer on the Townsville, because there were the ten of you in your little room. And you had to get over any differences you might have, and they used to come up from time to time, you couldn't help that. But generally, we were

21:30 very good. We used to go ashore and we'd join in and take an interest in their families and so forth, and what they were doing. So it was very good from that concern. Particularly going ashore, because you would have more time, then, to discuss…what they were doing and what their family background was.

Travelling is another….I seemed to be travelling a terrible lot. When I look

22:00 back and see where I had to travel between stations, and you meet people very briefly, but it's very interesting, their backgrounds. Because travel does that for you, I suppose.

How long had you been in the navy at this point?

Well, when I joined the Townsville I had been in about

22:30 nineteen, twenty months. It was getting on to two years. And the rest of the time was on the Townsville. So it was about half and half, I suppose.

What do you think that time did for your education? Do you feel like you learnt a lot in those twenty months?

I think you learned a lot on human relations, on mixing with different characters. There was some very distinct characters. Some were surprising,

23:00 but still very likeable, all the same.

Who were the kinds of people that you had never had the chance to meet before, and now the navy had given you the chance to…

That's right, they were completely new characters, as far as I was concerned. Well, I was growing up to, I was older.

How were they new? What about them?

Oh, only that their backgrounds were completely different to mine.

23:30 Some of them came from Queensland and that was a different atmosphere altogether, in more or less, the sub-tropicals. The ones in Melbourne, they sort of spoke slightly differently, the way they said things. The New South Wales people, you learnt about New South Wales and I didn't know very much before I went in the navy about the rest of Australia. I was fairly ignorant really. So it was very interesting to me, I was learning all the time.

24:01 **Battalions were set up, when they'd leave South Australia at that time, pretty well as an all South Australian battalion. Or in the army, an all Western Australian….**

The only South Australians that we really had was when I left, when I initially joined up to go to Flinders. But then, after that, I did meet up with South Australians, but not very many. Most of them were interstate.

24:34 Out of our signalmen, there was one from Melbourne, two from Sydney, one from Queensland. So that was quiet a mixture. Of the coders, the two coders were from Tasmania. We used to call them 'Taswegians'. We used to call one 'Flash'…That was their nicknames. They weren't very fast as far as were concerned. The

25:00 The telegraphists…Well, there was one from South Australia and the others were from New South Wales and Queensland, so they were from all over Australia. I don't think the navy, unlike the army, didn't like to put brothers or relations together. They kept them particularly away. Whereas in the army, they liked to put brothers together. The navy was different, in that way.

A more mixed bag?

Yes. I don't think they liked the relations to be together.

25:30 I think they wanted to keep them separate.

Were there any nicknames for the South Australians?

Yeah, everyone had a nickname. Either Bluey or Sprungah was one. Flash.…It really related to their character more than their names.

What was yours?

I was either 'Scotty' or 'Haggis'. So it was something

26:01 that related to.…Which was not in my character whatsoever, but never mind. I didn't mind that.

You were forming these relationships with the men. Did any of them ever have a chance to meet any of your family?

No. No, there was nobody during that whole time. We were isolated a little bit in South Australia, but no. There was nobody that I could

26:31 mix with as far as the family was concerned. It was rather interesting that when we joined the Corvette Association, that was probably thirty years or so after the war. Everyone came back and was very strongly reminiscing and so forth. But before that time, I think they all went back after the war and

wanted to get on with their lives and families and so forth. So they weren't really interested, at all.

27:01 But suddenly, after thirty years they all got very keen. It's still going, the Association, which is very good.

Your time at Daws Road Hospital, did you get to see your mother during that time, and your father?

Yes. Not very much, but I got out once. I was in the airforce ward, they didn't have a navy

27:30 ward at the repat. I felt pretty well after a week or so, and they asked me to go and help one of the electricians. He was putting up lights in the nurses quarters, so I was with him for a couple of days. Anyway, then there was vineyards outside, on the southern side of the repat [repatriation] hospital, and I decided I would go back one afternoon, there

28:00 was nothing on, so I decided I would go back and see mother. So I got on the tram, and I took my cap off and my thing and put myself partially into civvies and got on the tram, and went down to Millswood. I saw mother and had an afternoon tea with her, then I came back again. And when I came back and I went out into the vineyard to get my clothes, my hat wasn't there. I thought that was funny, that was no good. My cap rather. And when I got back into the ward, they were looking for a sailor with a sixth and seventh eighth hat.

28:31 I got reported for being AWL [Absent Without Leave]. Which was reported when I got back to the depot, after I was discharged. I thought, "Well, it looks like I won't get my leave." But they gave me my leave. I was on a charge just before I left. They said, "You're going back to New Guinea, so you will get confined to quarters for a week." But it didn't make a difference because I was on my way. I didn't actually serve the punishment.

29:02 **So it was just the one AWL?**

Just for that day.

And how were your family feeling about you, the war, at this time?

Well, I didn't really see very much of them, at that time. I think they were…I don't know. We didn't seem to discuss very much

29:31 what I was doing. So I can't say. They were glad to see me home, but that was about all, really. There wasn't a strong family relationship in so far as them wanting to know exactly what I was doing, all the time, all the way through. Whether they were that type or not, I don't know.

30:04 It wasn't a family relationship, really, when we talked. I used to do that more with people who were in the navy, the navy people.

So when you were on the Townsville, did you get the chance to disembark at some point? Did you get the chance to get off the ship and stretch your legs on shore?

Not very much. But we were mainly at Torokina. There's a funny story, really.

30:35 We were at Torokina after the war, and we heard the VP declaration, at Torokina. We were anchored off, just waiting, not knowing what to do. And we used to go ashore in the motor boat and have a surf. There was lovely surf there. And anyway, our leading signalman was sent off to do a course.

31:00 I was left as acting leading signalman. One day, in the afternoon, the NIC of Torokina came aboard, with his staff. And the captain was entertaining them. I got the call to go up and see the captain, and he gave me a message, to say that we were to disembark and we were to go down to

31:30 Brisbane and join the 21st Mine Sweeping flotilla, to sweep the mines along the eastern coast. He said would you send this off. So I took the message and took it down to the mess deck below, and gave it in to the telegraphists office, which was just off the mess deck, gave them the signal. That was all right, took it back and said, "Sir, the message has been despatched." And I didn't hear any more until we were all up on deck, and the NIC

32:00 was disembarking into the motor boat, and all the seamen came out from their mess and said, "Oh, we're back to Australia! We're going back to Australia!" I thought, "Heavens above, how do they know that?" Anyway, the next thing is the NIC had gone, and I was called up to the captain, with doffed caps, and, "How did the seamen know we are going down to Australia?"

32:30 I said, "I'm sorry, sir, I don't know. I have no idea." So that was all right. So then I was told I would be up on a charge. Then I went back to the mess deck and the signals officer said, "The whole mess is going to get detention. This is terrible." So we were all discussing this and didn't know what to do. And finally, poor old Sprungah said

33:00 "Well, look I'll go and give myself up." And what had happened was, outside the telegraphists' office there was a little alleyway, just there, and that led on to the seamen's mess, and he was having a doze. Just lying down on the deck, having a doze, and of course, he read the signal. He read the signal and

went straight out to the seamen and said, “We’re going down to Australia.” So I had to take him up,

33:30 and he confessed that’s what happened, and told the skipper what had happened. So he got fourteen days confined to ship, and off we went.

So it made no difference to him, either?

No. We went ashore when we got down to Brisbane, but he had to stay aboard. He didn’t mind that very much, so that was all right. And then we joined the flotilla, and that was quite interesting because we had twelve

34:00 corvettes and the Swan. And Captain Armstrong, who was on the Fairmile going up to Orokolo Bay, he was skipper of the Swan. He was in charge, he was the flotilla leader. We went out, we started out in Brisbane, off shore, and we would line up in a line, a line ahead, more or less. But the first one had a cable coming out behind it at forty five degrees behind it.

34:32 And they had cutters on them to cut through mines, because the mines were suspended from the sea bed. They were below the surface so they couldn’t be seen.

Can you explain what kind of cutter?

Well, it was just like a U, with teeth on it. So it would cut through the wire, as it was forced along. And the next ship was just inside that, so the next corvette behind the first one was

35:00 inside swept water, and then they had a forty five degree cutter line going out with a float, and then the next behind that was behind. So that the whole fleet going along, the only one that was in any danger of hitting a mine was the leading ship. Because they started out away from where the mines were supposed to be, and they gradually worked in a square until they, gradually, got into the middle. Until

35:30 they had been over that area so that area was okay. Then what happened is, the cutter would cut through the mine, the mine would come up, then we would shoot the mine and perforate it, so that it would sink to the bottom, out of harm’s way.

They wouldn’t explode?

Sometimes. There was a rare occasion that they did, and there was a terrible explosion. That’s if they had, by a chance, the bullet hit the teeth coming out, or

36:00 the prongs that were outside. But they were deadly, absolutely, the mines. The paravain was just a long cable, with these cutters at intervals along. We had a little derrick at the back of the ship, and it used to lift them off. And they had a float, which was a bit like a torpedo, and suspended from that float was a grid, that was curved, and that kept the….And that had to be adjusted, so that it

36:30 kept the wire a certain distance, just below the surface of the water, and at a certain distance out from the ship. You had to adjust that. And it was forced into that situation by the ship moving forward.

How long did you have in Brisbane before you…

Not very long. We got together, as all the ships got together, and off we went.

And what was Australia like at that time? Being quite isolated from it,

37:01 **did you find any novelty in coming home and seeing what Australia was up to?**

Yes, we didn’t get ashore very much. I don’t think I went ashore in Brisbane. I think we went straight on to the mine sweeping. But previous to that, we were doing a boiler clean, with our engines, down in Williamstown. That was when VE Day was declared. That was in May.

37:32 We all went ashore in the morning, most of us, and we went up to the hotel in Williamstown and they had free beer. So we were all having a few beers, and I decided I would go up to town. I got on the train, at Williamstown, and the electric train went through to Essedon and back again. At two o’clock I woke up and I was still on the train.

38:01 I got off at Melbourne, and then I met our leading signalman, Nick Crowley, then we danced around Melbourne, until it got dark. Then we went back to the ship. We finished up our boiler clean and then off we went up to New Guinea again. So that was the only celebration I saw with the people. That was very interesting, actually.

How so?

Well, everyone was excited

38:30 and singing, and very rightly so. It was really electric, because all the streets in Melbourne were absolutely full of people. Everybody was just everywhere, so they all congregated into the city, and it was very exciting. There was a lot of relief as well.

Were the navy given a lot of respect? Were you wearing your uniform?

Melbourne were very good. They liked their sailors, very much so.

39:00 But Sydney didn't. They thought they were a bit of the lower class. I think they'd had too much experience with sailors, in Sydney. We weren't liked very much at all, in Sydney.

How could you tell that Melbourne liked you?

It was just a feeling. And the marching through Melbourne…I don't know how many there were at Flinders, but there was a big number there,

39:31 so that was on our marches. The two marches we had, the streets were crowded…It was a bit like Anzac Day here. It was very good, very exciting.

What else was going on because of VE Day? You said one of the pubs was giving away free beer…

Yeah, I think everybody was. But

40:02 But my role was bringing everybody back to the ship. They might have been a little bit tipsy, but I don't think I had any more after that. It was enough for me, having some beer in the morning. But it wasn't a…alcoholic people. Everybody was just so excited and so relieved. It was a wonderful

40:30 feeling. It was just glorious.

One of the happier days of your life?

Oh, my word.

We'll just end there.

Tape 5

00:42 **If we could just go back to Milne Bay. You were living in quite unusual circumstances there, and having spent years also as an architect later on, can you take me back to that hut you were living in and talk about it in some detail.**

Yes.

01:00 What happened was that along the shore, like any beach or shore, and particularly while there was a lot of stuff being loaded and unloaded…There was lots of stuff that was blown up on the shore, and there was lots of timber. So what we did was we collected all that up, and we built up a platform of timber, and we made a timber flooring, which was a bit rough, but at least it was a flat floor, up about three feet

01:30 above the ground. Then we put some posts up, all the way around. Then we got the natives to help us. We put some cross beams and made a triangular truss, over the top. Then some (UNCLEAR). Then they came along, and they used some palm leaves, and they used a thin stem, about half an inch diameter, and they laid their green

02:00 palms over this to make a bit like a daydo. They started at the top and they put the first one on…I beg your pardon, they started at the bottom and worked their way up, so each one overlaps, so it's pretty dense. Like a thatching. So they covered the roof for us. The we got some mosquito nets from the NIOC,

02:30 and some camp stretchers, so we were able to have stretchers to sleep on. We had our mattresses out of our hammocks. They were quite narrow, but quite good. So we had our sleeping quarters. We got a stove from I don't know where, but they got a stove for us. But the natives did it.…all we just gave them was some bully beef, and they did the roof for us. It was a bit technical for us, at that time.

03:00 So they helped us put the roof on. So then we had a hut and we put a railing around the outside, open on the end towards the signal hut, and that was our quarters. We then got our food and stuff, our bully beef and so forth, from the NIC. We cooked our meals and had our coffee. We made our coffee out of big saucepans. And I was

03:30 taught by one of the chappies who was on the Canberra that joined us, and he was a survivor the Canberra, that which sunk. And he taught us how to make coffee, that we had to boil the coffee in a big saucepan, and then we put the coffee on the top and tapped the sides and let it go for about three minutes. Then the coffee was made. And it was very nice coffee, too. Then, we only used to heat up stuff, I suppose.

04:00 We didn't use to do any recipes or anything else. We'd get bread from the NOIC. So, that was much better, palatial. I was thinking today, what we did about our toilet arrangements. But I think we just went into the bush with a shovel. We didn't have any latrines as you would normally have. So we just did our own personal.…ablutions.

04:30 We used our little stream that was still running. Nice, clean water. Which was drinkable water. We used to have a shower….We did get from the natives, one of them was a long tree boat. What you'd call a tree boat, which is like what the Aboriginals have, which is like a sausage, open inside, like a cigar more or less, and a couple of paddles.

05:02 They gave us some beautiful paddles that were made like the shape of a leaf. So we used to go out and go for a paddle, for exercise more or less. And then somebody would just lean over, and all of us, about four or five, we'd all go into the water. Then we'd get up and we'd swish it backwards and forward to get rid of the water. Then we'd try and get back without falling over. That was some of the time. We used to pass the time, possibly.

05:33 **If not for the warships in the harbour, it sounds like a fairly idealic existence.**

Well, there were all palm trees and all such things around. The airport was just further down the road. We had our slit trenches just alongside the hut, that we could get to, if necessary. We had a couple of scares, but nothing…They didn't come over and bomb us, fortunately.

When you say

06:00 **you had a couple of scares, what happened?**

We had some red alerts. We were all ready to duck down, hop down, but they didn't eventuate. They must have repelled them before they came, apparently.

And were there usually ships in that harbour?

Oh yes.

So on any given day, as you wake up in the morning, what sort of sights would you see as you looked out?

Well, it varied. We had eighty or ninety ships there at one stage. Particularly when they were preparing to go north,

06:30 then it got a little bit less as it went. But there were always ships in the harbour, coming and going all the time.

It must have been a prime target…

Oh, absolutely, yes.

So who was guarding it?

Well, they had the Airforce. They had the Boeffer Squadron, which was down a little bit further along from us, and they had an airstrip there. They were Boeffer bombers, fighter bombers, and they were going out all the time. And they had Port Moresby, and they had another squadron there

07:00 that went up. They had Spitfires and I think they had Boeffers as well, as perhaps Kitty Hawks as well, I think they had. They were the two main prime ones. They didn't have much shipping, because before I got there, Rabaul had sent quite a fleet of ships to take Milne Bay, and go down to through the Coral Sea, take Port Moresby and come south, to Australia. But they

07:30 repulsed that convoy. And then Milne Bay, they landed, up between us and Meemeearah, where our spotting station was, they landed there, but they were repulsed and they withdrew from Milne Bay. And that is the first time they had a defeat, during the war, at Milne Bay. That was before I got there. So then that

08:00 really the turn of the tide. Then they had the Coral Sea battle, which was just before I got there. That was while I was in training. They sank the two Japanese aircraft carriers, so that was really the turning point, as far as Australia was concerned. Then it was a case of following them back, taking the route that they had taken down, gradually. And the Americans went further up, further north.

08:31 And left the clean-up of Borneo and Torokina and all the Japanese parts there, north of New Guinea, to clean those out, to the clean the Japanese out, and make it safe as far as that was concerned. They were left a bit behind, and the historians say they weren't very happy about that. About not being in the front line, more or less, but I think they did a very good job. It was one of the things that had to be done.

09:00 A nasty job. Going ashore and ratting them out. We went ashore a few times, and of course, a lot of the Japanese tanks and trucks and things were just abandoned in the jungle. Even then the jungle was growing over them. It didn't take very long.

You were saying there could be up to ninety ships in that harbour?

Yes, there would be. It was quite a big harbour.

And what provisions were there

09:30 **on shore for sailors or for the troops coming through….**

Not very much. There was only a wharf, and the wharf had one ship over, which was sunk during the attack. The initial attack. That was still there. So they loaded across that, and they loaded onto wharf. There wasn't a great deal of wharf for loading and unloading. There wasn't a lot of unloading and loading, because they were preparing the stuff they had for further north. But, at least

10:00 they had to come in and refresh for water and provisions for their food and that sort of thing. So I think most of their armament was already on board. So they didn't have to come off and go back again. But then the landing of troops? Well, they'd land those usually with a barge, straight up the shore. They had to walk through the water and ashore. That's how the 9th Divvy [Division] came in. They gave them exercises to go across the bay and they went through one of the American army camps there.

10:31 And I think they said they had things out on the line, drying out. There was just nothing left when the Australian divvy went through. But that was just a bit of a sideline.

So you had an American army camp….

They were across the bay. Then they had a motor torpedo boat station further out on…It would be the southern side of Milne Bay, not the northern side. The northern side was where I went up to Meemeearah,

11:00 this was the southern side, where they had a torpedo boat station.

So there's the wharf, and up to ninety boats in the harbour, and then there's how many of you in your hut?

Eight of us.

So you were the permanent residents on the beach?

That's right, and the battery next door.

And how did you get along with your eight? You must have been a tight knit crew?

Yes, it was quite good.

11:32 I think I had a bit of a fight with one, after I had been there for two or three weeks, something about the tent, I can't remember what it was. But we had a bit of a fisticuffs, then we came to our situation where we agreed with each other, and we lived together, more or less. I've forgotten what it was.

Did you have a bit of fun while you were there?

Oh yes. Going out for a bit of a swim and going out in our canoe, was a bit of fun. That was about all.

12:01 **And you were responsible for messages for any boats that came into that harbour?**

Or back, and vice-versa.

That would have been a lot of work.

Oh yes, it kept you going pretty well. There were always signals coming up. They wanted water or they wanted a particular part for one of their guns, or they wanted some more ammunition or they wanted some more food. They were always asking those sort of things and keeping them up to date.

So they would be signalling or 'Morsing' you from the ships?

12:31 Yes, we had a call sign and they would call us and we would answer. Some of them were a bit hard to understand.

Why is that?

Oh, if they were foreign, Swedish, some of the Merchant ships weren't Australian. Some were English and some were others. All nationalities, really.

So some boats that were coming in, they weren't necessarily to do with the war?

They were all to do with the war, but they were from different countries. They were Merchant ships,

13:00 that did a tremendous job during the war. They carried all the supplies and so forth. And then they'd bring in some supplies, that the DC3s [DC3 Douglas Dakota bomber] would take off and take out and drop somewhere. Drop to the spotters that were there, up in different places, spotting on the Japanese. They'd do that sort of thing.

It sounds like a lot of activity there.

There was. We didn't have much time to mess around on watch, anyway.

13:31 At night, it was fairly quiet. But during the day there wasn't much time, you were going most of the time, which was good, because it passed the time as well.

Could the Japanese have intercepted your…

They could have, they could have sent bombers or anything. If they had wanted to. But they were, really, looking after their retreat from Buna and from further up. That's what kept them occupied, I think.

So they were running scared by that time?

14:00 I don't know whether they were running scared, but they were looking after themselves as best they could.

And what opinion did you have of the American troops? You must have had a wee bit to do with them.

Not a great deal. There wasn't that many American troops there. They seemed to bypass Milne Bay. They went straight up to Manus. They had a big American base in Manus. But their navy was in there quite a bit.

14:31 So there wasn't a great of deal of Americans that I came into contact with.

Was there much difference between their navy and ours?

When I went back on the cruiser, it was a very tight ship. As I say, they were all in their dungarees and their denim, all the same. It was a very good ship. They would look after themselves as far as food was concerned.

15:01 We went down to breakfast and we had maple syrup and all this sort of stuff. And we were absolutely full to the boot when we had finished. And ice-cream and all this sort of stuff. But at ten o'clock we were starving. It was not a decent breakfast as far as we were concerned. It was light, but it wasn't filling. It wasn't steak and eggs or anything else like that.

15:32 But they were very well looked after and they had a very good mess. They had a good kitchen, and they were well equipped, as far as the ship was concerned.

And then you went off to Orokolo Bay from Milne Bay?

Yes.

And you had to set up somewhere to live there?

No, that was already done. They had the same huts. That was already established.

16:00 And different to Milne Bay, because the officers were right with us. They were all together, we were all together in a tight confine, more or less. Up on top of the hill, looking out to sea, bringing all the ships in. And there was a reef o n the northern side and we had to signal to tell them if they were coming too close to the reef, when they were coming in. They had to keep right over on the southern side, because that's where the channel was. They had to be very careful. Trying to

16:30 signal them in if they weren't English speaking was a little bit difficult, but we got them through in there, all right, and out again.

So that would have been quite dicey work at times? Bringing ships in…

Yeah. We had to make sure they were all right. And they had a big hospital ship there, for most of the time. And they were treating the wounded from Buna.

17:01 **Who's hospital ship was that?**

Well, that was an Australian, and they had one of the chappies on board that was a neighbour of mine, he actually rented a place next to us in Millswood. And he was a third officer, I think. He invited me around there once, and I got a ride on one of the water tankers and got round and got a little boat out to sea in.

17:33 That was quite interesting, to see him, and have a yarn with him. Then I came back again…

And you had a look around the ship?

That's right, I had a good look around the hospital ship, which was well equipped and well done. They were having a bit of a party, and I don't know what they were doing with their orange juice, but they put something in it, some sort of alcohol. I remember coming home, I was singing on top of the water tanker coming back, so

18:00 I was pretty happy if I remember rightly.

Can you remember what you were singing?

No, I can't.

And was it all men serving on the hospital ship?

There were some nurses on board. I don't know about the officers that were running the ship, I presume they were all male, I think.

Because you wouldn't have seen women for a while, at this stage?

No, no. I didn't see hardly any at all.

And was there anyone back home at this stage that you were writing to?

18:31 I had a girlfriend, or an acquaintance, that I used to write to. But she didn't want anything to do with me, before I even came home. She gave me the message in a note.

You got a Dear John letter?

Well, it wasn't exactly a Dear John, but I could read between the lines. She married another sailor, so I suppose she was happy.

19:00 **Did you ever have any contact with the Japanese? Did you ever come close to…**

Only when we were ashore, a couple of places. We went ashore to have a look at their…I think it was off Borneo, because they had previously, just before I joined the ship, they had gone in with a landing party, and shelled the shore and so forth. And we went back to sea how they had gone on. We went ashore and there was all this equipment that was rotting more or less, and there were Japanese in their camp.

19:30 They were caught, but they were just living together before they were taken away as prisoners of war. So that's about the only time that I had any contact with them, really.

You were with the party that went back to the beach to check?

Yes, this was not in Orokolo Bay, this was up in Borneo. This was while I was on the Townsville.

So were you reasonably close?

Oh yes, they were just there. They were in a tent.

20:00 They were there in a holding camp, really, and the army were there, they were looking after them. Until they took them away as POW [Prisoners of War].

What attitude did you have towards the Japanese?

Oh, later on I changed, but I didn't have much time for them. I didn't mention earlier on, before I went up to Milne Bay, before I left Sydney, I went to the pictures the night before I was to leave. And I got up the back,

20:30 and they put on a newsreel and they were beheading Australians and the English. This bloke next to me said, "Where are you going?" And I said, "I'm just going up north." He said, "You won't last up there very long." But anyway, it's only heresy. You've got to be there to see it.

Were you expecting to have more trouble than you did?

Oh, I just went and

21:00 took it day by day, that's all. I'm a bit that way, I suppose, that I just don't worry. I looked to what we'd do in the future, but I lived for the day, more or less.

Was that a good coping mechanism?

I reckon it was. I think so. If you worry too much about it, what's the good of worrying? It doesn't help you in any way.

But were there times when you did get seriously worried?

Well, it was only on odd occasions, really.

21:35 Being a passenger was the worst, going up to Milne Bay. That was my first experience, and you were a bit worried even going on a convoy, when they started dropping depth charges. You wondered what's going to happen, were you going to sink? That was the only real difficulty that you didn't know exactly what was going to happen. If you had a bit of faith, that was all right.

22:00 That sustained you, or it sustained me.

Given the unique position you had in Milne Bay and Orokolo Bay, being on the beach and seeing a lot of coming and going, you must have been privy to a lot of the gossip going around, about the state of the war. What kind of things do you remember hearing?

Well, not really, because we didn't really get to talk to them. We were

22:30 there in our signal station, up off the beach, and you would see everything that was going on, but you wouldn't get really much in contact with them. So we didn't have a great deal of contact. It was all navy, navy, navy. We were talking a lot, of course, with the battery, when we were living with them. But that was different matter. The most talk was about home and what was going on at home. That was what we were

23:00 mostly talking about. It wasn't so much about the war. We were there to get on with it, and we'd worry about that in the future. But we did talk about home, what was happening at home, any news of home, that was the most interesting part.

And was there any news?

Not a great deal. Those that…well, even their background, it was surprising. South Australia is a very… not inbred, but it's a very close state. A bit like Tasmania. And if

23:30 we did meet a bunch of people and start talking, there would be someone who lived in South Australia that lived down at Woodville and they always knew somebody else. It was absolutely fascinating that they would know somebody that you knew. Not a direct connection, but it was quite amazing.

I think that's true that South Australia was, and is still, a close knit community.

And then travelling from Sydney to Brisbane, you see, it took

24:00 about two days. You were in a compartment with eight others, more or less, you'd talk about things then. You'd talk about what you were going to do after the war, all this sort of stuff. But you don't worry too much about the war. It was just normal talk between blokes.

When you were there, did you see an end to the war? Or did you imagine that it was going to go on a lot longer?

After VE [Victory in Europe] Day,

24:31 that was the turning point that I felt anyway, that we would knock off the Japanese. We didn't know when, because if they had to invade Japan there would have been a terrific loss of life on both sides, I'm sure. We all talked about the atomic bomb when it did go off, but it went off, and the war was over. Bang. I felt that was a great thing, because that was the end of it. Although it meant a

25:02 lot of loss of life and so forth, and it sounded very, very inhuman, that was the only way they could have stopped the war, in my opinion. They would have gone on, they would have fought to the last ditch. And that would have been a loss of lot more people, I think. It's interesting. I went up to Japan and went to Nagasaki and Hiroshima, in 1970, and it was very moving. Very moving going into those two cities, and the memorial they had there.

25:31 The eternal flame. It was very moving.

Did you change your life about the meaning of the bomb? Of the importance…

Well, I always felt that if it ended the war, then it was justified, in a way. I don't like it at all, and I think it's terrible. But it did end the war. So I was satisfied with that. And then the Japanese…After that, I never had any real grudge against them

26:00 as far as a permanent grudge. They didn't do it, it was all the people up top. Tojo [Hideki Tojo] and his crew that were orchestrating everything. The general people, they couldn't do much about it. They were the same as we were. They were just in a situation they couldn't do anything about. That didn't worry me.

What was your opinion of the fact that they were not respecting the Geneva Convention?

26:30 Oh, that was terrible. I had friends that came back from…And also my cousin's husband, that came back from Changi. That was terrible. And it was so unnecessary, really, what they put them through. But they were just wonderful, the things they did, how they coped with it for so long. It's really something in the Australian character that's there. I don't know what it is, but I think it's wonderful.

27:00 And also those that were home. Gertrude, she was…She had three children to look after. She was always bright. You could see she was suffering. It was awful, the future. She didn't know if she would be a widow, or what would happen.

And she would have had no idea what was going on?

Not a clue, she didn't have any idea.

And what did happen to him in Changi?

27:31 **He survived?**

Oh yes, he survived and he came back. He was quite a character, and he then looked after the children, he got a job.

Did he talk to you about his experiences?

No, he wouldn't say much about it. And I didn't like to press him. Perhaps now, you might be able to, like you're doing. But then it was too soon, we were thinking of other things.

28:02 **And do you remember where you were the day that you heard the bombs had been dropped on**

Japan?

No, we didn't know. I think we only knew after the war was over, that that was what had happened. No, we had no idea they were going to drop atomic bombs.

So VE Day comes and that was a great time…

I was very lucky to be in Melbourne at that time. Then we went straight up to New Guinea again, and the South Pacific.

I just want to take you back to VE Day.

28:31 **If everyone's happy and having a great time and feeling a bit liberated, you would have caught up with a few girls that time, wouldn't you?**

No, no. As I say, I picked up our leading signalman and took him home. He was a bit worse for the weather. He was the one, I took up with him and danced all around Swanson Street, then I took him back to the ship, and put him to bed, more or less.

29:00 I seemed to have a time of doing that quite often. But no, I didn't have any idea or any inclination of picking up a girl, or anything like that.

Were you quite shy?

I was a bit shy, I suppose as far as the female sex was concerned.

And you hadn't had much to do with them, really. You were in an all male school and then the navy?

That's right, I was at school with boys, and as I say, I was an only son.

29:30 I had a couple of cousins that were girls, but that's about as close as I got.

So how did you find Maisie then?

Well, I came back and started my leaving. She had a great friend Bob Morrow, and he died not very long afterwards. And he was a bit keen on Maisie, apparently.

30:00 Mrs Morrow didn't like this very much. She thought they were getting a bit close. So she sort of knocked that off. But she very good to Maisie, after she knew that Peter Bocco had died, or had disappeared in India. They still haven't found him, I don't know what happened to him.

This is during the war?

This is during the war. He was in the air force, he was a DC3 pilot. He was acting out of Agartala, which is north west of India, and they disappeared.

30:32 The air force said they went into a storm, but they never found anything. They don't know whether he was supplying the Chinese with war materials or…Anyway, her friend said, "Why don't you come to a party?" It was a blind date more or less. So I said, "Yes," and went along, I liked Maisie.

31:00 I was very busy doing a course, so I didn't do very much. I didn't do much. Something else came up, and it's a terrible thing to say, but I got invited to a party and I thought, "Now who the devil can I go to the party with?" So I rang up Maisie and said would she like to come to this party, yes she would. Well, that was the start and that was the finish of it. After that, I'd see her on the weekends, I'd work during the day, doing the course. That was the leaving,

31:30 in 1947. I didn't see her during the week, but I used to go up Saturday afternoon, or perhaps Sundays to see her, because I was busy doing the course. That year, we got engaged on the 8th of December, and I had to go and ask her father…First of all I said to Maisie, "Would you ask

32:00 your father whether he can go and get an order?" Because he was in (UNCLEAR) Farmers, and he was the buyer. So he'd get an order and get wholesale things, so we could go to (UNCLEAR) and get a ring, you see. So she went and asked her father and he said, "What do you want that for?" And she said, "We want to go to Slanks." I think he knew what was going on, anyway. So he gave us the order and we went and got an engagement ring. I went and asked him whether I could take her hand. He said, "I can't do much about it now, you've got the ring. Haven't you?"

32:32 So that was that. I then went and had an operation on my knee, this was when I was medically discharged. It was giving me trouble, it would click out all the time, and it would swell up and I would fiddle around and it would go back again. So I went back to the repat and said, "Can't I see a specialist?" So they finally sent me to a doctor and he did an operation and took the fluid,

33:00 and got rid of the loose cartilages and it was good as gold after that. So I was in a hospital, just after our engagement. I went in during the holidays. I didn't want to go in when I was doing the leaving. Then I went to university, I started university. We went on the same pattern, more or less, until we decided to get married. We got married on the 9th of December, and we went across to Mount Buffalo, for our honeymoon.

33:38 We went up to Buffalo for our 50th. My father sent me a telegram to say that I passed my seven subjects in my first year at university, which I was very pleased about. We came home,

34:00 and I didn't…All I had was the war gratuity, in the bank, which was about one hundred and sixty dollars. We had nowhere to live, when we came back, and there was both our parents, her mother and father and my mother and father, there at the station, and they said, "Well, what are you going to do?" And mother said, "You can come back to our place." And Maisie said, "No way. Over my dead body," more or less. So

34:31 Mrs Bridgeman said, "We're going away for a week, you can come home to our place and see what you can do." So we went up to Maisie's. They said, "You can have the sleepout, out the back." So we had the sleepout. We brought a little stove and put it on a stand. We put the

35:02 double bed in this corner, and there was enough room to put a desk to do my studies and design. We put a curtain up on the ceiling, halfway over the double bed, so Maisie could go to sleep while I went on working. So we were there for about nine months, I suppose, before we got a trust home down at Edwardstown, and we moved down there.

35:30 So we were very together, for the first bit of it, anyway. The [Commonwealth] Reconstruction Training Scheme was really a wonderful scheme. It was brought in by Chifley [Ben Chifley, Australian Prime Minister], I think, the Labor prime minister. They paid us, I think when I first started it was three pounds five shillings a week. Plus all our fees.

36:02 Then I went on that, and then when we got married it went up to five pounds. Maisie had her leave when she got married. Before we got married she was working at Udunda Farmers, they said, "You have to leave. We can't have you back here when you're married." So she got a job at the Milk Board from ten to four, so that helped a bit. So we scrapped through that, and then next year…

36:30 It was about twenty months later when Jane was born. So we had Jane and Gayle at Edwardstown. We were there for….eight, nine years. Then we brought a place at Kingswood, an old place. We did it up, made it a very nice home for the children. It had a big lawn, all the way around. This was a lovely old place,

37:00 on a huge block, two hundred feet deep, lawn all the way around. It was a lovely family home.

Were you at university when your was born?

Yes. I think I was in third year. I finished the first year, then we were married…It was the beginning of the third year.

So the money from the government

37:30 **scheme was paying you to attend?**

That's right. It was like a wage as well. It was just a wonderful scheme. I would never have been able to do it, otherwise. I couldn't afford.

And that was for all the service people?

Those that applied, and they had to go through a screen, they went before a board and they said, "What have you done? What's your qualifications?" And they were very good. They gave me a year to do the leaving, which was matriculation at that stage, at that time.

38:00 **And you had your eye on doing architecture from….You had made that decision earlier on?**

They came and said, "What do you want to do?" I said I wanted to be a farmer, but I couldn't be a farmer, so I said, "My second choice is architecture." So they said, "Yes, you can do that." So away I went.

What planted that seed?

Well, my father was an engineer, and as I say, we would always be putting things together…I just liked architecture. I didn't have much to do with it.

38:30 I hadn't seen much overseas, except for the cities, Melbourne and Brisbane and Sydney, etc, but…

And your hut?

Yes, that's right. I liked putting things together and building things, always have.

And which university were you going to?

Well, it was a funny thing. Because at the School of Mines and Industries, they had a course which was called

39:00 a diploma in architecture, and the University of Adelaide didn't have a school of architecture, so the course was to go to the University of Adelaide to do a Bachelor of Engineering, which I did. At the same time, I went across to the School of Mines and Industries to do our design and mechanics. We went to the School of Arts, and we did free drawing and modelling. And so we did those three courses, and so

39:30 what I got was a Fellowship Diploma at the School of Mines and Industries and a Bachelor of Engineering in Architecture at the University of Adelaide, and a diploma of free drawing and things from the School of Art. I graduated at the end of 1953, and I received my awards in April, 1954.

We'll just finish there.

Tape 6

00:43 **You were talking before about building your huts, and you had some help from the natives. Can you tell me how that relationship was established?**

I'm not actually sure, because I was away up at Meemeearah

01:00 when they started that, so I'm not sure. But they were in the area. How they actually contacted them, I don't know. But when I came back, they were all ready and I was there when they erected the one. I know we gave them some bully beef and so forth, and talked to them. I don't know how they originally organised it, because I wasn't there.

What do you remember of the people themselves?

01:30 There wasn't a great of interaction, not at Milne Bay. There was out at Meeneearah, because we were more or less solely dependent on them, really, for some fresh fruit and so forth, and a nice big bunch of bananas. They just came and went occasionally. But when they did come, they helped us. It only took them…It only took them a day and a half and they were finished the roof, and we did the rest.

Did you have a name for them?

02:01 No. I couldn't remember any names.

Were you aware of the fact that they were helping Australians in other areas?

Yes, we had heard about the Kokoda Trail and all the help they did there. For the very little contact I had with them,

02:30 I just had a feeling that they were a lovely people. They were so open, and it was so strange and new for me, because I had never had any contact with Aborigines or New Guineans before I got to that situation. That was something new that I was excited about, really.

03:03 **What had you heard about Kokoda?**

Only what we had heard about on the media, what was happening, and particularly about the assistance of the New Guineas, helping them. Then when I went up to Meemeearah, we had more contact with the two lads they sent across with us. They were about twelve. They were eating beetle

03:30 nut and stuff, and we taught them how to clean their teeth and how to wash their hands. I suppose we thought we were helping them, but they had been living there for centuries, so they didn't need to wash their hands, I'm sure. But we were trying to show them a little bit about how we lived.

What were the boys doing for you?

Oh, they'd come and help us cook, put the stove on. They were excited to

04:00 come in helping us. They just wanted to know to do things and see what we were doing.

And you were teaching them how to brush their teeth?

Yes, that is one of the things I remember.

I can imagine that being quite difficult, trying to explain to someone about brushing teeth…

Yes, that's right. I didn't think much of the beetle nut because it made all their teeth go red. But it's a standard thing, apparently.

04:30 **Did you try any?**

No. They must have had somebody living there, probably ANGAU, that's the Australian New Guinea Patrol people because they had the little huts, they were already there when we got there. And the one up on the hill was camouflaged, so they must have been watching there when the Japanese actually attacked.

05:02 They had, what we called, a long drop. All around the island is a reef, that's about a depth of two feet, eighteen inches. And then there's a reef out at the edge. They had some logs stretching out over the water, above the high tide and a little hut with a little thing over the top of it, and that was the latrine.

05:31 It just went out into the ocean, it went over the other side of the reef. The reef, because it used to fluctuate to from about six inches deep up to about two feet, depending on the tide. We used to go and catch some fish sometimes. We'd take our rifle, wade out, and the fish seemed to be two or three together. You had to fire above them,

06:00 because you had to allow for the changing speed of the bullet as it went through the air and hit the water, it would go down. So you couldn't aim for the fish, you had to aim above it, and we used to stun them. So we'd get some fish, two or three, and we'd cook those, so were a little bit of our food. But we didn't have much time to do that, but if you did have time that's what you would go and do. On a decent day,

06:30 when it was clear and you could see the fish.

Is that the only time you had to use small arms?

Yes, only that. At Orokolo Bay we did a bit, but just practise. Terrible really, but we used to go out, across the hill behind, there was a dark volcanic rock. You could fire….and I suppose it was…

07:00 a thousand yards it would be at least. And you would fire and it would leave a little white dot, in the rock. Then we could use that as a target for practise, more or less. But we didn't have to do very much, other than trying to sink a mine. We'd try it with a three oh three first, and if it didn't work, they would get the five millimetre, which was the gun on the side of the bridge.

07:30 That was a bit stronger. They'd fire that to do it. I didn't have it in combat, so….

You never tried to take the fuse out of the mines? It wasn't possible?

No, that's right. They were old and you couldn't. Even to undo them would be very difficult, with all the growth that goes on. You might shake it and set it off, so you couldn't do that.

08:02 **When you were in PNG and various places and on the Townsville, do you remember hearing any music at all?**

No. We didn't have any at Milne Bay, but at Orokolo Bay, we'd have a picture night, occasionally. Once every week or so.

08:31 That was about any music we had, other than the radio. We had the radio, but we didn't have music on. We would be using it most of the time.

What sort of movies were they watching?

I remember one that was very interesting. It was…a very nice girl, somebody Lamond I think it was, and somebody else. And he had a vision and he could

09:00 understand or work out what was coming out in the paper the next day. So they were making bets, they knew which horse would win. That was one that I remember, which was a funny story. But there wasn't too many, because we didn't' get them that often.

What facilities did you have to see for seeing the films?

They'd just have logs laid out on the countryside, near the army camp.

09:30 You'd sit down and they'd put up a screen, just out in the open. There was no theatre or anything else. It was just a projector.

And what was powering that?

They'd have a generator, working back a bit, behind, so it didn't make too much noise. They'd use that for their lighting and their sound.

Did you sing any songs on the ship or anywhere else to pass time?

10:00 No. They did, I think, before I came. At Christmas, they had a big celebration on board the Townsville and they had items they put on. I can't remember what happened for the Christmas I was there. I think we were either underway or we couldn't do anything. We were in convoying or something. So Christmas bypassed me, more or less.

Did you do anything special for Christmas on the boat, normally?

10:31 Normally they'd have some celebrations. Normally they'd make the captain be a seaman, they'd reverse the roles. All in fun. I didn't do that because we were busy.

Were you getting any mail?

Yes, we'd get mail whenever we could. It was always fairly late.

11:01 My mother very kindly sent me up a birthday cake, she said. And she made a fruit cake and she sent me a note beforehand to say that she'd sent it. And she put some brandy in it, to preserve it. But when it came…I actually got it up at Meemeearah, and it had like a lawn, about half an inch of green growth on

the top. So anyway,

11:30 we cut that off and the rest was very nice. It was quite nice. So we shared that around. And the other thing in the navy, and it didn't happen until I got on board, but they had a Ladies Guild in Adelaide, that use to parcel up almonds, raisins, some dried fruits, apricots and a few of those things.

12:00 They'd make up a tin and send it off to the South Australians. We were most popular when the mail came in and we got one of these, the South Australians. You'd open these up with dried apricots and raisins and almonds, and they were lovely. They did a wonderful job. They used to send socks as well. Knit socks and so forth. It wasn't a Comfort Fund, it was a special one for the navy. I can't remember the name, but they were wonderful.

12:30 **Did any of the other states have similar…**

Not as far as I know. We were fortunate. We were very popular when they came.

Were you ever involved in having to shell the shore, as support?

Yes. We went once, I think, towards Borneo, and they sent a landing party in.

13:01 I think they weren't worried too much about it, but we had to shell a bit, then they went in and they cleared up the area. That's when we went ashore afterwards and saw all the old, rusty material. The Japanese, they had encircled them and they were holding them prisoner, so we had a look and came off again. We escorted some landing craft. They weren't ship landing craft. They were just the ordinary

13:30 open American landing craft, with a bay in the front that drops down onto the shore.

Was it frightening at all to be shelling? To be in that kind of action?

No, we didn't know if they were going to shell us back again, but they didn't. So we were fortunate enough. But you just didn't know.

Who was giving you the positions?

The army were ashore. Once they'd gone ashore, I think earlier on, and they had established

14:01 a base and they were sending us signals of where they wanted it. I know one time they told us to stop shelling, we were getting too close to them.

And you went ashore…that was later, wasn't it?

That's right, that's true. It really wasn't a shore where they had to fight. They fairly soon capitulated.

14:31 There wasn't a terrific amount of resistance.

So you didn't have a horrible experience going ashore? It had all been tidied up by then?

That's right. I didn't have too many horrible experiences. I was very lucky actually.

Did any of the other men injure themselves on board?

No.

15:00 Our worst experiences, I think, were cyclones. That was the worst. We used to roll and rock and pitch and toss. But they were good little ships that we had a lot of confidence in.

Can you tell us about the circumstances leading up to your accident and your discharge?

15:30 Yes, after we started mine-sweeping down the coast, we called in to Sydney, briefly, and the skipper went ashore and….he didn't come back. Because his daughter had chicken pox, so he was quarantined. Because he had been on the ship before, we were quarantined also. We got down to Wilson's Promontory.

16:04 We did our mine-sweeping, that was no problem. We could do our duties, but we were quarantined. And they were going into Melbourne for three days leave, so they said, "You will have to stay down at Wilson's Promontory." So we went into the bay and anchored. But before that, we ran into a storm, off the east coast, going into towards Bass Strait. And

16:30 And we were directed to take on some extra fuel to last us for the week we were there. So we had to go alongside the sloop, the [HMAS] Swan, which was the flotilla leader, at night. And the poor old first lieutenant who had taken over command of the ship, that was his first command, and he was a bit green. But it was very difficult. Because the Swan had anchored, and we had to go up alongside

17:00 and tie up and then bring our hose across to fill up our oil. He went in alongside, and we scrapped alongside quite a distance, along the side of the Swan, then he gave the order, "Full of stern," to get back again. The skipper, this is Captain Armstrong, got the megaphone and called out, "Stop your engines, man!" So we stopped and

17:30 we threw lines and got alongside and finally got our oil. Then we were left and they sailed off for Melbourne. We just dropped anchor in Wilson's Promontory. And the third day, I think it was, the HMAS Glory came past, that we took the surrender for, in Rabaul Harbour, and gave me the signal to challenge.

18:02 I was not on the bridge, because we had just painted the bridge, we were cleaning up for peace time work. And I was right down aft, and I had to run to try and get up to the Aldis lamp. Going up the stairs I fell over and twisted my knee. I finally hobbled up to the Aldis lamp and gave the signal and they went on. I got my leg like that, and I couldn't straighten it. I was down in the mess,

18:32 I couldn't do anything. I could hardly even hobble around. So they then, when we sailed off to Melbourne, they took me to [HMAS] Cerberus, they took me ashore and I was in hospital there about a month and then had a bit of leave. I finally got to straighten it a bit. Then I came back and I was given a discharge then. I was discharged back to Adelaide.

Had you down much damage to the sloop, previously?

19:01 No, just scrapped a bit of paint off. All very exciting while it was happening. It was all right.

And did the other sailors give you hell, having tripped over a step, or did you get away quite lightly?

Oh, no, they took it quite all right. They got me down to our mess and I just stayed there, really, until we went back to Cerberus.

Do you remember what Cerberus looked like to you now?

19:30 **Did it feel different to when you were a fresh young thing?**

No, it was just a huge area of lawn and gravel, which was the parade ground, and the two storey huts. And there was a cheer-up hut, which was a pre-fab [pre-fabricated] building…

A cheer-up hut?

Like a cheer-up hut. It was an assembly hall, but they did have concerts there and put a film on occasionally.

20:01 **And there was some sort of hospital there, or a medic?**

There must have been a hospital, because I was in a little ward with about five or six. It wasn't very big. Another sailor and myself were the only two in there, at that time. Most of them had been discharged, those who were going to be discharged. Because this was nine months after the VJ [Victory over Japan] Day.

20:37 **And so what did you do to pass your time?**

I just had to read, and waited. I didn't know what the devil was going to happen. Because we had no medical assistance on board, and we didn't know what to do. I found out afterwards I should have straightened it, straight away, even though it hurt like anything. But anyway, that's…

What had you done?

21:00 I left it bent.

Did you ever find out what kind of injury it was?

No, only that it was cartilage. I think I dislodged, damaged the cartilage. A normal footballers thing, I suppose.

So then what did the navy say when you…

They gave me a discharge and said you were going back to Torrens. I went back to Torrens, I handed in my…

21:30 hammock and stuff and then sent off home. I got the bus home.

How were you feeling about that, after your years of service?

Oh, I was feeling all right. But I was disappointed that I had to do that. I didn't finish off properly, that's the thing that disappointed, but I couldn't do anything about that. Once I got it moving,

22:00 I used to go and clean my shoes, and I'd hear a click and it would come up in a ball, and it would take a few days to go down again. I got a bit sick of that.

Were you debriefed before you were discharged?

No, I was just sent off, and that was the end of me. There wasn't any debriefing like they would for pilots on missions. No.

22:33 **Were you interested in your state or mind, or your state of health?**

No. Soon as rid as best. I wouldn't have been able to give them information anyway. I was just a lowly signalman. There was nothing much I could have helped them with, I don't think.

What was your state of mind and state of health at that time, when

23:00 **you were discharged?**

I was as good as gold, other than my knee. That was the only thing.

Had it changed you much?

Oh, I think I was more confident when I came back. I was always happy to try things, but I think I was more confident when I came back. As a person, anyway, with experience. It certainly brought me experience.

23:31 **Are there things in your life today that you can point to and say, "I'd probably do that because of my time in the navy?"**

I think you get into a routine. I'm a great routine bloke, as Maisie will tell you. I like to do things and I look ahead now, but I think that's come from training in architecture, I think, more so than the navy. It was a time that

24:00 you mature. People say, "Well, it's a big slice out of your life." But it's not. Because you get into a routine and you do it. You sort of grow up. Then when you start again, you have that confidence. So I found it very, very good, actually. The navy, they had very strict and rigid

24:30 routines, and if you stuck to that, you were right. It worked out very well. It's so old, they knew what they were doing.

And you can see that now?

I think so. I built on it, I think. And in architecture, you're designing, and you're seeing what it's going to be, so you're looking ahead all the time.

25:00 You're seeing how you can achieve that, so I always look ahead now. It's second nature.

Are you glad you joined the navy?

I am now, yes, very much so. It was a wonderful experience for me.

Why do you say you are now?

Looking back now on it. When you first do it, you're all excited and you don't really know what is going to happen.

25:34 **Let's talk a little bit about your post-war experiences. You did the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme and you were given the opportunity to get architecture, in a variety of different portions and eventually graduate.**

Yes.

26:00 **You were a newly married man, and you had two girls at this time?**

No. During the process I did. Towards the end we had Gale. So they were born while I was doing the course. But there is nearly four years between them, and four years between Gale and Simon. Over an eight year period, we had three.

And what happened when you graduated?

26:33 **Were ex-servicemen easily employed?**

Yes, I think so. We had a wonderful experience going through because they set up a school in Pirry Street to do English, Math 1 and Math 2. Then we cycled out to Unley High, we'd go out two days a week for lunchtime between

27:00 twelve thirty and one thirty and did Chemistry. And then from four to five thirty, we went out the other two days, in the afternoon, after school, and they taught us Physics. So we did Physics, Chem, Math 1, Math 2 and English. They gave us dispensation for the matriculation of another language, other than English. So I didn't have to go on and do French or Latin or those, which I was very pleased about. So that was the first

27:31 part of the course. And that course was made up mostly of ex-servicemen, who had been granted Reconstruction Training Scheme scholarships. And we all met and went and I think we had a school of about sixty or so, in Pirry Street. They were all ex-servicemen. Then when I went to university, there was a big surge and we used to be terribly keen and interested in what we were doing. That

28:00 helped us a lot. We had a lot of interaction amongst ourselves, and the younger students coming on as well. I think they appreciated us as well. So it was a very nice combination, of the younger ones that

hadn’t been away and those others that had come back.

So the student body got along quite well?

Yes, and the teachers were good because they like to have someone that’s a bit keen, I think, and ask awkward questions and so forth.

28:30 The competition between us was pretty high. There was doctors, dentists, surveyors, chemists, all sorts of professions who were going through at the same time.

Was there much competition between the services?

No, not really. I think everyone forgot their services and just went on. I must say there were

29:00 mostly air force. That was the majority. Then was the navy and then there was a few army people.

Why do you suppose that was?

I don’t know. I don’t have any idea. I think perhaps the army were sort of scattered. They didn’t get on board and work together as a real team, together, for too long. They moved about a bit. I think the air force was more like the navy, of getting together. That’s what I think.

29:34 **Had you found much competition between the services when you had been in the navy?**

Not really, I didn’t come up against them very much.

There weren’t too many jokes about army and air force?

Oh, we used to throw off at the air force a bit. The ‘Blue Lillie’s or the ‘Blue Tulips’ we used to call them, but that’s all. I used to take my hat off to the army,

30:00 I was very sympathetic towards them. I thought they had…not a rough deal, but they really went through the hard part of the war, I think.

Did you know blokes from the army?

Not really, no. Only my cousin’s husband, but that’s all.

You were going to tell you about your friend, who had gone through your entire life?

Well, it just happened by coincidence that

30:30 we joined Westmore Park together, and we went to Scotch together. He went on another year after I left. Then I got a job and he got a job, and we used to see each other. We used to go to church, the Boys’ Society together. Then he went down to Mount Gambier. He had children about the same time, when we had Jane. He had a son.

31:03 They used to live at Clarence Park, near us, we were in contact. Then he went to Mount Gambier. When we used to go away on holidays in September, they used to come up and stay in our house for a fortnight. Then when he came back we’d see him. Now we play golf together every week. He joined Legacy.

31:30 Then I joined Legacy afterwards, not because he joined, but I did join because I always wanted to do something with Legacy, for a long time. So when I retired I put in. I was over age, but they accepted me. I enjoy going to Legacy, it’s a good fellowship and it’s helping widows. So I enjoy that.

What do you do with Legacy?

You look after the widows.

32:00 They’ve got about twelve and a half thousand widows, and they seem to keep that going. There’s about sixty odd die every year, but there’s about another sixty come in, from Vietnam and Korea and so forth. We just look after them, and those that are in difficulties and help them. We don’t get any assistance from the government. It is purely a voluntary organisation. But they just look after any widows of ex-servicemen.

And what do you particularly?

32:30 They allot you to two or three widows, you look after them, and give them a ring and see what they’re doing. If they’re all right, then they’re okay, but they know you’re always there and they can ring you up, if they’ve got any problems or anything else. You visit them immediately, if their husband dies and see if there’s anything you can do to help them. They’ve always got problems coming up.

33:00 It’s a terrible thing, but they seem to take advantage, the community seems to take advantage of widows, when they’re on their own. You’d be surprised at some of the cases that come up, that you have to deal with and fix up for them.

What do you mean? What sort of things?

Well, I can give you one example that I'm doing now. This widow had a husband who was dying of cancer, and they lived down at

33:30 North Brighton. And she wanted to get a deck put down, a timber deck, they had a nice view. So that she could wheel him out in the bed, out there. And she got a contractor to say he'd come and do it. He was busy so he gave it to his brother to look after it, and his brother employed a couple of blokes who weren't really carpenters, and they put it up. It was completely condemned, so they had to pull it down. So we're just pulling it down, and putting up a new one. And she paid seven

34:00 and a half thousand dollars for it. The only thing we could do with him, was to send him to….get his license revoked, but that wasn't going to help anybody, so we finally got him. He did the right thing, he's got another chappie now to come and rebuild it, in accordance with the…He didn't put into council as he was required to do. So we put it into council, got approval and they're just starting now to rebuild it. But the husband in the meantime has died. The poor old thing, you feel sorry for them.

34:32 Obviously he took advantage of her, I suppose. But the main thing is to get it done and get it fixed.

So after you finished university….

We went to Evanstown while I was still in university.

35:00 I got a part-time job with a firm in town, Kenneth Milne. And I went there in between lectures and got a bit of extra money to help us along. Then I graduated. At the end of my graduation I had a call from people at church, I used to go to St Columba. He said, "Would you like to come into the firm?" It was Garlic and Jackman, that was the firm, it had been going for years and years.

35:30 I said, "Oh, that's a very kind offer, but I've been working for Ken Milne while I've been going through the college. I think perhaps I owe him a bit longer. I better stay with him, I owe him something." He said, "That's bad luck." Then over the weekend I was talking to Maisie and I said, "Really, a bloke's a mug. I gave him employment and helped him out, so I think it's about even, I think. I don't think I

36:00 really owe him anything." So I rang him back and said, "If you're happy, I would like to take that up." So he was very pleased. I started with them, almost straight away. That was in 1954, and I retired in 1992, so I was there a very long time. But it was very good, very rewarding, because we did lots of work. We had very good clients that were

36:30 stable clients. Banks. We were very lucky, and I was able to do lots of various works. The first big job I got was for Motor Traders, and that was a spare parts firm in Wakefield Street. They had a sales firm and all their different parts. They had

37:00 a brakes section and they had an engineering section, they did the engines. And they had a big property, a big area, in Wakefield Street, which rent through to the back street. I found out afterwards, they got the job (UNCLEAR) because the firm only had two elderly partners. They said, "You get someone new in and get onto this, you can have the job." Otherwise they were going to take it somewhere else. Anyway, the job was very good, because it meant doing the whole thing. It meant

37:30 doing all the floor coverings, all the furniture, the desks, the chairs, everything, right through, from woe to go, for all the different parts together. It was a very interesting job. I designed it, did all the engineering, did the working drawings, got it through council, supervised it and finished it. We remained with them for a long time. They came back and did various jobs for me afterwards. That was the start.

38:03 We had lots of country jobs, where we did jobs for the State Bank, the Savings Bank, the Commercial Bank, we were the sole architects for them. The Farmer's Union, they had wool stores and so we had quite a lot of work coming in all the time. So it was very busy, but very

38:30 rewarding, being in charge of it and so forth.

You were doing floor coverings and things like that, as well?

We did the whole thing, the decorations, paintings, colours, everything, for them just to walk in.

Have you seen the industry change, where interior design has been separated?

Yes, now. We did have one interior designer that I knew. He came in and gave us a bit of a hand with colours, and that was to help us, more or less, which was good.

39:03 But now they have engineering and mechanics and they have air-conditioning and landscaping….All sorts of things to help them. So they become like a GP [General Practitioner], looking after all those doing all the work. But I liked doing the whole lot. It was very fulfilling, very satisfying.

In post-war

39:30 **Australia, what sort of things were in high demand? It sounds like you were doing industry more than…What sort of things were people looking for in industry at that time? What was big? You mentioned banks. Were there other things that were exploding in growth.**

They were changing. They had different ways of looking after tellers and you had to be very precise in how you set up the tellers. Then

40:00 electronics came in as far as safety precautions from burglaries and that sort of thing. So everything was changing all the time. And they were opening up in the country, so we had a lot of country jobs. The Farmers had about forty or fifty branches, all over the country. So we'd fix those up gradually, do two or three a year, and bring them up to date. Then they brought self-service in. The Farmers used to have the old cashier where they used to pull the chain and the wire went across to the cashier sitting up in

40:30 the middle of the store. Which was quite unique, actually, but that went away of course.

We'll just change tapes.

Tape 7

00:46 **Going back to your years of service, what did you know of what your mother and father were doing in those years? What was going on for them back while you were up in New Guinea?**

Well, it didn't change

01:00 very much because father was still employed in the railways and mother was still doing her thing. So it was unchanged as far as I was concerned. There wasn't much news that came back from Mum, in the letters. They weren't every week, they were every month or so. There wasn't hardly any change at all. When I came back, it hadn't changed.

01:30 It was as if I had walked down the street and come back again. It hadn't changed at all.

Did they express any worry? You could have been in a potentially very…

No, I don't think they worried at all. They might have, but I didn't get any impression of it, anyway. And you've already spoken to us about your life long friend, but the other friends that you had before you left for New Guinea, did they all end up going into the services?

02:02 Not all of them, no. I suppose about half did. But I sort of lost them, really. Most of them. I didn't come in contact with them again. When I got back, I went into study, I was fairly isolated again, studying. I just had the one goal and that took up all my time. I didn't have time to do anything else. I wouldn't say I was a slow learner, but I had to concentrate quite a lot.

02:30 So only seeing Maisie once a week was quite a discipline.

Sounds like Maisie was a worthwhile discipline to keep up?

Oh yes, too right.

Can you tell us what Maisie was doing during the war years?

I think she was employed. She had to leave home when she was fourteen, and leave

03:00 Girton, to look after her mother, who was having a heart attack. The headmistress didn't want her to go, and complained to her father, but he had no other way. So she went home and she helped out. Then she met Peter Bocco, the RAF chap, who went to the air force, and they got on very well together.

03:30 And he was great with the family, with the Bridgemans, and…

How did she meet an RAF [Royal Air Force] man if she was home looking after her mother?

I don't know how that came about, but she must have met him somewhere.

She was working for the air force?

Yes, that was during the war. As far as I know that was nearly after the war. It was after

04:00 Peter was killed anyway, because she then gave up and went over to live her sister in Melbourne, to get over it, more or less, to cope with it.

So she was working for the air force after the war?

No, it was during the war. And then she went back into Udunda Farmers, where her father worked, and worked there.

04:30 Then she left there and she went into the Post Office. Then after the war she then went back to the Milk Board.

Do you know what she was doing in the air force?

He was a pilot on a DC3, it's like a transport.

And what was Maisie doing in the air force?

This was

05:00 just after the war, or after the hostilities had finished, and she was helping them disband. So she was typing letters and so forth. As it happened, she was left up in this one place, and they left her there for a month. They didn't even know she was there, until a chappie came in, a commander came in to look at the place to see what they were going to do with it, and he said, "What the hell are you doing here?" They'd forgotten all about her. So then she had to go out and get a job.

05:33 There was a number of jobs she went to.

Just to make sure we're really clear about your work. Could you describe to me the difference, going back to you as a signalman, the difference between land signals and sea signals.

Yes, there is quite a difference. Land signals, the army use

06:00 like a telephone line. And they do have other radio, but that's their main communication. They do have Aldis light as well, so that's their three one. So with the army, I suppose their despatch riders might come into the same category, they're all communications. Then they'd have telegraphists, which were separate I think. In the navy, the signalmen have been a very long established branch of the navy.

06:32 They are separated, as I said, with the coders, telegraphists and signalmen. Signalmen have always been up on the bridge. The captain…they're no this right hand man, but they're there for the captain to give them instructions, and for him to receive orders. That's really the difference, I think.

And how did you generally get along with your superiors?

07:00 Pretty well, yes. Pretty good. We used to have a bit of a chat on watch, when things were quiet. They were quite good.

And when you think about those years, New Guinea, Borneo, what do you recount as the best times and the worst times?

I think the best times were on board the Townsville, because I enjoyed that very much.

07:30 But on the other hand, going to New Guinea was a new experience, it was something different, it was exciting and rather unique. So that's the two different things. It's unique to the navy as well. Because usually they went and got on a ship, and they were on that ship for the whole term of their enlistment. So that was the difference.

They were the best times, what about the worst times?

08:02 Well, I don't think there were any real worst times. I would hate to work out the time I spent travelling. It was a horrific amount of time travelling. Even then on the ship, you're travelling all the time anyway. If you added those two together, that would be the whole time, really. Excepting the time that you are stationed at

08:30 either Milne Bay or Orokolo Bay.

And when you were stationed at Milne Bay and Orokolo Bay, would you say it was a bit like a Robinson Crusoe existence in those places?

It was, it was very much so, that way, because you were just on your own and that was it.

But you didn't really have a lot of time to do nothing?

That's right, exactly. You had a job to do and you did it,

09:01 and there was nothing else. Nothing else at all.

And did you ever get lonely?

Yes, a little bit, I guess. You wondered what was going on at home. But most of the time I didn't really have time, much, to get lonely. If you're travelling you're with company, you're with company on board. You had company at Milne Bay. So you're always doing something, so you didn't really have much to…I mean I didn't do a lot of reading while I was away.

09:30 Hardly any at all. I didn't have time. Whereas now I read a lot.

And when you were thinking about what was going on back home, did you feel like you might be missing out on something?

Not really, no. I was where I was and doing what I wanted to do, or what I had to do, more or less, and I was happy with that.

And looking back on your years in the service during World War II, do you look back

10:00 **on those days with a measure of pride in your contribution?**

Well, I don't know that I contributed very much, but I did the job that I had to do and I did that as best I could, and that satisfied me as far as that was concerned.

And also having the experience that you have had. What is your philosophy or thinking about war nowadays?

Well, I think that

10:30 in some cases it is inevitable, unfortunately. I think there is so much terrorism and so forth around now, that they have to have some sort of stand. I don't think you can be a pacifist, and I don't believe in it, as far as my beliefs in religion are concerned. I can't agree with it, but as I say, it's inevitable. In the Bible, if you read the Bible notes, it's strife all the way through.

11:00 Giving you examples of what's happened and how people go up the wrong track and so forth. Life is the same today, but it's a bit more organised as far as terrorism is concerned, for argument's sake. And you have got to be organised to combat it. A lot of people don't like that. They don't like organisation whatsoever, they want to be free. We're an absolutely lucky country that we want to be free. But you've got to think about the world,

11:30 in a way. Thank God we're right down here on the edge of it. Which is wonderful. But I think it's something that evil is there, and you've got be on top of it. And it won't go away, it won't ever go away. It will always be there, so we've got to be sort of alert and live for the day. That's my philosophy anyway.

12:00 I think you've got to accept where you are, and it's hard for some people…I say I'm terribly lucky and others are not nearly so lucky as I am, and I feel sorry for them, and if I can do something about it, I would. But that's your situation in life and you really have got to try and make the best of it.

Your life has spanned some very interesting historical times. You were born coming out of the First World War, you grew up during the Depression, were

12:30 **in the navy during World War II, you've seen a lot of changes. Looking at all your experience, what do you think are some of the most valuable lessons you have learnt.**

You have a principle I think, that you do the best you can, and you think of others if you can, as much as you possibly can, and consider them. That's why I enjoyed doing housing so very much.

13:01 And the office didn't do much of that, but I was very interested in that. And it gets back to…I was talking about this, about Motor Traders, because I did everything, because you had to have the personnel…The managing director had his office and all the others…You had to study what their function was to fit them into the jigsaw more or less. So you have a human relationship, and that to me is terribly important in life. I think that's very fulfilling. All the housing I've done,

13:31 I've enjoyed it very much. Most of them become friends afterwards. I think that helped in the relationship of getting contracts and jobs with the banks and so forth, that you consolidated and you got to know and were friendly with the bosses and the managing directors and so forth, and the board if you could get it. And you just took the opportunities and knew that you were trying to look after them, in other words. And make sure they knew that you were

14:00 trying to look to look after them. And in most cases it worked out very well.

This section of transcript is embargoed until 1 January 2034.

16:39 **Do you think the world's changed from when you were a boy? Do you think people were more church going people?**

Well, I think they were. I think that there was a lot of inter-mixing, of meeting girls and boys, and being together in groups, like the Boys' Society, that was very strong. But these days, there is so much variety about.

17:02 People can see on the television everything that is going on in the world. And it sort of becomes a bit mundane. It's a shame. There's so many things on, there's so many sports…When I was young there was only tennis, cricket and football, there was nothing else. Nothing at all. Well, there was, but very small. In a small way. And architecture has changed, that's changing all the time. But the fundamentals. don't change.

17:30 I can remember in the Institute of Architects, you say things change and so forth, but the fundamentals don't change. It's the basis of providing and I don't think that's changed very much. We used to say

things were changing so terribly fast and so forth. The technology changes but not the fundamentals.

Would you say that that runs true for people as well? That our lives are getting faster….

18:00 I think so. I think they find it harder, they don't find it any easier. Another thing that you have a bit of faith in is that things happen. If you're not doing things, nothing happens. If you sat back home and did nothing and didn't go out, well nothing would happen. That's what I found all through life, more or less. When I went into the firm, I was only there two or three years…I did the Motor Traders job. And

18:30 they had a vacancy on the Institute of Architects Council. One of the architects went to New Zealand. They said, "Look, will you come on and take his place and help us out to the end of the term?" So I said, "Oh yeah, okay." So I went. And they said, "You must carry on and put yourself up for voting again." And I did, and you're there. And the next thing they said, "Now we want you to be treasurer." So you're treasurer. The next thing is the secretary goes, and so

19:00 they want you to be secretary. Then the next thing is, it came along, that there was a vice-president and a president. And both of them said, "No, we're not going any more." So then I'm thrown in as president. I hadn't had that experience before. But Maisie was such a help. She had a knack of meeting people and making people feel at home, and saying hello. No snobbery whatsoever.

19:31 And that helped a lot. So I enjoyed that as well. So that's the sort of thing that has happened. While I was president, we used to have all the complaints from clients about architects, and architects about clients and so forth. As president, you had to deal with them. And also, all the building contracts had a clause in them that if there was a dispute, it should go to

20:00 arbitration, and it had to be a nomination by the president of the Institute. Well, of course, they came up and I had to go and do those. I wasn't asked, I just had to go and do them. And then I got interested in arbitration. So then I was a foundation member of the Institute of Arbitrators. So we organised that throughout Australia, and that's grown and so forth. So it's doing things that one thing leads to the other.

20:30 **Your life has certainly taken some interesting twists and turns, are you glad at the way things have turned out?**

Very much so. We've been very lucky. As I say, I went up to Japan in 1970. They asked me to go up. I think I was president then. And they had a tour from the Cement and Concrete Association. There were fifteen architects and fifteen engineers, and we had four weeks in Japan. And that was very, very rewarding as far as

21:00 structures and all that sort of concern. Particularly concrete. And then later on I had an invitation to go to America. And we went as guests of the American Institute of Architects. We went to five cities for five days each, and that was terribly rewarding. If I hadn't been president I wouldn't have gone. So you've got to be in it, to get there. So that was very good.

21:31 **And if you hadn't gone on that blind date…**

No, that's right. Exactly. As I say, Maisie's been…We've been overseas together, and trips and had some wonderful experiences together. I just say I'm a lucky fellow. Very lucky.

It sounds like you've had a good life.

Well, I reckon I have.

22:01 I think I've been very fortunate. I thank God for it all, really. But that's the way it's come. It hasn't been me saying, "I've got to do this, I've got to do that. I'm a high powered executive." The opportunities have been there, and I've taken the opportunities, by doing things, more or less. By taking part in things.

Thank you for your time.

22:30 **Is there any else you would like to add?**

No, I don't think there's very much else. We're at this stage of our life, and we're both reasonably healthy. We still enjoy ourselves and we've still got lots of friends. We've got lots of friends from the Institute and from other…things that have been good.

23:00 And Maisie's got some long term friends and I've got some, so it's very good actually. We're getting to the end of our tether, more or less, but you just keep on going. The time will come when the time will come. And that's it as far as I'm concerned.

You don't look old enough to be at your end of your tether.

Well, things change quickly. You never know. As long as I'm going, I'm going.

Thank you very much.

I've enjoyed it.

INTERVIEW ENDS