Australians at War Film Archive

Kenneth Barnes (Ken) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 21st January 2004

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1432

Tape 1

00:38 **Can you give us that overview first off?**

My name's Ken Barnes. I was born in 1934 on a dairy farm in central east NSW, a little town called Stroud. My Father was fourth generation farmer.

01:00 I spent my first 7 years in Stroud. Then the family, because of my Mum's illness, moved to a place called Castlereagh east of the Blue Mountains. Then my Father retired in the outskirts of Sydney. I actually finished school at 15 and took a job with Qantas Airways.

01:30 I was always interested in flying. I guess through accident I ended up in the navy when I was nearly 17. I wanted to fly, but the air force at that time wasn't taking people. I think even today they won't take recruits under the age of 18, so they shuttled me off to the navy. Somewhat naively I thought perhaps I could fly on carriers. We were all kind of

02:00 idealists in those days. Navy were taking recruits because of the Korean War probably. So I joined up. Spent the usual initial recruit training in HMAS Cerberus near Melbourne. I was then posted to a frigate, HMAS Culgoa.

02:30 Went to Korea just as the Korean War was ending. We were one of the vessels on patrol at the end of the Korean War. Spent more time in various naval establishments and then was posted to HMAS Tobruk, the battle class destroyer and served some time in the Far East doing what was called the Far East

03:00 Strategic Reserve. That was in 1957. Meanwhile the best thing that ever happened to me was that I met my wife to be, Christine, who was also in the navy, while we were both posted to HMAS Harman, naval communication station near Canberra. We married in 1956, moved to Melbourne, where I joined an organisation called Defence Signals Branch, [DSB] which is

03:30 one of the intelligence organisations in defence. Then, to my great horror I was posted to Tobruk after only less than a year of marriage. I was very relieved to leave the navy in 1958 and joined the DSB, Defence Signals Branch, as a civilian.

04:00 I spent the next 40 plus years working in that organisation as an analyst, reporter and later on as a manager. Because I suppose of the need to educate myself I went to university and gained a degree in economics and politics at Monash.

04:30 Meanwhile I guess DSB provided an extremely interesting and in many ways exciting lifestyle for myself. Christine and I had 4 children in this period, all of whom are now grown up and independent. When DSB, which was always a part of the defence organisation of course, originally we were a

05:00 division of defence and then became known as an outright organisation. DSB moved from Melbourne to Canberra. I took part in that move in the early '90s. My final posting was to Britain for 2 years, where I set up a new office there. That led to my retirement in 1956.

05:30 Christine and I moved back to Melbourne. I guess to keep busy in retirement I work for the National Trust, she works for the National Trust, and we also have other activities which keep us amused, occupied. We fell we're doing something useful for the community, so here we are.

06:00 **Tell us about your childhood in central NSW.**

On a farm I guess you become something of a learner. You have to learn to amuse yourself and I was always interested more in nature than in farming. I wasn't' much of a farmer. Didn't much like my Dad chopping

06:30 the heads off chickens and de-horning cows and doing all those pretty gutsy things that farmers had to do. I was very interested in nature. I used to keep a running record of all the birds' nests and when the lizards were out and the ants. I became very fond of the countryside and felt part of it. Was fairly good

at

07:00 school. A bit of a teacher's pet I guess at school. It was a tiny country school. Really this was Second World War days, toward the end of my first period of childhood at Stroud. The war broke out, because we were there in 1939 and moved from Stroud to

07:30 Castlereagh near Penrith in NSW during the war. I suppose that move brought me into contact with the air force, because there was a landing strip near us at Castlereagh where there was a squadron of Mosquitoes [fighter planes] and some other aircraft based. I used to sneak up there after school and during weekends and creep through the bush and sit at the end of the runway

08:00 watching these Mosquitoes [fighters] doing their circuits and bumps. I suppose that generated an interest in flying, in aircraft.

What year did you move down to Sydney?

I was 7, so that was '41. We moved from Stroud in 1941. At the height of the war really.

08:30 I can vaguely remember Japanese submarines in Sydney Harbour. My Dad was a First World War veteran and a Light Horseman. He took a very active interest in the conduct of the Second World War. I think that we were all caught up in that, the family. There was air force men and soldiers

09:00 around. My brother joined the army as soon as he could, I had uncles in the army. A lot of our friends were in the services. My sister, Marion, used to go out with an air force man. So there was military content in my life right from the start.

What did your Father

09:30 **tell you about World War 1?**

Not very much. We closed our ears to it. It was very unfortunate and sad. He was involved as a light horseman in the famous, as I know now, Beersheba attack. He was wounded at least three times, not at least, but certainly three times.

10:00 He was involved in several other campaigns in I think they called it the Western Desert, Palestine, Egypt and the Middle East generally, fighting against the Turks and the Germans. He was in the 7th Regiment. They went to Gallipoli at one point. But most of his actions during the war

10:30 was in the Western Desert.

Did he tell you stories about his experience at all?

Yes, he used to tell us, he avoided telling us the gruesome bits, but would tell us the funny bits. He rode

11:00 Laurence of Arabia across the Jordan River. He told us this as a sort of a jokey thing. Told us about his mates and about the horses and about going on leave. But never described the actions themselves, what it was like, the gruesome

11:30 rather and very dangerous activities he was involved in. Stupidly I never asked him, nor did any of us as far as I know, any of the children. We never asked him. It's strange, because that's happening again in my generation. I know I never talk to my kids about my Korean War experiences. Not that they were anything to compare with Dad's, but I never talk about it.

12:00 Strange.

Do they ask?

Yes, my daughter does. None of my sons as far as I can recall. My daughter's very interested in family history. What Mum and Dad did when they were younger, and the whole family culture. So she takes an active interest andlooks at all the photographs and reads

12:30 everything I've ever written. She's the only one. I'm not bitter about that. I'm not sad about it, by the way, it just happens. It's fairly typical.

When you were young, were there other veterans around the area?

When I was very young, yes. There were quite a few because in farming communities

13:00 it was generally accepted at that time that if Australia was at war, and usually we were at war in supporting the British government's decision to go to war, then it was generally accepted that if you were fit enough you volunteered. So most people did. In our circle, in the farming community that we lived, those who didn't were generally

13:30 criticised. The familiar story about young men getting white feathers in their letterboxes if they weren't volunteers. Those stories circulated pretty widely in those days. That was during the Second World War days. Korean War, heavens, I don't know. There were a few guys

14:00 volunteering to be in the services during the Korean War days, but I really didn't come in contact with them until I actually joined the navy.

Did you have a relationship with any First World War veterans that you may have talked to who may have told you stories?

I don't think so. I can't recall speaking to anyone about

14:30 First World War, except my Dad. No. They were around. We knew that certain people had been in the First World War. My wife's Father was in the First World War. I didn't know that until I married her. It's an interesting question. I suppose really, as a boy

15:00 you don't hear about the men who didn't come home. It was only afterwards that I heard about women who were spinsters, who had never married. The reason was that their sweethearts didn't come back form the First World War. That didn't impact on me at the time when I was a boy.

Tell us about

15:30 **your Mother.**

She was a typical farmer's wife. She was in the Country Women's Association. She was active in the church, she was very active in community work, Red Cross. My Father was the shire president at Stroud where I was born. So Mum had to provide all kinds

16:00 of support as wife of the shire president. She was very good at that. She was very gracious lady, very articulate, well brought up I suppose you'd say. Circle of friends. One of the leading lights in our district. Then she contracted TB [tuberculosis] from cows. At that time it was thought possible to

16:30 transfer tuberculosis from cow to humans. She had TB of the kidneys and gradually declined and then finally died when I was 13 years old, by which time we'd moved to the much smaller farm in Castlereagh. My Dad spent I suppose a lot of his time, but particularly his money

17:00 because of Mum's illness. There was no Medicare in those days. After being brought up on a really beautiful farm of something like 160 acres with a lovely crystal clear river running through it, the Karoa River, the family fortunes really gradually declines until after Mum died when Dad retired,

17:30 he retired to what was really a small citrus grove near Sydney. A place called Menai near Sydney. That's where he ended his days. Yes, Mum was quite a remarkable character. She wanted both of her daughters to be properly educated, urged them to go to Sydney to get jobs. In fact one of my sisters became shire clerk,

18:00 in other words chief executive, of the Dungog shire near Stroud, mostly because Mum felt that they should have careers. She was really quite advanced. So my parents were a really good couple. Dad was the fun guy, the freewheeling farmer, the bit of the larrikin, very robust and

18:30 shire president, very good at organising. Mum was genteel, educated, articulate, writer, socially adept. So they rubbed along pretty well together. When she died Dad was just devastated.

It's a debilitating and devastating disease, TB. It must have been

19:00 **very hard for you to watch and to live with.**

Yes. I was too young really, to understand the full impact of this. I was the youngest in the family, so my brother and two sisters were much more aware of Mum's condition. I just couldn't quite understand why she gradually deteriorated, spent lots and lots of time in bed

19:30 and later on in hospital and became weaker and weaker.

It wasn't explained to you?

Well, sort of. I think people used to say as they did about cancer in hushed tones "She has a kidney problem." In case of cancer, not that I had any knowledge

20:00 of people having cancer in our family, but they wouldn't say cancer, they would say something like "a growth" or you can obfuscate it in some other way. It was hushed and people just got on with things.

In the time that you were at Stroud,

20:30 **tell me about the school you went to. It would have been a very small country school.**

It was a small school and the headmaster, in fact I think the only teacher, I may have had one or two other teachers, but the headmaster was Mr Snape. Mr Snape who was very strict, very upright, very formal. I was of course terrified to go to school at age

21:00 Had to go through the bull paddock. My brother, who was a bit of a wag, we all are in our family, unfortunately., it's very difficult for us to be serious about anything. My brother said that going through

the bull paddock would be a real trial for me because the bull, while seemingly innocuous and somewhat genteel, would suddenly go into a rage

21:30 and if he saw a school child crossing his paddock, he'd charge. So it was a terrifying experience. It was even more terrifying when I got to school and found that I had to sit up and take notice. I suppose that dissipated because I found that I was not quite, reasonable at schoolwork. Looking back, that was a good

22:00 experience. It was quite a distance. It was about 4 miles, which is about 8 kilometres, to the school. So, no that's wrong. It was about 4 kilometres actually. So I used to walk, like a lot of the other kids used to walk to school. Then when we moved to Castlereagh I, like all the kids, had to have a bicycle, so we rode

22:30 our bikes. That was rather longer. That was about 4 miles, 7 kilometres. So we all rode our bicycles. That school was also a tiny rural school run by a man called Mr Crittenden, who was not only the headmaster, but the only teacher. There were 40 of us. He organised us so wonderfully well. He was a brilliant, brilliant teacher. Organised the whole

23:00 school into groups. We had excellent teaching in what now is called environmental studies. I think they probably called it "nature studies" in those days. He organised the school into a parliament. So we had political parties, there was a prime minister and a minister for the interior and a minister for the arts, a minister for this and that. We all had roles to play. We'd be elected

23:30 into these positions. That was one of the most important lessons I ever learned and a lifelong interest in politics resulted out of that. The prime minister was a lady called Mary. I think I was probably deputy prime minister or minister for something. We just had a lovely time.

24:00 **What was the main lesson that came from that?**

Democracy, the rule of law and the need to pull together in a group. So the ministers had to work together. If the minister for the interior, who was responsible for the cleanliness of the school and the tidiness of the grounds, didn't do his job, then we'd all jump on him and say "You've let down the cabinet here." The minister for

24:30 defence is doing a good job keeping the anthill from biting anyone, but the minister for the interior is letting his side down because there had been paper drifting around the school ground. So it was democracy, team work, playing your part, working together. Wonderful. This man was a saint. He was just a wonderful teacher.

25:00 **I've never heard of anyone else doing something similar.**

I often think that those little country schools were the making of that generation of Australians. My generation. Later on in life when I became responsible partly for recruiting people to what we called the gradual recruitment program in defence,

25:30 cream of the crop from the universities, it often occurred to me that the best most motivated young people we recruited coming straight out of university, were what I call country kids. They came from obscure little towns like Rainbow in Victoria. They were motivated. They had, you've heard of the Jewish Mother Syndrome, parents that supported them and encouraged them, country parents who

26:00 probably weren't very affluent, but knew that their kids had to be properly educated. So it's kind of sad, I think, that there's been a great conglomeration of schools and nowadays I'm not sure whether those wonderful experiences are still available to kids.

What sort of mix was there in the kids and the families of the area in terms of

26:30 **race, religion?**

In Stroud it was mostly Protestant familles who had immigrated to Australia in the 1820s, '30s and '40s. They were old established families. A company called the Australian Agricultural Company was formed in Britain in the 1820s and recruited

27:00 a whole lot of people. Drovers and shepherds and all kinds of agricultural skills formed this group that came to Australia and settled in that area around Stroud. My great, great grandFather was one of them. There was also a group of Irish immigrants, most of whom were Catholic. So there were two

27:30 I suppose transplanted ethnic groups. One from England and one from Ireland. There was a bit of friction between them. Not open friction, no violence or anything nasty happened, but we used to play jokes on them. We used to paint their horses white on April Fools Day. The kids got up to all kinds of mischief. That was directed sometimes against the Catholic families and they against us.

28:00 There were the occasional little skirmishes between the Catholic kids and the Protestant kids in school. It was all pretty innocuous really. But the best friction we could manufacture was between those two groups. Then in Castlereagh, when we moved to Castlereagh, not so much. I don't recall any

28:30 sort of ethnic groupings there. It was more homogenous. On the other hand, when we moved to Menai, this is where my Father retired and I was now a teenager, by this time there were European immigrants. There were Greek and Italian families and so called DPs [displaced persons], I think from the

29:00 Balkans. There was a little bit of ethnic tension there. A girl I was sweet on, well, friendly with, for instance, started going out with the son of an Italian family and later on married him. We thought, people were whispering around the place "My God, that's pretty awful. Fancy Mary going out with this Italian guy."

29:30 She subsequently married him, they had a lovely family, they're still together. He turned out to be more decent than all the rest of us. So you know, it was just so crazy at the time.

You mentioned your Father made jokes about the Catholics.

Yes, he used to call the Catholics "the Pope's army" in the jokey way. Dad was

30:00 the most gentle of men, but I guess he railed against the strictures, the religious training that good Catholics get. Because he was a bit of a liberal, he thought that really wasn't the go and that this whole

30:30 edifice, headed by the Pope was kind of built on some sort of shaky foundation. So he was not very, he was somewhat critical of the Catholic organisation at that time.

Were you a religious family yourselves?

My Mother was. Mum was a very strict, well, a good living Christian I guess you can say. She attended

31:00 church, we used to have Sunday School picnics on the banks of our little river there at Stroud. My Dad was more of a cynic. That sort of stream of cynicism I can trace right through the Barnes side of the family, his side of the family. Cynical, jokey, not taking anything at face value. My Mother was rather

31:30 different. She had a natural morality I guess you'd say. The church life fitted in with that very comfortable. Our family however, of the four children only my oldest sister, Gwen, was religious. My brother, Alan, was not. Marion, my other sister,

32:00 kind of in a nominal way. Even though I had a brief flirtation with religious life, I think I regard myself now as certainly agnostic and cynical. Sorry, but that's the way it is.

Did your parents drink or smoke?

Mum didn't. Dad used to have the occasional beer.

32:30 One or two. Smoking? He had a puff here and there. I guess we all did. I used to smoke in the navy and probably more than he did. No, Dad was very moderate in just about everything he did.

You would have been about 5 when the war started. Do you remember anything of

33:00 **the declaration of war?**

Not really. I remember some things about the war, but those memories didn't start probably until I was 7. I think when we moved to Castlereagh my awareness of the war began because of the presence of that air force unit,

33:30 Japanese submarines in Sydney Harbour and being fairly close to Sydney. I think it was something like 70 kilometres west of Sydney. You were aware of being close to a big city. I was getting older anyway, and becoming more interested. Dad was constantly talking about the war. From then on I used to look at the maps. I'd

34:00 draw maps of the Battle of France and plot the course of the Allied actions. I knew every Second World War aeroplane frontwards and backwards. Their airspeed, their groundspeed, their fuel capacity, their range. I knew the ships of the fleet. I took a really close interest in the conduct of the war.

34:30 We all did in our family. At least the menfolk did.

Did you have any interaction with the men from the base?

Yes, my sister Marion, who was very, very attractive, a beautiful woman, and that age, I guess she's 10 years older than me so I guess she would have been 17, 18, 19, 20 during the war years. She loved dancing and used to go

35:00 to the local I guess the School of Arts for Dancers on a Saturday night where she met the air force guys from the local base. She'd dance with them and occasionally bring them home to meet the family. Finally married one of them, an air force man. So yeah, they were always in the house and I was always the cheeky young brother. Spying on them,

35:30 making little jokes, pinching things to embarrass them, chipping her about the latest boyfriend. My brother did that too. We were all cheeky, pesky. I don't know how she coped with us. She should have

kicked us all in the teeth and sent us packing, but she was a good natured girl.

What did you think of the airmen?

36:00 The uniform never impacted on me. I thought they were pretty decent guys actually. She was fairly choosy. My Dad was pretty careful to make sure that she only went out with the nice ones. I was more interested in their equipment. I'd talk about their

36:30 Mosquitoes. I used to drive them crazy. As soon as they'd come to see my sister I'd be on them. "What part do you play in the air force? Are you a navigator or are you a ground operator?" or whatever various trades. I'd quiz them and ask them questions. It was all fun and very, very exciting for a young

37:00 kid.

At that time, what did you understand of what was going on in the war and the bigger picture sense?

I think I had a superficial understanding of the conduct of war because government censorship and propaganda meant that most of the population was led

37:30 to believe that things were going better than they really were. We didn't see any gruesome pictures of dead and wounded. We didn't hear about terrible reversals or appalling blunders. We heard about victories and stoic resistance and the new fighter aircraft that it was going to wipe out all the Zeros or the new naval vessel that was

38:00 going to be the greatest thing on the float. So we were all very, patriotism was uppermost in our minds and we all wanted to believe all the optimistic and positive stories. We weren't allowed to see the unfortunate negative parts, except insofar as my

38:30 Dad, who'd been in the First World War could more than most read between the lines and know that things were not going too well in certain theatres. We were clever enough to see that the battle front wasn't advancing. We would see the Germans pushing on towards Stalingrad and think "My God, this is bad." We'd

39:00 see after the landings in Normandy we'd see that things weren't going quite as well as everyone had hoped, because the Allied frontline hadn't moved from one day to the next to the next to the next. So you gradually got a feeling that this was tougher than we thought it might be.

39:30 **Your Father would express this and it was something you discussed as a family?**

Not in a structured and logical way. There would be one-liners. Dad would be sitting at the kitchen table reading a newspaper or listening to the news and he would come out with something like "Oh,

40:00 grumble mumble, things are not going well in France. I don't think this is gonna work. They've got to get rid of that ratbag general, he's no good." He'd say little one-liners like that and the kids would pick up on those and try to figure out what he was talking about.

Tape 2

00:33 **How would you follow the Second World War?**

Newspapers and of course the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Commission] radio. Mostly radio I think because it was constantly on the air. We were

01:00 all interested. Everyone was interested, the whole family. My Dad was particularly keen to follow the progress of the war.

What background did your Father have in his view of war?

He'd been a First World War Light Horseman and

01:30 had served in the Middle East. That was where most of his knowledge came from. He'd always taken a very active interest in politics. He was shire president in Stroud were I was born, and was active in the Country Party, now the National Party.

02:00 So the mix of politics and Australia's activities overseas and Australia's part in those days what we used to call the British Empire, we all felt we were part of this coherent British-ness. All of those factors played into his consciousness of the war. He had a good analytic mind, that's true. I think what you said is true, he

02:30 was good at analysing and he was cynical. He worked things out for himself, didn't just accept the view of the government or the propaganda of the day.

Give us an understanding of the propaganda if the Second World War. Can you remember there being a gross exaggeration of something?

03:00 I don't think there was any, I can't recall any gross exaggerations or any downright lies. What used to happen was that the government would put a spin on the events of the time and deliberately, for reasons of morale, would slant the news to bring out the positive aspects. Draw a veil over the negative aspects of the war.

03:30 There was always a new weapon that was going to shorten the war, or any Allied advance would be highlighted so that people felt good about it. I think this happens in every war. Certainly was there in the Second World War. I wouldn't want to put too much emphasis on it though. It wasn't as if we were deliberately fooled, it was just that there was

04:00 a slant. The good was emphasised and the not so good was put aside.

When the Normandy invasion took place, were you expecting that sort of invasion of western Europe?

Yes. There was a big build up.

Tell us about that.

As far as I can recall, Britain, it

04:30 gradually impacted on us that Britain was like a huge aircraft carrier. The Americans were pouring men, materials and armaments into Britain and that seemed to indicated that the Allies were gonna turn the tables. My memory's not so great, but there had already been an Allied incursion in Italy

05:00 and the Allies were pushing up through the Italian peninsula. So it seemed reasonable that sooner or later there was going to be a landing across the English Channel to Normandy. Or some part of France. As you know there was a lot of disinformation and faints were constructed so that the Germans thought the invasion would be in different

05:30 places. I think they were led to believe it was going to be in Calais when in fact it was in Normandy. But we knew it was going to happen sometime. The conduct of the war, big air raids on German armament plants and even on cities like Dresden seemed to be developing gradually into this big push. So when it happened we weren't terribly surprised. It was extremely exciting for a young kid like me.

06:00 The pictures were all over the newspapers. There were graphic accounts of this huge Allied armada crossing the Channel and landing on the beaches in Normandy. The barrage balloons, the landing craft, the ships standing offshore doing bombardments, the squadrons and squadrons of aircraft pulverising the German defences.

06:30 So it was all extremely exciting. At that time you don't think about all the mangled bodies and the dead lying on the beaches on both sides. You don't think about those things because it's almost like a Hollywood production. Most of the young people that I knew were probably

07:00 swept up in this. Mind you, we'd all been conditioned to believe that Nazi Germany was the devil incarnate. These were dreadful, dreadful people. They were gassing Jews, they were marching into Russia and slaughtering millions of Russians, the had bombed London, they'd done all sorts of most

07:30 horrific things. They had it coming. We were very g-ed up to the idea that we were gonna sock it to the Germans. We were gonna get Adolf Hitler and all his henchmen and the ghastly Nazi regime would be crushed. So the excitement levels were very high.

Did you know at that stage that Jews were being gassed?

08:00 No, that's an interesting question. I can't remember to be honest. I can't remember. Probably as a young kid I didn't know. My parents may have known. If they knew it was probably one of those things that wasn't discussed because it was so horrific, so horrible. We certainly were aware

08:30 that the Nazis had done some pretty awful things in their march to conquer Europe.

You had an idea of what was happening in Russia?

Certainly in Russia. Oh yes. We followed the progress of the German invasion and the terrible battle of Stalingrad because that news came

09:00 through. We knew what awful casualties were being suffered on both sides. We knew about the Battle of Britain in fine detail. How dreadful it must have been for the citizens of London. I suppose it was the Battle of Britain that impacted most, because in those days we felt ourselves British, we felt ourselves as a part of the British

09:30 system and so bombing beloved London was one of the terrible things that the Nazis did.

You had brothers or uncles in the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]?

Yes. Two uncles joined the AIF. They were in the Middle East. Then came back to fight in New Guinea when

10:00 the prime minister of the day, [Australian Prime Minister]Curtin, brought the 7th, 8th or 9th Divisions back to defend Australia. So both uncles and then my brother Alan, who is 8 years older than me, enlisted in the army as soon as he was old enough to do so. So I had a Father, brother, two uncles and a few others in

10:30 the family who were involved in the military in one way or the other. A few other in the extended family.

Did you talk to them about the war when they came on leave or anything like that?

Occasionally my uncles. Not in any depth. My brother, by the time he was old enough to enlist, the war was virtually over, so he had no wartime experiences to relate.

11:00 I didn't really ask my Father the questions I should have asked him about his wartimes experience. Should have. But that was the First World War anyway.

Talking about the First World War, how did your Father see the conscription issue and the division that it caused?

11:30 He was, I would think, in favour of conscription, but now I don't think I've ever heard him say that. So that's a guess on my part. Now I'm going to contradict that. I know he felt it was the duty of Australian men to volunteer to defend what be perceived to be our

12:00 way of life, the institutions of democracy and rule of law and the British way of life, in effect it would be the Australian way of life. Freedom of belief and all the freedoms we take for granted. He felt it was the duty of men to volunteer to defend those ideals and those freedoms. So maybe he was, but

12:30 then, now I'm gonna contradict myself again. He probably then felt that if they didn't volunteer then the government had every right to conscript them because the country had to be, and our values had to be defended in one way or another, against Nazi Germany or probably later on against international communism. That was his general philosophy I think.

There was a

13:00 **movement amongst ANZACs [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] from the First World War who were supportive of Nazism in the '30s especially. Were you aware of that?**

Not really, no. Never impacted on us. No, the only thing that is vaguely similar I suppose, is that after the First World

13:30 War my Dad joined an organisation which was to do with defending these traditional values. That was mostly a defence against the growing fear of communism. It was never, I mean, it was right wing, but

14:00 it was by no means a sort of extreme fascist organisation. It was really to defend personal and individual freedom. It was called the New Guard. Dad was kind of part of that in a peripheral way.

At the time, how did the Second World War impact on you?

14:30 **Can you remember the day?**

Second World War. Not very closely. I know there was great celebrations, dancing in the streets, everyone was so relieved, so upbeat and joyful. I can't remember detail about the actual end of the war. It's a few family things through. I know my sister was very relieved because

15:00 her sweetheart was in the services and that meant he would eventually go overseas and get killed. Alan my brother would be coming home. So there was a few family things, just relief I suppose. The war was over, now we can get on with life.

What was life like after the war for you?

Well, not

15:30 so good actually. Just think now, born in '34, the war ended in '45. So I was 11. I was just moving into secondary school and my secondary school experiences were not happy ones. So I personally went through a period of not being very happy with myself.

16:00 My Mother was becoming more and more ill, so the family went through quite a few years where things were fairly grim, quite grim. Right through the period when we were in Stroud and then in the early days of our time in Castlereagh, and that included the

16:30 Second World War years, things weren't too bad. Financially they weren't too bad, although Mum was so ill that a lot of our family income went in supporting her and paying doctors' bills and hospital bills. But it wasn't until the end of the war that things started to go downhill for me, personally. That was mainly cos I didn't like my secondary school at all.

17:00 I didn’t like the people there. It was quite a long way from home. Family life wasn’t as happy.

Were you boarding?

No, I had to ride my bicycle to Sutherland from Castlereagh. It was quite a long distance. It was a long ride, every day, there and back.

17:30 I didn’t have many friends, because Sutherland was almost a suburb of Sydney whereas Castlereagh, where we lived, was a farming community. So I was a farm boy, and for the first time in my life was involved in classes with city kids. They weren’t city kids, but they were kids

18:00 whose parents weren’t farmers. I suppose that’s the way of putting it. They were very different. They had different ideas. We were quite poor by this time. We lost most of our, whatever wealth we had. So I guess my confidence took a pretty bad nosedive about those years.

18:30 **You had an interest in English and Geography. How did you develop those interests?**

Primary school days, I think. I had this wonderful teacher in Castlereagh who developed my interest in politics and geography and history and

19:00 environmental studies. It’s now called environmental studies. Then when I went to the secondary school in Sutherland, the one teacher who was any good at all, the rest of them I thought were hopeless, the one teacher was the English teacher. He just developed my skills as a writer, which stayed with me for the rest of my life. He was

19:30 fantastic, but the rest of them I wouldn’t give twopence for. Especially the mathematics teacher, he was hopeless.

20:00 **What developed your interest in the military?**

I guess through secondary school I didn’t have much interest in anything.

20:30 It was a bad time in my life, secondary school. As soon as I could get out of school, that was 15, you couldn’t leave school until you were 15, I finished what was called the intermediate certificate and instantly wanted to get back into something involving aircraft. So I joined Qantas as a junior clerk and worked in navigation section of Qantas.

21:00 Found that to be wonderful work. Exciting and interesting. Not exciting, just interesting work. Used to work with a small group of people who provide navigation equipment to the navigators. That time Qantas was flying DC6s and they were super constellations and they were really wonderful, fascinating aircraft. They were going all over the place like the Kangaroo Route to Britain and I think

21:30 we opened up routes to the Pacific Islands. So that was wonderful. I also joined the Air Training Corps, which is a sort of bridge between the cadets, the military cadets in secondary school and the actual services. Air Training Corps was a kind of stepping stone into the air force in effect,

22:00 for kids who were too young to join the air force. That was excellent. There was a very good officer running it in our part of NSW. So the two things combined meant that I kept an interest in flying. Then as soon as I was 17 I went to the air force recruiting office. By this time I stupidly left Qantas. One of the most ridiculous decisions I’ve ever made.

22:30 I just left for reasons I didn’t know, to become a photographer because I took an interest in photography. I thought I’d make my living in photography. Of course I couldn’t. It was stupid. Then most people are stupid when they’re 17 or 18. Soon as I was 17 I went to the air force recruiting office and said “I’d like to be a pilot.” They said “Young man, we can’t recruit you, because you’re only

23:00 17 and we only take 18 year olds. But if you go around and see the navy, they will take 17 year olds.” So I went to the navy recruiting office and said “I want to be a pilot and fly off aircraft carriers.” The old petty officer there said “Oh, well son. Sign on this piece of paper, young man and we’ll see if we can do something for you.” So I did and they sent me to the training establishment here in Melbourne. Down at Flinders Naval Depot,

23:30 HMAS Cerberus. After initial training I became what’s known as a naval airman. Now I think I was just so naïve in those days I didn't realise what the naval airmen do is to push the Fireflies [fighter planes] around the deck of aircraft carriers and put chocks under wheels and do menial things like that. I kept saying “When are you going to let me apply to

24:00 do pilot training?” There was no pilot training. I think they were getting all their pilots from Britain in those days. I think they could get them cheaply because they were already trained. Yet I’d signed up for 6 years, so I was locked in. At some stage they gave us all an intelligence test and it turned out that my scores

24:30 showed that I shouldn’t be doing naval airman work, this manual stuff, but I might be better suited to being a radio operator. In those days they were called telegraphists. So I was shifted into that stream as a radio operator. Did radio operator training, Morse code and tuning

25:00 transmitters and receivers and rigging up aerials and doing coding and decoding. That's all the things that operators are supposed to do. That led on to a posting to HMAS Culgoa, which was the first vessel I was posted to in the navy.

Till then you were shore based?

Yes, here in

25:30 Flinders Naval Depot. We went on a training ship, a little mine sweeper, but that was just to get our seaman ship skills on the go. We learned knots and running up and down stairs and doing all damage control. It was quite professional. The navy's training is very well organised. I joke about it now, but it was

26:00 all very important of course. The Culgoa was the first ship.

Were you recruited specifically for the Korean War? Which year was this?

1951. so yes, the war was going and probably, I didn't know at the time, but yes, they were taking in a lot of recruits at that time. Probably anybody who was able bodied and reasonably

26:30 sensible would be taken onboard. My wife Christine was also recruited in 1951 a bit later. The women were recruited so as to release men from the shore jobs so that they could go to sea. She also became a radio operator. That's where we met while we were both in the navy.

How did you find navy life?

27:00 I found the intellectual content of the work stimulating and interesting, but I found navy life rather difficult. I was a farm boy and fairly, I've never been, as you can see, I'm

27:30 not a particularly robust fellow. Always fairly fit, but I'm not a rough and tumble sort of guy. I'd been brought up fairly strictly in what I'd say a kind of Christian home where manners were very important and you didn't sware. My Dad never swore. My Mother would have been horrified to hear some of the words that were floated around in

28:00 the navy mess deck. This environment didn't really suit me when I joined the navy. My background didn't click well with navy life. At least at the start. It wasn't until later on I found that a lot of the guys I mixed with were very decent.

28:30 They were just the same as all the rest of us. They had their good points and their bad points and they came from families just like everybody else. But there's a sort of bravado in the navy. Kind of macho, swaggering, devil may care, arrogance that is part of the culture.

29:00 It took me a long time to come to grips with that. Later on in life I found that a lot of the guys who were swept up in this, just as I was, were pretending. There was a navy culture that kind of encouraged you to be what you weren't. To suppress the sensitivity in your

29:30 life.

Sounds like the army as well.

Probably for all I know. Could be. You have to suppress whatever gentleness, sensitivity and refinement there is in your nature and tough it out. I found a bit of trouble doing that, certainly until later on in the navy when

30:00 I'd figured out who I was. But when you're 17-18, you really don't know who you are. At least I didn't.

How did you find the officers?

Fine fellows. I had no bad experiences with any of the officers. I thought they were refined, well brought up, educated.

30:30 I gave all of them respect I guess. It's interesting you should ask that. I always felt that if only the whole of the navy could be like the officers, this would be a much better place to work. Because you get the whole spectrum. You get the refined, well educated,

31:00 upright, good living people at one end of the spectrum. Not only officers, but through the ranks. At the other end you get the dregs of society really. Then the navy weeds out the bad ones, the really nasty ones. But you get this spectrum. It takes you a while in the services, maybe this is true of all of life, to figure out just where you belong in that spectrum.

How did the officers relate to the sailors?

31:30 **[…] The officers were refined and you had sailors who were coarse and aggressive.**

Even though the coarseness is sometimes pretended, sometimes a façade. Well, I think what the officers did was try to stay aloof. They had to.

32:00 Because if they became too pally with the other ranks they would soon lose their authority. So there was

a very definite divide. It may be more so in the navy than the other services. There was the upper deck and the lower deck, there was the ward room and the mess deck. There was the uniform differences of course. The officers tried to,

32:30 I think they also had this façade, even though maybe they would have preferred, some of them, to mix with the rest of us. They couldn't do that. They had to put up this barrier. We, for our part, would put up a barrier too. It was generally felt that you shouldn't' get too pally or too close to one of the officers because that's sucking up to them. That's just trying to get favours. You didn't do that.

33:00 You had to have your, as a lower deck other ranks person you had to have your own dignity. So you call them "Sir" but through clenched teeth.

What would you do for entertainment at Flinders?

In the evenings, play cards. We weren't permitted to gamble for money, but we played all kinds of cards.

33:30 Used to play mah-jongg, because there was always a sort of Far East element in the navy. Certainly the guys coming back from Korea would bring back their skills in mah-jong.

I didn't know cultural traits were brought back from the east.

Absolutely. Other games. Monopoly if it was invented then.

34:00 We used to just while away the hours doing all these things. Lots of sport. We were always encouraged to play sport. We'd read, we'd write letters. Nothing better than a letter. Those were the days that if you were away from home, getting a letter from home was just the most wonderful experience, or from girlfriends. So all those things.

34:30 We'd go on leave. I think for the first 6 weeks you weren't allowed to leave the navy depot, but then you could come up to Melbourne for the weekends on the train or hitch a ride with someone if anyone had a car. So we'd come on leave and we'd do what navy people do in the city. We'd go to Frankston.

35:00 I think we used to amuse ourselves in various ways. Nothing terribly nasty. Today you hear about lots of pretty awful things that happen to young people. Things young people get involved in. The worst we ever did was get drunk occasionally. I never did. Never, never can remember getting drunk, although I used to drink

35:30 a bit, smoke a bit. Some of the guys used to get drunk. Used to race around town chasing girls, getting drunk, occasionally getting into fights. But wow, it was pussycat compared to some of the things you hear about nowadays.

Were you a timid person at that stage?

I don't think I've ever called myself timid.

36:00 I was always reluctant to go into any extreme activities like drinking binges or fights. If we got into a fight of some kind ashore, or in the navy depot, we'd be up on a charge before you knew it. you weren't encouraged to be aggressive toward your mates and toward

36:30 other navy people. Certainly if you got into a fight in Melbourne, in a pub, the shore patrol would put you in the paddy wagon and you'd be back in Flinders in no time flat. So the navy had fairly high standards of conduct. No, that's an interesting question about being timid. I used to avoid

37:00 conflicts, but on occasion you have to stand up for yourself. I remember on one occasion somebody said some derogatory things about the Queen. I just flew at him. I didn't hit him, but I challenged him to go out. The usual thing was to come out on the foc's'le for a fight if there was a matter of honour involved. So I stood up to

37:30 him and he backed down. There were one or two other occasions. One fellow at one time thought that I was a little bit effeminate and said some nasty things about that. I told him that I'd fix him up too. No, timid wasn't the word. I never sought to get involved in any aggressive activity.

38:00 **Navy culture is different to army culture in many ways. There is a prevalence of homosexuality in the navy, as all other forces, did you ever encounter that?**

Once, yeah. There was a culture of avoiding any

38:30 homosexuals. You know this term "sending them to Coventry"? It's avoiding them and denigrating them. there were jokes about poofters, jokes about homosexuals and how they were to be eschewed. There was absolutely no

39:00 encouragement given. In fact, the only overt homosexual I ever encountered was a chap who was, where was he, Flinders? I guess it was Flinders. Certainly none on the ships. At Flinders there was a very gentle man, actually, who was a sort of almost an uncle figure. He was older than the rest of us. We were

39:30 all young guys. He made an advance at one time towards me when we were on a camp. I can't remember the details. I just brushed him aside. I said “I’m not interested in any of that.” That was the only. There may have been covert homosexuals in the navy, but I never ever came across them. What there

40:00 was on the other hand were civilians who preyed on sailors. Who tried to pick up sailors on shore leave.

Homosexuals?

Homosexuals, yeah. There was a lot of talk about them within the navy. When we’d go back from shore leave we’d talk about the girls and we’d talk about

40:30 the drinking parties and where we went. The more moderate sailors would talk about when they went up the Puffin’ Billy [steam train] or went to an art gallery or something. Others would talk about the drinking and about the men who had approached them in pubs. That was jokey talk. As if how to see them off, how to say something really nasty to

41:00 hurt them. So there was a culture of, I wish I could think of the word, of rejecting homosexual advances. Quite a lot of that was discussed.

Tape 3

00:34 **In your longer life you were admiring of the airmen and you joined up in the navy. What happened in the intervening years?**

01:00 **How did you come to find yourself in this position?**

After I left school I left Qantas because of my interest in flying, or air matters. Then, as soon as I was 17 I went to eh air force recruiting office, having been in the Air Training Corps, which is sort of a bridge into the air force. Air force wasn’t taking recruits

01:30 at that age. They recruited from 18 onwards. So they sent me to the navy. At that time we had a fleet air arm so Fireflies and Sea Furies and other aircraft were being flown off carriers. So I went to the navy and said in a most naïve way “I’d like to be a flier.” Of course, the old petty officer of the day, wanting to recruit anybody because the Korean War had started, said

02:00 “Just sign this paper, young man, and we’ll see what we can do for you.” You couldn’t just apply to be a pilot. They weren’t doing that anyway in the navy, but they put me into what was called the fleet air arm as a naval airman, which was really a labouring job. Pushing Fireflies around the deck in the aircraft carrier

02:30 and putting chops under the wheels. The navy did more tests and found I was more suited to be a radio operator, so I got into the telegraphist business. They were called telegraphists in those days. Virtually that was the end of any

03:00 boyish thoughts I had of flying. Form then on it was all communications and then into the intelligence business in the navy.

Was it a big disappointment to you?

I guess it was something I gradually came to accept, that there was no way I could reasonably expect to

03:30 fly unless I paid for flying lessons, and of course, nobody could afford to do that when you’re in your teenage years and your 20s. In effect, what happened was that as I became more and more involved in the intelligence world I found that was vastly more interesting than flying aeroplanes would ever be. That captured my

04:00 life really, for the next 40 years.

In your initial training, how did you adjust to the regimentation and discipline of the navy?

Not at all well. I found that

04:30 my mind was constantly pulling me in the different direction. I couldn’t really accept a lot of the strictures and a lot of what seemed to be silly rules that the navy had to adopt and clearly there are things onboard a ship which just have to be done. You can’t run a ship in sort of laissez faire way, it’s got to be fairly structured. I suppose

05:00 I knew that, but it just didn’t fit well with my background. My Father probably, and those very important teachers in my life had probably sowed seeds up there which in effect told me I should follow my own mind wherever

05:30 it led. People who tried to put in boxes didn’t make much sense. So any kind of discipline was a little

alien to what I really wanted to do.

Was there strict discipline in terms of punishment?

Yes, it was pretty strict. As I mentioned to Serge, if we got into mischief in the city on leave, say we got into

06:00 a fight, sailors sometimes got drunk and got into mischief, the shore patrol would round us up and take us round to the depot and we'd be up for captain's parade the following morning and we'd get 14 days confined to barracks or on number 11, which was a type of punishment running around the parade ground and kitchen duty and all that stuff.

06:30 **Did this happen to you personally?**

Probably once. Not usually. I was fairly goody-goody. I was clever enough to keep out of trouble. Or lucky enough to keep out of trouble. I wasn't one to drink much. I used to drink occasionally, but I don't think I ever got drunk. I wasn't one to get into fights or hunt girls

07:00 aggressively. I don't mean violently. None of us ever thought or dreamt of doing anything like that. Some sailors used to go looking for girls and sometimes get themselves into trouble for doing so. Get into fights or difficult situations. I never did that. I was always a bit too pure. Maybe I should have.

07:30 **Was there strong discipline for uniform matters or**

That's where I did find a lot of difficulty. Always had to have your uniform spick and span. You had to have a certain amount of numbers of every type and you had to keep everything laundered and pressed and I was a little bit sloppy in my uniform

08:00 arrangements. But you didn't get punished severely. You'd be told "Your cap's not properly cleaned." You had to put white, what's it called that stuff, Blanco or whatever it's called, on your cap. Sometimes mine got a bit grotty and I'd be told "I wanna see that cap tomorrow morning looking spick and span." So you'd have to clean it.

08:30 Nothing very spectacular. It wasn't a brutal harsh environment. Sometimes you see on television, the US marines get a bad name for this. There's always some great ape like character who's coming down hard on some poor innocent marine. He's made to go through some terrible privations. We never had that

09:00 in the navy. It was all pretty acceptable.

As a country kid, how did you adjust to the crush of people?

Not too well. That was the main problem I had in the navy. I think it was that I'd been brought up in

09:30 a very polite household where manners were important. My Mother was a good Christian lady. My Dad, although he had a funny bone, he was a decent sort of fellow. Whereas in the navy there's a sort of culture of macho larrikinism.

10:00 A lot of that is put on. A lot of it is culture and a lot of the navy guys were able to slip into that role fairly easily. A lot of them pretended I think, because it was expected of them to be phlegmatic, cool, tough, hard drinking. I had a bit of trouble adjusting to that.

10:30 We all tried hard to be tough guys. You gradually get to know how you can cope with those situations. You sort of adjust. We all had to do it.

Did you make friends?

Yes and no. Not at Flinders.

11:00 That was the adjustment period. I had quite a lot of trouble at Flinders. Once I got into, while still at Flinders, the radio operating business, then I made friends because there were men there who were similarly disposed. This sounds very snobby, but I made friends easily

11:30 with people who would interact with me in an intellectual capacity, intellectual way. The further I went into the navy the more friends I made. But I was never one for making friends easily. I have always been a loner. It really wasn't until probably the second ship I was on, HMAS Tobruk, where I made some good personal friends.

12:00 **In the early days of training, were there any initiation rites or pranks?**

A few very benign ones. There was a few things like the crusty old bosun's mate would tell you to go down to the store room and draw a tin of striped paint.

12:30 Everybody who knew there was no suck thing as striped paint would laugh that off or would enter into the joke and come back with a tin of something. "This is the best we could do, boson. It's not striped, but it's mixed" or something stupid. That was about the most benign one. There was never anything physical. I've read since, long after leaving the navy, that

13:00 crossing the line, crossing the equator, always is accompanied by some sort of ceremony, but in my day it was so mild. It was pantomime really. I think a couple of the ships have got into trouble because they have gone further than that. Now that there are women onboard some of the ships, I think maybe there's a bit of a problem there.

13:30 No, never any initiation.

No (kaoliUNCLEAR), no spanking?

No, nothing that I can remember that was nasty or embarrassing. There were lots of occasions where you had to defend yourself. There's a lot of ribbing in the navy, a lot of, it's not even good natured banter.

14:00 There's certainly a lot of good natured banter, but there is also some, it's not even ribbing. It's a nastier form of ribbing. It's a sort of denigrating each other and putting down. The senior people, the crusty old sailors are inclined to put down the young people, the younger men. You had to somehow cope with that by responding.

14:30 I could usually get out of that just by being slick, smart ass. But a lot of the rather more innocent young fellows I knew went through a lot of pain as a result of that. I've been through a bit of pain myself. It's particularly worrisome when say you're a new recruit. You're

15:00 an able rate. The petty officers or the leading hands would rib you and try to put you down because you're in double jeopardy there. First of all you're somewhat naïve. You're fairly innocent about navy ways, so you can't fight back. Secondly you can't fight back because they're senior ranks. They've always got the advantage. If you get the better of them you know that they'll

15:30 get at you somehow or other. So that was probably a bad aspect of navy life that I didn't really appreciate. In one particular case, when I joined the Culgoa, there was a particularly nasty chief petty officer. He was the senior radio operator on the ship. He was a shortish, wiry, rat-like figure, who

16:00 had a very nasty streak. He made life hell for a couple of us in the first couple of months and later on. That was bad.

On the Culgoa?

Yes, on the way to Korea and before Korea.

Tell me about the living conditions and where you

16:30 **slept and the food.**

I think we have to distinguish between ship and shore base. Shore base living in those days was fairly reasonable. All the mess decks, living quarters, were clean. They had to be. There was always a leading hand who was responsible for each dormitory or hut or whatever we slept in.

17:00 We were always warm, we were always well fed, the rules were followed and the only difficulty I found was in having absolutely no privacy. You were in a long sort of dormitory with probably 20 other fellows. If you were lucky only 4 fellows. You shared a bathroom and toilets.

17:30 Everything was open. There was no possibility of modesty. So there was really no way of getting away by yourself unless during the day you could just walk into some part of the depot and be by yourself. Onboard ship it was slightly different except that we slept in hammocks in those days, which is a

18:00 hessian base with kind of a duvet thing. They were very comfortable. They were kind of restrictive. Your neighbour was only that far from you, so there were three or four of us all stacked in together. Maybe 12, up to 20 people in one part of the ship. All of the radio operators would be in

18:30 that one part of the ship. And because we kept shifts, we'd be getting up and going to bed and having meals at different times of the day and night.

Tell me about the radio training you went through. You would have found it a change from

19:00 **the earlier training in the navy.**

It was a relief really, because the early training was to do with seamanship, damage control and knots and shackles and what to do to support the ship when she was in action stations.

19:30 That sort of thing. A lot of physical activity and hand mind coordination. In the radio operating training, telegraphist training, it was more cerebral, so you had to learn Morse code, had to learn about teleprinters, how they operated, how to tune transmitters, how to get good reception from your receiver, radio theory, which I found,

20:00 well, nothing was ever easy, but I didn't have any difficulty with radio theory to do with radio wave propagation and electron theory and other aspects of communications, which at that time seemed fairly demanding, but nowadays, looking back with the march of technology was fairly simple. So I

20:30 took to that fairly readily. I had no difficulty with Morse code. So I went through the course fairly easily.

Were they still using flags?

Yes, we had to learn flags. We had to learn semaphore to communicate by flags, but then those who specialised in that role were called signalmen and we were called telegraphists. So

21:00 there was some sort of screening process. I'd like to think it was on intelligence, but the signalmen would probably thump me if I said that.

What about radar? Were you using that?

No, we learned about it. it was part of the theory course. You learned about radar theory and we knew how radar worked, but I never operated

21:30 it. There was another stream of recruits doing that. They specialised in radar. Radar plot they were called, RPOs [Radar Plot Officers] or, I can't remember. They had a different insignia on their arm of their uniform.

Did you learn other codes?

Yes, you had to learn teleprinter code. There were bodo codes and hellscriber,

22:00 a whole lot of different teleprinter codes or telegraphic communications codes. You had to learn how to read them and interpret them, but there's two different codes here. I need to explain that with teleprinter code it's really a series of dots and dashes or ons and offs. It's a binary code. You learned that there were three

22:30 ons and two offs meaning A for instance. Then quite different codes in terms of secret codes. They're something we had to learn. We had to learn how to set up a cipher machine, how to code messages in one time pad which is a very rudimentary but extremely

23:00 secure type of code involving numbers. Had to ensure that we knew all the rules of communications security, which was to do with coding and decoding messages.

Tell us about the cipher machine.

In my day there were a couple. There was

23:30 a machine with a devise which was an add subtract devise. You got the coded random numbers from a pad or a devise and then you added another stream of numbers and got a result. So 7-5=2 and 2would be the number you transmitted. If you had

24:00 2, 4, 6, 8, that would mean "battleship" or something. That was very rudimentary. Then there was a machine called Typex, T-Y-P-E-X, another machine called Rockex in my day. They were just like typewriters physically. You'd type in a group of numbers, "2, 4, 6, 8" meaning "battleship". You have a codebook

24:30 where "2, 4, 6, 8" meant "battleship" and "1, 9, 7, 5" meant "steam ahead" or something or other. You type in those numbers and the machine would convert the numbers into different numbers, encipher those numbers. Then you would transmit the enciphered numbers. Rockex and Typex were the two we used in my day. Then incoming massages had to be deciphered

25:00 in just the reverse. Then you had to set up rotors in these machines so that the numbers you typed in in the encoding part of the operation were scrambled in effect to produce new numbers. We had to do all that. It was great fun.

25:30 **Did you ever get extended leave during your training period?**

Not really. We used to get, we were allowed to go ashore on weekends, not every weekend. I can't remember how many out of, might be 2 out of 3 or

26:00 something like that. Then once a year, yes, we'd get a long period of leave. From Flinders, while we were still at Flinders, we'd get the train. This was a great experience. We'd get this massive train, which pulled into the Stony Point Station. As I recall all the NSW guys would get into one or two carriages and we'd trundle up to Albury, we'd get out of the train and then transfer to the NSW train and go

26:30 on to Sydney. The Victorians would go elsewhere and the Western Australians, I don't know how they got home, but maybe they flew. That was a bit deal, going home in a leave train. It was one of the great things, because you'd see your family. Finally you'd get away from the place.

So you went back to Sydney?

Yes. I used to go home, this was 1951,

27:00 so my Dad was living in Menai at the time. So I'd go home to the family. My sisters were there and my brother. And we always had girlfriends. There was always some little girl back home who we were sweet

on, so we would all be looking forward to going back to the girlfriend and

27:30 seeing your family and just be ordinary people for a while. It was quite a long period. I think it was about 6 weeks leave. We had quite a long period of leave.

1950s Australia, can you describe the culture of the times? What was the atmosphere and what was your family's place in it?

28:00 Well, immediate post war and into the 50s, I guess Australia was really buzzing. We didn't really know it at the time, at least it didn't impact on me much at the time because I was only 17 or 18 so you don't really think about what's going on very much.

28:30 There was plenty of work. Soon as you left school you'd get a job. In that post war period I knew that I could pick and choose whatever I wanted to do, work. But within limits. I left school when I was 15, so none of the professions were open of course. I needed an education, but I could get a job as a clerk or a shop assistant, or any of the jobs that happened to be around.

29:00 That's why I joined Qantas, because I wanted to get involved in the business of flying in one way or another. It was a time I suppose when lots of things were opening up. New appliances were coming onto the market, kitchen appliances and because people were in work they could afford to buy things. We'd been through a

29:30 fairly tough time during the war with my Mother's illness and all the hospital bills and doctors' bills. Dad was really not well off at all during the war years. Then after the war my brother was working and both my sisters were working. The family started to generate a bit of income between us. I was in the navy from 1951 onwards.

30:00 Dad was living a fairly quiet retirement on this little orchard near Sydney at Menai. It was a tough time for me, because I was a teenager and until I joined the navy I went through a period of being very ill at ease. Not able to cope very

30:30 well with the demands of working, having a Dad who was declining, feeling sorry for him because he'd lost his, my Mother had died and he was the family support, he had to do all the cooking. I think for those reasons I drifted quite a bit. My sisters and brother were

31:00 fairly settled. They were married, having children, and because I was the baby of the family I was a bit of a loose cannon. I drifted around for several years after the war. After I left, well, several is an exaggeration. When I was 15-16,

31:30 those were two bad years. I suppose I joined the navy, still pursuing this air force business, this flying dream. I joined the navy for reasons I've mentioned, partly for security. There was a dream of flying and yet also the thought that I'd better start finding a secure niche for myself. So there was

32:00 a mixture of motivation. The rest of the community, gee whiz. Australia was going through a very important period, a time of transition. We were emerging from a period of being part of the British Empire and the Second World War was

32:30 a pretty good example of that. There were all these Aussies over there fighting in Europe, even before the Japanese came into the war. We went through that and then emerged from the war as a somewhat more self-aware nation and a little more independent of the British. For heaven's sake, [wartime Prime Minister] Curtin had said that we looked to America to defend us. So that whole

33:00 period of later '40s into the '50s was a shift from Europe, Britain particularly, into the United States. I was gonna say "domination", I don't really mean that. I mean United States influenced. In the navy that happened too. Hitherto all of our regulations, the equipment we used, were mostly British. It came out of the British navy. Very professional. The British

33:30 navy is fantastic, professionally fantastic, but then there was this great shift toward US style activities of operations and equipment.

You think the navy was admiring the way the Americans did things?

I think they admired the equipment, the technology. It was the technology

34:00 and the organisation, to a lesser extent the organisation. The British navy was well organised, they really knew how to run things, but the Americans had the edge on technology and that became increasingly apparent as the '50s wore off and into the '60s and '70s. They had the technological edge over everybody. They'd attracted some German scientists and engineers after the Second World War,

34:30 particularly in rocket science and space physics. The nuclear program, electronics, gosh, you name it, they had the edge. Sensibly the Australian navy, along with the rest of the Australian defence establishment, shifted gradually into the American orbit because of that.

The 50s

35:00 **are associated with big changes in culture, music, fashion and things like that. What memory do you have of this and what impact did it have on you?**

I got caught up in it, Colin [interviewer]. I used to wear all the clothes that were fashionable at the time. I certainly used to cut

35:30 my hair the way fashion dictated if I could, but of course you can't get away with that thing in the navy while you're in uniform. You have to have short back and sides. But when I was on leave I was always keen to get into trendy clothes. I remember I had a bright green jacket at one stage. I thought it was absolutely fantastic to wear this bright green jacket down William Street Sydney.

36:00 My brother, who was always sort of bete noir to me, because I was the little brother and always number two, he used to refer to it as "That bodgey coat of yours" in a disparaging way, because he was very straight laced. I guess we all did. Then music, not really, no. I didn't like the music of the 50s. It was so stupid.

36:30 It was Mickey Mouse music to me. I just didn't like it. What I used to like, and went many times to the cinema to see, were those Hollywood musicals. Heavens, I don't remember their names now, but there was a lot of romantic stuff. These were the years before instant gratification and

37:00 we were very romantic. We had these dreams and Hollywood used to pour all this stuff into our minds. 'The Desert Song' and you know those musicals. God, they just poured out of Hollywood. Oklahoma, Showboat, Paint Your Wagon, South Pacific, all of those. I saw all of them, every one of them.

37:30 They had a tremendous influence on my life, even today. You go into my CD [compact disk] record you'll find them all in there. I guess I caught this culture of romance the Hollywood purveyed. Hollywood told us all how to deal with the opposite sex for instance. You didn't do,

38:00 I don't know what people do nowadays. You read all kinds of interesting things about how young people conduct themselves, but in those days it seemed to be quite different. Girls were all hard to get. We were all petrified about sex because we'd been told that holding hands in the backseat of the movies got girls pregnant, so you didn't have to,

38:30 you had to be very careful. Then there was all these social diseases that you could get. In the navy the stories were amplified and amplified again about fellows who got the clap from sleeping with someone in Iceland. There were all these weird stories. So you tended to put all that aside and concentrate on the romantic

39:00 love as portrayed by the Hollywood musicals. And all the films of course. Not musicals necessarily, but all those fluffy things that poured out of Hollywood. Those were the '50s.

Do you remember if there was much of a scene in Melbourne with groups like Bodgies and Widgies and Mods and Rockers? [rebel groups]

Yeah. Well,

39:30 it didn't impact on me too much, nor on the guys that I used to knock around with. We looked down on groups like that because you know, we were tough guys. We were navy and they were so puerile, infantile wearing all that stuff. Although, as I mentioned before, once you're out of navy on leave, home, you get caught up in it anyway.

40:00 **In the navy you had your own group. You had your own uniform.**

That's true I suppose, and we liked to be special and different. I always thought the navy uniform was a bit silly quite frankly. I would have much preferred to be in something more sensible, cos they had those funny round hats and the ropes around your neck and the collar and all that. I thought "That sailor suit stuff, surely we can get through that."

40:30 But I suppose there was a bit of criticism levelled at the navy in my mind because it seemed a bit old fashioned. Whereas the air force, oh they were modern. They were right up there, even in their uniform. They had a better uniform. But I wasn't ever obsessed with the uniform. I just didn't like it much.

41:00 **You were still fairly keen on the planes though, weren't you?**

All the way through. Even today. Later on, when I became a civilian, my job took me overseas very often and there was a lot of flying involved in military aircraft as well as more particularly civilian aircraft. So I even today tae a very active interest in

41:30 aviation of all kinds.

Tape 4

00:34 **Tell us how you got involved in the Korean War.**

I was posted to Culgoa. We first of all did some trips around Australia and I think the first important assignment we had was as weather ship for the Montebello tests,

01:00 you know the atomic tests the British government conducted in the Montebello Islands off Western Australia. It must have been 1952. Culgoa was sent out into the Indian Ocean to monitor the weather, because it was most important for atomic tests that the weather should be just right. Following that we went back to Sydney and became

01:30 one of several Australian ships that went to the Korean peninsula, patrolled off the west coast of Korea. There was always at least one vessel there, one Australian combatant, probably two. In our time we were there with ships of other nations as well. British and Canadian, New Zealand, Dutch,

02:00 American of course. Plenty of American vessels, US navy. So it was really what you call a routine deployment to Korea. We spent upwards of a year there. I think it was from April to November 1953. In the middle of that the armistice was signed. The Korean War ended

02:30 in July 1953. So it was part of a commitment the Australian government made. It was a United Nations mission. I can't remember what the exact number of vessels that were involved, but probably we were about the fifth or sixth deployment to Korea.

What did you know about the Korean War before you left?

03:00 Quite a bit. We knew that the North Koreans had invaded South Korea. That was seen by the United Nations, not just the West, but the United Nations as a move to expand the communist message and therefore a threat to the free world,

03:30 the democratic nations. The United Nations certainly felt that way. I felt the war was entirely justified in terms of the aggressive action taken by the North Koreans. I think at that time we were all convinced that international communism was a threat to our way of life, our freedoms and

04:00 our opportunities. It was a dreadful blight in political terms. So I never had any qualms about serving in the Korean conflict.

Tell us about your voyage from Australia to Korea.

It was a mixture of beautiful,

04:30 tranquil, idyllic days onboard as the ship ploughed through benign waters like the Timor Sea with dolphins and flying fish and beautiful islands on the horizon on the one hand. On the other hand it was a very

05:00 gruelling experience, because as one went further north, not only were the seas rougher, the South China Sea can be particularly rough on a bad day, so there was a lot of rough sea, a lot of seasickness. Certainly I was one who from time to time was seasick. Yet we had to stand our watches. It was generally 8 hours on and 12 off.

05:30 So we had to rotate through the watches in the radio office and wireless office. Then it became progressively colder as we went north because my goodness it was March, April. I think we left in March and we got to Korea in April. On the way up it was quite exciting in that it opened up the world to a young impressionable 17-18 year old

06:00 because many of us for the first time saw Singapore, we spent time in Hong Kong, which was wildly interesting, fascinating place. In Japan and then finally off the Korean coast. All the way there were, from time to time training programs and exercises. Live firing exercises, gunnery, air defence

06:30 exercises, anti-submarine exercises, and all kinds of work-up procedures. So we were very busy. Yes, it was quite exciting. I think the only, I was never really scared of the sea. I was never conscious, perhaps living in a fools paradise, never fearful

07:00 of the ship capsizing or floundering in some way, I always trusted the ship and the seamanship of the officers and all the rest of us onboard. Always thought we were OK. I did have real problems with one of the senior staff onboard, the chief petty officer

07:30 who was really tyrannical and made our lives a bit of a misery. Looking back, I thought he was an absolute swine at the time, but looking back, perhaps trying to be very generous, he was similarly ensuring that we were shaping up and that there was no slacking and that we knew our roles and that we were properly trained. I think I’m being generous to him, though. He

08:00 was a swine actually.

How long did it take to get from Australia to Japan?

It was somewhat fractured because we’d steamed for 3-4 days and then go to a port of some kind. So as I recall it was Sydney Darwin, Darwin to Singapore, Singapore Hong Kong,

08:30 Hong Kong to Sasebo in Japan and between times there would be up to a week of steaming and then probably several days in port. So if you added those all together, I'd be guessing, but it probably took upwards of a month for us to get from Sydney to Japan and then a few more days to Korea, off the Korean coast.

What would you do for entertainment onboard the ship?

09:00 Most of us were pretty tired. We'd come off watch and because we had to perhaps go on duty at midnight, our sleeping patterns were badly shot to pieces. So we would spend a good deal of time trying to catch up on sleep, probably mostly unsuccessfully if we went into a routine. We'd also spend quite a lot of time on deck

09:30 just taking in the scene, relaxing. If we were off watch with no other duties to perform, we'd spend a lot of time on the upper deck if it was a nice day. Below decks we'd play cards, a lot of cards. A lot of stories, jokes, other games, mah-jong, which was a Chinese game that some of the sailors were quite expert at. We all learned to

10:00 play mah-jong. That was quite a popular pastime. Reading letters, writing letters, writing books. No television.

Fishing?

A bit of fishing if we stopped overnight somewhere. If we anchored somewhere, if we were maybe even in Hong Kong, but certainly I can't remember anyone fishing in Hong Kong or Singapore.

10:30 Certainly in later times, if we anchored off an island in the South China Sea or somewhere where the fishing seemed to be OK, a lot of people fished. The ships officers would put down a boat for fishing and swimming if it was a nice day and the water was fairly warm, we'd

11:00 swim.

How would you describe the relationship of the crew? When you're in a confined area, how big would the Culgoa be?

180 I think were the crew. It was a frigate, so it was somewhat

11:30 smaller than today's frigates. I'm not good at numbers. It's there on paper somewhere. There we go. Can I get that? 283 feet, whatever that is in meters, long and

12:00 she displaced 1,500 tons. Now, this is all in the old measurement. 2,000 tons fully loaded. That's not a big vessel, but it sizeable. We had four 4 inch guns. It was a fairly potent unit at that time. Compliment,

12:30 doesn't have it here, but I'd be guessing about 180 all told. Relationships onboard, well, they were mixed. You formed a circle I suppose. You tended to avoid people that you didn't get on with either because they were just plain silly or because they were overly aggressive. We didn't

13:00 have anything in common with them. You formed friendships with people you found comfortable. We all did that. We had little groups, and they changed constantly. I can't recall any real conflicts onboard. It may be with rose-coloured glasses, but I think we got on pretty well together, all of us,

13:30 with that one exception of the chief petty officer. We rubbed along pretty well together. We had to really, because certainly among the telegraphists, the radio operators, we had to work fairly closely together. You had to hand over your watch to somebody. So you had to be on fairly good terms with him. Anybody who let the side down by being inefficient

14:00 or not pulling his weight, pretty soon knew that he wasn't in favour. We had common cause against the common enemy who was whatever, bureaucracy, navy, the regulations, the officers, so we were all pretty much on the same side.

Was discipline extremely important in these circumstances?

14:30 Yes, in a way it was, but the officers certainly weren't overly aggressive in their application of discipline. The skipper, who was, we used to call him Nobby Clarke, I could never describe him as a hard man. He was just fair. He knew how to run the ship. He was very good. First officer was

15:00 always energetic. The first officer's job was to make sure the ship was running smoothly and that everything was under control. He was really the skipper's right hand man. All first officers, as far as I can recall, were pretty tough. If you didn't do your job they'd come down on you in a big way, but our man was never overly,

15:30 not a harsh disciplinarian. So I think that applied to all the officers. None of us had anything but respect for our officers on the Culgoa.

Did your training imparted certain values within the navy itself was the

16:00 **primary reason that kept a cohesion?**

That's certainly true. We knew that if we stepped out of line that we'd be disciplined in some was. If it was a really bad misdemeanour we'd be disciplined. We'd lose pay. The very extreme would be thrown into the clink I think, not that any of us were, but

16:30 we always knew that there was a fairly strict regime in place. We were trained and conditioned to accept that. The officers knew that they could give orders and that they'd be carried out. That we would adhere to the general standards of the navy regulations. It's a very structured organisation. The British navy's been in business for centuries.

17:00 They know how to manage affairs onboard a ship. Our navy was structured mainly on the British Navy, those traditions and procedures came across to Australians.

The American and the British, I presume you would have trained with them as well?

Absolutely. Did a lot of work with the British navy and with the Americans.

What did you find the differences were between

17:30 **The cultures of those navies and their system of operations?**

I think both navies rely very heavily on tradition. There's a lot of tradition in navy circles, maybe in military generally. A lot of tradition a lot of procedures that have been honoured by time. But the Americans had the advantage of being able to develop their own traditions

18:00 because they were a younger nation and a younger navy. So some of the rather silly things that happen in the British tradition, weren't continued in the American. Now I can't really bring them to mind, but uniform was one. Silly uniform in the British and the Australian navy. The Americans changed all that. They

18:30 adopted a rather more sensible approach to dress. And they had quite different technology. When I joined the navy, British ships were riveted. All the plates were riveted together and they were very good sea keepers, the British ships. I never had a moment's doubt that we would ride out a storm.

19:00 The American ships were welded and that was for efficiency no doubt. They were easier to build. I think during the Second World War they turned out literally thousands of those Liberty ships and they were just churned out, mass produced almost, like motorcars. They were all welded. So there were different approaches to naval ship building and design

19:30 and procedures. I'd like to think that the British and particularly the Australian navy relied more heavily on individual initiative, whereas the Americans buttoned down every procedure and documented every facet of naval activity. That was mostly

20:00 hearsay. I really can't quote an example where an Australian sailor, or even a ship's company, did something out of the ordinary out of the initiative of a captain or a member of the crew, where the captain of an American vessel wouldn't have done the same thing because he would have been bound by some document. It was mostly hearsay I think.

20:30 **Tell us what you did in Hong Kong when you stopped there.**

Wow. Well, we did some really good things and some pretty stupid things. The really good things were ride up on the big trams to the peak and take pictures from the top of the harbour down below and go out to Repulse Bay to swim and

21:00 wander around the little backstreets buying things, because things were so cheap there. We used to get our clothes made by those excellent Chinese and Indian and for all I know Sri Lankan tailors. Excellent tailoring was done there. The stupid things were to drink, to chase girls, to go to brothels,

21:30 generally to sort of let your hair down ashore, because you'd been confined to the ship. There was no drinking onboard, no liquor for the ship's company, and of course no girls. We were all 18 years old up to I guess early 40s would be a really old

22:00 guy. So most of us were in our late teenage years and 20s. So we were charged up with testosterone and we all kidded ourselves that we had girlfriends at home and that we shouldn't be chasing the Chinese girls, but we did. Some of us did. Did I? I'm not going to tell you. Really, most

22:30 of the sailors were pretty decent. We spent a lot of time ashore and really enjoyed experiencing that culture. It was all new, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan certainly. Japan was a fantastic experience, because a whole new culture was opened up to us and they were so different. The Japanese were so different. So were the Chinese in Hong Kong for that matter. Singaporeans were.

23:00 That was a wonderful learning experience for all of us.

How long did you stay in Japan for before you were posted to Korea?

We were based there in a port called Sasebo. I guess we were there for probably a week. As I recall we had an accident onboard just after we got there. There was

23:30 an explosion down below, I think probably in the engine room. I can't recall exactly the details, but there was an explosion which caused some damage and I think a couple of fellows were injured. So we had to have repairs done before we went to the Korean coast. So I'd be guessing, probably a week. Then off we went to the west coast of

24:00 Korea.

Tell us what it was like to be operating in the Korean War and what operations you were doing.

It was again very new to us. Nobody had really anticipated what it was going to be like. First of all it was quite cold, April. Even thought they'd come out of the worst part of winter it was cool during the day and quite cold at night. It was a

24:30 bleak landscape. Looking ashore and often as we went ashore, we used to sometimes go ashore to land parties on the little islands off the coast of Korea, it was quite bleak, quite harsh. The trees were bent over with wind, it was by no means a lush landscape that confronted us. Mostly

25:00 fairly good seas. I can't recall any really rough days off the coast of Korea. We had some rough days going there and coming back, but not off the coast. There was a note of tension constantly. Rumours would spread throughout the ship, and being radio operator I would be able to read, although I couldn't pass on to my mates, I couldn't pass on any of the

25:30 information, I was able to read something of the operations that were planned for the following day, or further in advance. So there was always a level of anticipation and excitement. There were always ships with us. Either an American carrier, sometimes we were assigned to the picket ship to a carrier

26:00 group. That means that we form part of a screen around the carrier to protect the carrier from incoming incursions from either submarines, not that there were any, but there were a few false alarms, or aircraft, not that there were any. We were never attacked from the air. That was one thing. Second, we used to do shore bombardments. If there were targets ashore, North Korean and later on Chinese targets ashore, we'd bombard them standing

26:30 off the coast with our 4 inch guns. Third we were in one occasion involved in rescuing a pilot from a downed Sea Fury I think, from one of the carriers. We also picked up some wreckage of one of the aircraft that had ditched. We sent parties ashore to rescue

27:00 some friendly South Korean and American soldiers that were being shot up on an island and took the wounded back to and American hospital at Inchon. So there was a variety of activity, a variety of operations. Overall it was general patrolling in a particular area. We were assigned a particular area to patrol

27:30 and to ensure that there were no incursions. There were also South Korean vessels in company with us from time to time. So it was a bit of a mixture really. A bit of this and a bit of that, but always something going on.

This was during the stalemate period?

It was in the first part of 1953 where there were still quite a to of activity going on, but yes, the heavy fighting

28:00 had died down by that time. There was still quite a lot going on onshore. And of course by July the armistice was signed. So it was really in those months winding down, yeah. What had happened was the North Koreans had pushed in, they'd been pushed back, [US General Douglas] MacArthur wanted to go on. There was all of that had happened before we arrived

28:30 off the coast.

The shore bombardment, you'd have to go up the shore of North Korea. Did they have vessels that could challenge your boat?

No. The North Koreans didn't really have a navy. Not to speak of. They may have a few small vessels, but we were never challenged by any vessels.

29:00 They had MiGs [Mikoyan and Gurevich Russian aircraft]. They had a very effective air force. After the Chinese joined the war it was extremely effective. But no, no vessels. There were a couple of false alarms with submarines, but we never engaged a submarine. We never saw a submarine. As far as I knew there were no Chinese submarines operating in our

29:30 part of the world.

The Chinese were known to have submarines?

They must have at that time. I imagine, but the Chinese military at that time was largely a ground force.

Very effective and able to take massive losses, but their navy was not particularly sophisticated. They had an effective air force,

30:00 but they were mostly aircraft bought from or loaned from the Russians, the MiGs.

Were you ever attacked by MiGs?

No. We had alarms. When there was unidentified aircraft in the vicinity we'd all be sent to action stations, but we were never attacked. I guess because we weren't a suitable target. They had other more important things to do, thank goodness.

30:30 **Can you give me an idea down the western coastline?**

I think shore bombardments were probably the most important thing we did. That meant that we theoretically, there could have been retaliative fire, but we were never fired on. Culgoa wasn't. Some other Australian ships were. Murchison is the

31:00 most well known example of that, because she went up the Han River and she was attacked from shore batteries on the riverbank. That was quite a dramatic event, but we never suffered that sort of problem. So shore bombardments, which generally were successful.

31:30 Carrier protection. That was mostly standing by in case something had to be done. If an aircraft crashed then the frigates or destroyers that formed the carrier screen would be required to effect a rescue of the downed pilot, or recover

32:00 the crashed aircraft if that was possible. And these shore incursions that I mentioned. Rescuing people that were trapped. On one occasion there was, I guess you'd call it a feint. I can't really bring to mind exactly what happened, but the Americans were trying to trick the North Koreans into

32:30 attacking an island which would have drawn them into an ambush. We were standing by as a support ship for that action. In the event we weren't required to take part. So I suppose there was always this air of tension, but nothing dramatic in terms of casualties onboard. We suffered no casualties. The only casualty we had was when

33:00 one of our own shells flashed back. There's a thing called a flashback of the explosion in the gun turret. That knocked down all the men on the bridge. A friend of mine, who was a signalman, was knocked down and injured, but no deaths at that time.

How would you get an order?

33:30 **For instance, you were giving an order to bombard a certain position, would you be told why or any more detail?**

Our captain really wasn't told the total strategic picture I don't believe. I think the order would have been something like "You are directed to stand off the coast of

34:00 some island" or part of the mainland and undertake a shore bombardment of a particular position where it is believed a North Korean mortar battery is located or North Korean or Chinese troop concentration or railway

34:30 martialling yard or whatever. The target would have been described in quite precise detail. Then the captain would be required to report back how many rounds were expended, what visual information was available to him about the conduct of the bombardment. On some occasions we had spotter aircraft to tell us

35:00 some information on how successful the bombardment was. All those orders would have been encoded or enciphered in some way. So as telegraphist I would have been required to decode the information as it came in. All the telegraphists were under strict instruction never, never, never to reveal any of that, or gossip about it. We would

35:30 pass the information directly to the captain or his designated officer, perhaps the officer of the watch. That was our job done.

What about civilian junks? Were you ever intercepting?

Yes. That was another part of the work. I suppose we would have done that several times. It would have been a contact of some kind.

36:00 Almost always a junk, almost always a fishing vessel of some kind and we would have had to investigate who they were, what they were. On every occasion they turned out to be quite peaceful, benign local fishermen or traders. So there was never any even gossip about them being the enemy.

36:30 **Did you ever go on the eastern coastline as well?**

I don't think so. I don't think we ever went. No, I can't recall ever being on the east. I think the general idea was that the Commonwealth navies with American support, more than support, American carriers

were there too, would handle the west coast. But the east coast was totally

37:00 United States navy. I think that was generally the idea because the preponderance of vessels on the west coast were Commonwealth or other UN vessels. Dutch, French, and certainly all the Commonwealth countries. British, Canadian, New Zealand, Australian. Including British carriers and the Australian carrier, British cruisers.

37:30 We had the west mostly. The Commonwealth countries provided most of the vessels.

What were the other nations you were alongside with?

Certainly all those Commonwealth countries. We saw a lot of the British. British carriers like HMS Ocean. Canadian destroyers, New Zealand frigates and

38:00 British frigates, British destroyers, mine sweepers. Some South Korean vessels. Smallish vessels. We used to call them gun boats. And Dutch. There was one Dutch vessel there that I can recall. Don't think I ever saw a French, although I think the French were involved.

38:30 There was a language problem I would guess. All the English speaking nations used similar procedures. So it was easy for us, as happened in later conflicts, it was easier for us to communicate with and work in company with the other English speaking nations than it was with the non English speaking, European or Asian

39:00 nations.

Was there any Dutch naval presence?

Yeah, there was a Dutch vessel. There certainly was one Dutch vessel when we were there. Not that we had anything to do with them. They were in the same area, like in our vicinity, but the really close relationships were with the other Commonwealth countries. And the Americans.

With the non English speaking countries, tell us some difficulties you encountered in communication.

39:30 We in the Culgoa never had to. They would have received their orders form the central command, MacArthur's central command, and through their some sort of naval liaison. They were given missions to perform quite separately

40:00 from us. I have no idea what they were. But presumably they were patrolling and doing similar things to what we did. They just weren't integrated quite as closely as we were with the other English speaking navies.

Did you find the American navy used different operational techniques to the Australian or British navies?

40:30 There were certainly some differences. Not any problems as far as I can recall. I can't remember ever reading a message saying "My God, you've got it messed up. You really stuffed this up, get with it" or any. There was, not as far as I can recall, anything like that. Procedures are fairly standard. And after all, the Americans, the US navy learned a lot of

41:00 their seamanship and a lot of their techniques from the British. The British almost invented the navy along with the Spaniards and the Romans. The British tradition came through even into the American navy and so I don't think there was ever any difficulty there. Except in spelling maybe.

Tape 5

00:34 **Go back to before your involvement in the war. Tell us about the experience of your first arrival on the Culgoa.**

I joined the ship in Sydney, so

01:00 yes, we would have been put on a train in Flinders Naval Depot and would have gone to Sydney by train with my hammock and kitbag, both of which weighed a ton. They were transportable, but they were pretty heavy stuff. We were told

01:30 to report to Culgoa at Garden Island in Sydney. How did we get there? Probably under our own steam. Most people in those days went wherever they could by public transport, cos nobody could afford taxis. So I suspect I just got on the train and went to whatever the local train station was. Woolloomooloo probably. Then dragged myself and all these

02:00 other things, kitbag, to the entrance to Woolloomooloo, HMAS Kuttabul and Culgoa would have been alongside the wharf there. So you drag yourself up the gangway, salute to the officer on watch, or report to the bosun, or bosun's mate, whoever was controlling entry to the vessel.

02:30 Say “Here I am, I’m ordinary telegraphist Barnes reporting for duty.” Then the system would take over. The bosun’s mate, or whoever it was on the gangway, would call for probably the leading hand of the mess deck, which I would have been assigned to. He’d come up and take me down to where I was supposed to make my new home.

03:00 We all anticipated that the quarters would be very crowded. They always are on a vessel. As I recall we were right up forward, so the mess deck would have been triangular in shape and the hammocks strung from hangers along the sides of the vessel.

03:30 There would be a locker for each one of us about the size of your film box, about half a meter by half a meter. We’d have to put our worldly possessions in that. That was it. Then you would be assigned to duties. You’d be assigned a watch. A watch, B watch, C watch. That meant that you’d tart work

04:00 virtually straight away, unless the ship was in harbour for a refit. I think we were probably fitting out at that stage, in Sydney. I can't remember how long we stayed in Sydney before we ventured out of the harbour. It’s a bit of a shock actually. Your new home, you’re scared stiff that you’re going to do something wrong. You’ve just come out of training, you know you’re going to be in company with a whole lot of fellows who

04:30 knew the ropes and had lots more experience. You wondered what was going to happen next and whether you could cope with the confines of ship board life. So for an 18 year old it’s not a happy experience. It’s kind of exciting, but terribly scary at the same time.

05:00 **What were your first operations?**

I can't recall exactly what we did straight away, but I suspect we, as usual, went out on some sort of exercise. There was always exercises. It meant a couple of days in Sydney, repairing everything that had to be repaired, taking onboard stores, supplies, and then you’d

05:30 go off to say Jervis Bay for a gunnery exercise. Gunners would polish up their skills at gun laying and target acquisition and there’d be a lot of banging and crashing and a lot of fun going up. Then back to Sydney. Then maybe you’d go out on an air defence exercise where the air force would fly aircraft around you and the gunners would have the acquire them and practise shooting at them.

06:00 Or an anti-submarine exercise where the anti-submarine people would be dropping depth charges against a mythical submarine, or a real submarine. Quite often we’d exercise with the submarines to practise all those skills. For the communicators, we were always involved in this because the signalmen would be up on the bridge doing their flags and they were the ones that transcribed messages from the captain or the officers to bring down to the

06:30 wireless office for us. The telegraphists, radio operators, would be sending messages in practise situations, as well as genuine messages about able seaman Bloggs being posted from that vessel back to shore because of compassionate reasons or some new team of sailors coming onboard, or weather reports, or general

07:00 naval regulations, new regulation about uniform for instance. That would all come through the radio office. “From now on we’re going to have to wear whites or blues” and we had numbers for the uniforms. Number 10’s one and (UNCLEAR). So there was constant work going on. Back to Sydney, back out for exercises. Then the first genuine deployment, in anger as it were, was to Western Australia to take part in the

07:30 Montebello atomic tests. That was my first genuine long term voyage in Culgoa.

How were you eased into your role and who were

08:00 **you directly responsible to?**

There was a hierarchy. I’ll start with the captain. The communications officer, who was generally a lieutenant. He was responsible for all ship communication. You’re going to ask me names, I hope not, because I can’t remember lots of names. The captain was Nobby Clarke. We knew his name. Communications officer, then there would be the

08:30 chief telegraphist, this fellow that I’ve spoken about, and the chief signalman. The telegraphist is responsible for radio communication, and the signalman for other communications, flags and the semaphore light, the light that’s always on the edge of the bridge. From there on down you’d get either a petty officer or a leading hand,

09:00 a leading telegraphist, directly under the chief telegraphist. Then you’d get the rest of us. The rest of us consisted of 5 telegraphists. 5 telegraphists, 2 leading telegraphists and the chief. That was the, so that’s 5, 6, 7, 8, sounds like about right.

09:30 There may have been 4, I can't remember. Each of the telegraphists, whether we were ordinary telegraphists, as I started out as, or simply telegraphists, were responsible for a watch. So we’d rotate through the watches. 8 on, 12 off.

Where was your workstation?

Directly

10:00 under the bridge. There was the bridge and the next level down, the radio office was directly under the bridge. In fact, I think there may have been a tube. You know those old fashioned tubes that you saw in department stores? Certainly we could communicate with the bridge by voice, by

10:30 this tube. You'd yell into this thing like you play games when you're a child. Tin can sort of thing. One of those, except it was a tube. I think there may have been one of those little flying fox gadgets where you could put a written message in, pull a chord and zip, up she'd go to the bridge. I can't remember that. If there weren't then we just scrambled up the ladder. You were very close. The

11:00 three things that usually happen in the nerve centre of the vessel, the bridge where the command is, the captain or the officer of the watch, the operations room, where the operations planned and plotted and the navigator usually does his navigating either there or on the bridge. But operations room is where the action is controlled. The gunners

11:30 are controlled from the operations room and the radio office. So we were all close together.

Where was your action station?

My action station was the radio office. No, that's not exactly true. Some of us were assigned to support the gunners when we were off duty.

12:00 Now, I'm going to run out of memory because as I recall, if there was a bombardment going on and if we weren't required in the radio office, then we were regarded as spares and we were given other duties. Maybe I think I recall a couple of times where I just handled shells. Get shells out of the magazines, this kinds of

12:30 chain going on, relay chain to get them up into the turret so the gunners could fire them off. I think I did that once or twice, but mostly I was in the radio office.

The chief telegraphist was a hard task

13:00 **master.**

He was a He was a tough guy.

In what ways did he make your life a living hell?

He insisted on absolute adherence to procedures. That wouldn't have worried me because we were all trained to accept that. If you stepped out of line, if for some reason you forgot to do something that had to be done, there was lots of paperwork

13:30 involved in the radio office and very strict attention to for instance protecting the codes and ciphers that the navy used. If you forgot to tear out a page in the code book or cross off your name in the code book or you hadn't tuned your transmitter correctly to that the next watch coming on fall out of communication

14:00 or couldn't, for some reason had a problem, then he would come down on you like a ton of bricks. But in stead of simply carpeting you and saying "This is not good enough. You'd better pick your ideas up otherwise you'll (janjiUNCLEAR) on the ship" he would humiliate you. It was the humiliation that worried the young guys more than anything else. And would threaten

14:30 us with dire consequences. "I can have you thrown off the ship in two minutes if you ever do this again. You're for it. I'm watching you." That kind of threatening attitude It was really his attitude and the way he delivered the threats, in a sort of rat like, weaselly way. In stead of being straight forward and honourable in his threats, it's a strange way of putting it isn't it?

15:00 Football coach, you see them in the huddles during the halftime of football and he's really getting stuck into the players and you think "They're really copping it" but they're copping it in a very honourable way. This man didn't do that. He would weasel his way into insulting you and putting you down and making you feel worthless. He'd make you feel worthless

15:30 in a gratuitous way. We've all had people like that in our lives, I just happened to strike one when I was barely 18. I was probably late 17.

Did he punish you?

Yeah, from time to time. I guess there was a day's denial of leave here and there. We all suffered that, except we thought he played favourites and some of us were

16:00 less favoured than others.

Did you hear mention of the term "silent contempt"?

Oh yeah. I don't know whether we practised that any of us. I know what you mean. We see these films

about marines, and there's a lot of silent contempt in some of those. At least they pretend

16:30 there is.

It wasn't a crime in the army.

It was?

It wasn't. As far as I know, it's only a crime in the navy.

I didn't know that. Silent contempt. We all, well, a few of us felt contempt for this chief, but how we expressed it, I have no idea. Keeping out of his way was the best way. Just don't cross him, keep out of his way.

17:00 Maybe it was his way of making sure we were sharpened up for the very real possibility that we'd be called upon to take some really important messages during the Korean War or the ship's safety might have been in our hands. He could have done it in a much better way, I thought.

17:30 **How did you find the first few weeks, doing operational exercises, getting used to the other crew and the officers and life onboard ship?**

I never had any trouble with the officers. I thought they were all fine fellows, really. The only senior rating I had any difficulty with was the

18:00 chief. One of the leading hands was a little bit silly, because he used to make jokes and put us down as junior ranks and we couldn't really fight back because he was a senior person and the navy pecking order being what it is, you couldn't really give him back what he gave out. But that was mostly in fun. I don't

18:30 have any great bitterness about him. The rest of the guys you'd gradually get to know and you fit in. You start telling jokes and stories and before you know it, you're part of the group. If you're not too bad at games, I was quite good at cards and I used to hold my own with mah-jongg and the other games, you start to feel part of

19:00 the team fairly quickly. I just didn't feel, I think lack of privacy was one of my main problems in the navy. You just couldn't get away by yourself unless you went right up. You'd go up on the deck and kind of sit out there in some little place that nobody could see you and just enjoy the sea.

19:30 Watching the horizon, looking at the flying fish and that sort of thing. That is really just jewels. They were precious times. The rest of the time you were in the middle of a group of fellows.

Tell us about the atomic tests at Montebello Islands. I'm not sure where that is.

20:00 Western Australia. It's off the northwest coast of Western Australia. Onslow I guess would be the closest port. What happened was, this was 1952, the British government exploded one or more atomic devices in the Montebellos for experimental purposes.

20:30 Culgoa's role, there were other ships involved, was to stand to the west in the Indian Ocean and measure wind velocity and direction and any other weather patterns that were, barometric pressure, weather patterns that were coming in from the west, because the tests had to be conducted in optimum weather

21:00 conditions. So we stood out there bobbing up and down day after day after day. It was a most boring time, because all we did was let up a weather balloon once a day and measure the barometric pressure. I wasn't involved in that. That was the navigator, one of the officers. We were taking messages all the time, praying that the damn thing would go off and then get back home. There were delays of course,

21:30 there always seemed to be delays. So we stood out there for a week or two weeks. It was quite a long time. Then glory be, an absolute miracle happened, one of the sailors got appendicitis and we all cheered lustily because that meant we had to go back to Onslow. There were all kinds of rumours circulating.

22:00 Nobody wanted this fellow to die of course, we just wanted him to get into hospital so we could get into Onslow. Nobody knew anything about Onslow. Whoever went into Onslow? Most of us never even heard of Onslow. So there were rumours going round that Onslow was a great place and that there were pubs and girls and lush forests to wander in and all sorts of fishing. So we were all anticipating greatly as this poor little vessel struggled through the

22:30 Indian Ocean at top speed trying to get this guy to hospital. Onslow turned out to be a couple of houses and a dog. So everyone was greatly disappointed. It's probably a thriving metropolis now for all I know.

Did you actually see the blast?

No. Didn't go anywhere near it.

You didn't see the cloud?

The mushroom? No.

23:00 **Any atmospheric change at all?**

Not as far as I know. I don't think we were anywhere near the actual explosion when it happened. Certainly it was never suggested we were exposed to radiation or fallout or anything nasty. No. Then back to the eastern states

23:30 and more exercises and finally to Korea.

The point where you were sent to Korea, how was it conveyed to you? Did you have much detail on what you were going to be involved in?

24:00 The only thing we knew was from stories that other sailors had passed on because I think, again I can't remember whether we were the fifth, sixth, seventh vessel into the Korean theatre, but there were plenty of stories coming back from Korea about what had happened. The most notable being the heroic story of HMAS Murchison, which sailed up the Han River and was

24:30 bombarded, fired upon and lost some people and heroically fought her way out of that. That was circulated in navy gossip channels among the sailors. We had a good idea what it was all about. It was a United Nations operation and we knew what we were getting into. I don't' know whether I took the message giving us orders to, I wouldn't have anyway,

25:00 because I'm pretty sure we weren't at sea. I think probably the captain and a couple of the officers went ashore and got their orders from the naval command and informed, probably in a sealed envelope or something. Off we went.

Were you apprehensive about being sent to war?

No, never.

25:30 No. I've never been, it sounds a bit like bravado, I've never concerned about any activity during my time in the navy. Certainly never worried about rough seas, never worried about being fired on. It's just bravado I suppose. It was all excitement.

Even

26:00 **before you were being sent in? On the way to Korea, there was no way of knowing how the Korean War was going to turn out. Did you have any apprehension?**

No, I didn't, but I guess it wasn't just bravado, it was probably an

26:30 understanding that the navy wasn't really under great threat. The only time you were under threat was when you got too close to the shore, or up the river like the Murchison. Furthermore, we were all indoctrinated to believe that we were invincible. This was Australian navy after all. We were a good fighting unit

27:00 and we were alongside the Brits and the Americans and they were pretty good too. So it never occurred to me, and I can't remember anyone ever saying this to anyone, that Culgoa might be damaged, that we might lose people. Even if we did, that was all the luck of the game. That was something we had to accept. Later on in another ship,

27:30 Tobruk, during the Far East Strategic Reserve time we were actually shelled by a British ship, so-called friendly fire, and we lost a couple of guys dead in the turret. Even that, it wasn't a frightening experience for some reason. It was just one of those things that one had to accept.

28:00 **Tell us more about that incident.**

Let me see. It was near Cocos Island as I recall. Cocos Island. We were involved with a British destroyer on what's called a night encounter. This is a fairly

28:30 regular naval exercise. There were two ships involved. They're both darkened, no lights at all and the exercise involves finding the other ship and engaging that ship before the other ship engaged you. So you could, depending on the rules of engagement, you could use your radars,

29:00 you could simply use your eyeballs, you'd have a good lookout, you could use your ears. You're doing techniques to find other ships. They're not a mile or two away, they're quite a distance away at the start. So they're manoeuvring around and trying to find each other. Like two men in a dark room trying to find each other by piddling on the ceiling, that was how it was described. It was kind of a difficult operation. Two

29:30 blind men in a dark room trying to find each other by piddling in the ceiling. So you're struggling around, it's pitch black and what happens when you find the other, when the captain of vessel A finds vessel B, he'd fire a star shell. You get your gunnery crew to train on the other vessel to get the other vessel in its

30:00 sights and then the gunnery officer gives an order “Star shell”. That means that the gunners pull a lever and the barrels are elevated 12 degrees, then fire the star shell. The star shell, one or more, explodes over the top of the target and gradually

30:30 drifts down illuminating the target. Everyone cheers and the game’s over. You’ve won. OK, what happened in this case was that the British destroyer found us first and either the gunnery officer didn’t give the order “Star shell” or it wasn’t heard and somebody forgot to elevate the guns 12 degrees. So we’re right in the sights and

31:00 I think 2 shells went straight into our forward turret. Made a big hole in the steel. I think it killed 2 people and wounded some others of our crew. So that was a terrible disaster. It was just an accident, but it was still a terrible disaster. There was a court. Now, fact mixes with gossip here, I think there was a court-martial and either the gunnery officer

31:30 or the captain of that British destroyer was court-martialled and lost his commission, gunned out of the service or something nasty happened as a result of that accident.

Exercises aren’t as innocuous as they seem.

No. That’s right. You can have this,

32:00 there’s always some danger. A thing I mentioned before was the flashback accident that happened in Culgoa, which didn’t kill anyone, it just knocked out everybody and injured some.

By this time,

32:30 **did you develop a love of navy life or a love of the sea?**

Not really, no. I loved the travel. I loved meeting different cultures and experiencing different, the way

33:00 countries operate. I used to love, on occasion I thought it was absolutely a beautiful experience sailing through tropical waters, particularly tropical waters on a calm day and little islands and calm seas. That was fantastic. Those experiences I find quite nostalgic. The rest of it, no. In fact, this

33:30 Christine will tell you, after I left navy I just completely blanked my mind off all those experiences, just put them aside and went on to what was by that time opening up as quite an exciting, interesting life. It’s only in the last couple of years that I’ve gone back and thought about navy, joined the Culgoa Association, signed up recently with the Far East Strategic Reserve Association, met some of my old mates

34:00 like Joe. That’s taken 40 years.

What did you think of the traditions of the navy?

I’m equivocal about them. I think they’re very important for maintaining order and discipline and to generate tradition that way seems to be a good idea, because then you get

34:30 this spirited core and a feeling of solidarity and team spirit and all that sort of thing. The services thrive on that. That’s the good, positive part. The reason I’m equivocal is because in later life, after getting into the intelligence business, I’ve felt that many of the procedures that the military adopt

35:00 were so backward looking that they constrain the progress of military activities. I won’t bore you with all this, but one example of that is; the military’s inclined to place great stress on lessons learned form the previous conflict, so

35:30 we emerged from the Vietnam War and the army’s doing all these things that they did in Vietnam that they found successful and they write all those successes, procedures and techniques into their manuals. Along comes the next war. The Gulf War was somewhere in Timbuktu. It’s all changed, everything's different, nothing ever stays the same. Never any two wars the same, never any two conflicts. The reasons, the activities, the techniques, the

36:00 technology. So I could never quite convince my mates in uniform, later on after I became a civilian that they needed to think outside the square. They were constrained to some extent by the past. Constantly being dragged back by their past. In the army they still talk about the Forward Edge of the Battle

36:30 Area, the FEBA. That went out in Second World War days. My God, maybe they’re not talking about it now, but they did when I retired. A few of us used to say “There’s no such thing as a FEBA anymore. Forget FEBAs. Forward Edge of the Battle Area, for goodness sake, that’s [German General] Rommel in the Desert. Think ahead.”

People say

37:00 **that those who don’t know their past are doomed to repeat it.**

Absolutely.

You are arguing the opposite.

Absolutely.

Were you or any of the other sailors superstitious?

Some of the others were, not me. I'm much too cynical I suppose. If you're cynical you can't afford to be superstitious. Some of

37:30 the sailors were. They had various little signs. The most celebrated one, I suppose it goes back to the [Noah's] Ark, is seeing an albatross or something about a dead albatross or killing an albatross. You've heard this.

Never kill an albatross.

Something like that. There were lots of others. Signs and portents of what was going to happen. Some of

38:00 the sailors truly believed in those things. I think a lot of them used to pretend they believed just to generate chat and discussion. Sailors in mess decks thrive on rumour and gossip and threats and portents of fire consequences if it certain things happen. It's a

38:30 thing you do to keep sane while you're whiling away the hours.

Did any of the senior officers take it seriously?

I shouldn't think so.

Such as avoiding operations on Friday the 13th or anything like that?

No, I shouldn't think so. I can't believe anyone did. None of them I had anything to do with. These are mostly,

39:00 navy's a microcosm of the general population. There are people out there who are into conspiracy theories and signs in the stars, they read their horoscopes and there was some of that in the navy, but it wasn't a big deal I don't think.

Given that people like to gossip,

39:30 **what was the talk in the mess hall as regards the Korean War, the Cold War, a possible World War 3?**

Lots of talk about all kinds of subjects. All of those and more. During the Korean War we were all very busy and there wasn't very much speculation and talk and gossip about what was going to happen

40:00 tomorrow, because we knew this was real life. Tomorrow was busy, we were preparing for it, we were getting over the day before, we were working hard. Times were tight. You'd do your watch and then you'd get your head down and try to sleep. Before you knew it action stations would be sounded, you'd be woken up, had to get your uniform on, get all your anti-flash gear on, your protective clothing and all that. Go up to do whatever you had to do.

40:30 But there was lots of speculation about getting home. Always speculation and worry about getting home. We used to thrive on getting letters from home because all of us were appallingly homesick. The worst rumour that could float around a ship was that the planned return home in November had been delayed

41:00 and that we were going to stay in Korea over Christmas, or that we'd be deployed to some other place. Malaya or Suez or somewhere. That was scary business. So a lot of talk about that. When we weren't very busy there was also talk about other conflicts around the world. This doesn't apply only to the Culgoa, but also Tobruk.

41:30 More so Tobruk than Culgoa, because she was in the strategic reserve, so she was available for deployment wherever required in the Far East. There was always speculation about going here, going there. A lot of it generated by just crazy guys gossiping and wags making up stories to frighten the rest of us.

42:00 I soon became very conscious of all this and

Tape 6

00:34 **I'd like to ask you about your relationship with different positions such as stokers, midships men etc. How would they interact, and what was the nature of their work?**

I suppose one of the important differences was manual work versus

01:00 clerical work. The stokers and seamen were mostly involved in manual work. Telegraphists and what

were called writers, clerical people, did mostly written work. We used to think that there was a pecking order and that, I hope none of my stoker friends

01:30 ever see this tape. We used to think the stokers were down in the bowels of the ship and they were trained to shovel coal or squirt oil into the boilers and that was what they should be doing because they weren't about to do much else. That was their station in life. But we telegraphists, we were smarter. We knew about radio theory and a smattering of science. We could read Morse code and we could decipher messages and so we

02:00 thought we were a little more superior. But secretly we, at least I, envied them for being as robust as they were. The same with the seamen. Those fellows, in rough sea, they're the ones that had to go up on deck and secure anything loose. They had to make sure the ship was sound. They were the ones who did the damage control.

02:30 They were the ones that hauled up the anchor. They did all these rather dangerous, not so much dangerous, some dangerous, but also very energetic job. Robust. Whereas we were in a comfortable wireless office, usually heated. Sure, we had to use our minds and quite often there was a bit of stress,

03:00 quite often, more than a bit in fact. If you're trying to read the navy broadcast and the radio signal is very feeble, you're struggling to make sense of the Morse code in those old days when Morse code was what you had to listen for. So we had our moments too, but certainly we felt a little bit superior. Other naval

03:30 ratings, the people who plotted the radar and the navigator, now we're getting into officers. The navigator was always regarded as a pretty smart guy. The radar people were always regarded as pretty smart guys. Signalmen. Stokers and seamen were not in that same category.

04:00 **Someone referred to them as the lowest form of marine life.**

Well.

Not you, someone else. How would they see, from below, how do you think the stokers and all the others looked at people who were thought superior, such as your group?

They

04:30 never insulted us. I would never receive an insult from the stokers or the seamen. They kind of tolerated us. They probably thought we were wimps. They probably thought we were privileged because we had a comfortable office to working. We were closer to the officers because we were constantly running up and down giving the massages and taking instructions about the communications of the vessel. So they probably thought we were in a class

05:00 apart. But they, to their great credit, none of those guys on Culgoa, or Tobruk, ever said anything to me that was damaging or hurtful or tried to put me down in any way, which was rather good. I had some friends who weren't telegraphists or radio operators.

05:30 **How would you find the hierarchy on shore establishments? Would it be different?**

Yes. That's an interesting question. The two main ships I served on were blessed with good officers who worked well as a team and

06:00 who treated the men very fairly. I can't say that quite so firmly about some of the shore establishments. I worked at the navy communication station at Darwin, the one at Harman and Canberra and a naval air station at Marimba near Sydney. There was more opportunity on shore stations for the officers and the

06:30 sailors to become involved with the civilian infrastructure and families and to be diverted in certain ways. I'm probably not making this very clear, but onboard ship, certainly the officers are totally focused. They've got to be, because they're responsible running the ship.

07:00 If they don't do their job properly some part of the ship falls apart or the ship suddenly doesn't perform the way it should. Onboard ship, everyone works as a team. But on shore establishments you can easily become diverted. You can get involved in things other than running the vessel. Sometimes that leads to favouritism or

07:30 people letting down the team in one way or another. Emotional issues start to arise. A fellow goes home to his wife and has a problem, next morning comes to work and it's still there so he maybe takes it out on one of his staff. That's just for instance. Or there's conflict among

08:00 the males over some woman that they're both sweet on. So being old-fashioned, I always felt it was a very stupid thing for the navy to take women on ships. I still think it, because it leads to emotional issues that are better avoided when you're trying to be coherent and run a vessel, which is not an easy task.

08:30 **World War 2 was the first time women were introduced into the navy, the WRANS [Women's Royal Australian Naval Service]. When you went to Korea the women were still active?**

Yes, they were.

What role did they have in connection to your job? How would you interact with them throughout your career and the Korean War?

The only WRANS I came into contact with were also telegraphists,

09:00 radio operators.

On the ship?

No, no. This is onshore. On ship, certainly none at that time 1953, nor right through my navy time. But on shore establishments we had mixed watches. So there was a mixture of males and females. In fact, that's where I met my wife, Christine. At the navy station in

09:30 Harmon.

And you're against women in the navy?

No, no. Let me clarify that. I'm not against women in the navy. I think that's an excellent idea, because during the Korean War the navy recruited the women so as to release the men to go to sea. The women took over a lot of the work we men would have done onshore. In radio stations in my case. What I was against is women onboard ships. I think

10:00 having a mixed crew on a ship is not a good idea.

How do you think from a woman's point of view the issues regarding the women in the services,

10:30 **would you see any like in women solely on a ship without having men?**

That's a very interesting question. I think I have to be logically consistent and say that would probably work. I can't see why it shouldn't work.

11:00 The reason I think it causes problems on ships is because you can't stop people from getting attracted to each other. We do. All of us. That sometimes leads to emotional issues which detract from the operational efficiency of the ship. Emotional issues between men and women and between the men through competing for the

11:30 women and between the women maybe competing for the men.

So sexual issues?

Sexual issues. I wouldn't for a moment think that a woman can't do virtually all the work a man can do. I can't think of any work in the navy that a woman couldn't do.

Are there any labour tasks that may be strenuous?

Well, I was going to say stoking, but nowadays the ships are so modern that

12:00 you don't shovel coal into the boiler, you turn a lever or turn a wheel. Pull a lever or turn a wheel. Women have been

12:30 particularly important in the navy, certainly in shore establishments. Those naval communication stations really just couldn't work without female sailors. (UNCLEAR) dedication and.

When you say sailors, do you refer to women as an administrative role?

And in command roles.

13:00 **At that time as well?**

Well, yes. During the Korean War there were certainly quite a few WRANS officers who had very responsible positions in shore establishments. My wife was a leading hand in the navy communication station where we met. Responsible position.

13:30 Nowadays it's even more so. We were at the same navy station recently to an anniversary, and the commanding officer there is a female, a WRANS officer. The chaplain at the dedication of the memorial said in support of WRANS, now they call them female sailors, that the WRANS civilised the navy, which I thought was a

14:00 particularly pithy, incisive comment. "The WRANS civilised the navy." So I'm not anti-feminist.

I'm trying to see where you're coming from from your generational point of view.

14:30 I understand.

When you first joined, how did you react to the presence of women in the forces and the navy?

I thought it was nice. I was

15:00 late teenager and in my early 20s and the idea of working with women was wonderful. They looked better than men. We flirted with them. We had girlfriends, we used to go on little parties. You'd organise a party on some beach and take some cans, tins along and drink

15:30 a little and flirt a little and meet new people. We all had girlfriends. I think, in a way, when you're onboard ship, you really just have to tell yourself "I'm going to go through 8 months or 10 months of never seeing a woman" except maybe in an Asian port. But if you get to the point where

16:00 you can work with them, as we do now in almost every shore establishment and certainly onboard some ships, well, you adjust to that too. Most of us came to respect the women who we worked with. Most the ones that I met in my time in the navy were very dedicated and very serious about

16:30 their professional work. Some of them were really nice looking. I married one.

Did being out at sea for so many weeks, months sometimes

Months sometimes.

It is the case is it?

Not constantly. I was never at sea for months, but certainly weeks

17:00 constantly at sea.

What was the longest?

I think about 3 weeks is my longest. I think that was probably during the Montebello tests in '52. I can't remember exactly, but certainly 3 weeks is. 3 weeks wouldn't be totally unusual off the coast of Korea.

Have you mentioned the Montebello tests already?

Yes, I did that with Colin. I could

17:30 probably easily find out how long we were on patrol in Korean waters, but 3 weeks doesn't sound much. 3 weeks, maybe 4.

That must affect the way men look at sexual relations. How did men cope?

Well, I guess we tried to

18:00 suppress any sexual desires. We just tried to kind of push them down.

That sounds pretty hard.

Well, you have, in those days there were Playboy magazines, weren't there? I think. Most guys had pinups in their locker. So you'd sort of sneak off into the toilets from time to time. That's how we coped. There was no, we've been

18:30 through this before, as far as I know there was no homosexual activity onboard Culgoa or Tobruk. If there had been I think most of us would have heard about it, because ships companies gossip all the time. There's always little bits of little stories going around the ship. "Guess what happened yesterday" or "Guess who's on a charge" or "Guess who's been thrown off the ship for homosexuality." We would have heard that. There was never any of that.

What about covert?

Could have been,

19:00 but they would have had to be very, very careful because there's no privacy on a ship. You can't get away from people. It's very difficult to have any secrets, because you're in a group of fellows. You're either working with them in whatever role you play in the ship, or you're sitting around in the mess deck with them playing cards and chatting and constantly in dialogue.

19:30 Even little nuances of conversation come up and it's extremely difficult to keep anything under control. If there's some deep secret in your mind, it'll probably come out. My mate Joe on the Culgoa, we used to know all about each other's girlfriends. As you know, he pinched one of mine, and he knew that, because he knew what she was like. He knew

20:00 I wrote to her. He found her address for goodness sake. It was very difficult to be anything but what you really are on a ship, small ship anyway.

It seems to be invasive in a sense. You're really a social animal in there, very little privacy, in that

20:30 **case, when you do get shore leave you're bound to explode in certain ways.**

That's the typical navy story. The guys bottle things up. Certainly they bottle their sexual desires up as best they can. When they're ashore they tend to let their hair down, but they do it in different ways. After I was married I used to

21:00 go ashore with a couple of guys. Our outlet was to go on long trips together. We'd get on the train in Japan and go as far as you could in Japan. A lot of fellows played sport. As soon as they were off the ship they'd get involved in some sort of physical activity. Playing footy or cricket or whatever. I think it was largely a matter of

21:30 whatever activities interested you. On the other hand a lot of sailors do go straight to pubs and let it all hang out. They drink themselves to a state of utter. Chase girls. We've all done a bit of that. But there's more to it than that.

It sounds similar to my understanding

22:00 **of the army.**

Yes, I think that's probably true of most military organisations.

Because everything is so structured and controlled in a way.

Yes.

22:30 **What fear did you have about being aboard a ship?**

There were some fears, but not ones you would imagine. Most people would imagine that sailors

23:00 would be afraid of combat. Anyone going into a combat zone. I wasn't in Korea, because I knew that naval units were fairly safe. There was no North Korean navy. The Chinese didn't have a viable and threatening navy at that time. There was no threat from the air toward us. From shore batteries they were pretty low risk.

23:30 So I've never been scared of the ship foundering or being swamped, turning turtle. Never, ever. I think the only fear that dogged me right through my navy time was fear of not performing satisfactorily. Somehow messing things up, not being competent or capable of doing my

24:00 job. I used to be frightened of tuning transmitters, for instance. Never had any trouble with Morse code or ciphers or any of the clerical work involved in radio work. But I was a bit worried about tuning transmitters. That was a fear that my bosses and my peers

24:30 would regard me as an ineffective or less effective or even incompetent. That was a real problem.

Those were your professional fears?

Yes.

What about the water? Sinking ship.

Never. Not in my case.

How would you see the sea?

25:00 **When you started going on sorties, what are they called in the navy?**

Voyages probably.

How did you see the view of the ocean and travelling through it?

I thought it was always interesting. Certainly in a calm sea it's just beautiful. It's a beautiful life. It's a

25:30 wonderful experience if you can get away and enjoy it. You're usually working, or you're down below, or there's the smell of diesel oil in your nostrils, so you can't quite enjoy the beautiful atmosphere. In a rough sea you're really hanging on and trying desperately not to be seasick. I was frightened of being seasick, which again is the thing of competence. If you're seasick in the wireless office, there's not much you can do about it. You just have to hang in there and

26:00 you vomit, you whatever has to, you get rid of whatever's in your tummy and then you go back and work. Because if you miss part of the naval broadcast, or is you can't receive an incoming message then you've let the side down. You're not doing your job properly. That was always a fear I had. I suppose there was also a fear of not being able to cope with the more

26:30 aggressive men on the ship. Not being able to stand up for myself, cos I'm a fairly peaceful person. Occasionally I had to draw myself up to my full 97 inches and kind of tough it out with somebody, but I tried to avoid those situations as much as I could. I was a little bit

27:00 scared of not being tough enough to cope with the few aggressive men. There's always a few really aggressive people onboard ship. Bullies. Like at school. It's like being at school except it's grown up.

When you say really aggressive people, how would they bully?

Try to put you down, try to humiliate you, tease you

27:30 until you reacted. Fairly typical. Fairly school ground stuff. Call you names, asserting things. I guess most people go through this at one stage. You have to somehow react to that and convince the guy that you're not

28:00 going to just roll over. There was always some fear that I would not be able to cope with that situation. I'd muddle through that somehow.

How did you deal with those problems?

Usually by trying to outwit them by using the only tool I had, because I'm not a really big fella. The only tool I had was my mind. I had to somehow

28:30 beat them intellectually by twisting their words back at them and making them believe that I wasn't going to be a pushover. They couldn't really assert these things without getting a barb back, or me being able to defend myself. People would, again there's no privacy, this is all done in groups. So if you could get the group on

29:00 side by being a bit smarter than the bully, and everyone knew who the bullies were. So the group would be behind you if you were on the right, if you looked to be the winner in this verbal stout. Then you were OK. So I tried to do that. Isn't that a fear that almost everybody has? Everybody has got this sort of, that wasn't specifically a navy fear, except that you're in

29:30 a group and you can't escape that. If there's a bully in the mess deck you can't say "Bugger it, I'm going to just disengage from this fellow, he's hopeless" and go somewhere else, because you're stuck with him for 10 months. You've just got to somehow cope with him. So that's a particular navy problem. I think probably even a greater problem in submarines because

30:00 they're really confined there.

What association did you have with submarines? What did you understand about their working relationship amongst themselves?

It's sort of navy folklore that submariners are a special breed of cat. They're specially selected, they have to have these personality attributes,

30:30 these abilities to cope with all of these situations that you find in close confinement. You can't get away from your shipmates. They have to be very resilient and tolerant and all that sort of thing. We generally admired submariners. We always admired anybody with, they had a special badge in their tunic. Anybody

31:00 with the badge was really quite often greatly respected in the navy. If you were a submariner you were "top of the pops". We used to exercise with submarines. In destroyers and frigates part of the job is to hunt submarines. So we were quite often exercising with submarines. We had to find them, they had to evade us, that was part of the game.

What were

31:30 **the idiosyncrasies?**

In submariners? A sort of phlegmatic coolness. They knew they were a sort of elite group, so they could be somewhat detached and cool and very stoical and probably looked down on the rest of us. We were just surface people,

32:00 they were the real navy. Of course, Australia had s great tradition of submarines. We've had submarines right back to the First World War days. It's a very professional part of the navy.

Do you have any idea what process they might have to go through in selection?

I think it's a psychological screening. I've never been through it, but

32:30 I think it's screening to weed out people who had quick tempers, who were impatient, who aren't able to cope with unusual situations. They try to get people with a bit of initiative, people who don't panic. Just imagine being in one of these things and being under attack. It would be just horrific I would think.

33:00 You asked about whether I ever had any fear. I never had any fear of being shot up or sinking, but had I been in a submarine, gee whiz, I reckon I would have had problems. The confinement would have been one terrible problem. Not being able to see the sky for instance.

Or look out the window.

Or look out the window. Yeah.

33:30 **During your stay in Korea, did you get a chance to interact, either through hostile means or prisoners of war, North Koreans or Chinese?**

No, never. I never, never, never saw one of the enemy. I didn't ever see a face. We usually drank with the South Koreans, and on one

34:00 occasion we took onboard some South Korean wounded who'd been shot up in an island engagement with North Koreans and conveyed them back to Inchon to the hospital. But no, never.

Did you have leave at Inchon?

I think we just dropped them off. I never went ashore at Inchon. The only time we ever went ashore

34:30 in Korea was the offshore islands, which were in South Korean hands. That was just to fraternise with the locals, show the flag, give us a bit of shore time. When you're bobbing around at sea all the time it's nice to feel some solid ground under your feet. We went down into a village and walked around and smiled at everyone and got smiles back and

35:00 that was quite nice. We used to go ashore in Japan. Japan was our home base, so we'd do a patrol of some weeks and then go back to Japan and spend a bit of time in port in Japan.

You would have been there in the winter as well?

No.

Not Japan, Korea.

No, we avoided the winter because by the time we got to Korea it was

35:30 April. It was still cool, but it was not the worst part of the winter. Then we left in November, so I was lucky enough to miss the winter. It was cold when we arrived there and starting to get cold at the end. The guys who followed us and preceded us spent the whole winter there. They went through a bitter winter, which was really cold. So I think we were

36:00 pretty lucky.

Generally speaking. How would you describe the weather conditions where you served?

Bleak. Quite bleak mostly. There were some sunny days, but look, I wouldn't go to Korea to live. Certainly not North Korea. I'd rather go to Tasmania.

36:30 **Regarding shore bombardment, you would have done this many times?**

Several. About half a dozen times.

How would you coordinate the fire support, say for instance if an army unit was attacking and they requested support,

37:00 **how would you coordinate with the army?**

Through communications. We'd get our targets in coded messages from higher headquarters. We were in fact integrated into the US navy system so we'd get our targets through that command structure.

37:30 There wasn't as close coordination as there typically is between army and air force. You know the army can call in air strikes and because they're spotting, the army probably can direct the air force onto specific targets quite close by, just over the ridge as it were. We could never quite do that. It was more difficult in a naval vessel standing offshore

38:00 to coordinate with an army unit on the mainland or in the island. But it could be done. What you do is set up a special tactical communications net so that we could talk with spotters, or the army unit involved in the mainland or more particularly on islands. That was part of the communications work.

38:30 Tactical communication, tactical radio. Sometimes we knew how effective our bombardment was, because we would get reports back from a spotter onshore. But I guess navy bombardment can't be quite as effective as

39:00 an air strike. Naval vessels are not as manoeuvrable, and the great big 4 inch shells, even the big, we had USS Missouri at one time in that same battle group as we were in. Missouri's a battleship and I think she had 16 inch guns. So these are great big monsters. They just lob great big shells over the top of us. We used to,

39:30 they used to whistle over the top of us. They'd thump into shore. It's difficult to pinpoint a target standing miles away. I'm almost suggesting that naval bombardment's a waste of time I suppose.

I've gathered that even in

40:00 **World War 2 there was considerable naval bombardments which had practically no effect.**

I think it’s not unreasonable to say that. I’m sure there’s a useful psychological weapon and they’re part of a bigger scheme. But the idea that you can sit in a destroyer several miles offshore, a couple of miles offshore and throw

40:30 lumps of steel at a well dug in target, the chance that you’re going to knock it out is pretty wild. After I went into the civilian part of defence, the intelligence business, that was another thing where I, looking back, thought “There’s got to be a better way of doing this.” Still.

Tape 7

00:35 **What were your views on being involved in the atomic tests and atomic test in general?**

Colin, at the time I didn’t have any view. I don’t think I thought

01:00 for a moment about whether or not there was a moral issue involved. It seemed to me that coming out of the Second World War we were always led to believe that the bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a way of shortening the war and saving lives. Paradoxically both Japanese lives and American, Australian, British lives. So

01:30 we were conditioned to view the view that the possession of atomic weapons by the west was reasonable and that they could be used sensibly and responsibly. And that they had to be tested. Furthermore, at that time I don’t think any ordinary person, and I was certainly very ordinary, I was 17 years old, thought for a moment

02:00 of the dangers involved. Of radiation or of long term damage to the environment or nuclear fallout. We just did it. That was at the time. Looking back now, with the benefit of hindsight, I guess if somebody said to me “Get on a ship and go out to the Indian Ocean. You’re ging to support an atomic test” I probably would have said “My God. There’s

02:30 no way I would do that. This is Australia after all. Why should the British pollute our beautiful Montebello Islands with their dirty bombs? Why don’t they test it on the Isle of Wight for goodness sake?” This is 2004. Same with the French. Why the hell did the French come out here and test their filthy bombs in the Pacific Ocean? As Gareth Evans said at the time

03:00 “If it’s so safe, why don’t they do it in Picardy or Monte Carlo for God’s sake?”

The question is; why did everyone let them?

We just didn’t know. We were convinced that the possession of atomic weapons was fine, it was all part of the preservation of western democracy and freedom and so on. We thought that we had

03:30 an obligation to Britain to assist in this area. But we’ve really moved on. It’s probably in a way quite a positive thing that in those 50 years Australia’s developed as a more independent nation and that we are all more aware of the dangers of these activities.

04:00 **At that time, were you aware of the other tests that were going on?**

I suspect I was. It was fairly common knowledge I think. I can't remember the chronology, but there were American tests in Bikini Atoll, there were certainly tests in the Nevada Desert. I guess we knew about those in general terms.

What about Maralinga?

Oh, sorry

04:30 in Australia? I probably knew about those too. I think it was general knowledge. But did we worry about them? No. I didn’t. But as a 17 year old I wasn’t aware of what was really happening.

Out at sea and in a war,

05:00 **did you get homesick? What contact did you have from home?**

Yes, I became very homesick. We all did. There was nothing better than getting a letter. During the Korean War letters were few and far between because there wasn’t a regular postal service. What used to happen was that one of the ships in the group

05:30 would go back to Japan for the usual rotation, take on supplies, be repaired or whatever. Then she’d pick up all the mail for all the ships on the west coast and she’d do a mail run. Come back from Japan and then drop off the mail. That was a red letter day. Literally we just tore our letters open and read then avidly. I was

06:00 as keen to get letters from my sisters and my Dad, though he wasn’t a great correspondent, but my sisters used to write quite regularly. And also from my girlfriend. We all had girlfriends. So a letter from you girlfriend was really something special. But that was the only contact. There was no telephone, no

facsimile or any other

06:30 way of communicating, except maybe spiritually if somebody thought they could do it in another dimension, but I never did.

Did you ever worry about your girlfriend back in Australia?

Oh yeah. Constantly. We were all a buzz with worry. All of us. There was nothing worse than getting a 'Dear John' letter. That she'd met someone else

07:00 and that the separation was too much and she'd moved on. That was just devastating to the guys. In the great scheme of things it wasn't devastating at all. There were plenty of pebbles on the beach, but when we were away from home, in the company of only men, the connection with the womenfolk in our lives was extremely important. We

07:30 became terribly concerned if we thought that our girlfriends might be, unfaithful is the wrong word because this was all romantic stuff mostly, but was seeing someone else. Getting interested in somebody else. That was the most devastating of things that could happen. So letters were very important for reassurance.

08:00 **Did your Father write letters?**

Well, he used to. Not as often as I should have wanted. I should have probably persuaded him to write more. He wasn't as articulate as my Mother. In any event she had died anyway, but he was a smart guy, but he wasn't a good

08:30 communicant. Wasn't a good letter writer. So I occasionally got letters from him. I'd write to him on occasion, but more particularly my sisters.

Your brother?

Once in a blue moon. We, like most brothers, there was a kind of pinch in between us. We weren't warm brothers. I was 8 years younger than him so I was always the baby of the family and kind of

09:00 regarded as a bit immature. So why should he bother about writing to me? I always regarded him as a bit of an ogre. He was so much smarter than me and knew so much more and it was a sort of typical older brother/younger brother problem. But he used to write occasionally.

What was he doing?

He was a

09:30 farmer. My Father was always a farmer and my brother, after the Second World War applied for the soldier settlement scheme and received, I'm not sure exactly how they did this, I think it was a grant of some kind, which enabled him, and also my Father helped him, to set up a property at Gloucester, fairly close to our original

10:00 country home at Stroud, northern central NSW, which he turned into a very, very successful enterprise. He was a very successful farmer. Somewhat more successful, and certainly better off than my Father had ever been. Went into beef cattle, reconstructed the dairy. He became chairman of the dairy board up there. Changed from liquid milk to powdered milk

10:30 under his guidance and became a member of the NSW Dairy Board. Visited China many times as a consultant. He had a very successful agricultural [business], he was a Bachelor of Agricultural Science. So a high achiever really. And very busy.

He was in the AIF?

Yes.

What was his experience during the war?

Nothing to speak of. He went to New Guinea, but it was right at the end

11:00 of the war. In a way we were somewhat similar because he joined the army as soon as he turned 18 and went to the New Guinea theatre just as the war was ending, but he got combat experience, brief as it was. I went to Korea at the end of the Korean War and got combat experience. So we're both lucky that we weren't involved in great hostilities, dangerous

11:30 hostilities. We benefit from the advantages of being returned service people with war theatre experience.

I want to ask you about the sea and if you saw any

12:00 **unusual sights or wildlife, unusual weather patterns or anything like that.**

Yes, I think the sea has a certain mystery and fascination about it that a lot of people have experienced. I'll just pick out a couple of examples. In tropical waters,

12:30 the Timor Sea is probably the best example I can think of, when it's a calm day and there's not a breath of air, the sea looks like trickle. It's just, just moving. Just moving. A tiny swell. The colours are just magic. If you're within sight of land the islands appear to float on the horizon. There's a sort of

13:00 separation which is, I guess you'd call it an optical illusion. As if the islands are floating, suspended. They're always mysterious and interesting. Usually there's sea life accompanying the ship. So there'd be dolphins and the most particular thing that used to fascinate me were flying fish. Little ones about 6 inches long and smaller

13:30 and larger than that. They'd go flying off in front of the ship. As the bow wave cut the water the disturbance would frighten the flying fish and they'd take to the air and fly in little traces just skimming the water. The bird life added to that because there'd always be birds. Usually they follow the ship because they're greedy and they always know we had scraps to throw to them, So there'd be lots of

14:00 seagulls and other forms of bird life. So that was beautiful. Certainly in the Antarctic Ocean, or the Great Southern Ocean, I was never far enough south to be called the Antarctic, on a really rough day, the sea would be so huge that you would look up at the

14:30 waves towering over the ship. Good seamanship meant that instead of wallowing around a sea from the side, the ship would plough into the waves and there'd be huge spray everywhere. Great

15:00 piles of foam and wild winds, streaks of foam on the waves. That was quite exciting and somehow generated a feeling of really being alive. Plus there'd be albatrosses floating around and bird life would be quite remarkable. You think "How are these creatures surviving out in this wild weather with land not anywhere to be seen"

15:30 maybe a thousand miles away. So that was quite….. Then, the third experience would have been in the so-called Japanese inland sea there is so much traffic. This also applies to the environs of Hong Kong. There's so much traffic. Large vessels of all kinds and

16:00 merchant vessels. Usually a few naval vessels because during the Korean War certainly and later on in the Far East deployments there would always be naval vessels around plying the waters, going about their work. They'd be accompanied by fishing vessels of all kinds and a large number of junks around China and Japan, which

16:30 were so picturesque that they fascinate you. The fascinating shapes of the sails and these little wooden vessels are quite remarkable. That was one of the great pleasures of being at sea. These experiences, the scenes.

17:00 **I want to ask you more about the Silent Service. Can you explain in more detail what that meant and how it related to you?**

OK. The basic philosophy is that a ship's position shouldn't be revealed. In order to conceal your position at sea

17:30 you were obliged not to transmit by radio because those transmissions could be intercepted. Certainly during the Second World War and then onwards, any transmissions on high frequency radio, that is the system that provided long distance, in effect worldwide long distance communication. High frequency radio could be targeted by direction timing equipment

18:00 and if you could triangulate. If you could get 3 or 4 stations all intercepting the same radio transmission you could locate the ship fairly accurately. So it was important not to transmit, especially if you were a submarine, but surface vessels as well. What we were obliged to do was to listen to a broadcast from a naval station, in our case it was from Harman, the

18:30 station near Canberra, HMAS Harman, or from another naval station near Darwin called HMAS Coonawarra. So we'd be listening for the broadcast constantly, broadcast on HF [high frequency] radio. You would be listening for you call sign. A lot of the broadcasts would be general information about weather, general naval instructions and

19:00 orders to the whole fleet. The fleet might be disposed all over the place. Indian Ocean, Far East and maybe Australian waters. A lot of that would be general, but some of the messages on that broadcast would be specific to our ship. We had our particular call sign, VMFT I think it was. VMFT. So we'd be listening for that call sign. In order to

19:30 obscure the recipient of that message, because anybody could listen to the broadcast. When we were in the Korean War the Koreans could have, the Chinese could have. The navy would code the call sign. So it wouldn't come out VMFT, it would come out something else, XYZB or something. So only we knew that code and we'd say "Oh, that's us". So

20:00 it was very important to read that message from the broadcast. The broadcast used to be 28 words a minute, which is fairly fast for Morse code, in the good old days when Morse code was still being used. So we had to read it, we had to listen for it. At such long distances it was sometimes quite difficult because radio transmissions on HF are affected by

20:30 ionospheric disturbances and general problems of fading and distortion. So it was quite a tricky job to be able to get every message from broadcast. If you wanted to transmit something in response to that, suppose the captain had to make a report of some kind, if you could possibly avoid doing it, or if you could delay it

21:00 until you went to port that was good. But if you really had to transmit while still at sea, then you would attempt to transmit in a manner and at a time which minimized the risk of being intercepted. You would have to transmit anything sensitive or classified in code or cipher. So one of the jobs of the telegraphist was to

21:30 encipher messages that were classified and then transmit them at particular times. In Far East waters we would be listening also to local broadcasts from US navy, or the British navy station in Hong Kong. So there was an elaborate communications network and procedures that covered our whole deployment no matter where we were.

22:00 But going all the way back to the start, the whole philosophy was to conceal your position and not give anything away.

22:30 **Did you ever see the use of lights from signals bouncing off the clouds?**

No, not really. The signalmen used to us their alders lamps and those great big fixed lamps with shutters on the side of the bridge all the time to communicate ship to ship. But he used to train those lamps

23:00 directly on the other ship involved. Bouncing off the clouds, a bit fanciful, quite frankly. A bit fanciful. I was so long in communications that there are all kinds of techniques developed to experimented with during my time, 45 years or something or other. Moon bounce was another one. We at

23:30 one stage experimented with bouncing radio signals off the moon. Mickey Mouse stuff mostly.

I guess they would have said that about satellites though.

Well, yeah. The difference is though that satellites, the physics are fairly predictable. You can,

24:00 it’s a fairly straightforward exercise in physics to, once you get your satellite up there, work out how you might communicate by using it virtually as a mirror, up and down. The moon’s a more flexible and unpredictable sort of thing. You can’t control it, you can’t manufacture the mirror that you can with the satellite.

24:30 A mirror is a simplistic way to look at it, but it’s true. It’s just like a mirror, a satellite. The moon moves and twists and turns and it’s got craters and it’s obscured by cloud and the ionosphere gets in the way.

In the Korean War,

25:00 **you mentioned bombardment, what was some of the other roles you were involved in?**

We acted as picket ships, screens is a better word, a screen of the carrier. Whatever carriers were there we would for a ring around the carrier. That was for two main reasons. To detect any submarine threats,

25:30 any incoming aircraft, because most of the frigates and destroyers had an anti-aircraft capability. Not that it was needed, that was just in case. Also to pick up any downed pilots, any crashed aircraft and generally support the carrier. The carrier was the centre of the battle group. It was the most important asset.

26:00 That was one thing. Second, shore bombardments, as you mentioned. Rescuing people from tricky situations. South Koreans we sometimes rescued from shore, particularly islands. On one occasion we rescued them from islands. Patrolling up and down the coast in search of any

26:30 possible threat. All those junks about and fishing vessels of various kinds, so we had to check them out and make sure they weren't North Korean or Chinese vessels trying to infiltrate or collect intelligence. I think there was something else, but it’s escaped me. But those were our main roles.

Did you ever

27:00 **encounter enemy aircraft?**

They used to fly overhead from time to time. We had unidentified aircraft or suspected North Korean or more particularly Chinese aircraft. They’d fly overhead, but I guess they weren’t much too interested in us. They had other things to do.

Did you ever fire on them?

No, never fired on an aircraft. Not on an enemy aircraft. Usually exercise all the time, but not in anger.

27:30 Nor North Korean or Chinese vessels. We never encountered any hostile naval activity.

You sometimes rescued pilots. Tell us about that.

My memory's a bit vague about that. We went to, let me see.

28:00 I don't think I've got it here. There was one occasion where, April the 30th 1953 we anchored at Chodo, which is a particular anchorage off the coast. "16:30 we bombarded gun positions onshore. 19:00 stood by while helicopter rescued a downed pilot from the sea. Eight jet aircraft were observed at 30,000 feet." They were unidentified. They could have been MiGs, but they

28:30 could have been anything really. We stood by while a helicopter went and rescued this pilot. Standing by means that we would be there to render any assistance and had the helicopter not been able to get the downed pilot, or his body, ashore, or to some hospital, themselves, then probably they would have delivered him to

29:00 Culgoa and we would have taken him back to a hospital say at Inchon. But we weren't required in that case".

29:30 **I think we've covered your Korean War involvement.**

Pretty much. What I can remember of it, that's fairly comprehensive.

Afterwards you returned to Australia?

Yes. I had a posting to a shore station. Ironically my

30:00 job at HMAS Marimba, which is a naval shore station near Sydney, was then, was to teach naval airmen Morse code and communications. So I became an instructor of the very people I wanted to be myself. However, by this time I'd given up all dreams of flying or being involved in flying in any way.

30:30 That was quite a pleasant experience because I was close to home. I used to visit my family quite often near Sydney. That didn't last very long. Then I volunteered to be in what was known as the Special Branch, which was a branch of navy communications which did what we used to call monitoring, which is communications interception work. That

31:00 meant that I was transferred to Harmon near, I'm sorry, did I get this wrong? No. I was transferred to a station in Sydney at Watson in North Head, to do a course there. That got me into the intelligence business. Then

31:30 I was sent to Canberra and worked in HMAS Harmon for some time where I met Christine, married her in Canberra. She was also in the navy Special Branch. I volunteered to come to Melbourne to join an organisation called Defence Signals Branch.

32:00 After about a year there I was posted back to Sydney, HMAS Tobruk, which is a battle class destroyer. One of the greyhounds of the sea. She was a really very sharp vessel. Modern, incorporated all the technical sophistication that had been learned during the Second World War. I

32:30 spent almost a year onboard Tobruk. That was the so-called Far East Strategic Reserve during the so-called Malayan Emergency when communist insurgents were attempting to overthrow the Malayan government.

I want to ask you more about Special Branch. You must have been aware of

33:00 **the significance of intelligence at that time. Can you describe the climate of those times with Menzies and the Red Bill [unsuccessful ban the Communist Party bill] and so on?**

Yes. This was the late '50s, so we were all concerned about the spread of, I guess it was known as international

33:30 communism. The perception was that the most important communist states, USSR and China, if they weren't contained would gradually swamp the rest of us. So there was a general feeling. I think there was some people in the left wing of Australian politics who would never accept this, but the

34:00 general feeling, and Menzies was a very articulate spokesman for that general feeling, was that somehow Australia had to play its part along with the other western democracies, Britain, United Stated, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, in containing communism. While I think my understanding of politics was growing at the time,

34:30 I probably just accepted this as a reasonable role for the Australian navy to be involved in. Reasonable activities. What turned out to be the Far East Strategic Reserve. This was a way of Australia contributing to other Allied nations being present and patrolling in the South China Sea

35:00 and up through the straits of Formosa, called the Taiwan Straits now, and as far as Korea as a way of containing this communist threat. At the same time the air force was sending units into Malaya. I think the Butterworth base was established. The Americans had quite massive naval power in the Pacific, the 7th Fleet.

35:30 The British were still heavily involved. SEATO, South East Asian Treaty Organisation, was established.

So it was all part of our response to the communist threat and the Cold War. In effect we were into the Cold War in a big way. And very serious about it.

Did you agree with Menzies'

36:00 **Red Bill?**

To ban the Communist Party? Oh yeah. No question. Absolutely. I agreed with I think every action taken to contain communism. Never had the slightest hesitation in reaffirming that. Even today I think we've saved the terrible fate of those eastern European

36:30 countries that were swamped by the USSR and their rather pernicious doctrines and philosophy. The terrible grey tide of statism. We were saved all that. In a way I reckon that intelligence played a massive role in that. So

37:00 starting with that move into Special Branch and then later on moving from navy into the defence signals branch and then eventually became the director of, that's one of the best things I did in my life.

Tell me more about your role.

37:30 **Hoe did you gather information and what things were you picking up?**

There were two elements to this. There's what's called electronic warfare. That's specifically a military activity. Electronic warfare is to do with conducting surveillance in the battlefield to intercept the communications

38:00 of the adversary. Intercept enemy communications, read their messages by breaking their codes and ciphers to determine what the heck was going on. What's his plans? What's his intentions? What' his position of forces? What are his likely capabilities? Etc, etc. And/or to disrupt his radars, maybe jam his communications

38:30 transmitters, issue false orders yourself so as to confuse him. Ensure that your own communications are secure. There are two sides of the coin. You're trying to intercept his communications and exploit them, and/or jam his radars and other electronic emissions. The other side to the coin is to keep your own communications

39:00 pure. Simplistically that would be radio silence, but in a more sophisticated way it's using codes and ciphers very effectively. And minimising your traffic, protecting your radars, a whole lot of, it's a cat and mouse game and you're constantly changing your approach as the

39:30 adversary changes his approach. That's called electronic warfare. That's a war fighting capability. That's what the military do. You could call that tactical. At a strategic level, the national intelligence organisations are constantly attempting to collect information

40:00 on the activities of any potential adversity. So they're doing the same thing, but it's at a national or force level, rather than as a tactical level. That's where the defence signals directories is aimed. But also, again the other side of the coin, the directorate, at that time the branch

40:30 of the defence department, was concerned with developing Australia's codes and ciphers and making sure that they were protected and that nobody could read them. That meant increasingly becoming involved in very high tech information technology, number crunching with massive computer power and the development of very sophisticated mathematics. So we had a dual role.

41:00 While I can't talk about targets or techniques, that general role has been announced in the parliament, it was announced by the Hawke Government, and very sensibly. It's a completely legitimate function of government. So we were very pleased that it was revealed. Previous to that we'd been sort of obscured within the department of defence, but after [Prime Minister Bob] Hawke made

41:30 the announcement we were outed, which was a very good, wonderful idea.

Tape 8

00:33 **You would like to tell us the story of your tenure into the Far Eastern Reserve?**

What happened there, Serge [interviewer], was that I had been posted to Melbourne as a sailor, still in the navy, and had married Christine by that time. We were

01:00 making our new home here in Melbourne. I desperately wanted to stay ashore because as a newly married man the last thing I wanted to do was to leave my bride. But the orders came through in early 1957 that I was posted to HMAS Tobruk, this battle class destroyer. So I had to go up to Sydney to join her.

01:30 It must have even November 1956. She was then deployed to the Far East and spent all of her almost a year, didn't get back until, I think I've got the dates wrong. I didn't get back until, was it January

02:00 1958. So I spent most of 1957 aboard Tobruk. We visited a whole lot of places. We went to Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, up and down the China coast, quite often through Taiwan Straits, because this was the time when we were trying to, all the western nations were trying to contain communism. So the Taiwan Straits were

02:30 something of a hotspot. The Beijing government had threatened to annex or retake Taiwan, whichever way you look at it, and they'd shelled some of the offshore islands, Quemoy, Matsu. We along with American Navy, British Navy, did a lot of patrolling up and down the Straits. Also the Malayan Emergency was

03:00 at that time, and we occasionally stood offshore. We were never really involved in that, cos this was sort of guerrilla activity and it was more to do with the army. I think there was a squadron of Lincoln bombers in Malaya as well, an air force arrangement. That was the Far East Strategic Reserve. I think the Australian government agreed to

03:30 have two ships permanently in the Far East and a third from time to time, the third was an aircraft carrier, which was deployed to the Far East from time to time. But there were two vessels there all the time Our two, in 1957, were Tobruk and ANZAC, the sister ship HMAS ANZAC. That was a pretty interesting time in my life. But very

04:00 sad in a way, because I'd left my new wife behind.

This was for a whole year?

Almost for a year. I think it was 11 months.

Sounds tough.

It was hard. The arrival of the mail was the greatest thing. We just looked forward to our mail coming in. When we got to port there was usually a bag of mail waiting for us, so that

04:30 was a big event. It was a fairly benign time militarily. Apart, I mean for the navy. I don't mean the army and the air force guys, they had different things to do. The only serious incident was that rather unfortunate accident that I described before.

05:00 **Were these designed also with a view to intercept enemy signals as well?**

That was my job on the ship. By this time I'd joined the Special Branch and I'd been promoted.

05:30 So I was involved in what I described to Colin as electronic warfare, which was the protection of the ship and that meant intercepting any communications that might threaten the ship. Plus making sure that our code and ciphers were

06:00 used correctly. There was no design work, the design work was all done back in Australia, but as part of Special Branch we had a kind of policing role. One of our jobs was to ensure that our own communicators didn't break the rules. That they didn't transmit messages in plain text, which should have been transmitted in cipher,

06:30 and that they observed the rules of communication security. For instance, our call sign was always transmitted in code. Anyone who forgot that really would have been up on a charge. He would have been disciplined. So one of my jobs was to ensure that didn't happen. It was, I suppose,

07:00 a bit like a military policeman, but it was in the communications field.

What messages would you come across that were potentially threatening?

I can't really talk very much about this, but if for instance we were threatened in any way, suppose there was a communist vessel of some sort, a Russian submarine to be

07:30 extreme about it, a Russian submarine believed to be operating in our vicinity. They were, there were always Russian submarines around, because the Pacific was available to them. They operated out of Vladivostok. If there was a Russian submarine in our area, part of the job of Special Branch was to try to

08:00 detect any transmission the submarine made. Now, that was extremely, horrendously difficult because submarines are, of all the vessels that try to keep their positions secret, submarines were most clever of doing it. So this was not an easy job.

08:30 Russian submarines were very sophisticated. Russian Navy was very sophisticated, so it was a constant problem. That's just one example. Conceivably the communist guerillas in Malaysia, they didn't pose a threat to the navy, because they didn't have a navy. There was no threat there, but

09:00 conceivably they could have been one of our targets. In the intelligence gathering field we would have

tried to gather intelligence on any communist organisation that threatened the ship, or that had any impact on our activities. It was a varied

09:30 role, quite challenging I suppose.

At that stage Indonesia was communist. ’65-’68 I think here was a coup there.

Who was in power then?

Sukarno.

This was Sukarno.

The PKI [Partai Komunis Indonesia].

No. Tobruk, as far as I

10:00 **Anything to do with the Permesta Rebellion in 1954-55?**

No, I wasn’t even aware of that. No.

A US plane got shot down.

I don’t think I even remember that. No. I really can’t talk about targets anyway. It’s kind of difficult for me. But it was kind of exciting.

10:30 We were in no doubt that we were performing a useful role. As events unfolded, as time went on, I’m more and more convinced this was absolutely the right thing to do, that Australia should have even involved in providing whatever we could to contain the spread of communism.

11:00 **That was your view at the time?**

Absolutely.

How has that view changed? Has it?

Yes. It’s changed to some extent. I haven’t changed my view on what I call this sort of monolithic

11:30 communist threat. The threat centred largely in Moscow. What I have changed my mind about, and have now a totally different view about, is whether the west was right in opposing what were really nationalist initiatives clothed in a

12:00 thin veil of communism and socialism. Vietnam was a good example of that. I think there’s a vast difference between statism and the grinding pull back of basic freedoms and human rights that was so much a feature of Soviet Russia

12:30 on the one hand, and the legitimate aspirations of the Vietnamese people on the other. It was a gulf there that unfortunately the west took time to recognise because we went through that awful period of feeling that any nationalistic

13:00 movement had to be a communist movement. And it wasn’t. They might have called themselves communist, simply because that was the only way they could see their way out of some depression, or some colonial domination.

Hence the nationalisation.

Yes. I think really history has now proved that it was

13:30 right to resist the Soviet Union. It was absolutely right to resist the Soviet Union. Whether it was right to resist China, probably true. I don’t have any qualms about that. I think the Chinese government at the time was wrong to support what was naked aggression by the North Koreans. I think they were wrong to march into Tibet, now ex-Tibet. So I don’t have any qualms about that.

14:00 On the other hand I think Vietnam was a different proposition. There were other cases of nationalistic movements that should have been encouraged, not rejected.

What about Sukarno?

That’s too difficult for me. I think Sukarno

He was with the non-aligned movement.

Yeah. That’s a bit difficult. I think that’s rather more complicated

14:30 because Indonesia is not a monolithic state and is not a coherent state. It’s fragmented and so many ethnic and religious fractions. Whether or not Sukarno was good for Indonesia, or the Suharto regime was good for Indonesia, or the present regime is good for Indonesia, the people on Indonesia, I’m not really very well qualified. The only thing I can say is good for Australia is national interest. I can talk about that. But that’s kind of,

15:00 that'll take another day, won't it?

In the Korean War you felt on the side of right resisting the Soviet Union in the broader sense through Chinese active aggression. In retrospect, MacArthur

15:30 **was trying to use atomic weaponry as well. With that information, do you see a different view from the Chinese point?**

I think it was right to pull MacArthur back. I think MacArthur was a bit of a hothead and egocentric and was probably more concerned with MacArthur than with

16:00 the good of the American cause, certainly the good of the United Nations' cause. I think it was right to stop where wisely the president of the day, it was Truman wasn't it? Truman stopped. The Chinese? Yes, it could have damaged relationships between the Chinese and the rest of us, certainly had atomic weapons

16:30 been used. Quite apart form the bloodshed. The loss of life could have damaged relationships. I think also probably that would have precipitated a wider conflict. I think the Russians would have come in in a bigger way had the United Nations, let's face it, it was a United Nations operation, although led by the Americans. Had the

17:00 UN pushed on, the Russians may have been obliged to join in. The Chinese, with their vast military numbers, would have resisted. There would have been a wider conflict, nuclear years. I think it was right to pull back. In the event, the Peninsula's continued to be a running sore, but that's infinitely better than the

17:30 awful catastrophe that could have occurred had MacArthur marched across the Yalu, [Chinese border]across the Rubicon. Does that make any sense?

Vietnam is a different kettle of fish. In the Korean War you can define the sides and the problems. Vietnam seems

18:00 **to come across as more complex cos you've got the domestic problem as well. How do you view Vietnam.**

In retrospect

And at the time.

At the time I think most of us, on the ride of politics or on the ride of, those of us who were traditionalists and conservative and so on, would have accepted the general view put forward by the US and Australian governments

18:30 that we had to worry about the march of communism down through the Indo-Chinese area and into southeast Asia generally. The so-called domino effect. If we didn't somehow stand up to them we'd all be swamped. They'd come down through Indonesia, they would finally get to Australia and we'd all turn out to be communist.

19:00 We accepted that, I suppose because our elders and betters told us that this was a real risk. We'd seen the Chinese and what they did in Tibet. We'd seen what they could do in North Korea. We knew they were supporting the Vietnamese push for independence. So it seemed all part of a scheme.

19:30 Cartoons at the time, this great spider or octopus or something with tentacles coming out towards Australia. So it was reasonable. In Hong Kong there were riots in the streets. Hong Kong was a British colony. There were communist inspired riots. We felt threatened when we went to Hong Kong. In 19

20:00 61 Christine and I lived in Hong Kong for 2 years. '61-'62. There were riots then, there was a little bit, just threatened a Chinese incursion. We thought any day the Chinese were going to march across the border and push us all out into the sea. So at the time I thought Vietnam was justified.

20:30 It's only in retrospect that one reads more about what motivated Ho Chi Minh and what the general aspirations of the Vietnamese people were that you think "Well, we could have handled that a lot better." In stead of painting the world red or white, there were other colours. There

21:00 was grey and there was blue and pink and all sorts of colours. I think that's probably what the west did that was unfortunate in the '60s and '70s, anything that was not white must therefore be red. Pity. We were

21:30 part of that. I was in defence all through that period as a civilian.

What did you think of the conscription debate in Australia?

That's a bit difficult. I can't remember what my attitude was. I think I was torn. I think I was

22:00 trying to have it both ways. I thought that if there was a genuine reason for people to put on uniform and go to war, then young men, and women for that matter, should be volunteering and it shouldn't be

necessary to conscript people. But on the other hand I didn't really think it was a good idea to

22:30 force people to fight. I had some sympathy with the conscientious objectors. By this time I was starting to change my views to some extent. I went to university for the first time in 1971-72. That was just toward the end of the Vietnam War. I found

23:00 myself, even as a member of the defence department, sympathising with a lot of the radical student meetings that were being held at that time. But never ever questioned the need to confront the Soviet Union. I thought Stalinist USSR, and even though his

23:30 successors were quite soft compared to Stalin, I always thought that they were tubarius. And they were. Khrushchev said. and I didn't want that to happen, I thought that our way of life and our freedoms and our democratic way government was precious. But I did start to differentiate between that and what we were doing in Vietnam.

Did you see communism as a monolith?

24:00 No, I started not to. I think that's where I went off at a tangent. Because some governments, including the right wing Australian government, were still seeing it as a monolithic worldwide movement. I think many of us, including myself, started to figure that this was not the case at all. There were lots of shades of socialism. Some aspects of socialism, even today I think some aspects of

24:30 socialism, are advances on our present way of working and living.

Progressive you mean?

Progressive. We were reading Galbraith and Herbert Marcuse and some of the radical economists. Galbraith was a good one. I remember him writing that one of the things he worried about in the United States was

25:00 what he called "private affluence and public poverty". That the US was taxing less, relying on private enterprise more, and that meant that the social infrastructure was suffering. Medical benefits and roads and ports and schools weren't being given enough government support.

25:30 But I think a lot of Australians went through that, particularly in the '60s and increasingly in the '70s. When did the Flower People? The Flower People really flourished in the '60s and into the '70s. This was a new wave. This was Aquarius. I was part of that. My mind changed.

26:00 By the time the war ended I was very relieved. I thought "Well, thank goodness we got out of that."

Did you see Vietnam as a defeat?

No. A lesson. I think the west should have learned a lesson from it that it was a dangerous thing to get involved in

26:30 other people's wars, other people's civil wars almost. That once you start meddling around, fiddling around like that it's likely to lead to disaster. I was in Washington in the last years of that war. From 1966 through to 1970.

27:00 I was a defence representative there. I was representing that intelligence organisation in Washington. So I think it was very interesting to see the way the United States changed its attitude in those days and the growing realisation that the war was a disaster.

27:30 **What work were you involved in in the '60s and '70s? When did you retire from the navy?**

In 1958. In '58 I joined the defence signals directorate as a civilian. I was an analyst and remained an analyst

28:00 for many years. Then I spent 4 years part time university and then final year as full time university and did economics and politics and then came back into defence. By that time I was, I suppose you'd call me a manager. Then went on in a managerial role. I was analyst reporter,

28:30 then manager and finally I was promoted to what the defence calls a senior assistant secretary and became deputy director of that organisation before I retired. I saw the whole development of it since the Korean War right up till the end of the Cold War. Then into

29:00 really the Gulf War. I retired in 1996.

That's fairly recent.

Yeah, 8 years ago. The last two years spent in Britain opening up a new office there.

29:30 This was a wind down for a crusty old Cold War analyst. I outlived my shelf life by then and defence gave me a nice little cushy job for the last 2 years of my working life, which was very pleasant indeed. I think what happens in the intelligence business, and

30:00 what should happen in the defence business, is there should be constant change. There should be a

constant re-evaluation of what sort of people we need in the intelligence business, what sort of techniques and what attitudes and procedures we should be using. Because the world's constantly changing. Once the Cold War ended,

30:30 then the military has to totally change its way of doing things. That era's over, and so does intelligence have to change its way of doing things. I think maybe I made a contribution to that because once the Cold War ended, after glasnost [openness] and after the war

31:00 came down, we had to re-evaluate ourselves and I was awarded a fellowship by defence to do a study and write some papers on Australian intelligence in the post Cold War era. What's going to happen to us now? What happens to all the Cold War warriors? Do we change our spots? Do we get retired? Do we

31:30 get put on compost heaps? What? I think that was a very interesting period we went through. Some people in the business were saying that we should switch from military and political intelligence into economic intelligence. But those of us who saw the dangers of that were violently opposed to that. I wrote a lot of

32:00 the papers that opposed it.

What do you mean by economic intelligence?

Furthering national interests by collecting information on your trade adversaries. I thought that would have been disastrous.

32:30 **That still happens, doesn't it? The CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] is prolific in that role now.**

Well, I can't speak for the Americans, but I know the organisation we dealt with in the United States, not the CIA, was as opposed to that. There were individuals that were favouring it. Stansfield Turner, who used to be director of the CIA, thought that the US, this vast monolithic US

33:00 intelligence organisation sort of switched to supporting the national interest by in effect spying on all the rest of the nations. Any trade competitor, fair game. He put that forward. He wrote in an unclassified way in the American journals about that. But he was a minority. Certainly all the people I knew in the US were opposed to it.

33:30 They shared my view. I shared their view, I'm not trying to say I broke any new ground here. Certainly we in Australia thought it would be disastrous to do that. First of all it would have destroyed the long standing intelligence cooperation we enjoyed with the United States, Britain, Canada,

34:00 New Zealand and some of the west European nations. It would have just blown that out of the water. Secondly it would have eroded the most important of Australia's, at least our organisation's intelligence functions, which was to support the defence force and the political aspirations of the Australian people through their government.

34:30 Third it would have turned professional intelligence officers into grubby little spies. We always prided ourselves on being professionals. We never strayed outside government policy. At least we always tried not to. I guess on occasion we made a mistake, but you never did that.

Did you ever get

35:00 **involved with the ONA?**

Very closely.

What's the name of the unit you were in?

Defence Signals Director.

Is it basically closed in with DIO and ONA? They're like sister organisations?

Yes, the arrangement is that the ONA, Office National Assessment, is the primary peak intelligence assessment body in

35:30 Australia and reports directly to the prime minister. There are two other intelligence organisations. One's the Defence Intelligence Organisation, which is an assessment body, they also do some collection through attaches, but they're primarily an assessment body. They assess defence related intelligence. Then ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation] of course have a role in domestic intelligence collection and assessment. The Department of Foreign Affairs have their own

36:00 cell which is again an assessment agency, but also collection because their diplomats are constantly collecting intelligence overtly mostly. Then there are two collection agencies that are totally dedicated to collection. One is ASIS, Australian Secret Intelligence Service. They do human collection. There's nothing classified about this. This has all been announced in parliament. And then the Defence

36:30 Signals Directory, the one I was involved in, who are involved in electronic intelligence.

That's domestic and international as well?

Not domestic. Never domestic. Strictly controlled. We were never allowed to do domestic intelligence collection against Australian citizens or Australian entities.

That'll be ASIO?

ASIO's job. Always ASIO's job.

You would be under ASIS?

No, never under there. ASIS and

37:00 DSB used to work as partners in the same field, but whereas their job would be to collect human intelligence. They were the real, they were the operatives, they had people asking questions of other people. Pinching documents and photographing documents. That's their role. Espionage in the traditional sense. DSB only interested

37:30 in electronic intelligence. Communications and emissions of various kinds.

What's your view on the current Iraq ONA spill over with one of their leading analysts?

I'm a bit out of it. I've been out of it for 8 years. My first indication when I saw what he did

38:00 was to say "I just can't condone that". I don't condone his actions. I think anybody who, you know the old phrase, who takes the king's shilling. You don't then betray your king. You don't betray the organisation who fed and watered you for the last many years. Nor the government

38:30 that you signed up to keep secrets for. That was my first reaction. My second reaction was that I thought he was probably right. Philosophically I thought he was probably right, but there was no justification. In terms of seeking weapons of mass destruction, I thought he was absolutely right.

39:00 I thought he was right and wrong. If he'd said "What do you think, Ken?" I would have though "Don't say anything. There are a million other people out there that are going to come to the same conclusions as you have. They all talk about it. Gradually we'll all come to realise that there were no weapons of mass destruction, we weren't under threat, there was no connection between Saddam Hussein and

39:30 the September the 11th terrorism. The disinformation/information, reporting, intelligence that came out of Africa about Saddam Hussein trying to get nuclear materials was a lot of hogwash. A lot of people are going to figure that out. So why

40:00 blow any whistles? What's the point?" The second question I would have asked him is "Do you really know? Were you really in a position to know that all the intelligence that might have been available to the US and Australian governments? Can you genuinely say that you're a knowledgeable enough person?" So I don't have much sympathy for him.

40:30 **Do you think, having had your intelligence experience, Australian intelligence in the contemporary scene has become politicised and therefore endangering Australia's long term interests?**

I think there's more danger of that happening now after the Cold War. I think during the Cold War we were

41:00 very objective and we could simply be professionals and just provide the government with whatever advise we felt they had to be provided in accordance with their demands. They were driving us, but we could be totally professional. Nowadays I'm not sure that's quite so easy. It seems to me that being in Canberra

41:30 the intelligence organisations are likely to get caught up in the political scheme and because the people in the intelligence business are human beings, whether they think they are doing it or not, sometimes even subconsciously they might do things and say things that they know will please the government. There's more danger of that. But thinking back on all the people I've

42:00 worked with in TAPE ENDS