

Australians at War Film Archive

Peter Chandler - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 12th May 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/152>

Tape 1

00:15 **Peter, it's really good to be with you this afternoon, and we'd like to start right from the beginning of your life, with where you were born?**

Well, I was born of the 5th of February 1925.

00:30 I was born in the home that originally belonged to my grandparents down in Rushall Crescent, Clifton Hill. My grandfather's home eventually became a private hospital. And I was born in that hospital. Later my family had a house built in Belgrave, leading up to that we had a mini farm in the patch. My father had a

01:00 hardware store in Belgrave, but after the completion of the house, up in Belgrave, we moved there and I spent all my youth there. I was involved in many things in the local district, fire brigade and so forth, Red Cross, and I lived there until I went to Scotch College, I should say going back to my education, I started off in the primary school at Tecoma

01:30 after I'd completed my 6th grade in those days, I went to Scotch College. I stayed at Scotch there for the best part of two years and through that period, there was the outbreak of war and my father having been tied up with the local militia, he was in charge of a 15 mile radius of Belgrave, and he then enlisted himself for active service. With that I had to leave

02:00 College and go up and manage my father's hardware store in Belgrave along with my mother at the age of 16. I stayed there until I was 17 years and 8 months and I enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy. Following that I was accepted 10 days after. My mother eventually had to sell the business, so my father and I were both

02:30 away. He was an army captain with the 24th Infantry and served in New Guinea.

Before we talk about you father's service in the Second World War, I'd like to go right back to his service in the First World War. What was your father's role in the First War?

My father, he was in the 1st Machine-gun Platoon in France, he was a machine-gunner on the old Bren guns and he served in France, quite some

03:00 time until he was blown-up and he was repatriated to England and when his health was good enough, they sent him back home to Melbourne. That was the end of his days in the First World War.

Did he ever talk to you about that experience?

Yes, he did. Yes, quite often he would speak about the life, the way of course that you were doing it very hard in

03:30 those places, such as in the trenches. They had to go through like any other war, but I think it was more hands-on regarding casualties because of the trenches. Chaps getting shot alongside of them and things like that. And being bombed and so forth, hand-grenades coming over to them and of course they saw quite a bit of bloodshed first-hand, whereas I'd say with the Second World War

04:00 it wasn't such a close-up conflict as what the First World War would have been. I mean we had it too, but it was a different type of war you might say, you know.

Did the Depression hit your family hard?

Yes, it affected everybody, my father at that time had the hardware store at Belgrave and he had been a Justice of the Peace in many years, a well-known

04:30 identity up there in the hills. And during the Depression years, various people that unfortunately had problems getting enough food and supplies. The locals would usually send them up to our place and it was a habit my mother would be preparing meals and feeding these people that came up. They would

often come up, and the chaps would come up and say "Well, can I cut some wood

05:00 and earn them something, money or a feed or something as that?" So my mother and father were well into that. I mean he had the hardware store that kept him going, but he found his way clear to send me to college. I was an only boy; I had an older sister and a younger sister. I was fortunate in those days that he could afford to send me to college.

How did you used to travel in those days from Belgrave to Scotch?

05:30 Well, I'd have to walk from the top of Bayview Road up near where Mater Christie is, that used to be Heathermont Guest House, we lived at the back of that, and I would walk from there down to Belgrave, catch the bus, the bus would take me down to Upper Ferntree Gully, I'd travel from Upper Ferntree Gully down to Glenferrie Station then I would get a tram from Glenferrie Station down to Kooyong to Scotch College.

How long did it take you?

06:00 Well, it could take some time. I'd be leaving home in the dark and arriving home in the dark, because I used to do rowing after classes. I'd get out and on the Gardiner Creek where Scotch College was and go out rowing for an hour and a half or such. Then I'd have to go through the whole format of finding a tram to take me back to my return trip up to Belgrave. So when I got

06:30 home it would be quite often be about 9 o'clock at night and that's when I'd have to have a meal, settle down and study and get some shut-eye before I had an early rise the next morning.

To do it all again. Did you say you went to Tecoma State School?

Mmmm.

Did any of your mates from Tecoma go to Scotch or were you the only boy from the area that went down there?

There was two of us. Only two of us.

07:00 **Why do you think your parents made the decision to send you to Scotch, and you had to travel a fair way?**

Well, I think it was in the family, my grandfather went to Scotch and his brother, my father went to Scotch, therefore I think it just had to follow on that I had to go to Scotch too.

How did you find it, the school?

Magnificent. I was sorry to leave it, but that's where war came in and upset my curriculum

07:30 virtually down there.

At that age, it was just before war broke out, did you have any idea what you wanted to do when you left school?

Well, I always had my eye on medicine and in my time in the navy, when time was available, we had a sick-berth attendant on the ship. And I used to read all his medical books and anything that had medicine

08:00 or relating to medicine and that, I used to read in relation to that. But unfortunately after the war, I couldn't settle down, I had nerves and I just could not sit in the one spot and concentrate. That was one of the problems and that therefore I could not pursue my ambition in those days.

So your dad signed up again and he went off to war,

08:30 **and you had to leave Scotch and come back and help your mum run the hardware shop. What were your sisters doing at this stage?**

Well my eldest sister, she was still going to school and my younger sister was going down to Tecoma Primary School. But as I say I was then 16 and my elder sister had left school and she was

09:00 home for a little while and then she joined a local shire of Ferntree Gully council, she was in the office there for a number of years.

And then you worked in the hardware shop?

I worked in the hardware store.

Where was your dad at this stage, when you were in the shop?

When I was in the shop, my father was in New Guinea and of course in those days we didn't have the transport system that we have today, so we had a Chev [Chevrolet] truck

09:30 and I would get up early of a morning and I would drive from Belgrave to Melbourne, no license or nothing, the road was a single bitumen road all the way down and of course when I got into some of the warehouses, they had a nickname for me, "Here comes Junior." you know and, "Would Junior like an ice-

cream?" and things they used to throw off at me, but I took that in all good humour. But no, I used to travel down there and get all the stock and drive

10:00 home that night and have to unload it the next morning. I had another chap, a young fellow that helped me do a lot of that work, that manual work but no I think I would have been the first one to obtain a licence at the age of 16 when the government brought in special legislation to overcome this problem. And I was on the doorstep of the police station when he arrived for work on that particular morning.

I didn't know that, so during the war you could get your licence at 16?

10:30 Mmmm, yes they brought it into special legislation and this Constable George Stag who was in charge in Belgrave; he was only too delighted when I turned up at the station to get a licence that morning because he said it was always a problem. He would be driving his car along the street and I would be coming in the opposite direction and he would have to, you know, take care not to be seen looking at me and recognizing that I was driving a vehicle.

11:00 So once I had that, well I had a clear conscience but I don't think it made any difference in those days because I was driving everywhere regardless.

And he didn't make you do a test I gather?

Well, I did do a test when I got there, he asked me what the colours were on the wall and I said "That is green and that is red." and he said "Fine, would you drive me down to the local railway station?" That was where the Puffing Billy was because a lot of supplies used to come up via that to Belgrave

11:30 and up in the hills and so I drove him down there, so he could pick up stationery for his office. And I just drove him back to the station and he said, "Well give me your money and here's your licence."

How much did it cost?

I could not remember in those days, but it was only a couple of shillings. It was pretty cheap.

So was Puffing Billy

12:00 **a cargo train then? What was Puffing Billy up to then?**

Well, the Puffing Billy would terminate down in Upper Ferntree Gully and go right through to Gembrook; it would take passengers because we had the train and buses travelling up to Belgrave and various areas. It was called U.S. Motors but when the train was coming through, on holidays in particular there

12:30 would be a lot of tourists that would come up for holidays and they would get off at Belgrave and various stations with their baggage and I think they used to do it, particularly in the good weather for something different rather than a coach. But we also had some of the heavy supplies were brought up by electrification to Upper Ferntree Gully and they would be off-loaded onto trucks for the Puffing Billy and the Puffing Billy would then off-load as it

13:00 went from right through from Belgrave up to Gembrook, Emerald and those places, Clematis and they'd off-load stock for cattle and timber, various goods.

Did you hear from your father in New Guinea very often?

Well no, I used to get letters now and again but it was hard to sort of

13:30 get communication because we were very restricted on mail, but I did get mail from time to time from my father, but I think most of the information was fed to me from my mother.

And how long did you work in the hardware store before you enlisted?

I was in the hardware store; it would be just over two years I was in the hardware store.

14:00 And then of course when I went away with the navy myself and I enlisted, it wasn't long after my mother had to sell the business.

Now your father was in the AIF [Australian Imperial Force], so what made you go into the navy, why didn't you follow your father's footsteps?

Well, that's a good question. My father and his brothers, they were all army, but I always had a liking for the water, you know in later years I have a

14:30 yacht and a boat and I always had an inkling for water and so I just decided to join the navy and travel.

You lived in the hills and yet you had a fancy for the ocean. Had you had much experience on boats before you joined the navy?

None whatsoever.

Never been on a boat of any size?

Not of any size, no, no. Canoes, things like that but nothing of any size.

15:00 Only the Waroona [?] from, I might say that used to travel from Melbourne down to Queenscliff, the Hygeia and the Waroona, the paddle-steamers and I used to go on trips down there with my mother and my sisters for holidays down to Queenscliff on the boat and then my father would come down at try [?] and set out that on a weekend, he would take time off from his business and he'd come down and take us home by vehicle.

15:30 **So you were lured by the sea to join the navy. How did you go about joining?**

Well, I just decided there, that I would go down to Melbourne one day and I signed up for the navy at age of 17 years and 8 months.

Did you tell your mum that you were going?

Yes, I don't think she was over impressed because her brother at that time he'd been

16:00 overseas and he was captured in Greece, prisoner of war and my father was away and I was the only male in the family, not had any brothers, two sisters. I said to my mother, I said, "Well, I just want to join up." and anyhow I was not called up until about 10 days after I turned 18.

But that wasn't very long really was it; you didn't have to wait long?

It wasn't long, in the meantime I had two call-ups from the army

16:30 and I rang them up, the powers-that-be and said that I'd enlisted in the navy and that I didn't wish to join the army owing to the fact that I was waiting for a call-up. And apparently the first message went by the board and the next thing I received a telegram. "If you don't come down to us, we'll come and get you". So in those days your local doctor was the intermediary in those sort of things. And

17:00 our doctor was Dr Jorgensen in Belgrave, well known, his wife and family are well-known artists, the Jorgensen's of Eltham, etc. And Dr Jorgy he said, "Well I'll fix this up, hang on a minute." And while I was in his office he rang up the Department of the Army and said "I have a Peter Chandler here who enlisted on such a date for the navy and that was it". So that saved them a trip of coming to get me,

17:30 so the navy took me on very smartly after that. That's when I, that was an experience leaving home.

Tell me about that, the day you said goodbye to your mother and went off to join the navy?

Well, it wasn't easy. I left my mother and two sisters, and well I

18:00 didn't have my mother's apron strings to hang on anymore. And I got on the bus down to Melbourne to the Alder Fleet Buildings, signed on there and we were taken by coach down to Flinders Naval Depot. And that was where my adulthood started you might say.

Was it a bit of a shock?

Well it was, you know I think a lot of people wouldn't realise the

18:30 fact that you get up in the morning and you have breakfast and you head off into the unknown, you do not know a person, you don't know who you can trust, who you can confide in, discuss private things with. But that came with time, you mix with the other chaps and you learnt to confide with them. I mean like in any society you have an attachment to some and not so much to others. And this is what had happened, you had to learn to

19:00 make your own judgements and make sure, well hope that they would be the right ones, you did have officers to speak to now and again. But it was just discussing things between yourselves. The hardest thing was I would say in leaving, it was after having various leaves ashore and going away was, you'd go down to Spencer Street Station and everybody would be

19:30 getting on a troop train and I'd be starting off as I did from Flinders, another new life because we were all split up after doing our class into various areas and different ships and so forth. And you go through all that process again, and it was very hard too for a lot of the young chaps that had family, you know it was terrible.

How long were you at Flinders?

I was at Flinders for approximately,

20:00 I think it would be about 6 weeks, and then I was delegated to what they call J Class and that was naval commandos. And then I was sent from there up to Port Stephens, near Newcastle and that was a commandos' depot and that was for Australians and alongside of us there were Americans.

Did you ask to go into the commandos or were you just sent?

No, I don't know. No

20:30 I didn't make any special requests, it was certain people were delegated to that force, and so that was

it, it was called HMAS Assault.

Tell me a bit about your basic training down at Flinders, before we go to commandos.

Well, the basic training was seamanship, navigation, tying knots and handling boats, compasses

21:00 and also you had to do classes in the gunnery school. We did quite a bit of that and the various guns and you did an all-round type of let's say combat, you know not so much the unarmed combat as we came up to, when we joined the commandos.

And did they issue you with your uniform right at the beginning of that process?

21:30 Yes, they issued us with a very standardised type of uniform. They fitted in some places but not in others. You had to make sure that the shoes you had did fit, because you did a lot of work marching around and activity with the old shoes. But down at Flinders there, not long after I arrived, there were a couple of chaps there that set themselves

22:00 up as tailors and so they would make you a uniform to your liking. It had to be standardised but the measurements and that would vary somewhat. Particularly around your waist and the bell bottom trousers would always be larger than the regulated ones.

You were used to being your own boss in the hardware store. What was it like having to adjust to naval discipline?

Well, it didn't worry me,

22:30 I enjoyed the service and I think myself, the discipline was very good for everybody. It made you appreciate the difference between people and how you can blend together as well. You have officers there and they're doing their job and you're expected to do your job and that's it.

Were you able to let your father know that you had joined the navy?

Yes,

23:00 I let my father know that I'd joined the navy and he sent me a letter and I hadn't been in the navy a great amount of time when I came back from the tropics to Flinders Naval Depot to do a gunnery course and my father was due to come home on leave and so I applied for extra time but it was not granted because I only had the week. But as it happened

23:30 I got an infection in my throat from the tropics and I was put into the Lonsdale Naval Hospital, while I was there I applied for leave, but it was not granted and as it turned out, when I took sick the local officer in charge down there

24:00 had the message passed on that I had not been granted leave, but the doctor wanted me to stay in hospital longer, and I think they got the idea that I might have been playing a little bit to get this leave, it was only a couple of days for my father to come home, and it was not granted. They virtually came to the conclusion that I was playing 'ducks and drakes', like I was putting on an act. And the local doctor

24:30 came in the next morning and asked me "How I was going?" and I said, "Well the brass, as you might say in the depot, have come in and virtually said, 'Well you're off tomorrow, you're putting on an act'" and as it turned out, the doctor being a civilian doctor, he called the officers in and gave them a dressing-down and he said, "I'm the doctor and this chap will leave here when I'm ready and not before." so I got an extra 24 hours in time to see my father.

25:00 **And that was the first time you'd seen him since you joined the navy?**

Mmmm. I hadn't seen him for about two years.

And what did he have to say about you joining up?

Oh, he was quite happy. We compared notes, with what he'd been doing and what I'd been doing in the tropics and that. I had experienced, before I saw my father, I had experienced bombing etc up around New Guinea and Langmack Bay, Balikpapan

25:30 and those places and so it was, we were being attacked on the water and he was being attacked on the land, so we compared notes.

Now when you finished your time at Flinders you said you got selected for J Class Commandos and you were sent to Port Stephens, up near Newcastle. What was the training there, what did that involve?

26:00 That was specialised training in unarmed combat as such because being as that what we were, we were trained on barges and our job if necessary to go ashore in various areas along with other forces, so our training was all unarmed combat, small arms, the handling of barges, the landing of barges with troops on

26:30 and supplies, trucks, guns, tanks and we did all our training around Port Stephens in the bay there along with the Americans.

And was that pretty tough, the training?

It was, it was strong training, every morning around about 6.30 you would be down on the beach. And you'd be up and down the beachhead run, run, run and you'd be in your

27:00 shorts and they would make sure you did your distance and in the sand it wasn't easy, so we had all that training there. Then we'd practise unarmed combat on each other, when we'd completed that we would be allowed to go back to have something to eat and have a shower, get into our gear and then we may have to then go out for the morning with packs on our backs and guns and

27:30 they'd make us really sweat it out. They would do it hard and get us fit and then maybe in the afternoon, we might be down, we would get in the barges and take them out off Port Stephens and practising landing barges, there was a bit of a technique in that particularly if there was any rough seas.

Tell me about that technique, how do you land a barge on a beach?

28:00 Well, number one in particular if you had a following, see you had to make sure that you went in at a right angle, you could have problems if you went on an angle because the sea would swing you around. The advantage of a barge though because if you had a shallow draught, people might wonder after you ran the barge right up onto the sand, not onto the sand entirely, but your prop would still be in the water then when you put a barge in full reverse

28:30 the volume of the water that would come up underneath the hull would make it buoyant and you would just float off the beach. So it was reverse off the beach and you had to get the technique of it, but it was interesting.

And what sort of operations did you think that you were going to be involved in if you were joining the commandos?

Well, we knew we would be heading for the islands,

29:00 which we did and we took quite a few troops up into areas around New Guinea, Port Moresby; a couple of stops we did there and then we went around the North Coast into Langmack Bay, Finschhafen etc and we were landing troops there. Our first night that we arrived in Langmack Bay was dark and we had troops to

29:30 off-load and we had no sooner off-loaded the troops and we thought, well it was time for a break and the powers-to-be said, "We'll put on a film for you and you can go down below decks and watch a film." and as I stated before it was a bit of a classic because we went down there thinking, well this is going to be something different and it certainly was because it was Shirley Temple singing on the Good Ship Lollipop.

30:00 It was really a good film, you can imagine but about halfway through the film we could hear these loud dull thuds and we assumed a couple of barges were going down the hull of the ship, down the side. If they hit the side of the ship of course there'd be that dull thud, like hitting the side of a drum. But all of a sudden it was repetitious and the sirens went and the Japs decided that we would be given a

30:30 reception by them, so they were bombs that we had around us but.

What ship was that?

That was the [HMAS] Kanimbla.

Was that your first ship after you'd finished training?

That was my first ship, mmmm.

So where did you sail from on the Kanimbla? Did you go back to Flinders from Port Stephens or did you go out of....?

No, we picked the Kanimbla up in Brisbane and picked up troops and from there on we went backward and forwards from the islands

31:00 taking troops up and bringing home other chaps for repatriation etc like that.

And what was your rank on the Kanimbla?

I was able seaman and I was on the bridge, and I got involved in various things on the bridge, particularly with the gunnery officer and he asked me if I would like to go back to Flinders and do a gunnery course.

31:30 An A-A Gunnery course which was the higher one of several. So three of us were selected and we were sent by train from up north, up on the coast back down to via Cairns back down to Flinders to do this A-A Gunnery Course. It wasn't an easy course, I passed it but the other two chaps didn't make it. They were put onto another course.

Is that anti-aircraft?

It was all anti-aircraft,

32:00 you had to be able to identify all aircraft, Japanese, British, American, Australian and it was all on different types of guns, Bofors Guns, Oerlikon, etc and we had to go through the training school at Flinders there at what they call a dome, that gave, how would you say, it gave the effect of live

32:30 action regarding aircraft and that. It was a big dome and it was completely black inside and your gun would have a spotlight in it and this would be actually where you are sighting your sights on this and this would move around like running a torch over the ceiling of the house. This was a very fine spot and also they put a

33:00 film on with these aircraft coming over from various areas and angles across this dome. But when you were actually firing the gun as you might say, there was only a trigger that was setting of the beam, you had dark glasses on, you could not see where the beam was going, but everyone else could, so they could get an idea how accurate you were, whether you had your sight on that aircraft or not.

And you had to be able to tell immediately if it was

33:30 **an enemy aircraft?**

Yes.

How long did that training last?

That training lasted I think we were down there for; it was a couple of months.

And how long had you been on the Kanimbla before you went back to do that training, do you remember?

I would have been on the Kanimbla, I would say for about, it was only about four months I think, somewhere thereabouts.

So you

34:00 **were still pretty raw in the navy, you'd already finished your commando training, spent some time on the Kanimbla and then you went back to Flinders and what was your next ship after that?**

My next ship was the HMAS Castlemaine. It was a Bathurst [class] corvette and that ship is at the moment at Gem Pier in Williamstown, that is a museum now. I helped fight to retain that

34:30 ship because, at one stage it came into the Yarra and we were invited down to go on board and we had various politicians and members of the Royal Australian Navy from Flinders and it looked like this ship might be taken over and sold up for metal or overseas for various trading ships as they were, because they could get into shallow waters.

35:00 Anyhow I put up a story that I thought it shouldn't go and I finished up on I think three TV channels because I had a white ensign from the ship when we came back to Melbourne and I retained that when I left the ship, and I presented it back to the ship and that's how the story started, on that interview when they asked me to rehoist

35:30 the white ensign, which I did and the questions came up and I answered them and I said I hope that it would be possible to retain this ship being the last of the Australian Bathurst corvettes afloat and it's still there and I'm still president of the association.

When you were first assigned to the Castlemaine who was the

36:00 **captain at that time?**

That's a good question. We had several captains but one that comes to mind who was a terrific chap is by the name of Moss and we were very fortunate a few years back when we had our reunion on the ship for our 50th birthday, that's going back a few years, 10 years odd, that Mrs.

36:30 Moss was still alive and her son brought her over from Perth to join us, so we had our (UNCLEAR) keeper's wife come over and she was a lovely person.

When you first joined the Castlemaine, what was your role?

Well, I had my gunnery then and I was on the bridge and I was captain of one of the guns, one of the Oerlikons and when I'm not on that, I was coxswain,

37:00 I would be on the wheel all the time. I did that and so basically my job was when I was on duty I would be on the wheel of the ship, you'd have a break off the wheel every hour or so, and you'd just go out on the wing of the bridge and you'd be doing lookout work or you'd climb up to the crows nest and doing lookout for a bit of a break. But basically I was on the wheel all the time.

And how many men on the Castlemaine?

37:30 Well, the ship's company varied, I'd say that we had anything from about 65 to 70 up to 120.

And were they a mixture of new sailors and older blokes?

Oh yes, because in various sections like down below decks and that you'd get petty officers and that, that had served on various

38:00 ships before they'd joined us. And it was through their experience that they could pass it on to us. Not that I was in that but above, on deck I was learning various things, even after our training, from more experienced chaps although most of them were younger than me, I think.

Tape 2

00:15 **Now Peter, you joined the Castlemaine. Where did you actually join that ship?**

I joined the Castlemaine in Adelaide.

Why was that? Why did you go over to Adelaide?

Well Castlemaine hadn't been

00:30 afloat for too long, when it was sent back down to Adelaide for a few modifications and to do sea trials and that's when I was sent over the Adelaide to join the Castlemaine.

Now I don't really know a great deal about Bathurst corvettes, if anything. So I would appreciate it if you could give me a good detailed account of what sort of a ship you were on. You said that there were, did you say

01:00 **there were 170 men in the company?**

It would vary. In some stages we would get, I suppose up to about 120 and other times like that, it varied we had chaps coming and going on the ship and we got to the stage there where we were doing survey work off the west coast. The image was that the allied fleets when they would be

01:30 sailing north to retake any of the islands from the Japanese, that the fleet would leave the west coast of Australia, because on the east coast were the reefs etc which created problems. Now our job was to do these surveys off the coast, and we would do big squares of them, several corvettes and that would all be mapped and our job was to

02:00 pick up any reefs or outcrops of rock and we would be able to transpose onto a map the type of bottom below us, sand, rock or what, the depth of the water. And we would do this graph right out from the coast. We would be out several days amongst the islands and our job was to work right up past Geraldton

02:30 right round to Darwin. And that was our job on survey. Well later on from there, when the bombs landed in Hiroshima etc we finished up, we went from survey work up to escort work, further up to the island.

How do you tell what's beneath you on a ship?

Well,

03:00 put it this way, to tell a surface it is you had a heavy lead weight and it would be on a nylon rope and the old saying is "Swinging the lead." and you could gauge the depths from that, apart from our other equipment. We had the asdic and radar etc, the asdic below the water, but we could pick up the depth of the water with

03:30 the lead weight and in the base of the lead weight we would be like a [(UNCLEAR)] and when that hit the bottom, that would pick up whatever substance was on the bottom. When you pulled it up if it was sand in it, it had to be a sand bottom, if it was jagged and things like that well it had to be rock that's how you would ascertain what it was like below you. And the depth as regarding

04:00 reefs etc and of course with Japanese submarines and that, we had the asdic

What does asdic stand for? [Allied Submarine Detection Investigation Committee - sonar]

Good question, because I wasn't a asdic technician, but I will tell you how it actually operated, virtually you would get soundwaves as I speak to you, below the water brings the same effect and that was transposed from a, put it this way like a drum or a bell

04:30 underneath the water being hit, pointed in a particular direction, the wave would go through the water in the direction of what you were trying to locate if it was a submarine, the wave would, that's a soundwave, a water wave, would hit the object and it would bounce back to the ship and that's when we would pick it up. So it was sending it back as an echo and we could tell if it was a whale or a submarine by the

05:00 sound that came back to our equipment. The equipment that they were using on the small compound on the bridge of the ship was round as a compass and as the asdic was going around in a circle and as soon as it hits something, some object, it would send this light beam back in the darkness of this compound cabinet and we could ascertain now what the direction the ship

05:30 or the submarine was and as I say whether it was a whale or submarine.

What was the range of the asdic?

Oh it was good for I suppose, you would pick it up say about 3 miles, it depended on the conditions at the time, of the seas and that as to the response you got back from it. The radar operated in a similar fashion but that was above

06:00 the water and that was up on your mast and that was still sending out a beam likewise as you may have seen on ships, there's a particular object goes spinning around at all times and that will pick up aircraft or other ships on the surface.

And did you ever pick up any submarines on your asdic?

Oh yes, yes.

And what did you do?

Well, the first thing would be

06:30 to make sure that you didn't get yourself in a situation where you were side on to the submarine, because you made yourself too big a target. We'd pursue the submarine and we had depth chargers on board and when we knew that we had got virtually up into the situation where we were above the submarine or near enough to it, we would fire off the depth charges hopefully that we would sink it. When I say sink it, it's underwater

07:00 but...

It would not come up again?

It would not come up again.

How did you know it was one of theirs and not one of ours?

Well, we knew where our submarines were. We were always warned as to where our ships were. We would know where our allied ships were at any time and the same with the submarines, we would be forewarned where they were and then we could pick them up that way.

Do you remember the first time that you encountered a Japanese submarine?

07:30 Well the first one, I remember I was up on the wing of the bridge, I was having a break off the wheel and I spotted this white streak coming towards us and a torpedo, the power of its prop would create a white phosphorus line in the water and it could be pitch black but because of that spinning in the water it would send up phosphorus and it would leave a white line and you could see it heading towards you.

08:00 Fortunately it was coming more straight on to us, and as soon as I yelled out to the skipper, or the officer of the watch, there was this particular torpedo coming towards us, it just came course a bit and I just stood on the wing of the bridge and watched it go down the side of the ship and I thought after, "Well, that was close." With that we pursued the direction that it came from and dropped charges,

08:30 the giveaway normally would, not always would be, that oil would come up or some substance from the sub. It only happened once but a few other times there we knew that we had done damage to the subs because with our equipment we could pick up the sound of their motors as well as on our asdic when we got close enough to them.

If a torpedo goes past you, does it explode further on or does it not explode until it hits something?

It would have to

09:00 hit something before it would explode. So it would keep going and it would just run out of power and that would be it. It would just sink.

Tell me about dropping depth charges on the Japanese submarines, how did that work?

The depth charges had a gauge, the depth charges were about the size almost of a 44-gallon drum and

09:30 they were in a cradle and under that cradle would be a round cylinder, well twin cylinders actually, one cylinder within the other and the explosives that would send the off would be underneath the inner cylinder, so that when it was exploded it would be like firing off a shot out of a rifle or something, a bullet leaving a cartridge and it would be the same thing as we fire off.

10:00 To gauge the depth that it would explode, there was a gauge on the side of the depth charge and the

chaps in charge of that would set it at a certain depth for it to explode.

And how many would you send over?

Well that depended, we'd use, we might send up to half a dozen.

Did you ever see any submarines surface?

One.

10:30 One came up. But we didn't, it came up, it was damaged. But we didn't intercept it at the time, we left that one, and one of the other ships that was following and they said "They would intercept the people that were on board". We often saw the results of the submarine though, like if at night time you'd see quite a glow over to the horizon that one of the ships had been hit, because up off the west coast in the northern waters

11:00 towards New Guinea and those places, well that's where most of the activity was going on. The unfortunate part about it was, far as we were concerned the results of submarines being sunk and not only that our allied ships which were worst, when we came across chaps in the life-boats in particular off any of the ships and we were not permitted to stop to help them

11:30 because if we did we could be the next fatal, or the target. It was not permitted. So we'd see these lifeboats at various times, we'd see there was life on board, with our binoculars. In some cases there they'd be on their last as you might say because of a lack of food, water and in that climate you'd dry

12:00 very quick and you could imagine these chaps see us coming towards them and think, "Well, we're saved" but we were not allowed to stop. So where possible if we could find anything buoyant enough we'd throw them over the side and hopefully they could get to them. But there's not much hope for that because they were too weak and we would just have to sail on, and just leave them.

So these were allied sailors?

Yes

And you just had to

12:30 **sail past them?**

Yep. It wasn't pleasing to see; you know I mean you can imagine it was upsetting to realise that what you were doing, these chaps would be holding out and think, "Oh we're saved." or those that were still alive were saved. Because we saw on a number of occasions there, you could see they were in such a bad condition that only one or two might be waving, there could be a dozen or so

13:00 in a boat. But after awhile though, you knew those who had passed away, that they would pass them over the side of the boat.

Did you know which ships they'd come from?

We didn't actually because a lot of the ships were not permitted to identify themselves for just the fact that if any of those signals were intercepted by any of the enemy,

13:30 they may be able to identify what type of ship it was and what it was carrying.

Were they able to signal any other ships in the area that were allowed to pick them up, or wasn't anyone allowed to pick them up?

No one, nup. No one was allowed to do it; I mean it was suicide because you might have one boat there or a couple of boats there with the survivors on board with the lifeboats

14:00 but it would only take one ship to stop and get hit by a torpedo and you'd lose another 100 chaps.

So was the idea that the Japanese submarines would hang around?

Correct

Right, and watch the survivors?

Yes, it was just like fishing. That was the unfortunate way of setting a bait and it was a well-known fact that once the Japs had sunk a ship like that and if they knew we were in an area or over the horizon they would pick us up.

14:30 They would think "If we hang around here, we'll get another one".

So I suppose you knew if your ship ever went down you'd be in the same boat?

We'd be in the same boat. We could be in the same.... You'd only hope that the circumstance were such that you were near enough to land to get your boat there, or hopefully one of the seaplanes might be able to get down

15:00 near you and pick you up. But that was very remote.

Was there ever an occasion that you thought you were going to go down?

Well, that could have been any time.

No moment in particular, where you thought "this is it"?

Well, no. I mean you had the moments where as I say

15:30 you're getting bombed, torpedos fired at you and I don't know you sort of, people... I was asked before recently at one of the schools where I was giving a talk, "Did you ever get scared and frightened?" But I don't think so, I think we were young and we didn't understand the dangers so much as we would now,

16:00 you know. When these things happen just say when it had finished, we would just carry on in the usual way. And just say, well that was close and you'd just go back to doing what you were doing. As we did, we went back down below decks after the bombing and saw the end of Shirley Temple. But these are the things that I think, as they say, young and fearless. We weren't putting on an act it was just that we were still

16:30 young and didn't realise. Out away at sea we would have a scrambling net over the ship's side and we'd be anchored 500 k's [kilometres] or miles off the coast for a break and we'd have a scrambling net over the ship's side and we'd dive over the ship's side and go swimming you know, and we might swim you know about a quarter of a kilometre away from the ship and things and we'd play water polo and things like that in Darwin Harbour.

17:00 **Aren't there crocodiles in Darwin Harbour?**

There were crocodiles, there were. You'd get sharks; there were blue bottles, jellyfish. One chap was killed by a jellyfish on Christmas Day when we were playing one day.

In Darwin Harbour?

In Darwin Harbour. No we used to do it. But there is no way known in the last 50-odd years that I'd ever think of doing that, no way known.

What were the conditions like on the Castlemaine?

17:30 They were cramped but comfortable, and of course we didn't have air-conditioning and those things. But it could get pretty hot in the tropics; you'd open up the scuttles and things like that to let a draught of air through. I used to often sleep up on deck. We all had hammocks but if it got hot I'd just go up on deck and lay my mattress and my hammock out on the deck and just sleep up on the deck of a night time.

18:00 **What was the food like on board?**

It was good, I mean it was. Well putting into today's categories it would be just average type food, but we did all right. We didn't get a lot of fresh vegetables, most of it was processed, like potatoes came in a powdered form and everything was in packaged form,

18:30 basically. When we used to have a drink, we used to have "kai" we used to call it. That used to come like slabs of concrete but it was chocolate and they'd break it up with a hammer, throw it in a boiler with water and boil it up and it would come out pretty thick and it was a very sustaining type of a drink, like hot chocolate.

Did it taste like hot chocolate?

Mmmm. But if you had some of that of a night time and you went

19:00 up on deck, you'd have to watch it that you didn't fall asleep at the wheel because it had that effect on you, you know hot milk drinks and that, one thing to put you asleep of a night time. Generally yeh, it was all processed. I'll reiterate a story one of the little boys at one of the schools put his hand up to ask me a question and he said, "You were on the boats?" and I said, "Yes we were on the ships and the boats." and he said, "Did you have chips with

19:30 the fish?" It just sort of related to him that we were on boats, so we would be catching fish and had to have chips, and I just had to explain to him that we had fish now and again because if a depth charge went down we'd often get a big fish, it would come up stunned and we'd send the boats down and we'd go and collect the dead fish. They were nice and fresh but we didn't have the chips. The powder would go into a drum with water and boil it up and that became a

20:00 potato mash.

Did you get many fish from the depth charges?

Yes, once every few months, we'd be permitted to use a depth charge and we'd use our asdic and we'd get over near a reef and let a depth charge go and put two of the boats down and we would spin around there, we would get plenty of fish, you'd get sharks and sea snake and octopus, you'd get a real mixture so it

20:30 was a smorgasbord and you just picked out the ones you liked.

Seafood basket?

It was a seafood basket.

And what about the quarters that you had. Did you have a personal space on the Castlemaine?

None, no, no our area like, with the seaman's deck we had, you could might say seating along the bulkheads,

21:00 which was the side of the ship, you'd have your seating, out from the seating would be like a trestle table set up and then there would be another seat on the other side of it. And of course they were virtually fixed to the deck, so they wouldn't slide around you know in a rough sea. Of a night time you would have your hammocks, your hammocks would be rolled up like a, lashed up like a sausage I suppose and then they'd go in the hammock bin on the mess deck

21:30 and you'd point them down so they stand on end into the hammock bin. And of a night time when you were going to get in the hammock, you'd hook it, the end of the hammock, both ends would have rings on it and there'd be a lashing at one end and coming down from the bulkheads there'd be hooks so you'd hook the eye of the hammock at one end over a hook, the other end there you'd put a rope, one of the lashings around there and take it up to what height

22:00 you wanted and they would be one above the other. And I suppose you might say just in an average lounge room like ours here there could be about 20 of you sleeping here, one above the other. And of course the hammock, when you got used to it, they were quite comfortable.

Were they canvas?

Yes

Did you have a sheet or a pillow or anything with them?

You only had what was canvas; it had the eyelets for the ropes from each end, to spread it out, like you would the normal

22:30 type of hammock for a garden, and you'd have a light mattress and a blanket and you'd use your towel for your pillow, that was it.

And how did you get in and out of these hammocks? That's a mystery to me?

Well yes, that question's been asked to me recently too. Above the hammock there were rails, if you had a low hammock you could just throw your leg over and jump into it, but you had to make sure that you did it the right

23:00 way otherwise you'd end up on the opposite side or down on the deck. To get into a higher hammock you would have rails across, you'd grab the rail and get a grip on that and throw your feet up in the air and into the hammock, but you never let go of the rails til you were in the hammock.

And if you're in a heavy sea, I should imagine there is an art to getting into a hammock when the ship is bucking around?

Well, the hammock would be keeping in the

23:30 what would you say? A horizontal position at all times because it would be swaying, and as a ship rolled well the hammock with the weight of the mattress in it would still be in that as you might say a horizontal position, but you had to be careful because sometimes it might get away from you, and it might take more than one jump to get into it. As I say once you've got one foot in, you could pull it towards you and get your second foot and get yourself in. Yeah you got the hang of it after a while

24:00 but if you didn't you'd finish up with bruises.

Did you ever get seasick?

No. No, I never got seasick. The best thing to offset sickness was when we had heavy seas, we would have the old tins of Brockoff dried biscuits, the oval biscuits dry and they would be put on the mess deck

24:30 table so if you got a bit squeamish you would just grab a handful and put them in your pocket when you were going up on the bridge and just nibble those. So always the best way to offset any seasickness is to eat dry food, even if it's dry bread, no liquids and nothing rich. But a couple of times it got a bit rough but I would just nibble on a biscuit now and again. But I'd seen some chaps that just wanted to die, they had chronic seasickness and

25:00 they would be down in the waist of the ship rolling from one side to the other as the waves were coming over, and you'd go to help them and they'd say, "I'm not interested."

Let me go, yeah I sympathize with that. When you went up to the islands, did you get off, did you get ashore very often?

Oh yes. Oh some of the very small islands when we were off the west coast and some of those areas

25:30 we would get onto a small island. I spent one night on it; we were doing a tidal party and that was reading the tides, the rise and falls of the tides. This was all tied up with our survey work, so three of us were put on this island for the night and we just took our mattresses across, we were only about 3 feet above water and the island I suppose wouldn't be more than about 100 feet round

26:00 and we put in these poles and we had to have our lights on the island with us, just to read the tidal poles, to make a note of every half an hour or so, what the tide was. And the ship went off and left us there. But we thought after that it could have been a little bit dicey if there had been a Jap sub hanging around, he'd say. "Here's an opportunity." But there again we weren't very concerned about it. But we did

26:30 go on small islands like that and other places up around, well right through to the Philippines, many of the islands we went on at times for recreation. We'd take our rifles ashore and shoot good crabs up the rivers and things.

Crabs? Shooting crabs?

Yeah, that's all we had. They were decent sized crabs so—

How big were they?

Oh well,

27:00 I'd say the bodies of some of those crabs we had, the big one would be, oh the body along would be about 18 inches diameter and the arms and the claws on them would be almost the size of a human arm. So you wouldn't go in the water when they were around, because if they took a hold of you they'd rip your fingers off or your leg.

So you would get a good feed off those?

Oh yes, we'd take them on board and we'd have to get the hatchet and cut them up and

27:30 an ordinary square four-gallon drum, with some of them there you could only get their legs into the drum, you couldn't get anything else in them, because the crabs were that large, but they were beautiful.

Did you have much time to look at the environment that was around you, the island? I mean what was it like physically up there?

Well it was beautiful; I suppose we appreciate it more so now, when we go to the tropics.

28:00 But on some of those islands you felt like you were a bit of a Robinson Crusoe type of thing and we used to meet some of the different natives. I remember on Daydream Island up on the east coast, which is now a big resort, we went ashore there and spent a day with the natives there and they were magnificent, the natives on the island, and they had their little church made out of all the

28:30 bamboo and they made up their little altar with the shells they'd collected around the beaches and that, and it was just beautiful and we met them and they brought their little babies down and I had a photograph taken holding one of these beautiful little black native babies, they were lovely people. It was interesting we used to meet them like that in their native state before it was all spoilt. Even their,

29:00 I always remember their cemetery on this island; they would collect bottles that had floated ashore and if they had a grave there, they would use the bottle's neck first down into the sand and that would mark out the grave, they would make their own little cross out of bamboo or any driftwood.

Were you able to converse with them? Did they speak English or were they still speaking—?

They had a broken dialect up on the islands there

29:30 but it was amazing like when we were in Hong Kong and those places, you know, you made, you could get along with it.

What did those islanders on Daydream Island know about the war? Did they know what was going on?

Well, I don't think so. I think that ships were coming and going and they'd possibly wonder what it was all about. But not many ships would go into some of those small islands.

30:00 **Because of the reef?**

Yes because of the reef and the shallow waters. But when we went into some of these islands, we went by some of our own lifeboats and that, go in there and land on them, but we would anchor off-shore from the islands.

Were Japanese submarines able to get in around the reef?

Oh yes, they got in around the reef; well I mean some of the smaller ones. I'd been on leave and the night I was heading

30:30 from Spencer Street Station up to Sydney was the night that the Japs went into Sydney Harbour.

In the midgets?

In the midget submarines and by the time we got up there, Sydney Harbour was just like Luna Park with all the, everything that was going on, the activity with the Japs coming in.

Did you ever see any of those midget submarines?

Mmmm, yes I don't think, I wouldn't mind being on a ship but I don't think I'd enjoy

31:00 being on one of those submarines, that claustrophobic that—they had to be in a horizontal position at all times in those and they could only just lift their head up and their arms, they were very small in size. I suppose in depth they'd only be about 3 feet.

Were they one or two manned?

Usually two men. Oh yes, I'd

31:30 be claustrophobic, it would be terrible because they had to travel in them. They'd be dropped in, in our waters by a mother ship.

Right, so they would bring them over on a ship and then drop them over?

They'd be brought in on a mother ship and from there on they would head into the harbour. But having the motor and everything all enclosed with them, as you could imagine what it would be like, the fumes of oil and the heat and everything like that because they didn't have a lot of the

32:00 sophisticated equipment we'd have today to counteract it.

Well the torpedoes they carried must have been pretty small, if the submarines were so small?

Oh, these midgets were, but you see a lot of those midgets though, they were suicide, they were loaded with explosives as were in when we were up in Lama Island off the China coast, the suicide boats. Well we went on there to destroy these suicide boats and they were about 14-16

32:30 feet long and those suicide boats had brand new Chev engines in them, 6 cylinder Chev engines. At the stern of the boat would be the pilot and at the bow of the boat would be explosives. And they were just suicide boats. And where we went aboard or we went ashore I should say was the job to destroy them.

What sort of boats were they then?

They were made of a marine ply, just a basic

33:00 boat. It was a deep hull. They'd travel a fair distance but we had to get there because Lama Island wasn't far out of Hong Kong harbour, and they were just frightened if some of the radicals and that they got hold of them they could shoot into Hong Kong harbour. Well that's why apart from that we were doing anti-piracy patrol up and down the coast. Because the Japanese that wished to

33:30 remain free, they had a prison camp in Kowloon and their means of survival was to sail up and down the coast and they would plunder other junks to get their food and water off them or any supplies they would require and then they would dispose of the crew over the side, in various ways, and just leave the junks adrift. And then they head off

34:00 when they were running short of supplies they would look for another junk. So our job was going up and down the coast and with the binoculars and there are hundreds of junks up and down that coast, and if we saw a head come up with a khaki cap on it, that was a dead giveaway it was a Jap, so we would pursue that junk, they were easy to catch up with, board them and we would take those Japanese off the junk and we'd bring them on board and put a couple of guards on

34:30 them and we would tow the junk back into Hong Kong harbour and we would send these chaps, these prisoners off to Kowloon prison camp and leave the junk in the harbour. We used to pick up a lot of cash there, Jap occupational money and that, we brought a lot home but you couldn't spend it locally, that was a problem

No good to you?

No.

So this is after the war, and these Japanese they

35:00 **knew the war was over but they just wouldn't give it up, is that right? So they set about to be pirates?**

Mmmm. That was right. Apparently they just thought at some stage that they would be able to escape the authorities and they wouldn't be captured. Because you see this was all going on we were the first

into occupied China, and I was on the Castlemaine at the time and I was on the wheel when we first went in there.

35:30 The armistice was signed 10 days after we arrived in Hong Kong. So while we were still contending with Japanese and Chinese communists in the area, from the various areas. We had a lot of experience up there with the Japanese.

Tape 3

00:15 **Peter, you've told us that you did a lot of work around Hong Kong. Can you explain why you were in Hong Kong and the sort of work you were doing there, and what period of the war was**

00:30 **this?**

Well, we went up through the Celebes Islands, the Philippines, we were directed to go up there, this was after the attack by the Americans with the atomic bomb and the allies apparently could foresee that this could be the climax of hostilities or close to it. So we were

01:00 directed to head up that way and owing to the fact that we did escort work, we had to escort some of the larger ships right through the islands and up into Hong Kong. We picked up most of them up in Manila or Subic Bay and from there on we joined up with them, American submarines and the British ships, some of the largest

01:30 the Anson and massive battleships and that. So we preceded from there up to Hong Kong as an escort and that was our job, because we were, well we had the equipment to counteract submarines etc there, we were there to protect the larger ships, getting back to occupied China.

What was the top speed of the Castlemaine?

02:00 Well, it depends whether you had a tail wind or not. You'd possibly get up to about 14 to 16 knots, it wasn't a great speed compared with the destroyers.

How big was that convoy?

Oh well I'd say that it was quite large, I would estimate it, there were seven Australian corvettes,

02:30 there were seven British submarines, there was two battleships, three aircraft carriers and there were various other destroyers, etc of the British mainly that joined us. So it would be quite a good-sized fleet.

Were there any other Australian ships?

No, only the corvettes and that's why I think that

03:00 because of our work, doing the escort work we were given that task to escort the fleet and right through to our arrival in Hong Kong the other ships hung off outside the Hong Kong Harbour from the island and our job was to go in first and find our way through owing to the fact that the straits in between the mainland and Hong Kong Island,

03:30 it was heavily mined and our job was to get in there and do the minesweeping. So our first task was to get into the channel and across that channel was what they call a boom and the boom was supported, it was a heavy wire mesh, supported by floating drums, the idea was to prevent submarines etc getting into the harbour and also for other shipping going in,

04:00 that if a ship tried to get through there and went across the boom it would get its prop entangled in the steel mesh. So our job was to find the opening, there was always an opening there as to which of the drums we sailed between, and I always remember on the bridge that day, I was on the wheel and we were the first in and the skipper said, "We've got a problem, we got to be able to identify." I'd give it a go as to which

04:30 drums that we could go in between, and these drums would only be about 150 feet apart, and a couples of these drums, I said to him, I pointed out, I said, "There seems to be something conspicuous about two of those drums." that they had some marking or paint on them and owing to the fact that rust had set in, it had obliterated most of it, and so he said, "We'll give it a go." so I headed between

05:00 these drums, and he cut the motors just in case we got entangled and we got through all right. So from there on we knew how to get in.

Who had put these up, was it the British or the Japanese?

I'd say at the beginning the British could have put them up, but owing to the fact that you know, the Japs were heading from the north down to the south, could have been to protect the other ship in the harbour and I would say that the British would have put them up.

05:30 Once we got through there, of course then there were the mines and that was our next job, to do the minesweeping. Well, we had minesweeping equipment on the corvette and when we were using that we were cutting the mines loose.

Can you explain in details how the minesweeping equipment works?

Well on the stern of each corvette

06:00 you would have a cable going out to a paravane at about a 45-degree angle from each side of the ship, that would be splayed out and the paravanes would be working such as an aircraft would with fins on it, with the fins making these floating as you might say a paravane, it looked like a bit like a torpedo, heading out away from the ship both ways, so it would spread

06:30 these cables out and they would expand out from each side of the ship. On that cable down near the bottom of it there were these big steel cutters like blades and that was to cut the cables on the mines. Now these paravanes would be down, well down below the water and splayed out as I say on a 45-degree angle on each side of the ship, the mines were suspended with a weight, a cable

07:00 below the surface owing to the fact that these cables, our cables would pull down under the water by the paravanes and they had blades on them, they would go along the water underneath the depths of the mines, when they got entangled those blades would cut the cable of the mine, once the cable was cut the mine would float to the surface, so they were virtually buoyant, but the only thing that held them down was the fact of a cable and a weight on the bottom

07:30 of the ocean or the harbour. Once we cut those the mines would come to the surface, then our job was to sink the mines, we tried those with various arms and until we got a couple of heavier gauged guns from one of the British ships. And we would be just up on deck and we'd fire shots into it near the watermark, and that would blast a hole in the mine and it would sink.

Would the mine explode?

08:00 Very rarely. Because the explosive in a mine, it was like a box suspended in the middle of a globe as you might say, it would be like a tennis ball with a small compartment in the centre and each of the horns on a mine that you'd see sticking out, if any of those were hit, that would explode it, that was just like a firing pin to the explosive in the centre of the mine. And that would create a mine to explode when a ship hit it

08:30 or a submarine of course. But that was our job, but once they came, as I say to the surface, our job was then to sink them and once they went to the bottom they would then just settle in the sand, and very rarely would they explode, they would corrode away in time. There were a couple of incidents where the Strachan, one of the ships, one went up underneath of it and did a lot of damage to the super structure and that and we'd been up in the tropics for a long

09:00 time up around there, so we were given the job to escort it home for a break because we were starting to get a lot of the Asian flu and guys were getting sick everywhere and the powers-that-be medically wise said it was time to be relieved of our job up there and we were sent home.

How long were you in Hong Kong?

We were in Hong Kong, it was about three and a half months and in that time apart from that we had various jobs

09:30 to do. We had a job to go out to Lama Island and destroy these suicide boats, as I say they were powered by brand new Chev engines and they were on the island and in the caves and on the same island there was a large radio station, and there was a fuel dump and ammunition dump. And off our ship

10:00 there was about, oh I think there was about a dozen of us went ashore. The chap in charge at the time that I went with was Lloyd Makin, he's still a mate of mine, he lives down Mount Martha. Lloyd's father was a minister for the navy during the war, Sir Arthur Makin. Anyhow Lloyd and myself and the others we went ashore to dispose of these suicide boats,

10:30 we got the coolies [Chinese labourers] to help us and tip over some of these petrol drums and we use our tin helmets to get the petrol and pour it over the boats and light something up and throw it into the boat, and we were just burning them. And then we went into the radio station and because there were Chinese Communists and Japs still loose in the jungle and that there, I thought "Well, in case they used the radio station for communications we had to destroy that."

11:00 so we were like little boys there standing back with the Tommy Gun, just blowing hell out of all of this massive board of equipment, thousand of dollars worth of damage, but that was the job we had to do. From there we went out to Stanley Island, another job and there was a Stanley Prison Camp and there were European ladies and girls had been placed in this camp and they'd been

11:30 there some time and our job was to go over and release them and we were the first to get there and we went into the jail and brought them on board the ship, and we had arranged to let them wash and feed and everything on board our ship. They had been living in squalid conditions, the reason being that the mothers were wanting to make sure their daughters

12:00 appeared very unacceptable for the Japanese who were running the camp, therefore any dropping you might say in their cells they'd virtually wipe it over themselves so they would smell putrid and had been trying to keep them away from their daughters, that was the only protection they had. They thought if they became too attractive, the Japs wouldn't hesitate in raping etc. Which we'd

12:30 had other experiences in that degree. So we got them on board the ship and got them towels and gave them a good wash, and a good feed and something and.

Were there any Japanese still on Stanley Island when you got there?

No, no they'd left there because they knew if they hung around there they would only get picked up by ourselves or anybody else.

These women were Europeans who'd

13:00 **lived in Hong Kong?**

Well not all of them, some of them. They were in Hong Kong at the time, but a small world that it is, one of the ladies was a daughter that was onboard our ship and when I told her where I lived in Belgrave up on behind Heathermount Guest House, she said, well, she and her daughter had had holidays up there before they went to Hong Kong. So a lot of them were placed up there I'd imagine with their husbands in business in Hong Kong

13:30 and places like that. That's how they became occupants of Hong Kong but the Japanese had taken them out to the island. Actually as far as atrocities are concerned, they were very lucky because of the photographs I saw first-hand in Hong Kong. I'd met this Chinese girl and she'd been educated

14:00 in Oxford University by her parents, spoke perfect English, her family very wealthy and they had a very nice home there and I befriended her and she said to me one day, we were having a cup of tea together and having a drink and she was telling me about the photographs she had and she said, "I'll bring them down next time I see you." So I saw her down there and she produced these photographs

14:30 and they showed the sexual mutilation of the women in Hong Kong done by the Japanese. They were not good reading matter and not things you'd want to produce to other people seeing this mass rape going on, actual photographs of the Japs lined up and a naked women pulled out over one of these cement horse

15:00 troughs on her back and they were just doing a massive rape. Other ladies, we saw several of them, been tied to a lamp post naked and had their breasts cut off and just left to die, and that was just some of them. That was just, that was the sort of evidence that she was retaining and she been asked by the local authorities to keep them in the safe place because they thought at the cessation of war that

15:30 this could be brought forward as evidence as to what was going on and what had gone on.

Were you able to do anything with that information?

Well, I wasn't in the position, or neither were we. This lass had it all under her care with the local authorities to produce those at a—she said she was going to hand them over so that she wouldn't have the responsibility of hanging on to them

16:00 and hand them over to the authorities, but the way it was when I was there at the beginning you didn't know who was running what. I mean we would be sitting on the, about the first ten days we were in Hong Kong harbour, we couldn't go ashore, it was safety, we weren't allowed, there was a curfew on at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Thereon, if you were on the streets you would get shot, they didn't ask

16:30 any questions and some afternoons when the curfew had started, we would be up on the deck on ship, we weren't that far off shore and you'd hear some shooting going on and you'd see these Japs and Chinese Communists etc having a little battle between themselves, but mainly the Japs are shooting them and they'd come along with one of these old

17:00 Chinese vegetable carts, picking up the bodies and throwing them on the back of the wagon and carting them off. When they couldn't put any more on the wagon they used to just throw them into the harbour. And that was something we had to contend with after awhile, because these bodies were floating in and out all the time and you can imagine up in an area like that they became rather potent, you know the aroma was crash-hot when you were sitting down trying to enjoy a meal

17:30 and you've got something like that floating past with the in and out with the tide, and a couple of times the skipper said, when it's on the way out towards the heads as you might say, from the island, I suggest we use one of the Oerlikons and dispose of them that way, stop them floating in and out all the time, the fish do the rest.

It's an extraordinary scene you're describing, this emotion of a society almost lawless and years where no one really knew what was going on.

No it was, I mean having seen it myself, you know visually like that and later on other things had happened and other stories that were told you know about up on Victoria Mountain

- 18:30 from Hong Kong there, the Japs went up there one night and having a night out and this chap and his wife and they had a son and a daughter and the Japs broke in and they tied the son and the father up and they raped the daughter and the mother in front of them, when they finished that they just cut their throats and did the same with the father and son after they had experienced that and just left them there.
- 19:00 That was only the ones that I saw and was told about and that was on good authority, these people have no reason to tell me otherwise. Some of them came out from Aw Boon Haw's wife, she told us some through an interpreter, he's the Tiger Balm king of China and one of my mates and I on one day ashore, we'd gone down through the Bonshi area and this massive
- 19:30 palace of Aw Boon Haw in Hong Kong, on the side of the hill, I've still got photographs of it and it was massive so we were cheeky enough to decide we'd go for a walk up the main driveway and go almost up to the house and this chap came out and spoke English you know, he was a Chinaman, Chinese well-dressed. He introduced himself to what
- 20:00 his actual status was there I don't know there but he finished up he said he would take us around and show us around parts of the palace and up through the gardens, through the caves in the hill, up on a great pergola and in the end he took us into the house and we went through this massive archway of two elephant tusks, I've never seen anything as large
- 20:30 in my life, hand carved, most intricately carved and we went through there into this lounge and this well-dressed lady was sleeping, laying back on one of the settees and we must have disturbed her and she sat up and said something to this chap and anyhow it turned out to be one of Aw Boon Haw's wives cause he had several places and he had several wives in each one. And she invited us to stay and have a meal that night with
- 21:00 them because her husband was coming home from one of his trips but unfortunately we couldn't stay because there was a curfew on, so we just had to take a raincheck on that but it would have been very nice to have stayed and met him and that.

Tell us a bit more about him.

Well he and his brother, I can't remember his other brother's name but it was Aw Boon Haw and this brother. They came up with this balm, the Tiger Balm, you may have heard

- 21:30 of it, it is guaranteed to just about cure anything. And you can still buy it in different places in Middle East jars, it's good as a cough mixture, I think it would kill chilblains, dandruff, you name it, it would do anything. And they made their fortune out of producing this. And he had the place in Hong Kong, Singapore and there was another one in Malaysia, very wealthy, one
- 22:00 of the wealthiest chaps there. He was that wealthy that even the Japanese were not game enough to even do any damage to the palace there because they knew he had so much power right throughout China, he and his brothers. If they stepped out of line there could be devastating consequences to any of them that did it you know. But she was a lovely person to speak to but we had to do it through
- 22:30 an interpreter because she could not speak any English. It was a lot of things like that in Hong Kong, it that way. I was sorry to leave there in a way, because it was so interesting to go out on the sampans, you'd go across the harbour and give them, it cost you next to nothing to go across the harbour and we had our
- 23:00 side party, which I've got photographs of us. There was a daughter, the mother, I'm trying to think of the mother's name but I think we called her Mama and the husband, I called him "Rinso" because he used to do our washing on board the ship, we'd give him next to nothing and he'd do your washing. But it was easier to call him "Rinso" than some Chinese name. And the little boy we called him "Knuckles." because
- 23:30 Knuckles came on board and we were playing cards one night and we gave Knuckles a pack of cards, well he was the greatest card shark you've ever seen and there's a little lad, he would only be about I suppose 10, 12 years old. And each one of them spoke reasonable English and Susie was the daughter, so we had our own names for them and they used to hang around our ship, and we used to feed them
- 24:00 because food was that bad up there for them. And they'd have these bamboo poles with these, like with a fish landing net on the end of them. And they knew when it was feeding time for us and they'd push them out up through the portholes for us to throw food in for them, so they could get food off us. And we got to the stage where the skipper told us we were not to do it anymore, because we were giving too much food away, and not eating the food we should ourselves.
- 24:30 But they were just dragging fish with little nets out of the harbour and you can imagine they're consuming this sort of stuff, that's the harbour, where you've got all the remains of people floating up and down, it wasn't sort of hygienic but they were surviving with it and they'd just sit on their little sampan and light up a little burner of a night time and use a couple of little old peach tins that had come off our ship or something and they'd boil it up and any residue that went down the offal shoot off the stern

- 25:00 of the ship, they'd pick that up out of the water. It would be old banana peels, potato peelings and whatever was ditched over the side that was the supplement to go with their rice. That's what they lived on like that, apart from what we gave them. So we adopted them and the day we left was a sad day for them because we had taken a liking to them and they us. And the night before I bought a bottle of rice wine from ashore for
- 25:30 dad, for Rinso and I suppose, he could not afford it, when we explained to him, he said that that bottle of wine would have cost him what he would earn and it would take him about six months to save enough money up to buy it. And that night he had a couple of these rice wines and he, I don't think he would be the best for wear the next morning. And he even gave me his identification card
- 26:00 with his photograph on it. And in later years when I went back to Hong Kong, I tried to see if I could get somebody to trace me to where one of the family may have been. But it turned out that he came over the border from Communist China, he wasn't a communist himself, but he came from that area, and that was the only thing they could tell me when we went to Hong Kong. No the day we left there, the next morning we
- 26:30 threw a rope over the stern of the ship and we towed them down the harbour behind us and they're waving and chanting and the skipper said, "Righto, time to let them go." so we let them go and you know there were tears in the eyes, we sort of become attached to them and we'd just let them go and you could see they were the same, they were upset when we cast them off. Just another little family we adopted.

Had you heard much, any tales about

- 27:00 **Japanese atrocities before you got to Hong Kong?**

Not really, we did hear various things but it was hearsay a lot of it, well it was hearsay what I got in Hong Kong, but we heard about some of the atrocities but more so there.

Were you prepared for this sort of thing, I mean how do you react when someone starts showing you this material?

Well you just couldn't

- 27:30 believe that any human being could treat other human beings like that. I mean you could not imagine, I know you people couldn't imagine that Australians and Americans and British and all of that carrying out these atrocities against any other human being regardless of who they are. I mean they were just a fanatical type of people, I don't know whether it was in their blood, or
- 28:00 I don't know what would drive them to it. But it wasn't a rare occasion by any means, with all these atrocities going on and the way that they were treating others. It was just one of those things I suppose. And I couldn't believe it that in a matter of years, so years back we went back to
- 28:30 Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, Bali and Japan and this day we were out with our friends, the four of us went over there on this trip and we were driving down the street in Japan and there's about half a dozen army trucks came along the road, and all these Japanese chaps were on board, army fellows, in the same cap, same khaki and everything and that was a most unusual
- 29:00 feeling as to have come up against all of these chaps and then to be over there in peacetime and see them travelling down the road past you and Bob my mate said, "You know if only I had a gun now." and I said, "Well it's all over now mate." you know but it sort of gave you a bit of a shudder when you thought of all the atrocities done by these people and here they were just at freedom driving down the
- 29:30 roads in their trucks. It was a most unusual feeling.

What are some of your other memories of Hong Kong in those few months?

Well, I think it's been covered a lot. We found it most interesting ashore with the Chinese culture and

- 30:00 with Susie, Knuckles' brother, we used to spend our evenings, they'd allow them to come on board, they'd tie up near our ship and we'd be trying to teach them English and they'd be trying to teach us Chinese, which was, we got along with it a little bit, the trouble was in Hong Kong
- 30:30 or China, there was 64 dialects. If you learnt the basic Chinese in Hong Kong and you went over to Kowloon over to the mainland, you used to get away with it, but if you went further inland it would become more difficult but they have a basic Chinese language but the dialects did change form place to place. Not that we experienced it because we didn't get right in inland.

Now if you'll forgive me asking,

- 31:00 **sailors get themselves a reputation especially when they're in foreign ports. How did the chaps amuse themselves with their shore leaves?**

Well, you could answer that in various ways but well everyone went ashore to enjoy themselves. I suppose you could say there are various ways and means of enjoying yourself there but

31:30 I think if you spent I think it was around, I'm trying to think what it was worth, a couple of pounds, well you could have the company of a very nice girl and that for a period of time. It was quite common when you were walking around because they knew that we had the money they didn't have. And it was commonplace to be walking

32:00 down the various areas, particularly when some chap would tap you on the shoulder and say "Would you like a girl or something like that?" No, we used to meet them at the taxi dancing, we'd go ashore and they had at one of the places we used to go to, it was a dance, it was conventional ballroom type dancing, foxtrots, waltzes, you name it and these girls were good

32:30 dancers, they were very good and when you went it possibly cost you about two shillings for half a dozen dances but if you got onto one of the girls that was co-operative she wouldn't worry that she'd say "I've had my half a dozen dances between you and someone else." and she'd say "Well, just keep dancing." and they played all the same music and dances identical what we had before we went away and after.

33:00 And this taxi dancing.

Taxi dancing? I don't quite understand the term 'taxi dancing'?

Well, I don't know where it came from or how it originated but they called in taxi dancing. I've never given it any thought as to how the taxi originated, how it came into it. But maybe they considered that pay as you go you know like in a taxi or something like that. The only taxis that we

33:30 had there, that was the tiggerartos [?], that was the three-wheeler job or the rickshaw. That's how we used to get around most of the time. The funny thing is too, that most of the, what would you say, the security side of Hong Kong were mainly Indians, pretty solid built guys and that and from previous places,

34:00 they were a darker-skinned breed, I don't know if they were a cross or something but they used to be the ones that used to be the local police around the Hong Kong area. Not that we had to worry much about it you know. You just made sure that you kept your hand on your wallet, particularly when you went down the Wanshai area, that was the low caste

34:30 area in Hong Kong. And that was well known for the pick-pockets and whatever, because I know, I lost a wallet in the early stages and we happened to be going down through this market place, on this particular day that we went up to Aw Boon Haw and we were walking through and their display gear was built by bamboo racks

35:00 with shelves on it and we were looking through all this gear and I had to get myself another wallet. And it just so happens that my wallet had my initials stamped in gold on it. We were walking along and one of my mates said, "Hey, is this your wallet?" And sure enough it was, it was just sitting there, three of us together and here's this stand, I suppose it would have gone up about 8 to 10 feet high and it had everything and it was about

35:30 10, 15 feet long, everywhere like this was all their goods and chattels to sell and so I picked the wallet up and I said to this guy, "How much for this?" and he wanted so many dollars for it and I said, "Where'd you get it?" You know didn't understand English then, so I said to the boys, "Oh well." and he said, "How much money did you lose?" and I said 'I lost a few dollars I brought ashore.' So he just waited

36:00 until this chap had a couple of customers and walked around where he was putting his money. So he said, "I'll get your money back." and I said, "How will you do that?" And he said, "Just leave it to me." and he said, "Grab your wallet and tell him you're going to buy it, and I'll walk around the back." and when the chap turned around elsewhere, he just grabbed a few dollars out of the old box he had there with his money in and he said, "Right it's time to leave." so the three of us walked around to the front and we picked up his stand and up-ended the whole stand

36:30 and people went everywhere and so did all his gear and he was too preoccupied worrying about what had happened, rather than trying to catch up with us, so we just. I got my wallet back and money plus and we just walked out and so we thought well, bits of devils in those days, we were just playing them in their own game, they were dishonest so a bit of retribution.

37:00 **You said that there started to be a bit of illness on board after a while, how did that manifest itself?**

Well, it would be hard to tell but like in these days when you visit these countries you have to be careful what you eat and where you eat it and things like that. And

37:30 likewise in the areas that you are mixing and I think most of ours was something in the form of a Asian flu that we were getting, it got to the stage that a couple of my mates and that, they just couldn't get out of their hammocks, just perspiration pouring from them and you'd have to be getting towels and that and wiping, getting them to wipe themselves down with fresh water and that to keep them right and they couldn't actually,

38:00 they didn't have any antibiotics and that to, they wouldn't even know what it was really and it got to

that stage that it became a bit of an epidemic on the ship and that was the reason why they said, well, you've done your stretch up here. and after the Strachan, another corvette had got damaged under it by one of the mines, they decided they would send it back home to Australia and

38:30 it could only sail to about half speed to any of us, so we were given the job to escort it back to Australia, so it was twofold we were coming back and we were escorting it back to Australia but I must tell you when we were coming home and wanting to get back home on leave and here we are getting dragged back all the time by this other ship you know it could only go at paddle pace out on the water, we weren't happy about having to be slowed down that

39:00 much, we made up for it when we got back.

Slow boat from China?

It was a slow boat from China for sure.

And this is December 1945 is it, when you leave Hong Kong?

It would be about, yeah it would be about that.

And when did you get back to Australia.

Oh well, when we got, I'd say it was the best part of about two weeks

39:30 before we got back to Australia.

And what port did you come into?

When we came back, we came in—I think Cairns was our first port of call and down to Brisbane, Sydney and we got back here, well then eventually the ship was paid off down in Melbourne. We stayed on it until we got to Melbourne

40:00 and we pulled into Williamstown Dockyards and we unloaded our gear and everything there and that's where we virtually left the Castlemaine, and later that was taken down to Flinders Naval Depot as a training ship.

Tape 4

00:26 **Peter, I'd like you to tell us about**

00:30 **your return home to Australia after Hong Kong.**

On returning back to Australia, we were given, it was approximately two weeks leave and following that I was then posted to another corvette by the name of [HMAS] Inverell, and the Inverell at that time was up in Brisbane and of course the war being over, I think it was a case of

01:00 keeping us occupied until such time as we were due for demobilisation, and the project we did then was to take engineers, lighthouse engineers in particular with us up the coast and in doing so we took with us these gas cylinder replacements in those days, well the lighthouses worked off gas. So our job was to take them to these various islands

01:30 off the capes and we would assist them in unloading the gas cylinders by boat and taking them to the destinations, assisting them, getting them up rocks or wherever, up the beaches so they could change over the gas cylinders and we would take the empty ones back. It was quite interesting because it was in those days it was more like a pleasure cruise. We were doing four hours on and 12 off, whereas our normal duties

02:00 would be four hours and eight off so we had plenty of time up our sleeves for doing various things and reading and going ashore. It was quite interesting being in that situation, we could really relax then, it was just a pleasure cruise.

Whereabouts were you at this stage, what lighthouses did

02:30 **you visit, can you remember?**

Well, it was numerous lighthouses, from Brisbane right up to Cape York. The various islands, Daydream Island in particular was one, that I think I may have made mention of, the various islands such as that, that's how we came across them. Particularly on the east coast because of the coral reefs, that was always a hazard for shipping from overseas,

03:00 particularly with the Americans they would get inside the reef or they'd go on the outside, several times doing escort work, they would signal us and ask us if we could assist them in getting on the inner reef, through the inner reef, to get into various ports down Townsville, Cairns etc. Because our reef up there is pretty hazardous, and particularly with the American Liberty boats they didn't

03:30 have sophisticated equipment on them as we did and that came later on. So we assisted them quite a bit in that way but basically yes we were doing the lighthouse work right through until we got back after several months into Brisbane and a signal came on board the ship that I was to get my FAO draft, that was First Available Opportunity.

04:00 **Explain what this means?**

Well, when you receive that, that meant that the First Available Opportunity was when you were in port, it would not matter even if I was in Port Moresby, if that draft came through; I was entitled to be sent back to Australia to be demobilised. So it was the First Available Opportunity, so if you were in any port or in any locations where you could be

04:30 transported back home, that was the way it went. That happened when I was in Brisbane, on our first attempt, three of us to get our leave, when we approached the skipper, he wasn't very pleased about that, he wanted to keep us on board but fortunately that afternoon we had shore leave and when we went ashore I said to the fellows, "Well, I'll think we'll call in at the naval depot ashore and see if we can see the officer in charge." which we did and

05:00 I informed him that we had a First Available Opportunity draft and he was refusing to release us. He wanted to take us to sea up the coast and he said he would look into it. The next morning the three of us were called before our own skipper and we could see there and then that he wasn't very happy and a good frame of mind because he had received a signal from the shore base to tell him that he must release us immediately. So with that he just told us

05:30 to get our gear together and there would be a truck coming along very shortly to take us. So we didn't get a royal send off from him but we were very pleased to get off and start heading home.

You might have expected something more for the end of your service.

Well, what do you mean, in relation to the skipper?

Yeah, had it been a happy ship, the Inverell?

Well, I wasn't on the Inverell as I say that long, I was only

06:00 on it about three months, the Castlemaine would be one of the happiest ships in the Royal Australian Navy, it had that reputation. And I would agree with it, because I still keep in contact with all my buddies, those that are still alive. I used to send out a mailing list for our reunions of well over 100, and my mailing list now would be down to approximately I would say about 30. And out of that 30,

06:30 at a reunion now which we will be having in October, oh well it's actually a small ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance, we have a plaque installed there, which I arranged and to get 10 guys there would be a miracle. We had one last year and the year before and I think our numbers in the crew would be about eight to 10. There are not many of them left.

07:00 There are others that are in homes and in a condition that they cannot travel, they've lost certain powers, sight and mobility, etc so these days it's very hard to get a group together. But I still keep them together in that respect and I refer to these chaps, I always have as our extended family because as I mentioned earlier,

07:30 we were so young when we went away, we were just past the school boy stage at 18 and these guys became our family, we lived together, we went ashore together, we slept and ate in the same quarters and it was just like any other children at home with mother and father that we were going through our early stages there and maturing with our mates, not with our parents. And so

08:00 I always classified them as an extended family and we hold the highest regard for all of them you know and know the same with us, we keep in contact that way, we send each other our Christmas cards and all of that, and its sixty-odd years since we started all that, it's been going on continuous but continuing but unfortunately the numbers have dwindled off but we'll keep going.

It does sound like a happy ship,

08:30 **the Castlemaine.**

It was, we had our own football team and up in the islands we used to challenge other ships, and the airforce and the army, we'd go ashore on Thursday Island, Darwin and that was our big day, football. Australian Rules of course.

The Inverell however sounds as if it was just a—you stuck

09:00 **together for a few months and you were wanting to get out?**

Well it was, you—the war was over and once all that happened you then felt it was time to go home, you'd completed what you went away to do and everyone was celebrating the end of the war, and we wanted to do the same. The only celebration I had on the ship was on the Castlemaine when

09:30 we were heading up towards the Philippines and we realized the Japanese were surrendering. The classic was that we used to get a one bottle of beer issue a week, but we would only get that if we were in port or anchored and I had one bottle of beer in my locker and there was no refrigeration in the lockers in the tropics, and I had that one bottle of beer and when the signal came to us that the Japanese were surrendering

10:00 I said to the guys, "Well it's time for a drink." and I took my hot bottle of beer down the mess deck and I think there must have been 12 to 15 of us had a drink out of that bottle, I think we were all having a teaspoon or a tablespoon of beer each and that was hot beer, but it suited the occasion.

When you were discharged in Brisbane, where did you

10:30 **go from there?**

I was sent back, straight back here down to Melbourne, to Lonsdale, Port Lonsdale and went through the demobilising here. That was the end of my days and home.

Had you considered staying in the navy at all?

Well, not at that time, I did have regrets in some ways that I could have made

11:00 the navy my life in many ways, I mean I had the opportunities of going further in the navy and if I'd had stayed in the navy, well I'd have retired at a reasonable age and some of the chaps did and very wealthy by the time they got deferred pay, etc, but I think, no I enjoyed my day immensely in the navy at sea and

11:30 but I think it was, I don't know, I wanted to come ashore and come home and see my family and my father had returned from active service and he was still recovering from his treatment in the hospital, and get back and see my family and live just back to a civilian life again. I mean it had its good points but it was just more or less like saying "Do you want to be a bachelor or do you want to get married you know?"

12:00 Be a bachelor and stay at sea and live that type of life, free and easy or come home and get consolidated.

You'd been keeping up some correspondence with some girls back home?

Yes.

When you finally came back to Upwey.

I was living in Belgrave at that time.

Belgrave sorry, what were the first things that

12:30 **you wanted to do when you finally got back?**

Well I think when we came back, I think the only thing we wanted to do was enjoy ourselves and spread our wings, catch up on a lot of that life that we'd missed out on. I used to like dancing; I used to go out possibly three nights a week or so, four nights a week dancing, we would go anywhere from Belgrave to Monbulk down to

13:00 St Kilda, out to the Fitzroy Town Hall and in those days one of the local girl's mother and father had a band, a local band up there and she used to like dancing too. Well if they were going somewhere to play of a night time she'd ring me up and say "How about taking me to the dance?." so we'd head off together, the girls didn't worry that day, they'd approach us sometimes and say "Well, there's a dance on how

13:30 about it?" So we enjoyed ourselves a lot I suppose, we in those days we drank quite a bit to. I don't think we were on our own, I think we were just going through the settling-down process and that helped a lot, I suppose it might be a weak way of saying but the alcohol did, it made you relax and got rid the old nerves and things like that.

Were you working at this time?

14:00 When I came home I wasn't working, I had several jobs, I started off at the hardware store which was my grandfather's business in D. & W. Chandlers. I came back and went into the company and I went down to Box Hill, my dad's brother he was the manager there,

14:30 and I went down there as the assistant manager and relieving manager. We had various branches all over Victoria, I used to go up to Ringwood, that was another branch, now and again, when the manager was away on holidays and at the later stage when I decided to get married and was having a house built, the company asked me would I like to go over and take control of a new branch over in Mount Gambier?

15:00 But I didn't go along with that because I was just having a new house built in Upper Gully and settling into marriage and decided no, I'd prefer to stay back here, so I stayed with the company for quite some time and then Wilma's father, he had been a professional tailor and he got the inkling that he'd like to

get into hardware and he said "If I buy a hardware store in Malvern would you come and manage it for me and teach me the trade?" So

15:30 I did. I went on from there to several positions in business, I was with a glass company called Oliver Davey Glass and I went over there as sales manager, and from there I got into the joiner and shop fitting trade and that was an RMS Company out at Hawthorn, I finished up there as the chief cost accountant, then a national

16:00 company in shop fitting approached me and I took over as state manager for Victoria and Tasmania of this company. So I finished up mainly in the shop fitting in the later days.

Can I take you back to 1946, when you came back, you've been demobilised, you say that you drank a bit to settle your nerves.

16:30 **Were you seeing much of your mates from the war at this stage or were you pretty much by yourself?**

Oh no, no there was always a group of us together. Well several of my mates, army, navy and airforce and they were chaps about my age too around Belgrave and the surrounding districts. We used to, particularly on weekends we would head off together to dances

17:00 or days out. Or we'd you know get around to various things, we'd have barbeques and various things like that of entertainment but we were always around together and the local girls would join us the same way, but we were all young in those days and much the same age and had various experiences. I suppose we used to compare notes as what the difference was from the navy to the army or the airforce.

17:30 That was it, we discussed our experiences and enjoyed ourselves quite a bit while we were single. Not to say that you can't enjoy yourself when you're married, I may have sort of put that in the wrong context.

Talking with these chaps about your experiences, can you remember discussing how the war may have affected or changed

18:00 **you?**

Well it did, I suppose, I suppose our outlook in life we were more, what would you say? More upfront or brazen in our attitude, that we had more confidence in what we did and our decisions we made, because we as I say we went from almost a childhood when we went in the navy to when we came out, over that period of time

18:30 I feel that we all matured immensely from that, possibly much more than the average chap that would have been our age that didn't serve in any of the services. It was just one of those things that you had to, well you were independent as a person in respect of the fact that you did not have family around you to discuss all these things with, therefore you had to make your own decisions. But

19:00 as I mentioned earlier amongst your mates you would discuss many things and confide in each other if you had problems or even not problems but just generalised, just discussing things.

It's interesting that you say that because there's a sort of a stereotype of the Australian male who even though he's got his mates you never actually talk about anything personal, but you're saying that you did and

19:30 **you found that useful?**

Well, it would be personal things like guys and girls would talk with their mothers and fathers at home if they had any problems. As we all hope that our children would do is to confide in their parents and discuss their problems and sort it out hopefully. And your mates there took the place of your parents, they were the ones to confide in,

20:00 of course you had a greater variety to choose from amongst the chaps on the ships, but there were those as I mentioned in early stages, there were those that you became very compatible with and others that you were still mates, but you had nil society, they're those people that you had a bonding to more than others - that was all.

Was there much of a distinction made after the war

20:30 **between young men who had served and young men who hadn't served?**

Well, no we never looked at it that way, not as far as I was concerned and I never experienced anything as such because my outlook was always somebody had to stay home and somebody had to go to war and that's why I think that there could always be a lot more credit given to those people who

21:00 stayed at home. As I always said, like my mother, she stayed at home with my two sisters, and here her own brother who used to live with us, he was a bachelor, he was away caught in Greece, my father was up in New Guinea, sent home repatriated, he was blown-up, I was away in the navy, my mother never knew where I was, there was no way I could even hint to her as to where I'd be

21:30 or where I was going. And she would never know from day to a day as to you know, whether a telegram was going to come, to say I was coming home or a telegram to say I was deceased. And that experience we knew from Belgrave and Terry's Hill there was a very well-known family there and they had two sons and this happened just before I went away

22:00 and the two boys joined the airforce and headed for Europe and a telegram came that one of the boys had been lost over Europe and within 48 hours another telegram came to say the second boy had gone. So you can imagine you know, the first one was you know disastrous but the whole town of Belgrave you know just been mourning when we thought what a shocking thing, there were only two children, two boys and both of them

22:30 deceased within 48 hours over Europe in the air force. These were the sort of things that, the people would shudder if the postman came, if he wasn't putting mail in the box and starting walking up the path, people would shudder because they would know he was delivering something personal, that would be a telegram, the normal mail would just go in your box. The postman, you always hoped that he would put it in the box and not start walking up the path. And we experienced

23:00 that when my mother's brother was taken and virtually lost at the time, was in Greece, he was taken prisoner of war because we never knew whether he was alive or not and he was like a second father to me, because he lived with us most of the time and we got on so well together. But these are all the things that could shatter families and it's hard to explain to a lot of people just the way it was

23:30 during those days because, people were sitting on a razor's edge all the time. And I feel that those people at home all the time like my mother and other people, and not only that but workers, other people had to stay at home, these ladies that worked in the Red Cross sending us parcels. There were people that had to stay home and work in ammunition factories, there had to be workers at home and I've never thought of any discredit towards these people that stayed at home,

24:00 because we had to be supplied with food and whatever on the ship and that had to come from civilians back home, working in essential services and that and that was it.

Your own decision to volunteer was made after you father had already volunteered, wasn't it?

Well, oh yes, he'd gone away

24:30 but I don't think that sort of had any bearing on my decision.

I'm just interested, you say that it was also just after this incident where one Belgrave family had lost both the sons. Can you remember thinking how your mother would feel, about the fact that her husband had gone and her only son was about to leave as well?

25:00 Well, at the time I don't think I put a great emphasis on it, I realised that well naturally she would not be over-enthused about me going away, but it was in later years, and the older I got and the older I get the more I feel for her as to what she must have gone through and my sisters, but particularly my mother. Because

25:30 having three males of the family away in various areas of the world, it must have been quite traumatic in that way. The ladies down in Belgrave and that, in those days, we were close-knit because Belgrave was a smaller town then and everybody knew everybody, meet everybody in the street and discuss things with them. When I first went in

26:00 the navy, and I got my first shore leave I was walking down the main street of Belgrave and one of the elderly ladies stopped me in the street and she said, "Oh Peter." she said, "I didn't know you'd joined the Navy Scouts or the Sea Scouts." and I said, "No, I'm in the Royal Australian Navy." and she said, "At your age?" I said, "Well I'm eighteen now." and she couldn't believe it but in those days we knew everybody in the town and we were one big happy

26:30 family there in the town also. There was always discussion and I think that might have helped my mother a lot because there were so many others in the same situation as her. It would give them a little bit of I don't know, I suppose a happier feeling, not a happier feeling way but to know that there were others in the same boat and they could discuss their problems and their ambitions of their

27:00 loved ones coming home.

Your father was one of those few people who served in both wars. Can you best describe his experiences in the Great War, where he'd been?

The only well, like naturally the experiences I

27:30 heard was like from my father. I think like a lot of those chaps, they didn't talk about it a lot you know, they didn't make an issue of it, but now and again through you know, in general discussions things would crop up. Like I do too, what happened, and I'd say "Yes." when I was in the navy and this happened and my father would do the same. And he used to discuss it every now and again

28:00 and I went to a number of his reunions and as he aged more, I took him to a few reunions. He kept in contact, one of his greatest friends was Bill Tingwell over in Coogee Bay in Sydney and you might know

his son, that's Bud Tingwell, Charles Tingwell, and Bud and I keep in contact and Bill Tingwell he

28:30 had three sons and like I had three sons, but I was the only son to my father. But right through until the end they were great buddies, that's from the First World War.

His decision to volunteer in the Second War, would he have been over age at that stage?

Well he was, he wasn't over-aged, he was one of the older as you might say servicemen.

29:00 Being involved with the militia he had all that experience, training the chaps in camps. Various weekends they'd have different functions on with the militia, in training. And with his experience, it was in his blood, he just liked the army and the militia and as I say he was in charge of a 15-mile radius from Belgrave militia.

29:30 The nearest militia group was down in the Surrey Hills drill hall, which I used to go down there with him now and again. And they used to enter competition boxing and things like that. But I was sort of involved with Dad, they used to have battalions' picnics around and I'd meet his buddies and they'd discuss things. Nearly all of his mates were younger than him and even today if I mention my name is Chandler

30:00 and any of the chaps that had served with him, they would say, "Are you Uncle George's son?" Because they referred to my dad virtually behind his back and they used to call him "Uncle." because he was the older one and they were all young. So that was terms of endearment right up until today. If I meet any of those that are still living, because a lot of them, not a lot of them but a few of them are still living, because they were a lot younger.

30:30 But they always referred to "Uncle George". I got a magnificent poem out there by a Mr Les Walkim from over in the western district, he wrote a poem about my father, and it was just magnificent. Uncle George.

Can you remember witnessing any discussion between your father and your mother when he decided to go to the Second War?

31:00 No, I never recollect any decisions or discussion between my mother and father. Only my father had decided that he would sign up for the AIF. No, I never recollect any of that. I just, well I barely recollect, the fact you know I was young in those days and I suppose preoccupied in other things that he said, "Well, I'm going away." and that was it.

He was running the business

31:30 **at that stage, wasn't he?**

Mmm, he was running the hardware store and that was when the decision was made, that I'd have to leave college and take over the business, I had only just turned 16, I beg your pardon, I was about 15 and a half, when I took over the business, running it. But I'd had experience younger; I used to be in and out of the shop at different times, when they were busy,

32:00 you would go in there and serve customers. So I knew the run of it, you know virtually right through and I don't think there was any problems about that, I had the backing of my mother but she couldn't assist me all the times, because she was an asthmatic and living up at the top of the hill and she was not a driver, and I was the only driver, so hence that's where I started driving the vehicle

32:30 at around about 15 years old and if she came down, well I had to have a vehicle to take her home.

You father's experience, where did he serve?

Well basically, in the First World War was in France and the Second World War was up in New Guinea.

And you mentioned that he was blown-up.

Both wars,

33:00 I always laugh, we should have called my father "Gelignite Jack" or something. He was always getting blown-up, but he was blown-up in the First World War in the trenches as a machine-gunner, repatriated home and til the day he died he still had shrapnel in his body, apparently they decided it wasn't worthwhile worrying about pulling in out of him, it didn't worry him and then he was in the Markham Valley in New Guinea

33:30 and got blown-up again there, and the natives, they use to call them the Fuzzy Wuzzies and they brought him out on the stretcher and he was sent back home then too and he was in Heidelberg Hospital but he was very lucky, he came out with all his limbs, and sight and hearing and everything like that, he just had body injuries and he survived. But it was

34:00 enough to send him home, they thought that he'd had enough and in those days Blamey was more active, General Blamey and that came up apparently and when he met one day and he just said "I think it's time you went home, you've been through two world wars, that's enough." So they sent him home, while he was still safe and reasonably fit.

And yet that wasn't the end of the danger for him, was it?

Well, that was when he came home and he had

34:30 several positions and when he came back, after having quite a bit of leave. That was when he was involved in the prisoner of war camp up in New South Wales with the Japanese.

What was his role at Cowra?

He was second in charge at the prison camp. He used to come home on leave and see my mother, you know I think

35:00 every month or something like that, he would get reasonable leave. But up in there, he did tell us a story; he told me the story of it and the article that he wrote. They had an inkling that the Japanese were up to something, as regarding the break-out and they took as many precautions that they could. But on this particular time the Japanese got together and in mass they charged

35:30 the fencing etc. On the outside of the compound there were a couple of gun emplacements, they over ran at least one of those and killed several of our chaps and a number of Japanese were killed, when they were getting through the barbed wire. A number of them killed themselves, one hung himself in the kitchen at the camp and others dropped themselves into the fork of a tree, to virtually hang themselves

36:00 in the fork of the tree. Others got out and got over the railway line and waited for the train going through and threw themselves in front of the train. It caused quite a stir locally when the word got out. But it was kept hush hush because my father said that they cut off communication with Sydney, Brisbane, and headquarters

36:30 in relation with this break-out. They were frightened, that knowing the Japanese, that if they heard in Japan that a number of Japanese, hundreds of Japanese had been killed in Cowra they might decide to take it out on our prisoners of war over there. Not knowing full well that it was a break-out, the story might have got distorted that we just massacred them here, without good reason, and therefore that was kept quiet.

37:00 And at a later date my father was called down to headquarters and they wanted to know why there was no communications going on for several days and he explained to them the reason, to them down there the reason why that it was kept secret for the protection of our own prisoners of war overseas. But at a later date the story came out, my father wrote the story and he submitted that through

37:30 to a few places and he got recognition for it and one of them that was he had an article in the Repatriation Writing Project back in '64 and he won a prize for that and he was presented with a book by the then Lieutenant Governor Sir Edmund Herring of the 19th Australian Infantry Battalion and also Major Workwood

38:00 who was the commanding officer of that battalion and they'd made this presentation to my father for the writing of this quite a long draft he did, but I've got his original draft but then as time went on, it was republished. And that outbreak they had, put out a film, some time back, I

38:30 don't think that did justice to the intelligence to our armed services because even though I was in the navy, the way the film was put out it was just not as it was. I don't know, it was distorted to the actual fact and the truth.

Tape 5

00:40 **Peter, you've talked a lot about how collegiality has always been important to you and also community involvement. You've talked a lot about Belgrave the town for example. In your post-war life you've**

01:00 **had a lot of involvement in community things, can you tell us a bit about that and perhaps reflect on how your war service may have influenced your decisions in being involved in such work?**

Well, as I mentioned before I think being through the service gave you, you obtained a lot of confidence

01:30 in yourself, in your mannerism and what you spoke, and what you spoke about, and I've always if I've been in a position of responsibility with an organisation I would always do research on it before I attended a meeting and things. And right from the word go I suppose, I was only very young when I joined the Fire Brigade in Belgrave. The Belgrave Fire Brigade and

02:00 I used to like doing things for the Red Cross, I built a nice size yacht, a model yacht and raffled that between the community and businesses around the place to raise money for the Red Cross and as my father was up in the hills there, he was Fire Brigade, Justice of the Peace etc, Shire President and as I

said I had the opportunity but at the time

- 02:30 I had a young family at the time and decided not. But apart from that in the service into the community as I got older I was, I don't know I just seem to be a victim of circumstances you might say that any time I put my head in the door of some organisation, I just seem to become President of that Association or so.
- 03:00 I've been a Justice of the Peace since 1969, I was a commissioner of declarations and affidavits for four years, I was nominated by the late member of Parliament, Mr Bill Borswick, was a good friend of ours, we used to play tennis together with, and I was tied up in that. Also back at that time in '69
- 03:30 I was made President of the Belgrave RSL [Returned and Services League] and I've been a member ever since of the RSL although they combined with Upwey, and it's now Upwey Belgrave and I've got a feeling they're trying to recycle me because they asked me to stand for the Vice President, the Senior Vice President of the Upwey RSL. I said on condition that I don't have to go further, I think I've been there, done it, but it was like I feel an honorary position to
- 04:00 be a Senior Vice President, so I could be on the committee and assist in any way I could in these things. Among other things I was going back, I was President of the Belgrave RSL, President of the Upper Ferntree Gully Preschool Baby Health Centre, when the boys were young, President of the Upper Ferntree Gully Tennis Club, then I was President of the Upper Ferntree Gully Scouts and Cubs and I was presented with an award
- 04:30 for long and loyal service to scouting, I was President of the Upper Ferntree Gully Liberal Party, but as I mentioned at a early date I didn't wish to pursue that, the reason such as council too, having a young family. I was President of the Ferntree Gully Bowling Club, President of the Ferntree Gully Swimming Pool Association, President of the Boronia Shopping Town Association, where we had a couple of businesses. I was Foundation
- 05:00 President of the Sherbrook Juniors Athletics Association and received their 25 year medal for being their foundation founder and president of that association for the whole of the mountain district. I was Foundation President of the Castlemaine Association, Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Shire of Sherbrook Scouting Association, Secretary of the Upper Ferntree Gully Fire Brigade; I was awarded a 12 and 25
- 05:30 year medal for long and loyal service to Belgrave and the Upper Ferntree Country Fire Authority and I'm virtually still a member, I've still got my old badges, I don't know what badge they'd have for me now. I have been and still am the honorary auditor of the William Anglis Upper Ferntree Gully Hospital Auxiliary; I was a foundation member of the Belgrave Progress Club. I received a Certificate of Honour from the Anglis Hospital in '97 for my work towards
- 06:00 that cause, also a Certificate of Appreciation from the Hospital. A Certificate of Appreciation for the Dandenong Ranges Community Cultural Centre. Community award from the Shire Ranges back in 1994 pardon, that community service award as I suppose it was realising all these other things I had been
- 06:30 involved in and it was the last and the highest award ever presented by the Shire of Yarra Ranges before they joined up with Lilydale and it was a great honour that my wife and I and family were invited over there and I was presented with that award which I still have out there. I was also presented with 32 years' service as a Justice of the Peace, by Mr Steve
- 07:00 Bracks and as it is at the moment, I'm still working with the RSL and the Hospital Auxiliaries. I've just sort of kept myself occupied in various ways.

I reckon when the time comes for Australia to have its first President, you've got some good experience.

I don't know about that, I would be past the use-by date I think.

This amount of community service, I know that recently people have talked

- 07:30 **about the fact that current generations don't seem to be so much committed to community service and some people speculate that it's because they haven't been through a war, they don't know this sense of giving to community out of need for each other. Do you think that this has something to do with your attitude?**

Well, the younger generation, like

- 08:00 our children, our middle boy up north he does a bit of community work in various ways, and our son Grant. My wife has worked for quite a long time for the Hospital Auxiliary as the Treasurer and she recently received her 15-year medal, for her work in that cause. So she's always been like myself community wise,
- 08:30 following through with the children you know like various things that they've been in and with the Tennis Club she was made a life member of the Tennis Club up at Ferntree Gully. And she's had various certificates presented to her for being community minded I suppose; it just worked in both of us. But these days, we find with the, say the Hospital Auxiliary, we find it hard to get volunteers as we used to.

09:00 The younger ones don't seem to get themselves involved so much, unfortunately, because we've always had a lot of satisfaction out of it. Wilma, I think finds it with the Hospital Auxiliary. She's always on the go, making jams and cakes for stalls to raise money and the phones ringing just about every day or every second day of the week in relation to that.

09:30 For money coming in from me the hospital down there, they have a kiosk to raise money. But it keeps her occupied and she likes it and I think it's good that people do get involved, because you're meeting people all the time as I have, and made great friends. You don't do it for the glory of it, I've never even looked at it from that point of view, it's just that to me, it's just a way of life and I've just been in it all

10:00 my life. I think if I was not a member of something, I'd sit at home and I'd just go rusty, you know I couldn't sit at home all day and watch TV and things like that and I'm not up to knitting so that's why I get into my bark art, that's my hobby.

And your involvement with the RSL, and things like the Castlemaine Association, are

10:30 **those things more about collegiality with war time colleagues or is it the same sort of breath of community?**

Well, as time goes on I think that each of these things do lose a bit of steam. With the association

11:00 the functions and the ideas we came up with to getting together and so forth, well I just can't gather the numbers now to justify having different celebrations as we did in the past. With the RSL we fortunately have a very progressive RSL but the base of that RSL is chaps from Vietnam and Korea in the various services. I

11:30 would say over the Second World War there'd only be, I would say I could only name about three or four, there are a couple of others that remain members. I would say living members of the RSL Second World War would possibly be no more than about 10 or 12 in a RSL there of over 200 about 230 members, so the guys

12:00 and the girls over there are younger than myself but they are enthusiastic with a lot of the things they're doing all the time and welfare and so forth.

Were you an active participant in the RSL in the years following the war?

Yes, oh yes, actually I joined the RSL up in Cairns during the war, but there was a little catch to that because

12:30 during the war, Cairns, they used to have an old Queenslander type home up on stilts and that was their RSL below the RSL there, it was dug into the side of a hill and under there they had a bar about 6 feet long and they used to sell beer in General Blameys, that was a beer bottle with the top cut off, they had a technique of doing that - was a hot wire or a cord soaked in metho, you'd let that burn itself and then you would throw it in

13:00 cold water and it would crack around the top. You'd take the top off the bottle, then they'd grind it down so it could be used for drinking beer out of. Glasses and containers were hard to get. So when we went ashore you'd go to the hotels and through the lack of beer, chaps that were first up to the bar, would grab about half a dozen glasses and put them over in the corner. Well the hotels couldn't cater for the volume of the glasses that would disappear

13:30 and it used to be a classic, we'd go ashore but we would have to find something to drink out of, so we used to go down to one of the old op shops or second-hand dealers and see what was waterproof in the form of a vase or anything like that and we would take that down to the bar and get the girl to wash it out and then she'd say "Righto, that will cost you a shilling or one and six pence for the beer that's in it". And then they ran out of vases, etc in the

14:00 op shops and the second hand shops, we'd go to the milk bar and buy a bottle of milk and we'd ask them to dispose of the milk, you know, but they weren't allowed to do that, so we used to go outside and there'd be a stray dog walking down the street and we'd pour the milk into the gutter and go back and ask them to wash it out, so we'd be drinking out of milk bottles in the hotel. And that was in various places up the coast. But when we got wind of the RSL

14:30 and various days and times, they were provided with beer, so we joined the RSL so we could go over there and take advantage of their hospitality.

And their glassware?

And the glassware, but with the number of guys there when you got to the bar in the queue you'd get your General Blamey, it was the best part of a normal large bottle of beer, you'd get your first one then

15:00 you'd get in the tail of the queue again because you knew it was going to take you long enough to get around. So you'd go around that circle several times and you'd see a few flaking out on the dirt underneath the building, after a period of time, they went around the circle too often or couldn't quite make it. But that was when I first joined the RSL and I came back home, and I continued on as a member of the RSL in Belgrave.

15:30 **Why were these bottles with the top cut off called General Blameys?**

Well that I don't know, you would have to ask someone that served in the army, I think. I don't know whether it was a little bit of a crack at General Blamey, that he didn't have a top on you know. No, I don't know, I really don't know how that came about. But

16:00 they served a purpose, thanks to General Blamey.

And so back in Belgrave you became a member as soon as you came home?

Yes, yes we all did, it was a social gathering, and we'd have smoke nights and so forth.

Was it just serving members, returned men and women who were there or did you have partners?

No, in those days it was basically only returned servicemen who

16:30 were eligible to be members, whereas today social and associate members are permissible in the RSL. That's because of the lack of numbers falling off and I think that's in a lot of the clubs, most clubs they admit anybody that meets their requirements, as regarding behaviour, dress etc

The bonding process of the war is very important.

17:00 **Do you think that at times that bond is hard to understand, for people who don't, who haven't had that? For example, people's spouses or the rest of their family. Does that sometimes create a tension?**

I think it, well I know when Wilma and I first got together, or even

17:30 first married there were various things came up, well I suppose I wasn't that easy to live with for a while, but I'm fortunate that I have a darling wife that has put up with me for these years, for about 54 years and presented me with three loving boys, with Roger, Grant and Adrian and we've been a happy family. But in the early stages I think we,

18:00 nothing serious mind you, but I have learnt one way of living and Wilma had been as you might say living in a protective more area and over a period of time I think she has learnt to understand my problems, I don't deny that when I came home, I'd have been hard to live with, I had nerves and

18:30 suffered from very deep depression at time.

Can you talk a bit about that, I mean as much as you're happy to?

Well, yes I think my doctor understood, as he would have learnt like a lot of others, you weren't, I don't know whether you would say you were moody,

19:00 but there were times when your stomach just felt like the size of a matchbox, you didn't feel like eating or what. Well you had ideas of in early stages of what you felt like doing you know, I think you were mixed up emotionally and nerves wise and I know at one stage my doctor

19:30 sent me to a specialist, and I found out it was a psychiatrist in the end but this doctor of mine, I could verify the fact that he was a terrific fellow because on the day I had this interview in Melbourne he said, "Call and see me on your way home." and I did. He said "How did you go?" And I said, "Alright." She asked me numerous questions, and "What did I do when I was depressed?" and

20:00 I told her that on the way home, I'd, before I could go home and have a meal, I'd go into the local hotel and have three or four beers to settle me down, because if I went straight home and I didn't, I just could not, I had no hope, I couldn't enjoy my meal and that and this particular psychiatrist I told her this, that I called in on the way home and had a couple of drinks and

20:30 that was it. And she informed me that the worst thing that I could do or anybody could do when you're depressed is to touch alcohol. and I didn't out rightly say that I can't go along with it. I just said, "Well to me, I can relax, go home and enjoy the company of my wife and enjoy my meal and sit down and relax". And if the situation was that I couldn't, I don't know, it wasn't done intentionally but it was just the way

21:00 it was. So with that my doctor said, "Oh well, the interview sounded pretty good to me." he said "Let's go up and have a couple of beers before you go home." so that was his attitude. He said I used to throw off at them as head shrinkers, psychiatrist. No, I went through a lot of those stages of depression and I think I used to get out and want to lose myself at times you know but

21:30 I outgrew it; I mean you still get emotional time too on Anzac Day and things like that.

Were there things that triggered your depression?

I think you'd be, get more depressed when you got tired, I think when you got a bit rundown, and it was a case of whether it was the depression bringing that tiredness on, exhaustion or what, I don't know.

22:00 It wouldn't be a dispute between anybody that would bring it on, I mean it could but not necessarily, it

was just some things would go through your mind from time to time and particularly the depressing times were oh a few years back there now and I'd be sending out letters to my mates and that, an annual event, and I opened all the mail up and I had a heap of envelopes on the table and

22:30 here were six letters, relating to six of my buddies that had died in that year. That didn't help. Those are those things.

Did many of your friends and colleagues have the same sorts of experiences?

I don't know, well I never discussed them; I never

23:00 discussed that with them, I think that I would say that many did. I know that one of my friends up in the hills here, he'd have nightmares and his wife said she finished up, he'd be out of bed and she'd find him under the bed, things like that. I know one night, I was living at home at my mothers and father's place and I had a sleep-out and a flywire door and this uncle of mine that had been a prisoner of war, he

23:30 started working and his alarm went off in the middle of the night and I went straight through the flywire door, I'd gone through before I knew what had happened, it was just that the, I suppose the alarm clock was similar to our alarms on the ship, not unlike it and before I knew what I was doing I had gone through the door and I picked myself up out on the concrete, and I thought "There's a job to do tomorrow, go and get a new flywire door." That was the first thing

24:00 that came to my head I think.

Did you dream a lot about your experiences?

Yeah, I used to.

Like nightmares?

You would get like that and you'd wake up and you'd feel like somebody was belting on your chest with a hammer and things like that. And other times, I know when I first came out of the navy I, it was hard to get trips on aircraft and I'd decided that I'd go to Tasmania for a holiday in the break and an uncle

24:30 of mine, he had contacts and he arranged it for me to get a flight across to Tasmania and back, so I went over there for a couple of weeks and I remember out in Hobart, I used to get on the lounge and relax in the sun and while you would feel for no reason at all, you would just wake up in a sweat and I'd be nearly off the lounge and everything like that, I must have gone into a real nightmare and

25:00 actively wise as well and on occasion this lady came and tapped me on the shoulder and I didn't know whether I was actually asleep then, I must have been having something going on and she tapped me on the shoulder and she said, "Are you alright?" And I woke up and said, "Oh you know." and she said, "Wait till I get you something." so she went and came back with something for me and I must have just been having one of those times. I know that I must have a lot

25:30 of times unbeknown to myself but I'd know that I'd wake up you know I knew that I could have been kicking my feet around and my arms around and things like that physically as well as a nightmare. I'd bear that out when I say a couple of times you know I think I could relax particularly just after when I was in Tasmania these things would happen. They wore off in time, but it took time.

26:00 Do you still think about things in that way?

Well, not as often, put it that way. It's upsetting when you lose your mates still, because they're one of your family. And the same thing is too, its quite upsetting for these mates' wives. We just recently went with my friend Lloyd Makin

26:30 as I mentioned earlier who was one of our officers on the ship, and his wife hadn't been too well for a while. Anyhow she passed away, we went to her funeral, we had become attached to the guys and the girls, like the wives mixing with us and we befriended them the same way as the guys, because they were understanding the problems that their husbands had

27:00 and they discussed it with no doubt whatsoever that when the wives got together what their husbands were up to and they were acting no doubt from time to time. We never asked them because we would never hear the end of it in some cases. Oh no, I think you had a feeling sometimes that people were discussing you, or I suppose your condition in a way,

27:30 the problems going on. But in time it wore off but as I say in the early stages it took time just to adapt.

You mentioned the sort of thoughts you would have, might be suicidal or something like that. Did any of your colleagues

28:00 end up taking their lives?

Mmmm. Yes, well I mean it. I think one of the most blatant was, we brought troops back from New Guinea and they'd been up there a long time and we were pulling into port and all the chaps were up on deck, they'd been sent home, they'd been up there for quite a long time and we heard a shot and this chap had just used his rifle and put it to his head.

- 28:30 Why I don't know, he was coming home and all the other guys were that enthused about arriving home on leave to see their love ones. There must have been a problem somewhere, so he took his life and we had to, well as you can imagine it wasn't a good job to do but we had to handle him and get him ashore into an ambulance and clean everything up and it was those sort of things that we thought so blatant.
- 29:00 But yes I've known several that have done that, but I think in those times you felt like it and I think what kept you going was your family, it was your wife and you thought to yourself, "I've seen others go through this terrible thing and I'd be a chicken if I did it." and not
- 29:30 only that you would hopefully think that anyhow, you'd bring so much sadness and upset to your wife and your family. And I think they were the strength.

Were you able to talk to your father about these things?

No, I don't think we—we spoke about different things that were close

- 30:00 in our experiences but we never, I don't think we ever got that way where we'd say you know anything of that nature put it that way. My dad never mentioned anything of that nature and neither did I you know. But I never discussed it with anybody, you felt that way at times, I did once or twice with a doctor, but
- 30:30 as I say, I'm fortunate that my wife and family kept me together.

Tape 6

00:24 **Peter, I'm wondering if we can talk a bit in detail about the work**

00:30 **that you did on the corvettes, around the island, escort duties? Paint us a picture of what a particular exercise may be in escorting.**

Well, basically as from leaving harbour, depending on where we might be. There'd be usually a flotilla of,

- 01:00 you might get three, half a dozen ships, either be going north or south, troops either way or supplies and our job was to give them protection as you can imagine, those ships were not very mobile and our job was to, we would lead well out ahead of them. And with the corvettes they'd be
- 01:30 way out on the port side, starboard side and our job was to listen for with our equipment, for submarines, pick up aircraft approaching or any such. If it was aircraft or ships, our job was to make sure that they identified themselves through their normal codes. With regarding submarines our job was to, if any around,
- 02:00 to locate them and do our best to dispose of them. We would know that if they were allied submarines around, which we'd see now and again, but as I say we were always forewarned because it was not always easy for a submarine to send out a signal, whereas the ships and aircraft were ok. That was basically it, it was to provide protection for those ships, because as you can imagine on those ships
- 02:30 they were carrying a couple of thousand troops at a time, some of the big ships and Liberty ships. And it would only take one submarine with a couple of torpedos to dispose of a couple of thousand chaps, you know out in the ocean. But they as I stated earlier they had lifeboats and things, but there again depending on circumstances of where they were as to what chances of survival with other ships coming through and helping them.
- 03:00 But that was basically our job, was to escort all these other ships and not only that, to escort some of the larger ships in the navy. As I say when we were heading towards Hong Kong, up around the Philippines etc with the larger ships our job was still to deploy out in various areas ahead of them, not only always ahead of them,
- 03:30 to hang back, because some of those ships were vulnerable to submarines hanging off and waiting for us to go past, and think "Well, here's our opportunity, we can have a crack at one of these larger ships dwindling behind." and so it was a all-round protection netting that we provided for the larger ships. Whether they be navy, mainly it was transport ships.
- How many corvettes would commonly operate together?**
- 04:00 Well it varied, but in our group there'd possibly only be about three of us at a time, depending on the number of ships, in the flotilla of them, but usually about three of us, might pick up a couple of others at times, might be five. And it always depended too on the availability of them, because the corvettes were on both coasts of Australia.
- 04:30 And as you can imagine, down the east coast of Australia, there were many ships lost, that you never heard of. It's an education, if you're ever up at Byron Bay to go around the waterfront, and there's an

avenue right round there, a walking track and they've got plaques there of all the ships lost on the Australian coast during the war. And I think at the last count there must have been about 60, 70 ships lost on the Australian coast at a minimum.

05:00 **Lost to enemy action or to—?**

Mmmm. Lost to enemy action. A lot of this was never publicised during the war and a lot of it was lost after the war because a lot of these went down and they never had the equipment to detect where they were, what, it would be an expensive item for them to go out looking for them now. I mean the damage is done, and they're on the bottom and that is it.

05:30 But no there were ships lost right through, I mean there were ships like the Centaur, you know like the hospital ship and all that, well that got quite a bit of publicity, but there were other ships not just Australian ships, ships of other nations were sunk, various types, carrying oil and cargo.

You described how you were attacked once when you were all watching Shirley

06:00 **Temple. Was there any other times when your ship was under direct attack?**

We had a couple of times there, yes. Up around through Subic Bay and those places, low flying aircraft. But we weren't always the target, we saw them go over and sometimes a number of aircraft in the one hit. They'd be on their way, on another mission

06:30 and we were not the target, fortunately.

What would happen? What happens when an enemy craft is sighted?

Immediately an enemy craft is sighted, the same as the ship, the alarm bells go on the ship and everyone heads for action stations. The first thing you do, we always had helmets, particularly on the guns. But as soon as the alarms went

07:00 off, everyone would head to action stations, there would be nobody sitting around, everyone had a job to do. The engineers and everybody would head down below decks, to the engines. On gunnery as I say at a time like that, I never went to the wheel of the ship, either the coxswain or chief coxswain would take over there usually and I'd head for my gun, I was captain of and you'd stand by there, waiting for the opportunity if an aircraft

07:30 came by to well just open fire on it.

What sort of gun were you in charge of?

Mine was an Oerlikon, we had a Bofors and an Oerlikon and a three-inch gun. But I was on an Oerlikon.

And describe an Oerlikon?

Well, an Oerlikon, it's a—put it this way, an Oerlikon cartridge would be I

08:00 suppose it would be about, I'm trying to think now off-hand, it would be about inches long and about an inch thick in diameter. And that was in a round magazine, they call them a rotisserie job, it was just a round magazine that would be fed onto the top of the gun. There'd be one chap on each side assisting,

08:30 one would be ready to put on a new magazine, the other one would remove the one that had been emptied and I was what you put into, it was like a harness on your shoulders, it was two half round pieces of metal and each one of them was padded with a strap around and you'd strap yourself into that and you'd be standing and as you spun around

09:00 the gun, you'd just walk around, spin around or if you had to raise the barrel up or down, just bend your knees up and down and just follow sight of whatever you were firing at. And you'd have one chap on each side assisting in that manner, and anything else you required, as regarding particularly ammunition.

And did you have, were there occasions when you had to fire the gun in anger as it were?

We did, I did several

09:30 times. You couldn't say whether you were successful or not because you weren't the only one. I mean everyone was having pot shots, but we didn't have our autographs on the shell so we just didn't know who scored the shot but I had several occasions where the plane would disintegrate. One of the old tricks that the Japs used to do, would be with the Zeros, they'd

10:00 fly over the top at a great height, virtually almost out of gun range, or they'd use the sun behind them, because if they had the sun behind them and you were looking up at that sun, as you can imagine it was very hard to detect a plane in the direct line of the sun. The other thing was they'd get above the ships and they'd come down completely vertical, well no guns could be put in a vertical position to fire at them.

10:30 So they would, particularly some of the suicide ones, they would come straight down in a vertical and likewise those that were firing at you, at the last minute they'd swing off, but they'd be coming down

vertically firing at a ship. And that was their tactics they used. We saw a couple coming down, they just kept going, and there was just a

11:00 spout of water and there were no remains.

Were you witness to any Kamikaze attacks?

Only from a distance, as I said in some of those areas there up around the islands there were a number of ships, I remember in Finschhafen and that, there were a number of different types of ships, navy and cargo in the harbour and we'd see them come over and

11:30 a couple of them we saw hit at a distance. They were fanatics you know, they'd have to be to carry out that work, but that was their way. The Japanese held no fears regarding their own lives, they

12:00 were just fanatics that take their own life. As I said that rather than be taken a prisoner they would cut themselves, they would kill themselves.

You must have been to any number of ports around the area, from New Guinea up

12:30 **through the islands up to the Philippines. Any of those stick in your memory?**

Oh, I wouldn't know, we went into numerous ports, not by the ship, we had to go in by boat but, well Port Moresby was possibly the largest of the ports up around there at the time, and the busiest

13:00 I would say and Morotai was another one because they could accommodate a number of ships and the larger ships but smaller areas we went in. When you are talking about the various ships there was the first ship I mentioned was the Kanimbla, I was not on it at the time, I joined it after, that was a armed merchant cruiser

13:30 in the first stages, it had been a passenger liner in England years back, it was converted to an armed merchant cruiser, there was plenty of armoury on it and that was deployed in the Persian Gulf and it was always the joke that it was the first and only ship to ever sink an ammunition train and people couldn't believe that a ship could sink an ammunition train and that was on the Persian Gulf.

14:00 **Could you explain this?**

Well, the railway was running adjacent to the foreshore in the Persian Gulf, and they got the message that it was an ammunition train but it had troops on board too. So the Kanimbla opened fire and apparently got it in the right spot and blew the whole train up, the ammunition and the guys on board. So,

14:30 that has always been a joke, that took a bit of beating.

It's curious of course that you mention that the Kanimbla was in the Persian Gulf because the Kanimbla has just been in the Gulf, but that is a different ship, isn't it?

Yes, it's an entirely different ship. You see our Kanimbla looked virtually the same as a passenger ship except of the fact that around the upper deck we had barges

15:00 right along on each side of it. The new Kanimbla was different all together, that has provisions for helicopter and all of this, the main stern of the ship is a platform for choppers to land on etc and carrying troops to and from.

Were you involved in gunnery on the Kanimbla?

Indirectly I was, but

15:30 when I say indirectly, I assisted and that was when the gunnery officer asked me would I care to go back to Flinders Naval Depot and do this gunnery course And I said "Yes, I would like to do something, specialize in some course." and that's how it eventuated through him and three of us were sent down. As I said it was a tough course and

16:00 I was the only one that survived it. There was a lot of mental work in it and study. But the classic of it is, one of the other chaps that failed finished up one of the wealthiest guys on the land, growing sheep in the Western District and the last I heard of him, a bit of a joke, he owns almost half of Western Australia now. So he wasn't that stupid, but he was a typical cocky you know. I mean we went and saw him when he lived out of Hamilton and

16:30 that and he's a real country fellow but he knew his job, on the land he did.

You were involved in the Philippines as well. When were you in the Philippines and what was your role there?

Now that was with the Kanimbla when we were up around the Philippines with the barges and we were landing troops and picking other troops up.

17:00 And that's where we were assisting the Philipinos up there in the liberation of the Philippines and

that's when I received my medal presentation.

That was, you received a medal recently for your involvement in the liberation of the Philippines.

That is right, yes.

That was—

17:30 **tell us about the circumstance of that?**

Well, this was my wife and I were invited, Wilma and I were invited to attend the East Sale RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] Base, for the reason being that Her Excellency Delia Domingo Albert, the Ambassadors of the Philippines came down and her job was to present us, a few of us with the Liberation Medal of the Philippines and that

18:00 was back in 21st of February, 2000, that's three years ago, just over. So we went down there and had a most enjoyable day and she was a very delightful person, a very small person but very nice and she addressed us that day with a speech and gave us all a copy of that, it was very nice and apologised for taking so long

18:30 to recognise the work we did in the liberation of the Philippines.

I imagine the Americans are the ones that are generally seen as being responsible, they like to see themselves responsible.

Well yes, I would say so. What annoyed me was just recently when some of these demonstrations about Iraq, this particular chap,

19:00 I see him quite often, I don't know him personally walking around with a banner, "Go Home Yanks [Americans]". We must agree that it was Pearl Harbor that brought the Yanks into the war, but following that, it would have been dire straits without them. With the vast coastline that Australia's got and our population there would be no way known Australia could have defended

19:30 itself successfully without the assistance of the Americans. They came out in the droves and we had quite a lot of time with them, the English came out to, but then of course on the other hand they still had their problems over in Europe with Germany, so a lot of them couldn't come out. That's why a lot of our chaps requested to be sent back home from Europe when the Japanese started to worry us down here.

20:00 Anyhow, yes Americans, plenty of them and they treated us very well themselves you know. There was always the jealousy with a lot of our guys because the Americans were getting very good money compared with us, and a lot of the local girls

20:30 took advantage of that and of course, if they wanted to have a good night out they'd head for the Americans you know, cause I'd say well they're going to get a good night out with plenty of money and so forth.

Did that worry you at times when you were overseas?

Well, no it didn't because I thought if the girls were any good they'd go for us anyhow, they wouldn't worry about the money. I mean they'd think—

21:00 **You would have seen, I mean what you saw of the Americans, what was your impression of them?**

Well, we had no reason to think otherwise of them, they were easygoing, real friendly.

21:30 I mean it would be nothing; there'd be get togethers anywhere you like, down the street or at some park. They used to like their whiskey, they'd nearly always be carrying a flask around, and they'd walk over to you and say, "Hey Buddy try this one out." and you'd take a mouthful of that and you'd just about have steam coming out of your ears, some of it was like a—I think their sick berth attendants on the ship used to make up the home brew, not that we didn't, but

22:00 not to the extent that they did. Very hospitable, and particularly up at Port Stephens where I mentioned earlier in the Commando Depot, the Americans had some Nissan huts that they lived in adjoining us. And in one of these Nissan huts was their bar and of night time they would invite us to go over there for a drink and at no stage did money change hands. You'd go over to the Nissan hut and they'd have a bar down one end

22:30 and table and chairs around and jugs of beer everywhere. And come in, sit down, and have a beer and when the jug got down to about half empty or half full as you might like to say, they would say, "Oh it'll be flat now, go and get another one." and the amount of beer that went down the drain as you might say, it was unbelievable. But that was their night out and they were treated that way in those places where we were not. We would just get our beer issue

23:00 on the ship once a week and we didn't have bars like that, we had to wait until we went to shore if we wanted to go and have a few big drinks you know.

You mentioned a bit of home brew. Did that go on, actually on the ship?

Well ours was assisted by nature as one might say, when we went ashore we would collect some coconuts and

- 23:30 as you know those little eyes in the coconut. You would drill a hole in that and through the hole we would get a little bit of alcohol from the sick berth attendant. To that we would add sugar, something like raisins or something dried and then we'd put a bung in it like a bit of doweling and that would brew in the milk of the coconut. It was pretty potent; it wasn't
- 24:00 what you would say top-class shelf but it served its purpose. But I always remember we came unstuck down in the, particularly on the Kanimbla, we had a paint locker and it was right up in the bow of the ship. Well, we had the tins of paint all along in these metal racks, and they were put in racks so that the motion of the ship, they never had lids on them, when you finished painting of a day time you'd have your blue, red and white
- 24:30 paints, you know the prima undercoat was the red prima and the blue grey was for the ships hull and down below decks would be white, and when the chaps finished at the end of the day they'd just put these pots with paint on the rack and the brushes into water so they wouldn't dry out. So we came up with the idea somewhere we'd stack our coconuts. So we thought we'd put them in the paint racks. so we put half a dozen in there, there was not a
- 25:00 word said about it for about a week later until the chap in charge of the paint locker came up this morning after being in pretty rough sea and he wasn't very happy and it turned out that a couple of our coconuts had exploded and blew paint all over the bulkheads and everything, there was red, white and blue paint. We went down and had a look and it was a mess. You know you take a lot of turps and
- 25:30 whatever to try and get rid of it; it was a hell of a mess though. That went down like a lead balloon you know. That was why from there on if we made it, we'd leave it up on deck and put the coconuts in an area so if they blew up they wouldn't create a problem.

Were you ever moved to try this after the war and was this something that you did?

No, no I, I mean I did brew some different

- 26:00 wine, Kumquat Liqueurs and some wine and all that. I've still got some Kumquat Liqueur there that must be about 25 years old, but if you tasted it I would recommend you don't drive back to the city, but don't spill it on the carpet, we don't want any holes burnt in it, that's all. But yes, no I never tried coconuts after and home brews and that. Oh some of us tried home brew beer and things like that but
- 26:30 not for some time.

Now you mentioned also about the commando training course that you did. Can you tell us a bit more about this?

Yes, well that was over and above normal training, it was, we were taught unarmed combat, how to approach from the front or the back and disarm an opposition

- 27:00 if they were carrying rifles, guns and whatever. You had to learn to do that and even if a chap took a swing at you and how you would take a very smart pace forward and grab his wrist, shoulder under his armpit and you'd throw him on his back very easily after you got used to it. Places like that we used to do down on the beach on the soft sand but there was various ways and means of disarming.
- 27:30 The different weaponry we had to use, we had to learn to crawl under barbed wire through mud, a sort of mud swamp under barbed wire with our gear on. They'd have rope ladders up the trees and swinging ropes from one tree to another where you'd hang onto one rope and walk along the other. Do a bit of a—
- 28:00 it wasn't altogether a tightrope job but it was pretty slack but we did all of that. And they had various courses to test you out where you had to get up a wall, over the wall and down the other side. It was all different ways and means of well if not keeping you fit, but that would go on all day and every day and in those days, and up at that place there,
- 28:30 when we were going through that at Port Stephens, the food wasn't a hundred percent, it was not unusual if you ordered eggs, you'd get them in their shells still. And on several occasion we got an egg in a shell and you broke it open and there was a partly developed chicken in it and the aroma that came to you was shocking, so the food wasn't that good,
- 29:00 a lot of it.

Was that deliberate, were they trying to challenge you?

I think they, that time yes we weren't getting the best of, I think just sort of build up the resistance to eating mocker pies or something. No I think it was more like a challenge you were just given the, it was just a staple type diet, nothing flash at all. But neither was the cooking.

- 29:30 **Were you taught any survival techniques to do with finding food?**

Well, we were to a degree, we were taught various things on how to survive, how to collect water if we were stuck and things like that, from condensation, even eating grass and things like that. You were warned about various things.

30:00 But not so much, it wasn't a big issue because I mean you always, you were provided with something to carry with you, you know.

What about eating grass, you were told to do it or warned against it?

No, no they said "The cows can do it, you can do it, so if you're stuck well you can eat grass and that." Oh, we just tried it and there were certain berries that you

30:30 could eat and things like that. But it wasn't an issue really with us regarding survival in that manner, it was more physically than you know, your appetite.

And what was the specific purpose for you undergoing this training?

Well, it was just a toughening-up process I think. I used to come home on leave and my older sister, I used to boast I could lay on the floor on my back and say take a running jump and land on my stomach you know, it never worried me you

31:00 were just hardened to it you know. Not like we, you know like I am now with that middle age muscle, well it's either that or my wife keeps buying me fat shirts, I'm not sure what it is. But no, we didn't have any superfluous fat on us at all, we were very fit and they kept us that way. And that kept us going too. Well, we were living a healthy life too,

31:30 plenty of exercise and I suppose, well we were getting most of the time, as I say we had a staple diet and what we didn't get we made up for when we went ashore.

There's a series of questions that we asked most of our people, which don't necessarily have any narrative to them, we just like to build

32:00 **up a picture of these things. You've answered probably most of them anyway. When you volunteered, tell us some of the—can you remember any specific reasons why you wanted to volunteer, was there something that impelled you to do this?**

Well it's hard to say,

32:30 well I think it was that feeling amongst us all, that, I think it's gone on unfortunately through Australian life that we're known for, if there's any problems around we get out and say we're here to help our mates and it still goes on. And we realised the way the Japanese were on the move up north

33:00 and they were just gaining ground gradually, coming south. We'd heard quite a bit about them, as you asked earlier, not as much detail as I learned later. And I think it was as case of, well there's the Aussie flag and we're going to fight for it and away we go. There was just no hesitation. I don't think that it came into bravado

33:30 or anything like that. It was just that you did it automatically I think, you felt you've got a purpose in life and here's an opportunity to prove that you can carry that out and go away and fight for your country and you knew that it was for your long-term benefits, benefits to your own country and your family and friends and all of that. Somebody had to do it, if we sat back,

34:00 the world would be a different place here today.

Did you feel that you were part of a tradition, when you went into the services?

No, I don't think I looked at it from that point of view. No I don't think I'd say a tradition at all. The Anzacs have a tradition; I mean it's always referred to as "Anzac Day". Somebody said to me

34:30 recently or I was questioned on air just recently, "Did we feel any, have any feeling you might say about, they referred to the Anzac but not the air force or the navy?" and I said, "Well, no within the RSL Club we have groups of each other you know the Navy Senior Service and all of that." I said but I wouldn't elaborate on that otherwise I'd get a few kickbacks

35:00 when I walked in the RSL next time from the army and the air force chaps but regarding the services, like the chaps in the RSL I wouldn't know. I would say the biggest percentage of them; I wouldn't know whether they were air force or army. I found out who the navy ones are because that's always a crack at the Senior Service and things like that for a joke, but well the navy chaps we always seem to make ourselves known to each other.

35:30 But we don't treat the air force or the army different to any of our mates. As I say, I don't know what services that a lot of them are in.

You mentioned Anzac Day, you went to Anzac Days in the 1930s with your father, is that right?

Well, I would yes, I was only five years old then.

36:00 I don't say I can recollect back that far quite. But I do in my youth remember an Anzac march through the streets of Belgrave, when there was a RSL there, a march through to the Cenotaph.

What has been your participation in Anzac Day since the war?

Well, I've usually had

36:30 some position in it, apart from the days when I was President. I was invited as the guest speaker the year before last to speak on Anzac Day in front of everybody, up here the combined RSL Upwey, Belgrave and that position was usually handed over to

37:00 local members of Parliament, on that day there were members of parliament there but I had the honour of being the guest speaker on the day, and that was something I was very proud of. But during the Anzac period and leading up to it, I've been going around, I go to several schools and talk to the children, and

37:30 even Remembrance Day I was invited to go up to Sir Thomas Moore's, Belgrave and speak to the whole school in the chapel and the teachers. I've already spoken to, last year it was about four or five schools and this is something that has only developed over the recent years, where the schools are looking for that type of talk from ex-service people,

38:00 so I enjoy doing it. I talk to them about services; I don't talk about any subject that could be upsetting to the children. I just more or less elaborate on the fact that we weren't much older than many of them, when we went away and what it was like, our change of life and for those that came back like myself virtually uninjured, it was an experience, we learnt

38:30 from it and that's interesting. I get a lot of the children asking questions and I enjoy it too because you get some very comical questions asked by the young children. You know you see the way the young brain operates and I thoroughly enjoy talking to the children. I might talk to three different sections and each section might have about three classes in it. But yeah.

39:00 **I don't mean to dwell on this, but you say you came back from the war uninjured or relatively uninjured, and yet we've been talking this morning about the emotional injury that you've had. Do you think that in some ways, not telling those parts is telling the whole story of service,**

39:30 **naval service or military service?**

Are you relating to me talking at schools?

Yeah. I mean is it important for school children to know that wars often have hidden costs?

Well, this is what I always elaborate on to the children, I always say to them "Keep in mind nobody wins a war, we're all losers". We can boast about it and say that, "Well, we won the First War

40:00 and we won the Second World War but at a price, there were many lives lost, many injured and many still suffering from it and repercussions right throughout the community." Nobody wins a war, and it's just one of those unfortunate things. As we've had recently that, we had one guy standing out of line and creating that and something had to be done because it was left too long when Hitler went through Europe.

40:30 And I even saw, when we were talking about photographs earlier, I saw one photograph and that was taken in one of the barns over there when the Germans massacred a lot of the Jews etc and this barn would be as big as this house. And the photograph was taken inside, and there were big barn doors and it was taken from one end of the barn to the other. The interior is completely

41:00 black except, not except at the end of that barn, up against the doors were all these black and mahogany sculptures as I might say and they were several hundred people that had tried to escape out of that barn when they set alight to it and the intense heat that they put in with fuel, and they were all just burnt, some of them were standing up against the door, some on their knees, laying down and there was a great

41:30 heap of these human beings and just black, just like they were carved out of mahogany and things like that, you know. I mean Europe had similar to what we had over here with the Japanese but they're the scars that are left but you don't go into a lot of detail with children.

Tape 7

00:23 **Just back again to when you were enlisting, did you think**

00:30 **more about fighting for Australia or did you feel it was being part of the British Empire?**

No, Australia, home, that was it. No, we just were proud to be members of the services I think and we

were fighting

01:00 for our country. I suppose indirectly you might say Britain but, the British had their problems over there and we had ours over here. We were rather separate and distinct away from what was going on over there.

Do you remember listening to the famous broadcast that Menzies [Australian Prime Minister] made,

01:30 **the declaration of war, did you hear that?**

I faintly recollect that yes, when he spoke yeah. We did get various receptions of things, not well I think up north there we got a few speeches from Tokyo Rose [Japanese propaganda broadcaster],

02:00 we did intercept some of those.

On the boat, on the ship?

Mmm, yeah.

Describe those broadcasts.

Oh well, she spoke very well, and you might say compassionate if you'd like to call it that, but her attitude

02:30 was to try and tell us that you'd be better off at home, you're not proving anything here, you may not get home and you're fighting a lost cause sort of a thing. Her job was to try and disturb everybody and talk about things you know, about your family at home and try to bring tears to everybody's eyes and all of that, it was a bit of a psychology skit you know.

03:00 **Was it effective at all?**

Oh, we just used to laugh you know, to us it was just a laugh; we'd say well you know when's the next comedy act coming on and that was it. I think the only broadcast that virtually brought tears to your eyes a bit, was when we heard the celebrations on VP [Victory in the Pacific] day coming over, of all the excitement and the people back home

03:30 and the streets were full of everybody out enjoying themselves immensely and we were still up there and we said, "Oh, if only we could be down there." Yes, that was one of those things that we'd have loved, we could hear it and it meant so much to us. And you think, well this is what you've been fighting for, they've got it and we've got it but we're not there to celebrate, only just one hot bottle of beer.

04:00 Anyhow we made up for that at the first available opportunity when we got ashore.

You mentioned the rivalry, the friendly rivalry between the services, you being in the senior service and whatever. Was there much of that during the war too?

No, not really, no.

04:30 No, we'd go ashore and the army guys, you'd bump into them and if they had trucks and they'd say, "Where you going? I'll drive you here, I'll drive you there." and whatever and as I say we used to play football with them, whatever like that. At one stage we had a break in Darwin and they had an army camp down the river, the tidal river down there and

05:00 we had the opportunity, I think there was about a dozen of us, they had to draw straws to who could go and who couldn't, so it was just like a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK raffle on board and I was one of the lucky ones with a couple of my mates and we had the opportunity of going down, down to the Adelaide River and the army trucks picked us up and took us down there and they had a big camp there near the river and

05:30 they entertained us and we lived in their huts built of bamboo, corrugated iron roofs and mosquito netting because we were near the river and we used to swim in the river. There were crocodiles there but we never worried about them then, we used lengths of bamboo for buoyancy and we'd have races down the river and back. They only elaborated on that at a later stage, that there were crocs there but I think possibly

06:00 the number of us there scared them off. And of night time they would put on a bit of a concert for some of the guys and entertain us and feed us. And we had a week down there. And you'd go to bed of a night time you'd have to put your netting around, they were like choppers the mossies down there, the only thing you'd hear of a night time was the tarantulas,

06:30 the big tarantulas going across the batons and it was just like you'd hear a possum up here and you'd hear these spiders going over, they were big blokes, they were bird eating spiders a lot of them, you'd have thought they had hobnailed boots on when they went over there of a night time. You made sure you'd clean, check your shoes out in the morning before you put your foot in them. All of those experiences were funny.

And I was intrigued yesterday, when you

07:00 **were talking about a game of water polo in Darwin Harbour, when one guy was actually killed by a jellyfish.**

Mmmm, yes that was a Christmas Day and we challenged one of the other ships to water polo and we usually, we used to have a couple of our boats, motor boats going around in a circle, a few sharks etc. And we'd just go over the ship

07:30 side, out in the harbour and we'd play this water polo, we used to have a net over near each of the ships, if you could call it a net, but it was just a challenge. I never knew anything about this chap being killed until the next morning because that was the first time we'd been able to have much alcohol for a while and it must have done the job, because we

08:00 were having a drink and I woke the next morning laying up on the deck, just in my shorts and none the better for fair wear and tear. And I asked one of the guys I said, "Where's all my gear?" Oh you know I had my wallet in my pants and this and that and he said, "You were determined to play water polo." and he said, "You were going to go overboard, so we told you to strip off into your shorts." and I don't know what we were drinking because

08:30 I went over and played water polo that day and I didn't remember from that day to this, only the next morning. And that's when they said one of the other chaps nearby had got hit by a blue bottle and of course those blue bottles are virtually like an electric shock and he must have got a decent hit with it. I got stung down the side by one and that was in Hong Kong, we went over the side one day there and I felt it, this shocking

09:00 sting right down the side, it was just like red hot barbed wire going from my shoulder down the side of my body and your leg. And I went up the scrambling net on the side of the ship, which they have the ropes, scrambling nets you know goes over the side. And I went up that there like a rocket and down to the sick berth, and the attendant wiped me down with alcohol and I apparently got the stinger off one of those and it must have hit me down the side.

Did it leave a welt?

09:30 No, but it was pretty painful for a while. It just felt like a burn, but it was a real shock. It fortunately didn't last too long but it was—the trouble with them is it will stop the heart, it's just like an electric shock if you really cop it, but luckily I just got it down the side, it was just enough of one of the tentacles, I've got a rough idea what it was like though.

10:00 **I mean that's a funny way for a sailor to die, I suppose. If you had any deaths on board, how would you deal with that amongst the crew?**

Well, we had a couple and one chap it turned out it was appendicitis and a couple of others but down below deck

10:30 we used to have these strips of canvas, it was one thing we learnt too in the navy was stitching canvas, with bag needles etc and we'd put the chap on the canvas and it might sound funny but out in my workshop there now, I've got what we used. We used to have some, about 1-foot lengths of railway line,

11:00 actual railway line, just in short lengths, that had been cut with a welder and we would keep that onboard, so we'd lay the chap out and we would put a piece of that in between his legs. You know railway line you could put your feet in between, we would put that in between his ankles and then we'd have to stitch him up, or stitch the canvas up and up on deck, we would lay him up on one of the stretchers,

11:30 drape our flag over him and have a service there. The skipper would do it usually, because on the smaller ship we didn't have a chaplain. The skipper would read out, as you might say the last rites and such and say a few kind words and just up end it, and over the side, because the lead was there to take him to the bottom, that was his resting place, you couldn't do it any other way because

12:00 you didn't want to see anybody floating around. So that bit of railway sleeper did the trick, it took him feet first to the bottom.

Would you have a wake or something like that or just get on with your duties?

Just went back to your normal duties, you just go up there like. On the ship sometimes you'd have a small church service of a morning, non denominational

12:30 service, just a short one and likewise with that we would just have a small burial service and with that we would send him over the side and pull the stretcher back and put it back in its rack and back to your normal duties. It wasn't nice, naturally I mean but you'd hope you had something else to occupy your mind when that was all over.

13:00 Get yourself going again, you know. So that was a simple burial, but not very pleasant.

Did you fear getting wounded or injured or sick?

No, no well you never went out looking for it, and you just hoped that,

13:30 I myself, I consider myself very lucky, myself now that I'm on February the 5th I'll be 79 and I think that I'm most fortunate and people say how well I am. doctors and physios when I go there for if I've got a bit of a pain in the butt or a pain in the neck or something and they say well how fit I a". I think I'm reasonably fit for my age and I said "I don't go out of my way to keep fit. I do

14:00 a bit of walking but not as much as I should, but I've always been active". And I just say "Well it's in my metabolism." that I'm very fortunate that my wife Wilma, she's not happy sometimes because she had a heart murmur a couple years ago and she takes about half a dozen tablets a day and she's got to watch what she eats, fatty foods and that but I sit down for a meal and whatever comes out I'll

14:30 eat it and like this afternoon I'll be having a couple of nice big fat pork chops on the barbeque with fat and all but I don't have to worry about my diet, I've been lucky. I've been to hospital a few times, I've had dupertron [?] contractures in my hand and things like that and that was aggravated by a shell on the ship landed, I lost in one day, and the butt

15:00 of it was going down and rather it hit the deck in case something might happen, I put my hands underneath and it crushed both of my hands, so I had both of my hands tied up for a while. And in later years I had this, it's like on the tendons and I've had operations on my hands etc and skin grafts and that, but that was basically only the major thing. I've had an operation on my nose, due to war service, but that

15:30 was boxing that did that. It was all a part of the service. I've had different small operations like that, but I consider I'm very very fortunate that I am still physically and I think reasonably mentally well, and I'm still here and enjoying life with my family.

Those sorts of small accidents like you know dropping a shell, was that common on a ship?

16:00 **I mean what happens, little injuries?**

Oh well, things like this, there are nearly always accidents. Unfortunately, this day it was wet and that's why it slipped through my hands. I went down below decks another day and down the gangway and I started at the top and finished on my back on the bottom, and I still get a bit of treatment for my back, but I landed on the base of my spine and that doesn't help things as you get older, that was because my

16:30 shoes were wet when I went down. You'd be getting different accidents. At one stage there our cook in the galley that was in Hong Kong Harbour - that one too, he was preparing a meal and he had a meat cleaver and he cut right across his thumb, the base of his thumb across the palm of his hand and we didn't have our sick berth attendant on board and I used to have my meals down at one end of the mess deck table and that was a steel

17:00 cabinet where the sick berth attendant kept all his gear and at an odd time I'd see him stitch somebody up. So I said to this guy, "Well if you sit there I'll fix this up for you". So I got out the needle and thread and cleaned his hand up with alcohol and stitched it up and bandaged it up. The sick berth attendant came back late that night, and I told him what I had done, it couldn't wait for him. So he left it for a couple of days and had a look and he said

17:30 it was a good job I did, I stitched him up well. I put about a dozen stitches in his hand, it was better to do it then, than let it go later because it's more painful because the sooner you suture up a cut the nerves are still dead around it, and the longer you leave it, it gets more painful so, I thought "Oh well, I don't know whether I had a suck out of the alcohol bottle before I started or not, but anyhow the job turned out all right".

What about your patient, I imagine he had a

18:00 **bit too.**

No, he was all right, he you know, so that was my first operation I performed in my ambition, which never eventuated, plastic surgeon or whatever.

18:30 **On board a ship, it's a pretty claustrophobic environment, and I imagine you get to know everyone pretty well, sometimes perhaps too well. Were there occasions you know, was there any niggling, any aggravation or fights?**

No, no, no very little I mean, there would be

19:00 the odd argument I suppose about various things. You'd argue today and have your words and tomorrow everything would be virtually back to normal. I mean I suppose some chaps, you might have a disagreement with and all, you wouldn't possibly feel the same way about him as previously, but I could not recollect

19:30 leaving any ship with any ill feeling towards anybody. I'd say that you can give and take and under the circumstances I think when you look in hindsight now that you could realise that some guys were uptight, see it's all those things of you know, when the mail came on board and things like that you know. You'd sit down and getting the mail from somebody

20:00 and the guy next door to you, he didn't get any mail and so I thought I might have got it because you didn't get the mail everyday, it was only when you got into port. And I was lucky that we pulled into Port Moresby Harbour and it was my 21st Birthday and I got a lot of mail and the others wondered what was going on but anyhow everyone at home thought about me and I got the mail on my birthday, which was unbelievable

20:30 because in war time you could not rely on any of that. It was just fortunate, but anyhow all those little things like that, there could be disagreements as I say, but nobody that I recollected really held umbrage against another one.

You said that some blokes could get up tight, a bit of cabin fever, that sort of feeling that you couldn't get off?

No, I wouldn't say that, see

21:00 it wasn't as though we were in small cabins, we were in a mess deck and they were quite open, you could imagine like on each side of the ship you'd have an area of I suppose 20-feet wide and possibly 40-feet long and down the centre were your steel lockers. And on each side of the bulkheads and where you dined on each side, seamen on one side and the stokers and all those other

21:30 chaps on the other side. The only ones that had more or less the claustrophobic area were basically the officers and that where they had their own cabins and people like that, they had very small cabins. But no we had wide-open spaces where we slept and dined and then when you were not there, you were up on deck doing whatever you were supposed to be doing.

Did you see any

22:00 **acts of heroism, if we can call it that, any specifically brave things?**

No, not that I can really recollect. There could have been acts of heroism and that. I think at times like when anything could have been going on like that you were preoccupied doing what you were supposed to do yourself. I think a lot of things that we were not affected by, was the fact

22:30 that in times of problems and danger, that you had a job to do and you were just preoccupied doing it. And we never thought about those sorts of things, you know. It never sunk in, as I mentioned earlier, the dangers and that. You thought about it possibly later, and you'd just say that was a close call and go about your job again. So be it, you know.

Was religion

23:00 **important to you?**

No, no we as I said had a nondenominational service, which we all joined in, but no, religion didn't really come into it at all. I don't recollect any of the chaps on board on that,

23:30 whether you're Protestant, Catholic or what. We had a service on board, well everyone entered into that one service. That was it because on the smaller ships the skipper would do it and he could hardly stand out and perform about three or four different services in Hebrew and English and whatever it might be. That was it we all became one, with regards to that. We all attended the service and we all respected

24:00 the service, regardless of what colour or creed.

Sailors can be superstitious chaps at times. Did you have any lucky charms that you kept with you? I mean did you pack anything special when you went away?

Well, I didn't pack anything. My father was given a gold ring with a horseshoe on it, when he went

24:30 away in the First World War. When I came home on my first leave, and I was going away and my father said, "Would you like this?" He hadn't worn it. He said, "This will bring you good luck." and I put it on and I wore it right through the war, unfortunately through fair wear and tear, the emblem of the horseshoe wore, I've still got

25:00 it in there, and it's still a gold ring and it's a good gold ring. It had worn down a lot but the only time it didn't bring me good luck, was I jumped down a hatch one day and my finger as I slid down caught on the edge of the steelwork where my ring was, and I had that finger wrapped up for about a week or so after, because the ring snapped and embedded in my finger.

25:30 So that was a job I got fixed up at a later date ashore, to get the gold ring joined again but that was the only time it brought me bad luck but going by the law of averages and the results, I'm still here.

Peter, I wanted to actually asked you about the Castlemaine, a few more questions,

26:00 **because I'm pretty interested in this ship. Where was it built?**

That was built down in Williamstown and that's where it is, back to its home base, back in Williamstown.

That's where it is now?

Mmmm.

Can you just give me a good description of the ship, what it actually looks like and the size of it and what sort of guns it has, all that sort of thing?

Well, I would have to get my copy,

26:30 which I've got here to give you, the actual dimensions of the ship, but it was one of the smaller type ships that we had in the Royal Australian Navy. It had a four-inch gun up on the [(UNCLEAR)] and it had a Bofors gun mid ship down near the stern, up on each wing of the bridge was the Oerlikons,

27:00 also down towards the stern of the ship was where we had our minesweeping equipment and depth chargers. That was virtually all the armaments we carried on board because we weren't, what would you say, a battleship, we weren't out looking for trouble in that respect. We were more or less, were survey and escort

27:30 and where necessary we had that equipment, such as the depth charges etc to meet up with any submarines in the vicinity.

And what about below decks, how many decks were there?

Well, main decks there were virtually only two levels, down below decks was where most

28:00 of the crew bunked, there was all the seamen on one side and the engineers department on the other. Then below us, towards the bow of the ship was the coxswain of the ship and the chief engineer and the chief petty officers had a mess there too. The back at midships was where the officers apart from the skipper, the officers had their

28:30 cabins and their little mess deck, it was a very small lounge room compartment where they could retire, the skipper, his cabin was directly under the bridge, his cabin was actually on the top level on the deck, so he could walk out of his cabin and he would be on the upper deck of the ship and he was in a handy position directly below the bridge, so he was there at all times, if required.

29:00 He didn't have to come up from two decks down.

Where was the galley?

The galley that was on a level the same as the upper deck and that was going back toward the stern of the ship, below the area where the Bofors was, so that would be about midship down behind the cabins and the wheelhouse etc. Well it was,

29:30 it had to be in an area like that because if the cook happened to burn something that wasn't edible, he didn't have to drag it up from down below decks, he could go straight over the side.

So how did the goods get from there down to you in your mess?

Well, we were on the same level.

Oh I see right.

And we would just have to walk back toward the stern from our mess deck to get our food.

Did the officers eat the same food as you?

30:00 Well to the best of our knowledge, yes. But basically yes, they had one chap he used to look after the officers and that was his job, and when meals were ready, he would take the meals down to the officers down below deck, but we queued up for ours.

How many officers were there on the Castlemaine?

There was,

30:30 I think we had on five, five or six at the time, yeah.

What were they like on the whole, the officers?

Oh, very good. Oh well, I think at one stage, we only had one skipper that didn't tend to mix in with the chaps so well, and he wasn't over-popular but everyone was happy when he decided to go to another

31:00 ship. He just didn't blend in well, but all the others, yes we used to get on well together. Even some of the officers, when we went ashore, they'd just say, "Well, where are you guys heading for a drink this afternoon?" and we would say "Such and such". "Oh I might call and have a drink with you and something." Oh no, I used to, particularly on the Kanimbla, I used to play a lot of tennis in my day and when they were going ashore to play tennis, one of the officers might

31:30 say to me, "Do you want to come over? There is only so many of us going, make up the numbers and have a game of tennis with us." and things like that.

Did you ever see the Royal Navy up close; did you ever have anything to do with British sailors?

Mmmm, more so when we got to Hong Kong, because that's when the British Navy became more involved then with their larger ships. And I became involved, several times, once a week,

32:00 anyhow while we were there, I used to go over in our motor boat to collect the pay and the Anson was a battleship there and that used to be our pay office, where we got paid from the British ship. That used to be a little bit of a classic there, because we were paid in Australian currency, but later on we

32:30 could find out that because of the Yanks were kicking around in Hong Kong, there were plenty of American dollars going around so when we got paid in the Australian pound note we could take that money ashore and it wouldn't buy anything, but if we exchanged it for American dollars they were only 60, well equivalent to 60 cents to the dollar you might say, and we

33:00 could convert the money to American and we could buy twice as much. And in actual fact in monetary wise so far as the Chinese were concerned, they weren't interested in our currency, but if you, if you had a few American dollars you could buy the world from them, so we used to do our own money exchange ashore, you'd go over and say to these Chinese, "Do you want to sell any notes?" So we would swap

33:30 back and convert back over on the ship, you would be going from Australian to Yankee then vice versa but you would buy your Australian dollar which, there was nothing to them, you might get your Australian dollars for about 30 cents each, they wanted to get rid of them. But once you got those Australian dollars, you'd go back and convert them to Yankee dollars and you'd make 100 per cent value on the turnover so, that was one of the gimmicks. I hardly ever did it, but some of the chaps used to make good money out of it.

34:00 But that, the British ships yes, they were large and the Anson was, and it was that big that when I went up the gangway I would advise them of who I was and what ship and I'd have the authority to, with one of the others, to collect the cash and they'd say "Well, follow the green line, or the blue line or the red line" and you would follow that and it was like walking round the Melbourne Cricket Ground about three or four

34:30 times by the time you got to your destination. It was that large that there was no way known, and I spoke to some of the chaps and said "Well, how do you get on if you're up the stern of the ship or up the bow?" And many of those chaps never knew each other or never met each other, because the ship was that large.

Did you notice any other differences between the British Navy and the Australian Navy?

No, not really,

35:00 no not really,

What about the Americans, the US Navy and us?

Well, the Americans were a bit more laid-back in some ways, they weren't as disciplined as what we were, and I'd say, or the British Navy. The Americans came unstuck on a number of occasions, with they were quite reckless and I think it could have been

35:30 one or two occasions in Iraq the same where there was friendly fire and some of their own guys were killed. And that happened in the Coral Sea with reckless firing we're following planes down at low level and they finished up the plane would dive behind one of their ships and they kept the old gun going and they were strafing their own ship and the plane disappeared behind it. Well things like that, that was the Americans, I think that's why they all finished up with so

36:00 many medals, I mean, I think they got a medal for every time they changed their underwear, we used to joke about, but that was just the way they lived and they still do.

I was going to ask you about discipline actually because in the military, of course they have the military police, the provosts, was there any sort of naval equivalent?

Yes, we had our Naval Patrol, I

36:30 used to get that job, now and again. And we used to wear for identification, when we went ashore instead of our bellbottom trousers out over our shoes we would wear white garters, a white belt, a canvas belt and we'd have a band on our arm "NP." a white band with a "NP" in navy blue on it, Naval Police. And our job was to go ashore

37:00 at various times to just check out our own chaps to see they were behaving and dressed properly. If they were carrying on a bit or improperly dress well you'd haul them over the coals. If they were more than had their share of alcohol and that well we would organise a vehicle to take them back to the ship.

Was that a popular job to have?

Well, sometimes

- 37:30 not, but you know more often or not, on the ship you would know the guys personally and say "Come on." and say "Do you want to come the easy way or the hard way?" I think the only trouble we had was on one occasion was I think it was in Cairns at the time and we got a call that there had been a bit of a fight at one of the restaurants on the street and we went up there and the whole front window of this restaurant
- 38:00 had been smashed in and the American police were there and they had their wagon with a cage on the back and one of our chaps was involved and I spoke to him and said, "What is this?" and he said "Oh the Yanks had a go at us, so we retaliated." and a couple of the Yanks picked up a couple of these steel framed chairs and threw them through the restaurant window. So the Yankee police
- 38:30 offered to drive us back to the ship with two of our guys, and we thought "Well, they're doing us a favour." and nothing was said until we got back to the ship and one of the Yanks turned around and he said, "I want to see your officer of the watch and I want to report that your fellow smashed the window at this café." and I virtually said, "Well that was hearsay, did you see it?" "No, well our blokes
- 39:00 reckon that the Australians did it." and I looked to our blokes and said, "What about you?" "No way known we did do it". So I just left this guy there and I said "I'll bring the officer of the watch back." and I went down below. And this officer of the watch he, a redheaded chap with a short fuse and I explained it to him and I said "I think they are trying to sponge off the blame onto our chaps where they were not witnesses to it and our chaps emphatically said 'no,
- 39:30 we had nothing to do with it'." So the officer of the watch asked for our fellows to be released out of the back of the cage and went onboard and the Yank wanted to know what the officer was going to do and I said, "I suggest you get off the ship before you finish up getting locked up yourself." So, off my ship, he ordered them off and pulled them back to their size and that was the end of it. Nothing was said from there on, we just went back and discussed it together and there was a bit of a laugh
- 40:00 and said "Oh well you couldn't stop them from trying, blaming someone else and going for costs."

Tape 8

- 00:16 **Peter I know that you've got a tattoo on your arm, I saw it yesterday. Is it a crown and anchor?**
- That is correct.
- Where did you get that? Tell me about that?**
- That was just one of those reckless days ashore
- 00:30 in Brisbane and we'd been out enjoying ourselves for the day and walked passed a tattoo shop and this other chap, a mate of mine from the ship and "Why don't we get a tattoo?" And I said "Why?" you know. So anyhow just to be into it, like everything else, I said "Righto." so we went in there and we picked a tattoo and he and I had the identical tattoo, so
- 01:00 where he is today, I don't know, but there's another guy kicking around, if he's still on this planet that has got my tattoo on as well. But it was a reckless thing we did, because I never pursued it any further but some did and it's quite amazing the tattoos you would see and where they were, you know on various parts of the human body and I would say that
- 01:30 where they had some of those tattoos would be rather excruciating to get done and that was enough for me, I wasn't going to try and outdo them.
- What did they have tattooed on them, when these would have been excruciating? What did the tattoos say, I won't ask you where they were, I think I've got a pretty good idea.**
- Like one chap, on the cheeks of his behind, he just had port and starboard tattooed on it. And the port side was done in red and the starboard
- 02:00 green and that was it. And well I suppose it's not too bad to tell you, but one chap he had a fly tattooed on his penis.
- A fly?**
- And it was funny you know, he had to show it to us when we were in the shower room together, boasting about his fly, he said "Have a look at that." and I said "God." you know, and one clown turned around and said "It's only a little fly, isn't it?"
- 02:30 And he said "Yeah, but sometimes it becomes a blow fly". But yes, some of them went overboard, you might say with tattoos on other parts of their body.
- That's very much a sailors' thing isn't it? Tattoos are very naval.**

Well it was.

I just also want to ask you about the variety of people that you had on board.

03:00 Well, some variety we had, you might say, well we had basically European chaps, we never had any Aboriginals. I think most of the Aboriginals were in the army. We never had any Aboriginals. We had a couple of chaps that I think came from Chinese background, a few of them onboard.

03:30 But basically, no, but as regarding walks of life, some chaps came from just some ordinary little, not wealthy family, a family that weren't getting it easy. I came from a family where I had been educated at Scotch College, I was fortunate.

04:00 And all different religions, naturally but that and there was never an issue about religion, we were all one.

What did that experience do for you when you got back into civilian life?

I think I learnt there were a lot of things. I always remember coming back after seeing the poverty in Hong Kong where these

04:30 women and children and that were scooping up offal out of the harbour and the food that they would eat you know, as I say out of our offal bins were just rubbish and that and I always remember at one stage at home, having a meal with my two sisters, and my older sister, my late sister Marge and she complained about the meal so I,

05:00 she was a little bit picky sometimes and I thought "The time has come that I'll just say a few diplomatic words". I hope that I did put it in a diplomatic way: That if you could only see what other people have got to survive on, you'd never complain about a meal. That's been my theory, I mean I must admit a couple of times I've been to a restaurant and it's been far from what you expect, I don't make a big issue

05:30 of it, but I just let them know that I paid a good price for it and it's different if you just get a hamburger, well that's it but when you go to a nice restaurant and you get a steak, like a bit of a leather sole, I think you're justified in asking for it to be taken back. But regarding that, I learnt that and I've never complained about food. Every time Wilma cooks up the food for me, well I enjoy it and

06:00 she's a good cook, so I've got no reason to complain. And she's provided very well for myself and my three boys, so we're lucky there and appreciate it because in those days what we had to eat, as I said it was a staple diet but that was it, we survived it and we appreciate the food ourselves now and I think that it annoys me sometimes when I see some of these people sit around and complaining

06:30 about some food and I've you know in a mixed circle and I think, "Gosh you know, to me I've had the same food and there's nothing wrong with it". I don't think they've had that experience.

Now Peter, I know you would like to say a few words, we are coming towards the end of our time with you and so this is your opportunity. Anything you'd like to put on the record now?

Well, I'd like to put on the records that I am the way I am today

07:00 because I always said "You pass through this world but once and you hope that, well you've done the right thing going through the world and helping others less fortunate than yourself." As regarding my wife Wilma, she's been a very, very loyal wife to me and I know she will be for the rest of my life. But she's had to put up with a lot from me

07:30 in various ways, I feel—in settling down over the years, particularly in the early years and been a very loving wife. And I've got three boys, my sons Roger, Grant and Adrian and they're the same and we love each other and we talk to each other every week, even though I got the youngest lad up in Mossman, Cairns at the moment he is, and my middle boy is in Northern New South Wales,

08:00 Grant and he is up there, and we'll meet him up there for our trip shortly and Roger our eldest boy is down here and they've been very loving boys and so are our grandchildren. At the moment we got our grandson Aaron staying with us, because his mother and father have changed over, changed house so we've had him with us and he's

08:30 a great guy and Melissa his sister. And up north we are looking forward to seeing two of our other grandchildren up there, that are only in the six, seven year old age group, but we look forward to catching up with them each year but no I'd like to dedicate this story to my wife and loving children.

Well thank you very much Peter, we've really enjoyed talking to you. Thanks a lot for that, we appreciate your time.

Good, thanks Annie [interviewer].