

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Leslie Barton (Snow) - Transcript of interview

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### Tape 1

00:35 **So we'll start off with this life overview that we've spoken about and I'll get you to begin it by telling me where you were born, where you grew up. That sort of information.**

Well yes, I was born on the 26th of September 1924 at a Northern Queensland town called Proserpine. My Dad was a paymaster on the railway

01:00 construction sites when they were after the World War I they created jobs with the railway and he was the paymaster on those and he used to get shifted 'round. I first started school at a little town in South West Queensland called Eaglewood [Hawkwood?] and the work cut out and the Depression of course was in and we went to live at a at Stewart Avenue, Kalinga and I went to Eagle Junction State School

01:30 at first grade. I went right through Eagle Junction through 'til my seventh grade. I never went to high school. I left then. I my first job was at Burns Philp as an office boy. I lasted there about oh possibly nine months. I didn't like the office work. It wasn't my scene. So I left and I got a job,

02:00 the war had started then, and I got a job at a munitions factory and I was turning striker pins for bombs and, which I didn't like very much at all because I was covered in soluble oil and I starting eleven o'clock of a Sunday evening and it wasn't I didn't like it. So I went out the bush and I got a job at Cocklarena [?] station at Cunnamulla, which was seventy five mile out

02:30 of Cunnamulla, and I didn't completely agree with the grazier. They were a pretty mean lot. So I left there and I came back and I joined I went to a little cattle property thirty six thousand acres at Miriyong at Mungallala, which is between Mitchell and Morven. I worked there and I came down one Exhibition when I was seventeen and I made application to join the navy.

03:00 I was almost eleven months before I heard back and I wrote to them and asked them why they hadn't called me up and they said, "Well you were only you were a month off seventeen when you come down and we've had to wait and besides you're in a protected industry." So I said, "Well I'll soon fix that up." So I just left and I was called up with the navy and I went to the navy in a draft of three people. I went to Flinders. From Flinders I went to

03:30 Penguin, which is at Balmoral in Sydney. From there I went to I was drafted to HMAS Swan. I was on her for about a month and I we were in dry dock and I got a little impatient of watching the war go by and me sitting on a boat in dock. So I was put through to a new group in the navy for assault landing barges called HMAS Assault, which was at Nelsons Bay, and I done

04:00 a course on landing barges and from there I was drafted onto HMAS Manoora, which I was on for three and a half years, 'til the end of the war actually. When I got out I done a rehabilitation course because I had no trade, and I done a plumbing course and I had to travel to Canberra to get employment even in those days.

04:30 I worked for the Department of Interior and when I got my licences I went out on my own and I was on my own business ever since. I think forty seven years I was had a plumbing business and then I went into I also obtained a builder's licence and I used to build a lot of spec houses and I done that more or less until I retired at fifty year old and then I I've always been a country

05:00 person and I always felt I had something with animals and I went into I had an odd racehorse and I used to breed them then. I had seven or eight mares and I used to breed 'em and I had some successful horses, which won good races in Brisbane, and until my wife got ill with cancer. Well we had to go out of it. In between times I was at Goondiwindi for quite a for ten years

05:30 working at plumbing and I got interested in sheep dogs and I used to work sheep dogs in sheep dog trials and I won quite a few good trials and then I took on a judging 'em of course and all the things that go along with that game but then we got back into the horses and of course when we had to get out of Marberg and come here because of my wife's illness. So here I am, present day.

**Excellent. That was perfect. Very good.**

06:00 **I'll go right back to the beginning now and tell me what your memories of Proserpine were like?**

Well I have very, very few. The only memories I have is a photograph of me when I was nine months old in the hospital but no, I haven't got very many memories of those. I do have, when we were at my Dad was sent down to Inglewood and I have memories there when I was a little fellow. The place was plagued with rabbits

06:30 and prickly pear and I remember climbing through a fence and fell into prickly pear and my mother putting me on the kitchen table with a pair a tweezers pulling these little fine burrs out and a course every kid in the district had a couple of pet rabbits, which were the disgust of the extermination lot, but anyhow I started school there and then a course the jobs cut out and we had a lot of well we all still suffer from the old Depression syndrome I feel

07:00 and I don't know, but I remember my Dad who was a well he wasn't an accountant but he was the paymaster. I used to pass him going to school and he was chipping footpaths two days a week to get a ration ticket to keep us survived. So they're my memories of school.

**What was his job as the paymaster? What did that involve?**

He used to he drew all the pays every week and he went 'round and had

07:30 their time sheets and he'd tally them all up and then pay them accordingly. He used to go down the railway line that was built on a trike and pump his way down and eventually, he never had a motor car, but eventually he had a motorised trike for the railways and I sort of recall them but with no distinct memory really of it.

**And do you remember when this work stopped? When the Depression**

Yes.

08:00 It well it stopped after he they were building a line from Texas to a little place called Silver Spur, which was a mica mine, and I think asbestos but I'm not sure and when that line was completed there was no more work and he'd bought a house down here in Brisbane at Kalinga where I lived. Well, my parents are both dead but they lived there 'til the end of their days really.

08:30 **And tell me what the situation was with the relief work that he would do?**

Well the relief work in a Depression, there was no work and I know my Dad had six hundred pounds in the bank and the banks foreclosed on all withdrawals and he also had a block of land at Ashgrove in Stewart Road Fraser's Paddock, which was eventually an army camp, and he had to sell that

09:00 to for us to survive really but the relief work was that you registered at the police station. You got a ticket. You never got money. You got a ticket saying that you could go to the grocer's or the butcher's and get so much worth of rations every week, which was actually just survival, and I'm not sure how long he was on that for until he got re-employed and he got re-employed with the Main Roads Department and he was there 'til he retired.

**And**

09:30 **what was the work he was doing chipping footpaths?**

Chipping the weeds off of gutters and sweeping out the gutters. They used to have the horse and dray in those days and the horse and dray'd go along the side of the road and they'd shovel all the stones and the weeds into the dray and they were chipping, where there was a bit a concrete, they'd clean it and make it nice and tidy.

**Do you remember if there were there any changes in your father when he had to start doing this kind of work?**

10:00 Oh I don't know. I really didn't notice a lot because we were at we were at school all day and we'd come home and my father'd be tired out and never had much chance to play with us a lot. Used to have the odd game of cricket weekends but apart from that I never noticed any great thing. My mother was a great manager and thank God for that.

10:30 **Do you remember any particular ways that she had to scrimp or save or**

I certainly do. I remember well for porridge and I'd still love to try it, the stale bread she'd cut into inch cubes and pour hot milk on it with sugar and we thought that was great but it was a way of using up the stale bread and no wastage and tapioca puddings and rice puddings. All everything you could make for more or less nothing and

11:00 well, we survived and I've got no complaints.

**Had your father been involved in World War I?**

Yes, my Dad was a sergeant with the field engineers, the 15th field engineers. Yeah. He went in at I think he was thirty years of age when he went in and he came out. He was on the Western Front. He wasn't at Gallipoli. He went on the Western Front. He suffered oh terribly from frost bite and

11:30 trench feet and played up with him many years later too.

**What would he tell you about World War I?**

Very, very little.

**As a child, were you interested?**

No. Not really. I used to ask him he had a lot of cards and his medals. I used to wear them Anzac [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] Day when I was a kid but never got deeply into it but I don't I really don't think my Dad liked talking

12:00 about it.

**What was Anzac Day like when you were a kid?**

When I was a kid we used to march down with the boy scouts to a set of gates on the local park at Kalinga Park and hang a wreath on there and do a parade while they played the Last Post and then we'd go home and big day out.

**What did Anzac Day mean to you when you were a kid? Did you understand what it was about or**

No. The only thing we understood

12:30 that was that our soldiers had gone overseas and many, many were killed and they had a pretty rough time but nothing deeper than that really.

**What would your father do on Anzac Day?**

Stay home. I can't ever remember him going to an Anzac Day march.

**In later years would he talk about the war at all?**

Well unfortunately when my Dad passed on I lived in

13:00 Goondiwindi and I think that was in 1960 or '61 he died and for those ten years I was away at a time where I was interested in the history I wasn't near him to talk about it but he never very, very seldom spoke about it.

**And how old were you when you moved to Kalinga?**

Kalinga,

13:30 I was I started Grade 1. So I would have been I would have been six I'd say. Yeah.

**And as a fairly young child, what kind of a suburb was it like to grow up in?**

Oh it was pretty good. I had to walk about oh good two and a half mile to school but that was no problem. Everybody done that and you'd meet your mates and you'd all walk home together and talk about the homework and probably revise a little bit as you were going

14:00 home and ask your friend a question if you didn't if you couldn't answer it but we all got on pretty good and bowled tyres down the street for we had a dirt road at the start and we used to have tyre races with old disused tyres and we used to have races down there and no cars, no bikes.

**How would you race them?**

Bowl them. Bowl them along with your hands, with your hands and oh we used to we used to have a lot of fun like that. No one had any money.

14:30 **What other sorts of games and things would you...?**

I remember my uncle, who was a my father's background they came out from England. My grandfather came out from England in 1864 and they lived at Paddington and he ended up, when he got married he ended up at Miskin Street Toowong and the place is still there but he

15:00 was a real old staid English gentry type of person. They were he was born in Chelsea in London and my Mum come from a different background. She was of German descent and they had property at Mount Walker and I think I've got some of those genes because I love country and my Dad wasn't all that keen on it. He liked it but he wasn't all that keen. He'd rather he was a city person. So

15:30 my grandfather, he was a painter. He used to work in the engineer's office with the railway and he used to do a lot of paintings and I believe to this day there's still one hanging in the painting of Stewart Holme and it's hanging in at New Farm in Archbishop Duhig's manse there. I don't know, I don't know

how long ago it

- 16:00 was presented or it was commissioned to do that but he done it and I remember at the time when I was a lad, oh I suppose I was fourteen or fifteen, that I he told me about it and I've got one of his oh no I gave it to me son the other day. I had one of his paintings here, you know watercolours. So...

**And tell me about what siblings you had.**

I had one sister,

- 16:30 an elder sister. Well typical of two children families, always fighting and squabbling over who was washing up. No dishwaters. No sink. A tin dish on the lino on the kitchen table and one washed up this week and wipe the other wiped and vice versa and we were always fighting over it but my sister, we get on alright but we were never close because most of
- 17:00 my sort of teen years I was away. I was out in country and she stuck with the cities and she married and went to Melbourne and she's still in Melbourne but we don't have a lot of contact you know. I talk to her children and they come up and we're on friendly terms without being really close.

**And tell me about your schooling days. How well did you enjoy school?**

I hated

- 17:30 it. I think I was never any good at maths but I was very good at English and I was selected by the school and there was a thousand kids at that school and to go and do the essays. We I remember one incident in Grade 7 there was half a dozen of us sent to the Shell Company, who were at Bowen Hills then, and they had all their big tanks and all their supply depot going and everything.
- 18:00 They came off the ships, you know the tanks, and from there they were distributed around to the petrol stations and we had to write an essay on it and I remember being selected by the school to go and do that but football yes, I liked my football. I was a pretty fair runner. I wasn't the best in the school but I was very close to the best. That was only over a hundred yards a course but yeah, I sort of enjoyed that but I really didn't like
- 18:30 school. I was no scholar.

**And how far school through school did you continue?**

I didn't. I didn't go to high school. I finished at primary school. My I know my parents tried to get me into a trade and I don't know, I wasn't terribly interested but anyhow I found my niche I feel when I went out the country and I really loved it.

**Well just tell me a bit about this**

- 19:00 **first job that you had?**

At Burns Philp? Yeah well I got the job there as office boy and all I was doing was running down to the tuck shop to get the lunches and the morning teas for the manager and the his secretary and three or four other accountants in the place and I was general message boy. I was just they owned Pennys at the time and I was perpetually running up and back to Pennys with documents to be signed and cart

- 19:30 them back and I...

**Where was Pennys?**

Pennys was on the cor... it was in Queen Street in Adelaide Street, Adelaide and Edward and they had a big department store there. It's since gone now.

**What sort of store was it?**

A department store. It had everything. It had a big café up on the top floor. Oh quite a large café for those times but

- 20:00 I was always up and down and it was I suppose half a mile up and back. I might do that sometimes twice a day and then running down and getting, Mr Loxton was the manager and Mr Reed was my boss, who was the secretary, and I was just running 'round. Running 'round looking after them and no I didn't like it.

**How had you gotten this job?**

Well to be honest I don't know how I really got it. I it must have

- 20:30 come up and I applied for it and I don't know, because most positions like that you had to have a high school education and I never had that and must a been just lucky at the time I guess.

**And at the time did you have any prospects for the future? Any thoughts about what you might like to do?**

No. Never thought of it. Never crossed my mind. No. Work was work and that was it. You had to work

and you had to bring in some

21:00 contributions to the household.

**And how did this how did it work in your house? How much contribution did you give or...?**

Well my Mum used to manage all our moneys, my sister's as well, and first and foremost we had to buy a monthly ticket on the railway. We'd go up and we'd get a monthly ticket and after we'd paid that then we'd so much was pocket money and the rest went into the house, which I don't know but I know when I first went out the country

21:30 I got I think two pound seventeen a week. That was my wages but I had all keep. All my keep was supplied. The place I worked on was a pretty old place. It was all mud brick. No electricity. The all the meat when we killed meat I used to have to ride seven mile to the nearest

22:00 station that had sheep because we were a cattle property. I used to ride home of a night with a big wether tied across my saddle and ride it home. Then I'd have to kill it and hang it and course you'd have the lamb's fry that morning for your breakfast but all the meat had to be salted and you'd have the coarse salt and you'd rub it into it and you'd hang it on a in a bough shed, which we called bough shed. It's just a shed with boughs on it

22:30 leaves and to keep the shade and netting benches all open wire netting benches. So that as the meat dried out, all the moisture could drip out of it and it became as hard as hard as hell and to eat it you'd have to soak it for about two days and then it'd soften up and then you could boil it and no roast but you could always boil it, 'cause it was terribly salty.

**How does it taste?**

Oh well you didn't have many

23:00 options. You that was it you know. That's what you ate. Cows. I used to have to make my own butter. I'm talking in the singular of my own because the old chap that owned it was fairly old and he'd go away for two or three months at a time and leave the me there on my own and when I wanted milk or butter I used to have to go out in the paddock and muster a few cattle that had

23:30 had cows that had just calved. I'd bring them in and I'd have to skull them, putting a rope around their horns and drag 'em up to the bale. Rake them into the bale and then try and milk a kicking cow that objected strongly to be milked and then I'd separate that and from seven cows every morning I'd get enough to make butter and I had plenty of milk of course but I didn't need the milk, it was the butter I needed, and I used to put that in a coolgardie safe, which was just a

24:00 gauze safe with a hessian bag draped over it and the water on it, a well in the top and it'd suck the water down and the wind'd keep it cool and I've often been tempted to go back and see it but I believe the place has been sold and added onto another one but I joined the navy from there.

**How did you survive for things like vegetables and...?**

Well the mail used to come out once a week. You used to get a few vegies [vegetables]. I

24:30 grew a few of my own but not enough to do you know 'cause it had no water. There was only a tank and you couldn't water your vegetable patch with a tank. We had a dam about, oh two mile away but no reticulation. So we used to get a bit out on the mail. Bread once a week. Every Saturday the mail come and went back on sometimes Saturday night and sometimes Sunday morning. 'Cause I was thirty-six miles South,

25:00 oh nearly due South of Mungallala where we were.

**And being fairly young and how did the solitude affect you?**

Never worried me. Always plenty to do and I always had a horse and I used to go for one night a week to another neighbour who used to invite me over to have dinner and I used to ride over there oh I suppose be

25:30 six, half past six. I'd ride over oh five or six mile. About through about three gates and I always remember riding home I used to canter this horse home and the moon always seemed to follow me, dancing through the trees. It was on my left hand side and I'd go another couple of mile and it'd be still in the same position and I could never work that out but oh no, it was a lonely life but you know I survived that okay. One

26:00 stage my Mum come out and she come out for about four weeks to cook up a lot and make sure that little Leslie was getting the right nutrition but and it was a break for her but apart from that no, I but when I joined up he didn't like me going but I just said, "Well too late. I'm I've gone. I've joined and I'm going."

**And what were the main bits of work that you were doing for him?**

Well the main thing I was doing was

- 26:30 checking fences, riding. You didn't do this they weren't every day things but every month you'd check and you'd see that cows were calving alright. You might put a few together and draft a few big weaners off. Brand I'd never brand unless he came because it took two of us to mark and you had to throw them and brand them. Well we used to do that oh twice a year. Take the big calves off the cows and of course they'd be back in
- 27:00 calf again but it was mulga country and you had to be careful of being staked. I had a few staked. They'd tread on broken mulga and it's very poisonous and very hard and the stakes'd come up and stake your horse in the legs and you'd have to look after him pretty well and

**Can you describe mulga country for me?**

Well mulga country is where I was on Mungallala it was part Mitchell grass and the other half of it, the

- 27:30 Southern half, was mulga and mulga usually grows in red, sandy country. Harder country with very little rainfall. A terrible hard timber and when it rots, or if it's rung bark, it goes to it breaks off and leaves sharp spikes on it and horses walking through it can easily get spiked. 'Cause it doesn't break off easily. I'll penetrate three or four inches up a horse's leg and or a foot and you have to get him
- 28:00 home then. You walk home because you can't ride him but and sometimes in drought it was cut for feed. We'd get up with an axe and we'd cut it down and the cattle would eat on it in the real dry times. Survival only, no fattening. Just survival.

**And is it attractive country?**

Well it all depends if you're a bush person, open spaces all look good, but if you're a city

- 28:30 person you'd say, "Oh it's a bit thick. Not a lot of grass growing there." No, it wouldn't be attractive to a city person.

**How tall is the mulga?**

Mulga grows oh it can grow twenty five, thirty feet when it's really developed but you you'd cut it down. You'd just cut it down eight inches above the ground and drop it and the cattle'd just come in and eat all the leaf off it. They're still doing it today in drought areas with the mulga.

- 29:00 That's where mulga's a an advantage. To have mulga country because the grass'll brown off and the wind'll blow it away and the mulga's still there and it's a good standby, yes. Sheep and cattle eat it, so pretty versatile.

**And just to go back a little bit, the first we'll go actually right back.**

Mm.

**The just tell me a bit more about the job you had in**

- 29:30 **the munitions factory?**

Yeah well the job I had there I a friend of mine worked there. He wasn't a school mate but he was a local friend and we used to play together and he had a job down there as a fitter and turner and he said to me, "Why don't you come down and try this?" So I thought, "Oh well. Doing nothing else." So down I went and they put me on a capstone lathe and it was repetition work. You never done anything else but turn out these little striker pins and they were a little pin

- 30:00 about three inches long and about a quarter of an inch in diameter and they were turned to a needle point. It had to be very sharp and you had to have keep the tools on the lathe very sharp otherwise they you didn't get the impact I guess when the bomb went off to set it off and then they had a cyanide bath there. We used to drop them into that for some cyanide treatment to harden them and I was there I don't know, I suppose

- 30:30 seven or eight months and oh I hated starting work eleven o'clock Sunday night, 'cause I used to have to ride a bike from Kalinga down to near the Breakfast Creek Hotel is where they were and I suppose that was oh five or six mile, six mile, up and back and then you'd come home and your overalls'd be soaked with soluble oil and it was greasy and monotonous work, just the same thing same thing day after day and you couldn't

- 31:00 get a change because that was a contract to make striker pins. So no, I give it up.

**What was the security like around the factory?**

No. Very, very little. Very little. I don't remember anyone challenging us to go start work or have a pass or a ticket or anything. Just went to work and left and came and went as you pleased.

**And what do you remember about hearing the declaration of war?**

- 31:30 Well I don't think I was terribly upset but I think what really got me going was bombing a Darwin in ah, I think it was February '42. Yeah I think it was February '42 that they bombed Darwin and I think, "Good God. They come to get me." So I wrote to the navy. I'd had my application in but I wasn't seventeen

- 32:00 and they explained to me, "When you're seventeen we'll call you up." So I wrote to the navy and I said, "Look," you know, "I've had an application in since August the previous year." They said, "Oh well now you're eighteen but you're in a protected industry," which was primary industry. So I said, "Well you call me up and I'll soon fix this." So anyhow they'd they gave me the my application was answered and they
- 32:30 said to me, "Well come down for a medical." So I just gave notice and left the job and of course against protest from the chap that owned the place. He didn't want me to leave and I went down and I was accepted. There was only three of us went at the time and one chap I played football against later but the other chap I never ever saw.

**And just previous to that, the first job that you had in the country you mentioned you didn't get along with the**

- 33:00 **grazier. What was the situation here?**

Well in plain Australian lingo, he was pretty miserable. He'd I used to I was a cowboy and a cowboy job there isn't what you think. It was a rouseabout doing all the feeding the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOKS, milking the cows, chopping the wood, doing the gardening. All those sort of jobs around a station, handy man jobs, and

- 33:30 this chap he used to be a smoker but he'd never take if he went out mustering all day he'd roll two cigarettes and that was his that was the go a the man and the lunch was cut every day for the two station hands to go out mustering and it was a couple of melon and lemon sandwiches. Well you can imagine what they're like in a saddle bag riding a horse around and opening those up and here it is all soaked into the bread.

- 34:00 **What kind of sandwiches?**

Melon and lemon jam. Have you ever had that? Try it. It'll put you off it forever. Anyhow I used to have a lot of turkeys and I used to gather the eggs and I used to snooker a couple of eggs and I'd boil 'em in an old court pot behind the shearers' quarters and I'd give them to the station hands to take out to put on their bread. They'd scrape this jam off and it was it was a terrible way to go and I remember it was getting towards Christmas

- 34:30 and out on the mail a whole lot of fruit, case of apricots and a case of grapes and a case of plums and a course I'd never seen fruit from the day I arrived there. So I thought, "Well I'd better sample it for them." So and I knew that they'd want me to. So I opened the case and I tucked in a little bit and oh when they come home, hell was to play. So I just said, "Well pack up me traps and

- 35:00 see ya later," because it was Saturday when the mail come out and he went back Sunday and I was on him Sunday and I was seventy five mile from Cunnamulla. So I up with me traps and back home.

**And how did you get the second job?**

I went to Primaries [Department of Primary Industries], who used to run a service for any grazier wanting staff and they'd run a list and they would run ads

- 35:30 but I never answered an ad. I went up to Primaries, who were in Creek Street in those days, and I just said, "Is there any jobs? I'd prefer to go on a cattle station rather than sheep," because a lot of work in sheep. Not that I ever shirked hard work, I never did, but I just thought, "Well cattle'll be more interesting." So yeah, they said, "Yeah. There's one out here at Miriyong at Mungallala." I said, "Righto, out I go. How big is it?" "Thirty-six thousand acres." I said, "Oh that's better. I can handle that."

- 36:00 So out I went and I stayed there 'til I joined up.

**And tell me about this Exhibition Day that you went in to town for?**

To no, to Brisbane. Yeah, to the Brisbane Royal National.

**Why did you go to that?**

Well oh well country people went to the Royal Nashi [Royal National Show]. You never missed the Royal Show. Just to see all the animals, the sheep and what was available and not that I could have afforded a tuppenny stamp probably but you always

- 36:30 associated with country and, "Oh look at that horse. Gee he's a nice horse," and, "Look at these bulls. Gee, they're bringin' big money." You'd go through it all and I was always keen on the sheep dog trials too. I used to love those and I went down there and I said there was a recruiting office and I can still see it, where it was, and a couple a sailors all done up in their smart uniforms. I thought, "Oh, might have a go at this." On my own and these recruiting blokes pulled me inside. The petty officer

- 37:00 who was sitting there, "Here's the application forms. Fill it in. How old are you son?" "I'm seventeen next month." "Oh you're too young." I said, "No but I'm out the country. Let me fill it in now and when I turn seventeen I haven't got to write down to get the application." "Yes, righto. She's right," and

**Why the navy?**

I don't know. I really don't know because I just haven't got a clue. I think later I did do an assessment with myself and I thought, "Well at least if I'm on

37:30 a ship I've only got to worry about dive bombers or torpedos but in the jungle I'll be in mud and muck and," oh and I'm thinkin' of the blokes in Gallipoli up the cliffs and I thought, "Oh gee," you know, "I think the navy might be a bit better for me." So I that's how I come.

**And what was it about the situation with the war that was influencing you to join up at all?**

Well I think the Japanese

38:00 bombing Darwin. I think that got my back up a little bit. I thought, "Goodness me, they're coming here to take us away." I thought, "Well, why not? It's an adventure." I suppose adventure would be the key word to it. It was another adventure and also it riled me to think they had the gall to attack us.

**When you signed up did you tell your dad?**

Yeah. Yeah I

38:30 told my Dad and yeah, he was okay. My mother was a little bit reluctant but no, they got behind me and they were supportive of it. I suppose from my Dad being a World War soldier I'd suppose he'd been through the mill and he knew how I would have felt. So no, it went I had no kickbacks from family. They were all contented about it.

**When you came into Brisbane for the Show**

39:00 **was this your first Brisbane show?**

No. I went as a kid from school. We used to work around the place mowing lawns and cleaning up neighbours' and we'd get threepence or sixpence and we'd put it in a little piggy bank my Mum had and she said, "Well that's your Exhibition money," and you'd buy all these fabulous sample bags for a shilling you know and we'd go in and save up and get as many sample bags as

39:30 we could and but we went every year the Exhibition, but only through money that we'd earnt 'round the house. I think my Dad used to give me threepence for we had a weeping fig in the backyard and they're the messiest trees ever and I used to mow and rake up. I used to get threepence for that.

**Had the Show changed at all due to the war?**

Well I don't I really don't know. I was never deeply involved 'til

40:00 after the war except as a kid going to it, but after the war I showed a lot of thoroughbred horses at the RNA [Royal National Association] and I also worked in sheep dogs and I judged three or four RNA sheep dog trials there but it was on a different plane I was. I was a kid looking for excitement at the Show on the herdie gerdies [spinning rides] and the dippers [roller coasters] and all the amusement area but as I came back after the war

40:30 I was looking more at more stable things. Matter of fact, I was a council steward with the RNA for ten years.

**We're just going to pause there because we're at the end of the tape.**

## Tape 2

00:35 **Yeah, I was just interested in that munitions work. What was it like in that factory? What was it like inside there?**

Well it was very impersonal. You never really got to know too many people because you were on constantly changing shifts and you had a more or less on a quota. You had to get so many of these striker pins that I was the project I was on, you had to

01:00 get so many done every shift and it was sort of head down and backside up. You never got to know many people in there.

**Were there a lot of women in the factory at...**

Yes. Not a lot. It wasn't a big factory. I suppose oh there'd be twenty five, thirty lathes and women were there, yes. Women were doing they weren't on lathes, but they were doing other work and

01:30 I couldn't tell you especially what they were doing but they were there. Women were there, yeah.

**And was it promoted or talked about how you were an important part of the war effort around the factory?**

No it wasn't. All it was, it was cursing about the soluble oil splashing all over your face and dirtying your clothes and going home to your mum with all this oil dripping off and her going crook about how to



wash all your new clothes separately

02:00 and no, it wasn't really pleasant. The atmosphere wasn't really pleasant. It was just that we were doing something for a war effort I guess that kept us there.

**What's all the soluble oil? What's that from?**

It's a soluble oil, it's a sort of a it's a an oil you put in it's a cooling oil and you mix it with water and it comes out sort of a milky colour. Like very light coffee colour

02:30 and there's a little spout that keeps going onto the object you're turning to cool it because if you had metal to metal it'd burn and it'd soften that point and that point on the striker pin was fatal for it to be softened in any way. So soluble oil was in abundance on it. Just poured onto it. It was pumping through out of a pump onto it all the time but as the lathe turned it'd splash all over you. You just couldn't avoid it.

03:00 **And how dangerous were the working conditions?**

Oh I didn't I didn't term it dangerous. I it was just constant and monotonous and I think that's what got to me in the end. That

**I guess not dangerous in an extreme sense, but what was kind of like some of the, what they'd call workplace health and safety issues of the place?**

It was never heard of in those days, Kiernan [interviewer]. There was no such thing as workplace and safety. I

03:30 mean that was the job, you do it and you know and if you didn't get your quota up the foreman'd come 'round and say you know, "You better keep goin'. You're a bit behind. Keep these turning."

**I guess what I'm talking about is, what's some of the health kind of conditions that people at the factory or yourself kind of could have got, like say dermatitis or anything like this?**

Well I suppose from the oil. I never heard of any because I wasn't there long enough and

04:00 let alone to find out any later repercussions about it, because it could have eventuated, but there weren't very many old people there. I suppose I know the foreman was only about forty and a lot of the women didn't appear to be any older than that either.

**And before on the last tape you were talking with Naomi [interviewer] about your joining the navy story and you told her that you had to wait for your call up because of the manpower issue.**

04:30 **How did you manage to just get out of it? Was it difficult to just resign a job?**

No. No it wasn't Kiernan it wasn't difficult to resign the job. I mean the chap that I worked for, a bloke called Ted Perrin, on Mirriyong, he didn't want me to leave. He wanted me to stay on and I said, "Well I'm going to go," and he said, "Well," more or less, "you can't because you're in a primary industry," and they were protected.

05:00 That industry, any primary industry was protected from any person working in it was protected from war service and he said, "I can write down and tell them," and I said, "Well you can do what you like, but," I said, "here's my notice. I'm finished." And I suppose there was no aftermath from that because I was joining one of the services and I think if they had a said, "Well this fella's leaving it to join up," I know a lot of people went to

05:30 primary industries to protect themselves from joining up but that wasn't my go.

**And so tell us about how you received your notice that you were going into the navy.**

Well I they sent me a notice out there to come down for a medical and that's when I gave notice and I came down on the train and I stayed at my parents' place at Stewart Avenue, Kalinga, and

06:00 'cause I had that as my joining up address because all the mail went to my Mum and anyhow I went into Moreton Navy Depot. They gave me the usual tests. The colour test, the physical test. The doctor goes over ya and said, "Righto. Report here in fourteen days and South Brisbane station. Report to the regulating petty officer. He'll give you your ticket down," and down to Flinders I went.

**How did you feel about receiving a call**

06:30 **up and passing the medical?**

Oh well I never had a worry about the medical. I never felt I did. I don't know. I think I was glad that I was another adventure. That's how I really think it was. I'm honest with myself I think it was another start of another adventure. Hey. What's going on?

**Oh just interested in some details about the medical. What what's the colour test?**

The colour test is they have a circle and they have

07:00 it all in little one circle about four or five inches diameter and in it is a number maybe in pale blue and all 'round it they'll have pink and green circles and you've got to distinguish that number. So you know that's number twenty six or and they give you half a dozen of these and a course if you got defective eye sight well you can't get into the navy. Oh well I think they would take you

07:30 in as a cook or a steward or something but once I got to know a bit about the navy I didn't I wanted to be on deck. I didn't want to be a stoker and I didn't want to be a steward or a cook or I don't know what I would a done if I had a been allocated to there but I wasn't given a choice either. I was just drafted in. "You're a stoker, you're a cook, you're a seaman," and that's how it went but I was fortunate that way.

**And what were the physical things**

08:00 **that the doctor**

The physical things, they, "Any previous operations?" Give you a lung X-ray, oral test. You go over mouth that your teeth are you know reasonably stable. Oh I think that was the main things but it wasn't a stringent test. It was just general thing you know, "Were you flat footed?" "No," and you know and

08:30 they'd have you walking. "Can you move your limbs?" "Any restriction in your limbs?" "No," you know. "Any aches or pains or any breaks?" "No," and stamp went on your application and away you went.

**And what was your journey down to Victoria like, like on the train? Like**

Well it was there was only three of us and it was on a passenger train and I remember the first stop was at Coffs Harbour, where we stopped

09:00 at that evening in the refreshment rooms. The railway stations used to have a refreshment room like a café and a bar and you could get off and have a meal and a drink and then the train'd stop for about an hour. So naturally, I wasn't a real drinker in those days, but like a dog off the chain, go in and have a beer. So I went in and then we went in and had a meal and I chatted up a little girl in there that was a waitress and actually I

09:30 wrote to her most of the war years but nothing ever serious but I mean just sort of 'cause I never really knew her but we wrote for years and years and years and we got down to Melbourne and then we had to catch the train down to Flinders, which was quite a way down right down towards Wilsons Promontory and we were marched off the station, all recruits you know. Three of us from Queensland and there was a few from Victoria and all recruits marched down,

10:00 in your civvies, marched down to Flinders Navy Depot and go up to the master at arms who was the what will I say? He'd be like a police man in charge of the entrance you know. Surveilling who went in and out of the place and, "New recruits. Righto. March down to dormitory so and so and so and so," and they kitted us up with a kit and gave you a dormitory and then you went down to they give you a day to settle in and then they

10:30 you went down to all these schools. They had there was a big drill hall and there was an old warrant officer. Oh, he must a been in the navy for many, many years and all the recruits called him Poop Deck Pappy and every morning he'd get up on this little podium and he'd knock us all to attention and we'd be standing to attention and his favourite thing was, "Listen to what I have to promulgate," because everyone

11:00 had it, "Oh, listen to what I have to promulgate," you know and then we'd go into a big PT [Physical Training] session and after that we'd go to the schools. You might do a Monday, okay torpedo school. Tuesday, gunnery school. Oh Wednesday, seamanship. Thursday, sailing. They'd take you out in the cutter and teach you how to sail and row a cutter, row a whaler and went through all those schools and then when you when they passed you out as efficient you went

11:30 out to depots. Well from there I went to I went to Penguin, which had just been opened, and that was at Balmoral in Middle Head and from there I was drafted on no, I wasn't drafted onto it, but I was sent on the Queen Mary had come back I think with the 9th Division from overseas and she was anchored off of Taronga Park, 'cause that's the deepest part of the harbour

12:00 where the boat could swing around the buoy with the winds and not ground. So they put myself and another friend that I got to be friends with and they put us on sentry duty and on the Mary they used to bring these big lighters alongside. Oh things hundred foot long and they were full of stores and they had two great big doors, as big as these doors here. They'd open 'em and we'd load all supplies in and water. 'Cause she was too big to go

12:30 alongside a wharf. There wasn't enough room for her and they had to cart everything out and the tugs'd pull these lighters out. Refuel her with fuel too and water and food and tinned stuff, you know all these supplies, and this went on for about a week and actually we got lost there one morning going on watch because everything was the sameness on it. There was all the bunks underneath were three and four deep and they were all racked up out of timber you know just to carry the troops

13:00 but anyhow this morning we got out and we're just going up to go on watch and we looked up in the sky and we could see the black smoke and we said, "That's coming out of a funnel," and sure enough, the

ship was underway. The Mary was underway, going out, and we're still on it and started to chew on the fingernails a little bit. Say, "Good God, they've forgotten us. There we are here and the ship's underway. Where's she going to? What are we going to do?"

- 13:30 Anyhow they must a sent a signal over and next thing a motor boat came alongside and she's still underway. She's going out towards The Heads, out past Middle Harbour, and they got us off that way down a rope ladder. So that was quite an experience of where we were gonna end up but anyhow from there...

**Well just before we move on there I'm going to ask a few more questions about...**

Sure.

**When you first got into the navy just down in Flinders.**

Yeah.

**What was the talk**

- 14:00 **amongst the three of you on the train as you went down there? What kind of conversations were you having?**

Oh I suppose wonderment really. You're thinking you know, "I wonder what it's going to be like down there," and we couldn't get into a uniform quick enough, the three of us. We all wanted to get the put the uniform on and parade ourselves a little bit you know like mob of peacocks I guess but no, we were looking forward to it. Quite harsh down there and one thing I remember well, that

- 14:30 when I went to Flinders I was seventeen and you have two weeks on and one, two weekends on board like in the depot and one weekend off, that's three watches, and it was my turn to go ashore for the weekend and I'd palled up with a Victorian chap and he had it teed up for me to go home with him. When I got down to, liberty meant to clean and to go out to the office to with my leave ticket

- 15:00 "You're only seventeen." I said, "Yes." "You can't go ashore unless you've got your parents' permission," and I said, "Well nobody's told me this." "No, you've got to have a letter in writing from your parents to say you're allowed to go ashore," and I said, "God I'm good enough to come and join the navy and I can't go ashore." So anyhow no, I stayed back in. So in those days you could send telegrams and I sent a telegram to my Dad and I said, "Look telegram your

- 15:30 permission down for me to go ashore," which he did but I think it was a Saturday or something and I didn't get it 'til the Monday but I'd missed that leave and I had to wait another two weeks before I could go on leave. That's how ridiculous it was but anyhow I remember that part well.

**And do you remember your very first moments as you walked in and then the navy kind of first met you? What was said to you? What were the first moments like?**

Yeah well

- 16:00 I suppose you I suppose you think to yourself, "What the hell," you know. "What have I got myself into," because everywhere 'round was strict and everyone's to attention. There's no freelaying about talking or and the and all the old hands saying, "You'll be sorry. You'll be sorry," and I think that happens in all the services and we're all lined up waiting to get a kit and all these comments are going on and I don't know, I think a lot

- 16:30 of I didn't feel so much loneliness or isolation because I'd been used to it. You know being in the country but I think it might have been a shock to some fellows that you know got a little bit homesick. I never run into anyone that was really homesick, desperately homesick, but I've seen a lot of blokes miss home but no, I think that's just how I felt.

**What about the first thing said to you as you lined up for the first time? What was being said by the commanders?**

Well

- 17:00 I thought, "Well here we go." Like, "Snap to attention and don't give any cheek." So no, it was discipline yeah, which in later years I really appreciated but then I wasn't used to it either and it yeah. It was a shock, yes.

**And so how would they instil this discipline? What would they say exactly?**

"Righto just all you lot up to up to the slops," which they call slops in the navy were

- 17:30 called stores. "Go to slops and get issued," and you'd all line up and that fella'd give you a kit bag. The next bloke'd give you a uniform. Next bloke'd give you shoes and you'd go along 'til you were fully kitted up and they were ticked off on a thing. "Righto, all up to dormitory Block F," or whatever it was and the leading seaman or a petty officer'd march you up there and, "That's your bunk. That's your bunk. Thanks your bunk," and it was impersonal, yeah. Very impersonal and you sort of never settled down to

- 18:00 know because the chaps I went down with, I never saw them again in the navy, even at Flinders. They were mine they must a been in a different class. They were probably doing torpedo school and I was

doing gunnery school or vice versa. You know you'd just get into little groups of twenty and they went you went to all these schools.

**And what was your kit that you received that first moment?**

It was a great big sea bag about that high and of all the ridiculous things it consisted of a big pith helmet,

- 18:30 which was absolutely useless. A couple of uniforms. Number ones we always called your best and they had all different rigs, the navy, one right down to ten and ten was just a square neck shirt and a pair of black pants and you know it had all these rig a the day was number tens or number twos or number ones depending on the occasion and you got these. One pair of shoes, no boots.
- 19:00 No boots were issued. No overalls were issued, only to stokers. No dungarees [denim trousers]. We just had to work in the square neck shirts and the caps and if anything, every now and again they'd have a kit inspection and if you didn't have the required number of everything the master at arms'd say, "Bring your kit up." As soon as slops opens you went down on board, down to the stores and when they opened, they only opened about once a month, replenish your
- 19:30 kit. Bring it up to scratch so and if anything in your locker wasn't tidy, the they used to call it the scrand bag. They'd touch your locker and if it flew open and anything fell out they'd pick it up and the master at arms'd put it up in his office and it'd cost you a bar of soap to get it out. You'd have bars a soap you'd buy, which goes back to the old sailing ship days when they scrubbed up you know.
- 20:00 So a lot of stuff that was absolutely stupid but it cost ya a bar a soap to get it out if you wanted it.

**Was there anything of a kind of you know even a in fun kind of initiation into the navy amongst the regulars there?**

Oh no, except they didn't make it easy. They'd always, "You'll regret it. You'll be sorry. You should a stayed at home. Fools for joinin' this." I think usual thing in any service you know,

- 20:30 knockers, but they done in a not a vindictive way. Done in a way to say, "Well we've done it, you're gonna cop it." It's like a new kid at school I guess and they break you in and it's how you handle it. Some people handle it good. Other people resent it but if you don't go with the flow you're a lost cause I always felt. I found it much easier to go and give it a jar later on when you knew the ropes.

**What happened to the guys which resented it?**

Oh

- 21:00 I don't know. They were just sort of lost in the lot that you'd go up to your dormitory and they'd be whingin', "Oh yeah what happened to me today. Yeah that mongrel down there," you know, "yah yah yah," and you, "Oh just walk away and leave it." I mean it happened and you couldn't do anything about it. You just wore it and get on with the job.

**And you told us briefly the things you were learning. What were the first things you were learning in basic training?**

Well the first thing I remember was PT. That was every morning,

- 21:30 irrespective. The next thing was tying knots and that was the greatest thing I was ever taught. Tying knots and doing fancy knots. Crown knots and wall knots. Makin' like a Turk's head on the end of a rope and all those things. Very interesting they were and then I think we used to go rowing. We took the whaler out and we used to row across to Hastings, all 'round Hastings there, which is across the bay
- 22:00 and a petty officer'd take us out or a subbie'd take us out and teach us how to feather the oars. You know row and you don't just keep dippin' 'em in splashing, you've got to feather the oars, turn 'em, and they taught us that and then they took us out other days sailing. Showing us how to put a sail up. If we were shipwrecked somewhere we could save a lot of energy and use a sail. Then they then we went to the various schools. They were the manual things really. The others
- 22:30 were study things. Signalling, semaphore signalling. Used to like semaphore signalling, but I was never any good at Morse code. I was flat out distinguishing the dots from the dahs.

**Just actually a question off track, what's the Turk's head knot?**

The Turk's head? It's a knot that goes 'round, it's just like a Turk's turban. It's got three layers and they interlace like that. Go 'round and on the top there's a crown knot and a oh it looks spectacular and they have 'em on heaving

- 23:00 lines when you come alongside and you want a bit a weight on the end and you want to throw it to a wharf. It's got a bit a weight on it and it'll go that way and it's an it's a all ship's bells have it. On the rope down, they've got a Turk's head. They've got a wall they're made of Turk's heads are made of a wall knot and a crown knot and it's just a bit a fancy stuff. Looks nice.

**And so all up, how long was the basic training?**

Oh it was about

23:30 August, September, October. I was only a couple a months at Flinders.

**Did you get a you mentioned you got out on the water a bit there?**

Only to row and sail. Never on a ship, no.

**And what was the purpose of teaching you the sailing?**

Well I suppose in case of shipwreck that every ship carried a whaler, which is a

24:00 long boat, rowing boat, with two, four I think it's got four oars and a sail. Mast and a sail. Well they taught us how to row in case the sail was wrecked and they taught us how to sail in case of loss of energy. If long periods in the water well you could use the wind.

**Was there also things they were teaching you about how the ocean, the sea worked?**

No. No. Nothing of that.

24:30 No.

**And**

How to put on a life jacket. Went through those drills, and gas masks. They were put into a chamber with a gas mask and they'd turn the gas on and just to see if there's any leakages. You'd come out. That's okay. If you weren't coughing and spluttering and half dead well your gas mask fitted but if it didn't, well better do a bit of adjustment and then they put us into the swimming pool. Full gear.

25:00 Dive in and if you could swim the length of the bath, which was oh only about thirty metres I'd say, if you could swim that fully clothed they put a tick on your file. "Can swim." "Yes." "Cannot swim." You know that was on your records. Not that it made any difference because if a ship was going down there's no known way swimming would make much difference. The vacuum'd suck you down

25:30 but no, they were the oh manual skills that we were taught I guess.

**How'd you go in the swimming**

Yeah I passed that. I was never any star swimmer but yeah, I had no trouble doing that.

**Do you remember any of the men having trouble?**

Yeah well some of 'em were floundering. I can remember some dog paddling in the one spot but it didn't make any difference because they just put against, "Can swim," they just put, "No."

26:00 Still went through.

**Were they given a bit of a ribbing?**

Oh yes. Like all guys together, yeah. "You're a dud. You can't even float." Yeah.

**And you mentioned the story about missing your first leave, but did you get any subsequent leaves in Melbourne?**

Yes. After I got permission from my parents. Yes, I went on leave. I'd friends I'd made friends with a Victorian chap, who actually later went on to the Manoora with me, but

26:30 he was in the signals and I wasn't but yeah we ended up friends for quite some time.

**What did you get up to on this leave?**

Well I suppose we'd chase up a few girls and go to the pubs. Go to ice skating. Oh you know whatever venue that was entertainment. There's no such thing as hanging out at nightclubs or any of that. We'd usually get leave sometimes you'd have to be back by eleven

27:00 at night or sometimes it was overnight leave and you'd have to be back by eight in the morning and if you weren't, well you were on the mat but most of us unless they lived in the town liked to get back to the ship. It was sort of, I don't know, it was a feeling like that was home and it was always a good feeling to get back on board and get in your we all had hammocks but on board Manoora, this was later in the time but

27:30 I had my hammock on top of some lockers and I used to lay it out, it wasn't swung it was laid out and they used to have a little mattress in them about two inches thick, which didn't cushion much but I used to have mine there under very close to some asbestos pipes and God knows what, but you know you didn't worry about those things in those days but I didn't have to swing my hammock every night. Hook it up on hooks and lash it up every morning

28:00 and put it in a bin. I'd just roll it up and leave it on top of the lockers.

**And during those first leaves in Melbourne you mentioned you were chasing girls. Would you**

**be wearing your uniform?**

Oh of course. Oh yes. You lived in it. You didn't have anything else because that's all you had. You never had your civvies.

**And did the uniform help you out on the town at all?**

Oh I don't know. We could a kidded ourselves a bit and thought it did but I don't know, it

28:30 oh we used to chat up a few of the girls and you know maybe take one to the pictures or something. That was about the go of it in those days. There was no nightclubbing or there were dances but in those days it was later days that in Sydney when [I was] a few years older too.

**And was there any kind of support from the public when they'd see you out there in...**

Oh yes. Yes. Yeah the public were pretty good to us. Yeah I

29:00 think yeah they were co-operative with us and they'd help us and yeah. I gotta say yes. We had good treatment from them.

**And were you following the progress of the war as you were going through your training?**

Yeah well we never told a lot. Only what the censors had let go through you know and a lot of things it in talking in hindsight that we thought were true. Everyone

29:30 on board ship thought they were true but we had no proof and we weren't told and since the war I've read a lot of books and they were true. Not all of them, but most of them were true. So those sort of things interested us you know and we said, "Oh is this true? Is this garbage or," you know and never deeply concerned us. We just felt, especially on board ship, "Where are we goin' next? Where's our next spot? Where do what port do we call at?"

30:00 **Well after basic training, where did you move from here?**

To, from Flinders I went to Balmoral at Middle Harbour.

**What were you learning here?**

I learnt nothing. It was like it was more or less a staging depot but I remember getting my chicken pox vaccination just before I left Flinders and luckily I'd been working with cattle on the properties and I didn't have a great affect, but it did make me

30:30 fairly sick but everyone that had them oh they were pretty sick with the chicken pox vaccination. They come up in big blisters on your arm and you were allowed three or four days off duty and then back to the grind again but it was a transit depot and everyone waiting for a ship was more or less drafted to Balmoral and that's where I went onto the Queen Mary and then I went onto the Swan and then I used to come back

31:00 to those depots and then went up to HMAS Assault because it was just the new thing and it hadn't it wasn't completed when they got me into it and I was at Port Stephens, beautiful harbour but it was CCC [Civil Construction Corps] were building it and I was on an old ship called the Ping Wo and it was an old Chinese coaler and it wasn't a very big ship. Ooh a couple of hundred ton

31:30 and there was about ten of us living on it and it was on a wharf just down from the hotel and we used to live on that and every day travel across to Port Stephens to Fly Point to the depot, which was being built, and help arrange things on it. You know like oh I remember one job, painting the stones white down the drive way, down the entrance, and you know all those sort of jobs to help them get the depot.

32:00 Well the Westralia come up and she was used as the depot ship because the Ping Wo couldn't handle 'em and they had a lot more ratings coming up. So I lived on her going every morning over to Assault until it was ready and Assault was 'specially designed for training in landing barges. For assault landings. That's its only purpose. So we went into specialised training there. When the depot eventually finished the ships went and

32:30 we were in the depot there. I think all told there might a been five hundred of us because there was three ships, the Manoora, Westralia and Kanimbla and each had twenty five barges and there was about four crew to every barge. So and plus office to each one. So there would have been about five hundred and they put us through a special course on landing barges and a lot of seamanship skills too that related to

33:00 the barge operation, which was entirely different to ship board. Anyhow we started off with some English barges called alkus, and they were very low in the water and they were metal, all steel, and they had a little door where the troops run out and they were prone to rough surf they were prone to sinking and the surf breaking over the stern and the entrance for troops to get out in a hurry. They were inadequate. So the Yanks

33:30 gave us some personnel boats, which were very similar but they were made of plywood. More powerful but they had a pointed bow and the troops had to get out and jump over the bow, which again which is a shocking you know. Slowed it all up. So in the end we got LCVs, [Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel], and

they had a ramp and we'd run up on the beach, drop the ramp and all the troops'd go out one

34:00 hit, which was by far the better set up. Lot quicker. Get rid of troops and get rid of equipment and so we done oh a lot of training there. Practising all the time. We started practising on motor boats until the barges come. We had we used to call it the Hollywood fleet and they were all forty foot motor launches from Sydney Harbour commandeered by the navy and some of the things that happened

34:30 to those boats, I chaps coming alongside tearing the guns off one and bashin' into another one. Forgettin' to put it into reverse quick enough and there was a lot of catastrophes there but anyhow they all survived and fair bit a damage I would have thought but yeah, we done that we done that there and then Manoora came back up from Sydney because she was an armed merchant cruiser. She had seven six inch guns on her and she used to cruise the Indian Ocean looking for raiders

35:00 and she had the distinction of sinking the first Italian ship in the war out here off Bougainville. Apparently this Italian liner was in Sydney and war had been had broken out with Italy and there was a ban. Ships couldn't leave harbour and the captain of the Rommalo [?] decided he'd sneak out. So he shot out and they couldn't find him and some other ship radioed in and located him and Manoora was up off Fraser Island.

35:30 So she shot over there and found it and sunk it. Took the survivors off it. Sunk it. Well when it came back from there that was its last days as an armed merchant cruiser. They took all the big guns bar one off it and all the holds were full of empty forty four gallon drums and they took all those out and they rigged her up with avits, derricks and things on the side to carry barges and then she come up to Assault at Port Stephens and that's

36:00 when I left the depot and joined her.

**Before we get onto the Manoora, I've got quite a few more questions about...**

Sure.

**...some of that training. Tell us take us through like one of those landing exercises. Like the first one maybe that you did on one of the those kind of...?**

Well the first ones were in calm water. They were right inside Port Stephens and there's a lotta little bays there but we used to go into a little place called Shoal Bay and

36:30 relatively calm. Very little swell or waves breaking and as we become more proficient at it they used to take us outside the heads and take us onto one of the ocean beaches and that was pretty disastrous because a lot of us were unaccustomed to the big swell and quite a few boats broached. The swell got behind the stern and brought them side on to the beach and mission

37:00 impossible to get them off. You'd get another barge to tow them off but oh the sand'd build up and it was wait next day for the high tide. Well I can remember putting two ropes on the stern sheets and I was on a big barge. It, oh it weighed about fifty ton. Carry a thirty ton tank and two jeeps and trailers or three ton truck with artillery behind it and they were pretty hefty and we'd put two ropes

37:30 on the cleats on the stern and anchor them to the beach. Right up the beach to a tree wherever we could to hold it from going further and we'd light a fire on the beach and we'd be there all night. Just holding on, waiting for the tide and then they'd bring a couple of bigger boats around and sign us off. Well then they decided that we'd better get used to kedge anchors and as we were entering through the surf we'd drop out this great big kedge anchor. So

38:00 that we could back off and it could pull us back and we could get off ourself. Well once we become expert at that, well we'd had it pretty well solved that we could get on and off without a lot of trouble. Although some boats that were heavily laden in some of the assault landings we done were grounded and they stayed there too. Never got off. Trucks and troops and I can tell you a story about that later but

38:30 **Oh during the war?**

Yes. Yeah.

**Oh we'll get to that later**

Yeah.

**But what's a kedge anchor?**

A kedge anchor's like a great big plough anchor. It's like a big plough. Shaped like a plough and it's got an arm coming up and you put it on there and when it grabs in it digs in like a plough into the sand and it's very, very hard to get out. You've virtually gotta back right over it and pull it back the other way and a course as we'd

39:00 put the barge in reverse and back off, or try to, we'd be pulling on that rope and a little bit at a time, a little bit at a time and the anchor never give away until you went past the anchor. Then it'd come up.

**And how were those barges powered?**

The big barge I was on had twin grain marine diesels. Had two motors. Dual controls. The other LCVPs only had one but they were all diesel.

39:30 We started off with Hall Scott I think, and they were petrol, early in the piece and they weren't very successful. So we changed they changed them over. So they were quite efficient.

**We'll just pause there 'cause we got to the end of the tape.**

Oh, have we? That didn't take long.

**No.**

## Tape 3

00:40 **I'll start off by getting you to tell me about the Swan that you did your seamanship on.**

Yes. Yes. I was only on the Swan for about a month. She was

01:00 going under a refit and actually there was a skeleton crew. I was part of the skeleton crew because it was going to be three or four months refit and they were taking single mounted guns off or they were open mounted and putting in twins with a shield. So it was gonna be a lengthy thing and

**What kind of a ship is the Swan?**

The Swan was a sloop. Yeah.

01:30 **Can you describe sort of what she looks like?**

What she looked like? She looked like she was between a she was bigger than a Corvette but she was smaller than a destroyer or smaller than a frigate really. Crew of about a hundred and sixty. I just couldn't tell you the tonnage or the length but she had sister ships in the Yarra, who was sunk up in the Timor

02:00 Sea. The Yarra, the Swan. There was one other, which I just can't recall but they were they were too light for big bombardment. They did participate in some bombardments but the only had four point seven inches and bombardments were six and eight inch guns. Longer range, more hitting power. So they were done for sort of cleaning up jobs.

02:30 Sweeping areas. All general purpose boat for ship for the navy really. They done a bit of everything. Escort work.

**And was the Swan the first ship that you went**

Yes, it was.

**What's that experience like of being at sea for the first time?**

Well I never went to sea on her. I was she was undergoing refit when I was drafted to her. I was hoping to get to sea but when the news come that

03:00 we used to talk to the doctors and they'd say, "Oh you're gonna be here for six months," and I said, "Oh not me. I'm gonna get off this thing," and there was only about oh thirty of us on her as a skeleton crew to do maintenance while she was being refitted and

**And how did the crew treat someone new coming in like you?**

Well it was a little bit impersonal. I become friends with a chap called Snow Petrie, who's since died, and I used to go ashore with him.

03:30 We were at Cockatoo Dock. You know Cockatoo Island? And I can always remember sitting over the stern or over the rail and looking over at Balmain and the ferries used to go across from Cockatoo to Balmain and I'm thinking you know, "I'm just wasting my time here."

**What were your day to day sort of duties?**

Just maintenance. A bit of chipping and a touching up a bit of paintwork and just sort of general maintenance. Couldn't do much because the dockies had wrecked the ship

04:00 really you know. Taking gear off and cranes and you know you're duckin' 'round planks and cables and

**And was there anything you were learning on board this ship that you hadn't learnt at Flinders?**

No. I never learnt anything on board ship, on board Swan because, as I say, she was in dock and she was under maintenance you know and well it wasn't hard. You haven't got to have a be a rocket scientist



to chip paint.

04:30 **And how did you manage to organise getting off the Swan?**

I was drafted off. The first lieutenant knew that I was looking for I wanted to go somewhere but I didn't want to be there and he may have taken the opportunity, I really don't know, but a draft came through from Penguin to be drafted back to Penguin and after I got off there

05:00 I went on the Mary, which I spoke about earlier and from coming back from the Mary I went up to Assault, up to the Ping Wo and then on to Assault. From Assault to Manoora but really the only two ships I ever really got into was the Swan and the Manoora.

**And you were telling Keirnan about the different landing barges.**

Landing craft?

**Craft.**

Yes.

**When did the Manoora**

05:30 **sort of come to Port Stephens at the time that you were training on these landing craft?**

Yeah well we'd finished our training and she was all rigged up to carry these barges and she was only there for a few weeks while we sort of all acclimatised to shipboard routine of where everything was and all our action stations and our cruising stations and what you know. Generally what's what. Familiarising ourself with the ship and also doing

06:00 a bit of barge work. Landing and practice. We used to take a few Yanks [Americans] and board them up and land them on the beaches just practice and educating the Yanks too.

**And on these landing craft, you were taking talking to Keirnan at the end of the last tape but can you take me through sort of what your specific role was called or what it...?**

Just landing craft. Assault craft. We actually

06:30 on board ship there were two segments of the ship. There was ship's company, who were the people that actually sailed the ship and there were boats' crew, who were actually the people that had nothing else to do on assaults other than their barges. At sea we had to do sea duties, cruising duties. Action stations at sea just the same as everybody else but and do the maintenance on the ship too but our special job we were especially trained for

07:00 landing craft whereas ship's company weren't and they never ever got into a landing barge.

**And what sort of what did they tell you about situations that landing craft were used in?**

Well we knew they were we knew that they were used for assault landings on beaches and after we joined Manoora at Port Stephens we went to Melbourne and we went to a place called Mount

07:30 Martha, Dromana. Way down Port Phillip Bay and we got all the Yanks that came back from Guadalcanal. Now I couldn't tell you the number of their division and they had no idea of how to go down scrambling nets while the barge was alongside and we done all this practice and put them through their ropes and it also helped us and we'd come alongside and they'd come down the scrambling nets. We'd get 'em in and we'd run ashore to Mount Martha or Dromana,

08:00 drop 'em on the beach, pick 'em up and go back to ship and load them back on again and do the same the next day and the seas were pretty rough down there and I think a few had amputations. They were caught with the barges rising on a ship and swerving over and some were half way down a landing net and gettin' their leg crushed or their arm crushed but that was accepted as par for the course. You couldn't do anything about it. I mean

**I was gonna ask, is there a way of**

08:30 **keeping steady next to a big ship like the Manoora?**

No. It's there was a rope along the side and we had boat hooks and we'd hook on and hold it steady but the ship being eleven thousand ton was fairly steadfast in the water in comparison to a little fifty foot barge and they'd be bobbing up and down with the waves and the wind and the only way you could successfully get into a barge was wait on the

09:00 rise, wait on the rung of the landing net and wait for the ship to come out and jump in and that way you got you out of most dangers but it was you had it was a pretty slick operation in rough weather.

**How tell me how these boat hooks work?**

It's a pole like a broom handle with a hook and as you come alongside you hook onto the boat the line along the side of the ship and that pulls you in and then when you come

09:30 alongside they're held on to stern and aft while they get in and as soon as they're in you just push off.

**How much gap is there in between the two**

They're rubbing. You put a fender down the side, which is a oh a these were rope in these days about that round about six or eight inches round. Drop them over the side to stop rubbing through metal, metal to metal, and they'd ride up and down on those and then as soon as you got off, just bring them in board and go on your merry

10:00 way.

**And as the people getting onto the landing craft are gonna jump...**

Yeah.

**From the ladders**

Yeah.

**Are there members of the landing craft that**

Oh help them on. Yes. Oh yes. Oh yes, they they're got full packs. Rifles and the whole kit pack on.

**So how do you help them on?**

Oh just grab them by the arm or lift their pack and or get their foot down and

**What's the most common injury you saw of**

10:30 **people trying to get**

Crushed arms and legs. Feet. A lot of feet between the boat and the ship coming over. The idea was to get the landing net inside your boat. Instead of hanging down and the ship going against it, bring the net inside your boat and then they had a little bit a and you'd sometimes you'd stretch the landing net so that it kept it out. So instead of going down that way they'd be coming like that

11:00 but oh there were different ways you could help them but oh I suppose thirty per cent efficient. Couldn't do much more.

**And what was your particular job as people were boarding a landing craft?**

Well ho try to hold the boat in to the ship mainly.

**With the...?**

With the boat hook but once you got the boat hook you'd get it with your hands and you'd hold on to it and hold it in there. It wasn't all that difficult except the wind. Wind was blowing it'd blow the

11:30 they had a big ramp on them, it was quite high and the wind'd hit that and it'd yaw out and you'd pull it in. Yeah.

**And at Port Stephens tell me what the Manoora looked like the first time you saw it.**

She looked like a... to me she looked like an overseas liner or she wasn't an overseas liner but she was a coastal vessel

12:00 that carried quite a few pass eleven thousand ton almost. Done flat out speed of about fifteen knots. So could get around fairly quickly. Yeah, I just though, "Oh well I'll get meself a nice possie on here and be comfortable," but I mean better than on a man o' war or all crowded but anyhow no, it I was quite happy with Manoora, yeah.

**Tell me about the first time you went**

12:30 **aboard.**

Well she was anchored out off Fly Point at Port Stephens, Shoal Bay there, and we used to see her out there and said, "Oh yeah well wonder what ship we'll be allocated to." There were three of them. There was the Westralia, Kanimbla although the Kanimbla didn't come 'til later. The Westralia, Manoora and we'd always say, "Oh I wonder which one they'll draft me to." West and the West was a pretty old a lot older, ten year older ship and

13:00 I we all said, "Gee I hope we don't get on that one. Go on the Manoora." So anyhow it was just how we were drafted and the requirements. See I was trained LCMs [Landing Craft Mechanised] and there was only three LCMs to each ship. There were twenty five barges each ship, three of them were LCMs and twenty two of them were LCVs, which were a lot smaller. So I was on LCMs and we gotta go to one of them but anyhow ended up Manoora and you know I had I was happy that I done it and

13:30 I never made many comparisons really but there's always inter-ship competitions you know. "Oh look at the old West. She's no good. We can beat her," and oh just a little bit of wasn't friction, it was competition and we used to pride ourself that we could always beat them to unload. We could get our boats in the water quicker and it was always a race. "Quick, get us off. Quick, we gotta beat them," and,

"Unload your cargo. Quick. Get 'em. Go on. Look there get them," and

14:00 oh no, friendly but a little bit of little bit competitive like that.

**And how did the existing crew on the Manoora treat you when you first came aboard?**

Well we had a different mess. We were in different part of the ship. All boats' crew were had a mess deck all of their own. Well a mess deck, they had about six of them all in rows, and a mess deck

14:30 consists of about a dozen blokes and a form and you looked after your own mess and the ship's company were on the port side, probably forard of us. We were just slightly after midships where I was, on B deck, and they were probably up further but we never ever had much to do with them except action stations or maintaining part of ship you know. Never had much to do with 'em really.

15:00 Boats' crew were specially trained and they sort of stuck to together. All boats' crew.

**How many boats' crew on the Manoora?**

Well there were twenty five barges and each barge had some had four, some had three but every one had a stoker and a subbie. So that was two hundred, I suppose about three hundred-odd. Oh then we would have more because we had a lot of mechanics that repaired the engines and the water pumps on the barges. If something was

15:30 amiss on them they'd had their own workshop on board ship and they'd take a motor out and replace it and do it up. So yeah I'd say probably at the most four hundred. Mightn't a been that.

**And whereabouts were the barges stored on the Manoora?**

The barges were hanging over the side on davits and they were hanging along the side of the ship. The LCMs were put on deck. One in the well

16:00 deck up forard in front of the bridge and two behind the funnel and inside of those they were that big we had the smaller barges inside them and a course for us to get in the water we had to unload the smaller boat inside of us, then we went in.

**How did they get unloaded on the**

We had cranes and we had an army engineers. We had a little troop of those that manned all the winches and they used to raise us and lower

16:30 us and we had, which I can relate later on, that we had quite a few hairy experiences with crane breaking in half and guide lines and throwing us into the water and we had a quite a few hairy experiences.

**And tell me about your sleeping arrangements on the Manoora. Where were you**

Well sleeping arrangements was hammock. We all had our hammocks of course but

17:00 a lot of us as the war progressed and we went into landings we used to cart a lot of stores and that ashore after we landed troops. We'd always come back with reinforcements and reinforcements to the side about a week 'til after the landing consisted of fuel, food stuff, clothing, tents, whatever they troops needed and we always managed to commandeer a couple of American

17:30 collapsible stretchers and being in the tropics, so hot, we used to put these collapsible stretchers up on deck and sleep up on deck 'cause it was much, much cooler.

**And how many people would have their hammocks in a like how many men would you sleep with?**

Oh I suppose half of the crew slept in their hammocks. People like me a lot of people slept on the forms. Laid it out on a form and they'd sleep on that and on top of

18:00 lockers like I did. Anywhere and everywhere.

**On top of lockers?**

Yeah. We used to have a row of lockers all like cabinets with all little doors. Everyone had a little locker to put their gear in and up on top was flat and they were about oh four foot six high. Nice and flat and about that wide and I used to unload my hammock there and had a blower there and an asbestos pipe next to it and quite good.

**And why on**

18:30 **top of the lockers? Why not...**

Well it saved me putting my hammock in a hammock bin every morning. Every day you had to lash your hammock up and that consisted of rolling it up and you had seven lashes along it, like half hitches all the way along it, and you'd fold it up and you'd put it in a big bin at the end of a mess. While I just folded mine over and left it there. No hook putting it on hooks, undoing it. Lash up and stow they called

that. Didn't have to lash up and stow.

**Did you have a specific hammock that was**

19:00 **all your own or did...?**

Had your hammock with its name on it and you had a mattress and a mattress cover stamped with your name on it. Yep.

**And did you essentially all sleep like on the mess deck that's where you ate as well?**

Yes. Yes.

**So in terms of shift work, how did this work with people getting sleep and working on shifts during the night**

19:30 **and day and...?**

Yes, well they used to have a chap on every watch. Most ships there's three watches. You know oh I think you can have red, white and blue or port or starboard. Some have two and everybody knew their shift. You were either blue I was blue watch all the time I was on Manoora. Never changed and I think that happened to most of them and they had a runner of the watch and he was a chap that when a watch was on at the middle watch at night, any errands that

20:00 had to be done he would run 'round but he would also go down and wake up the next watch. Like it was, say, quarter to four. The runner of the watch'd go down to the mess deck, "Wakey wakey." You know shake 'em. He knew he had a list of who was on watch and blokes had already told him where they were and he'd just shake, "Come on, you're next watch. Get up there," and away he'd go. He'd shake all the watch and every watch had a runner and he done that. He also done messages from the bridge

20:30 or any of the officers or whatever you know. Wake the officers too.

**And how 'bout if you were on a watch during the night and then you wanted to get sleep during the day but the mess deck was in use for people eating and this sort of thing. How did you manage to sleep through that?**

Yeah with great difficulty because the only time you ever had off was your if you were on morning watch and you'd have breakfast late but you still had to work part a ship, even at sea.

21:00 Everyone worked part of ship, which was I was fo'c'sle. There's three parts of the ship. There was fo'c'sle, tops and quarter deck, which is virtually the bow, the middle of the ship, midships and stern and your all your work was allocated to the fo'c'sle, or mine was, and it was the smallest group on the ship. 'Cause the fo'c'sle virtually only had the anchors and the riggings there to look after. The others had all the deck work, cabs, after mast, the quarter deck.

21:30 You know they had a lot more to do but you would have your breakfast and then you'd go back on watch. You'd go back onto your duties but oh, the worst were the first dog, which was four 'til six, and the second dog was six 'til eight but the middle watch was eight 'til twelve. You never got any time off for that. Morning watch, four 'til eight, well they'd all had breakfast and they were working part of ship. So that's what you missed out on.

**And tell me about the**

22:00 **work you did around the fo'c'sle?**

'Round the fo'c'sle? Oh well I was I was very fortunate. Most of it was hosing down decks. First thing of a morning you'd parade. You'd go in your divisions. Even at sea, no matter where you were. "Righto, you'll be allocated off. Fo'c'sle there. Tops there. Quarterdeck there." All in sections. Petty officer'd march you down to the fo'c'sle. "Righto, we're gonna holy stone those decks," which is a like a brick on a thing and you get all these nice

22:30 teak planks and you bring 'em up white and oh, "The cable lock we want the cable locker hosed out," which is where the anchor cables go or, "The hores pipe's a bit rusty. Chip them," or, "This hand rails want doing," and general work. Chipping and touching up you know with red lead and fortunately as time go by the petty officer in charge of it he gave me a good job and I was in

23:00 charge of the fo'c'sle locker, which was a little locker. Goodness me I could hardly turn 'round in it and it held all the paint brushes, the paint pots, the scraping tools, the hoses, the holy stones and anyone when they were allocated, "Okay we're going to holy stone today. Go up and draw holy stone." They used to come up to me. I had a little counter and they used to come up to me and, "Okay, sign for this scraper. Righto, you got one scraper," just to make sure it was returned. Well that

23:30 let me off a lot of duties because I didn't have to work and I also took my hammock up and I put it on the bench and that was my little cubby hole. I had a little private cabin all of my own right up in the fo'c'sle.

**And you'd sleep up there?**

Oh yes.

### **Was this allowed?**

Oh well I don't know but I wasn't I was never stopped. I don't know whether they knew it but 'cause I didn't have to fall in for parts a ship of a morning. I'd go straight to my locker. Unlock it. I had a lock for it. I'd unlock

24:00 it and, "Righto fellas, what do youse want today? Paint brush for you," or, "Sign here."

### **And how would the runner who woke people for their watch find you if you were asleep in this cabin?**

Well you'd tell them. You'd tell the runner of the previous watch. You'd say, "Oh look I've changed. I'm not sleepin' there tonight. I'm up I'm on deck. I'm up on deck," and you know you sometimes you'd wake the wrong bloke. You'd get cursed and

### **Were you ever a runner for the watch?**

No. I wasn't. My

24:30 cruising stations were on the wheel and the crows nest and you used to do each shift was four hours, other than the dog watches, and we used to centralise in the wheel house and there was duck boards in the wheel house, which are like lattice boards to stop you're not walking in water. Not that you'd need to but it was full of those and one'd be up the mast and the other'd be on the wheel and two'd be resting. You'd have an hour

25:00 off. You could sleep and then the chap on the wheel, when his hour's up he'd shake those two fellows. Shaking them meaning waking them up. We always called it shaking them. Wake them up and say, "Righto, you're at the mast head. You'd better go and close up and your trick on the wheel." Used to call it a not a turn, a trick. So okay and then we it's rotated. So every one of the four of us done one hour in the mast head and one hour on the wheel.

### **25:30 Tell me about the mast head.**

Well I remember coming out of Melbourne when we'd finished with the Yanks and going past Gabo Island down near Cape Howe. There was always, not always but there was a lot of sub scares there and as we entered out there was a big sub scare on. They'd sounded up a Jap sub or a German sub, I'm not sure which now, and we had to do a great big circle. We were down half way

26:00 to New Zealand in the Tasman Sea and boy, she got rough. She was as rough a sea I've ever been in. Anyhow I I'm on the wheel. I done me trick on the wheel. I'd had me hour's rest. It was my turn up the mast head and I was the second last and when you got to the mast head, there was a phone in there and you rang up and you'd report to the bridge, "Mast head closed up." Just report that you were there. "Mast head closed up," and, "Mast head relief closed

26:30 up." So anyhow I've been up there an hour and I'm hour and quarter, hour and twenty minutes. On the blower, the bridge. "Where's me mast head? Where's me mast head relief?" "Oh he's closed up twenty minutes ago." I said, "Well he hasn't got here. What's happened?" So they sent out a party lookin' for him and here he was up the cross trees. He'd froze. It was that rough you know she was whole ship was goin' like this and he was froze

27:00 on the rigging and on ships there's a part they call the cross tree, which is about three parts up the mast but where all the stays go to and once you go up that it was a steel ladder. Went up from that it was a rope ladder and it moved and he got to where he had to cross over, one ladder was that way and the other one was that way and where he had to cross over on the cross arms to go up, he froze. He fear got him. So they had to come down and

27:30 a couple a blokes went up and got him down and needless to say I done two hours up there. I let him know about it forever. Never let him off the hook.

### **Just describe the whole mast**

Well the crows nest is a... it's a cylinder. It comes up to about chest height. So you can just get your arms on it and rest them. About that high. You were equipped with a set of binoculars.

28:00 You had to scan the horizons for anything and report it on the phone to the bridge. Day time you still had binoculars but a lot of funny things happened up there at lots and lots of ratings took up magazines and they'd duck down behind it and they'd be reading the magazine or having a cigarette and on one occasion some ash must have dropped

28:30 down and there was a heap of magazines a foot thick in the bottom of the crows nest. No one took 'em down, just left 'em there readin' the comics and caught a spark and she just smouldered. It didn't flame, it just smouldered and the smoke pouring out of the crows nest and, "Action stations," and they found 'em but no one ever owned up to it but I suppose everyone contributed towards it. There was a bit of a scare on

29:00 for a while.

**What sort of magazines were up there?**

Oh all sorts. Man, all the girlie ones and comics and yeah Bluey and Curlys and God knows what.

**And was did you have some sort of system where you'd read a magazine for a certain amount of time and then look at the horizon and**

Oh yes.

**So**

Oh you'd scan the horizon and you'd say, "Oh well, looks pretty good," and, "Oh gee I'll have a look at this one," and, "Oh yeah enough. Oh I'd better go and have another look"

29:30 and they had like if something on the horizon and they found it on the bridge because they'd ring you up and they'd say, "Wake up. What are ya doin? You're on report." When you come down you'd be on Jimmy's or the first lieutenant's report. "Why didn't you sight this? What were you doing up there?" You know. "Oh sir I was looking out to starboard when that happened."

**And how big was the**

30:00 **area that...?**

The crows nest?

**Yes.**

It was I suppose about the size of a forty-four gallon drum. In height and diameter I would say.

**Anything to sit down on?**

No. No nothing to sit down but you would get your knees against it and put your backside up the other end and sort of half squat. Yeah. Just for an hour.

**And what's it like**

30:30 **with such a view of the ocean?**

Oh terrific. Oh you can see the end of the world. Yeah it was quite a good view but late evening was the worst when you're up in tropical waters and there was a lot of phosphorus in the water. You'd see great big hunks of phosphorescence oh like this and they'd hit the bow and they'd explode and you'd think, "Oh good God, I've missed a torpedo or a mine or what have I hit?" but you got used to it.

31:00 You'd see it floating before you come to it but if the bow of the ship hit it, it'd just explode and go into little tiny fragments and I was a little bit frightened 'til you got used to it.

**And does the sea play any tricks on you when you're looking at it for so long? Any**

Well no. Often got wet up there in rough seas. The bow pounding into it and she'd put it sixty, seventy foot up in the crows nest. You'd come down wet, soaked,

31:30 but the hardest part was when I was doing tricks on the wheel with the wind on your stern and it'd sort of lift the stern and yaw the ship like that. You know below the stern around and you're trying to get on course and the bridge a course is watching you like a hawk because some of those reefs up there are fairly dangerous and if you got a couple a degrees off course but I remember one night I was on doing trick on a wheel and this

32:00 rotten wind's blowing right up the stern of the ship and oh I'm working, I'm correcting it all the time. You know bringing it back onto the lubbers line and get myself on the one four oh, whatever and

**What did you call the line?**

The lubbers line. That's the line on the compass.

**Why is it called...?**

The compass doesn't the compass doesn't move. It's the ship that you what you have to get used to is bringing the head of the ship around to the compass and it's very confusing at times once you're

32:30 working like hell. Sometimes you make the wrong move and you say, "Oh gee I've gotta bring that, correct that," but as soon as you make a wrong move the bridge has got the compass up there. "Get on course. Helmsman get on course. Keep the ship on course," but when the water when the wind's behind you and it's yawing and it pile drives the ship into the wave you know and you come up and you're off course. Oh you really work. You're really working for an hour on a tail wind, especially on a big ship like that

33:00 and a big side. The wind influenced it a lot.

**And who's in charge of you? Who's paying attention to you when you're doing**

Up on the bridge is a flybridge. We were in an enclosed area and up on the top is an open bridge.

Compass platform they call that. It's really open. No cover, or maybe a canvas top on it and they've the navigator's usually there, the officer of the watch, and they're more or less they're on there with a couple of look outs. They're more or less there watching your course

33:30 and you get off and you get a blast. Yeah. "Get on course. What are ya doin' helmsman? Goin' to sleep?" but ah oh no, that was just part of it. You accepted but you knew how important it was too to keep your ship on course. "I told you to steer one two zero and you're one seven oh," or something. "Get it back on," but every now and then if you were zig zagging, which made it a lot more work, a voice'd come down

34:00 the voice tube you know, "Alter course at," you know, "on the count," and count down to ten. On ten 'poom'. "Alter course." 'Cause you were in a convoy and everyone had to do the same zig.

**Is it a bit stressful?**

Oh I didn't find it stressful. I really didn't but oh young and foolish I guess and no, I didn't find it stressful.

**And how did you find**

34:30 **the sort of ranks in charge of you? How did they treat you generally?**

Some were good. Some were human beings. Some weren't. Officers were a sort of a little class of their own as far as we were concerned. Some would mix good but I'd say majority, no. They stayed to themselves and

35:00 I think they liked to keep it that way. Captain, we had a good captain. Never worried us. Very quiet man but had obviously had a lot of experience and he was a good captain because we come through without a scar so I've gotta stick with him. We had a few first lieutenants who were Jimmys, executive officers. They were second in charge. They were they had to enforce all the

35:30 rules. Same for the captain. If you done something wrong you went up before him. He dished out the punishment but if it was something really bad you went before the captain on a captain's report but

**Did you...?**

No, I never went on a captain's report. No. No I wasn't there.

**And in the crows nest?**

Yes.

**Was there ever... you mentioned that really rough sea.**

Yes.

**Was there ever any danger of**

36:00 **being thrown out of it?**

Well I don't think you worried about getting thrown out. You were more worried about hanging on. You're saying, "Oh gee I wish it'd stop," because it was fair it you can imagine at ground level the angle of the rock was only that far but from way up seventy foot up it was you were going you were travelling a further radius and you were pleased to get out.

**How did you did you have to climb over the edge to get**

Yeah climb over the edge and get on

36:30 this shaky old rope ladder. She was goin' with the wind and you were and then you had to cross over and go down at right angles to down the other, which was a steel ladder but it was fastened and it was stable.

**Did you ever have any close calls?**

Not falling off. I was hanging on for dear life. I was too busy hanging on to worry about I could see the drink but I wasn't going in it. I was oh no. Yeah. It was quite an experience but you know.

37:00 **And being up there, you mentioned the phosphorous in the tropical seas. What other ways does the ocean change as you get up into the tropics?**

Oh there's a lot to see. There's always something going on. There's always porpoises or flying fish. See a lot of flying fish and they really fly. They come up on deck. Had them up on deck, yes. Oh you know fish about oh six, eight inches long. Yeah you often get those but they sort a come outta the water and go back in and

37:30 entertainment for the troops.

**And is there something hypnotic about the sea?**

No. What I think what I liked most was when up in the tropics when it was really calm and you were off watch, you'd go astern and you'd hang over a rail and I used to smoke in those days and you'd have a cigarette, which you know if it wasn't in danger area and you'd look out at the moonlight and you could see, have you ever seen

38:00 you ever been to Broome and seen that stairway to the stars? Well that's what it seemed and at certain times when the tide's right the sun comes down and it looks like a ladder, the moon comes up I should say and it looks like there's a stairway straight up to the moon. It happens every couple a times a year but that's what this looked like. It looked like a ladder. Got wider and wider as it went to the moon. It was coming over the horizon and it was beautiful and it was so peaceful you know

38:30 and I think we used to reminisce a little bit. I know I did. I thought, "Gee that's beautiful," you know. "I'll have to come on a cruise."

**Describe how it looks like a stairway?**

It's the little ripples on the ocean were like rings and as the moon came up it reflected on the water and it tapered from wide to narrow or from narrow to wide and as it came up it'd put a reflection on the water

39:00 like the rungs of a ladder and you had to get the moon just right and the sea calm but over in Broome it happens I think, I don't know if it's every four years or a couple a times a year but I was fortunate enough to be there when it was on and it's really spectacular. Yeah. Stairway to the stars, moon or something they call it but yeah, phenomenal.

**We'll just pause there 'cause we're at the end of the...**

## Tape 4

00:36 **Off camera we were talking that there were some things you were saying you didn't not sure you wanted to say but some jokes and stuff that had happened with the crows nest or...?**

Oh well yeah the main thing was the fire I you know. I didn't know whether starting a fire on board ship I thought that might go over like a lead balloon.

**Were there any other jokes or**

01:00 **talk about the being up in the crows nest? Like were you given a name or anything up there?**

Oh no. It was my cruising station and I had that all the time I was on Manoora. That was my cruising station. Action station was different. Everyone had different action stations.

**Tell us about yours?**

I was on the starboard side after I was on a .5 oh it was bit bigger than a machine gun. It was only for anti-aircraft. It was useless for anything else

01:30 and on occasions between landings we'd have practice shoots. The air force'd come along and tow a big sleeve behind and we'd have we had a couple of three inch guns too, or four inch guns I should say, and we used to shoot those off and see how close we could get or whether we could hit the target and a course all these guns we'd all have a blast at it and try and knock it out without hitting the aeroplane.

**Was it a dangerous task**

02:00 **or...**

No. It was a practice day. That's how it was and we looked at it oh it'd be announced that morning. "At eleven hundred hours there'll be a fly past with a trial shoot or practice shoot." Didn't happen a lot. I think we had about three or four of 'em.

**Were there any incidents to talk about?**

No. Not that I know of. No, and I never saw a sleeve go down either but then again it could a passed right through it. It was just a flat sleeve and could have gone through it

02:30 and it wouldn't a deflated it. It wasn't a like a balloon. It was just a sleeve like they have these days with aircraft.

**How did you make sure that the aircraft wasn't hit?**

By firing at the sleeve. It was oh it was quite a fair way behind it. They played it pretty safe.

**Were there any incidents with problems with the machine gunning with you?**

Well I did. Yes I we were having we were having a shoot and the



03:00 .5 I had on, I still got the scars here. I it jammed and I went to recock it, it had a little handle, recocker, and I went to pull it back and as I pulled it back it went off and it took my thumb forward with me and I jammed me in the loading bolt and it jammed there and I couldn't get out and the gun went off of course and I had to pull it back and get me hand out and oh they took me down the sick bay and stitched me up and put me off work

03:30 for a week but apart from that, that's all that happened.

**How bad was the thumb?**

Well it was stiff for quite a few years. They sewed it up both sides, so it must have jammed through it but oh time off isn't easy to get in the navy. Like I think I got I think on me record there it says I got three days off duties and three days light duties. So it was a week. I got a week off.

04:00 So I was back on I suppose they thought you could paint and chip with one hand.

**Did you enjoy this time off?**

Oh yes. It was all like an adrenalin kick I think you know. "Oh gee whiz. Somethin' different, hey? We're havin' a shoot today."

**And in the crows' nest how would you keep yourself kind of warm or anything?**

Get down as low as you could and have a great coat on and just get down as low

04:30 as you could with your chin just on the rim.

**Would you wear anything on your head or**

Yes, you would. You'd have a balaclava and a Sou'Wester if it was really blowing and a spray was coming up. Put a Sou'Wester like they did on the old wind jammers and old sailing ships but most times you didn't have those on. You just had a balaclava and of course when you came down, the runner of the watch'd always have a cup a kye for you and I don't know whether you're familiar, but kye was a chocolate drink.

05:00 Bit like Milo and cocoa and it used to come in big slabs and they'd smash it up with a hammer or whatever and pour hot water and melt it and we used to come off watch and the runner of the watch'd have the jar a kye and you'd have your mug there and you'd be sipping at it and it was beautiful and it'd warm you right up to your toenails. While we're on kye, I remember one incident. I came down off middle watch one night and I couldn't find my

05:30 mug. Someone had you kept your mug in your locker so no one else could get it and there was a chap on board. He was always spic and span and looked after his gear like it was there was no tomorrow and freezing cold and I thought, "Well I haven't got my mug. Can't find my mug. I'll use this fellow's," and his name was Pud Burgess. So I touched his locker and it flew open and here's his mug. So I got it and I poured it up with kye and I got we always put our hands

06:00 around the mug to keep your hands warm and you'd sip at it, sip at it and I got about half way down and 'clunk'. Set a false teeth were in it. Oh that turned me off. So I just got the mug, kye and all, put it back in his locker and closed it and it was a bit of a performance the next day I could tell ya and no one owned up to it. Not a soul.

**Well what did he do that what was the performance?**

Oh, "Who put this in my teeth?"

06:30 This is my locker. You've got no right takin' my mug," and, "You keep outta my locker all you blokes on middle watch," and rah rah rah. "Look at me teeth." "Oh wash 'em out. Forget about it and go," but it really turned me off 'cause I was really cold and I was in me hands around this mug and I was little sip and, "Oh lovely," you know and you know that stage where I gotta tip it up a bit and 'clunk'. Then it wasn't the nicest feeling.

07:00 **Well what was it the feeling like on board? Like did you have some pretty good mates at this stage?**

Yeah I did. I had some very good mates and I'm still mates with 'em. They're still my best friends.

**Describe a couple for us. Your closest mate.**

Ah my closest mate I'd say would have been a chap called Ray White, Knocker. All Whites are Knockers in the navy. All Clarks are Nobbys. They it's just a traditional thing that's gone through from the sailing days

07:30 and Knocker White was my mate and we were very close, and we still are, and another mate called Cec Browning, who we used to call Moonface. You know the big happy smile and he was always grinning and matter of fact I've only the last two months I've just come back from his place. He lives at Torquay, down Victoria. Top fella him and his wife and we're still mates. Come down. He's been up here

08:00 and stays with us and we're we pick up as though we've never been apart and maybe we haven't seen each other for twenty years.

**And why are Whites Knockers?**

I don't know. It's a traditional thing but every White in the navy is a Knocker. Knocker White and Nobby Clark. I don't know. I think it stems from the old sailing ship days. Yeah.

**And where were they...**

Like Gibsons are Hoot

08:30 but I've figured it out. That may have come from those Gibson owls. There's an owl called Gibsons and I think hoot comes from them but all Gibsons are all Hoots. So it's funny how these names have tagged along all these years and the no connection with anyone, just, "Oh Knocker." If there's ten Whites, they're all Knockers.

**What about yourself?**

I was always called Snow from the day I went on board Assault.

09:00 I was called Snow 'cause I had very fair hair and how I met these friends of mine. Nappy Arnold, you're gonna laugh at some a these names. I had my friends were Nippy Wallace, whose right name was Trevor. I had Kenny Arnold who we called Nappy and I had Knocker White, who was called Knocker and I had decided that on our way back from Melbourne after we got outta the rough weather,

09:30 it was a Sunday, and on Sundays in the navy they have what they call divisions and everyone the lower deck clears lower deck. Go up on the deck and parade yourself. Captain inspects you, inspects all the troops and the padre has church. Now padres in the navy are called sin bosuns. You've probably heard of that but that's what we always called the padres. Sin' bo' the old sin bosun.

10:00 Anyhow he'd give the sermon and but to do it for the inspection you had to have all your gear your shoes polished, your socks clean and clean gear and your cap nice white and everything spotless and a course I wasn't all that keen on keeping all me good gear nice and spotless. So I decided along with quite a few other fellas but I was a one out of them and I'm looking for a place to hide. I thought, "Now I'm not going to divisions

10:30 and I'm not going to church. Where can I hide?" And all the barges were strung on davits over the side of ship when we're at sea and they had covers. A tarp cover over 'em so water wouldn't get into them when you're at sea and out of the bollard at the front there was a little gap, oh a quarter of an inch gap, and I could see smoke coming out if it and I thought, "There's someone in there and there's someone in there smoking." So I

11:00 went up to the thing and undone the hooks like a tonneau cover on a utility. Undone them and I said, "Someone in there?" and they say, "Get away. Get away. Don't come in here. Don't come in here." I said, "I'm comin' in here or I'm gonna drop the whole lotta youse in." So, "Righto," they undone it and, they were hanging onto it, and they let me in and that's how I met Knocker and Nappy Arnold and they're smoking. So I joined 'em and in three and a half years on Manoora I went to divisions twice. Skulking as

11:30 they called it, to get out of duties you skulked. I used to go down the cable locker with Knocker and Nappy and it got that putrid from mud coming up on the anchor cable and you know being stagnant in there from weeks and weeks and you come out with caked in mud. "No good. We gotta change it." So we had a big funnel on Manoora. Quite a big funnel and it had a trap door in it. So we decided, "The funnel. That's where we'll go. We'll go up in

12:00 the funnel." So we'd sneak up there when divisions were on. Hide in the funnel. Close the door and in the funnel there was all grating. The floor was all grating and you could see down into the engine room and all the heat from the engines, 'cause she's still going at sea, coming up and oh we'd be sweating it out and you'd get up, you'd be staggering. You'd be half stupid. Just to get outta divisions but we continued doing it. We just done that for well, I say, I think twice,

12:30 maybe three times at the most in three and a half years I went to church.

**Were you ever caught?**

Yes, I was nearly caught. They counted heads one day. They suspected that there was something amiss, that all the ratings weren't there and they counted the heads at parade for the inspection and they said they'd count heads straight after. One of the boys, one of our mates come racing. He

13:00 had to go to the toilet. That was his pretence. He knew where we were. Came up the funnel. "Better get down. Quick." So we're down and we got on a bit a gear and we're lined up like little soldiers. They counted 'em and, "There's three more people here than the first count. How come? The three ratings who weren't here in the first count please one step forward." Looked at me mate and not a movement in us. We're just like little tin soldiers. Sitting there and this chap, I'll I've never forgiven him for it anyhow,

13:30 but his name was Unnar Eddington and he pushed me. He was right behind me and he pushed me and a course they took it as I was owning up to it and so me two mates they said, "Oh well don't do it on your

own. We all go together." So we got fourteen days jankers, which or number 11. There was punishments went in 14 and 11. 14 was oh doing an hour and a half and number 11 was doin' it for seven

14:00 days or you know whatever. Different grades of punishment. So we got fourteen days 11 and I said to Unnar, "Why did you do?" and he said, "Oh we were all gonna get punished." I said, "But they couldn't have blamed the whole crew." I said, "There there'd be no one to work. If they had a got all of us there was no one to do work part a ship," and I said, "You," you know, "you dropped us in." "Ooh (UNCLEAR)," and I said, "Oh well. End of story. Forget it." We just copped it and

14:30 it was just a little incident of not goin' to church. I don't know whether that did never taught me a lesson anyhow.

**Did you go back to**

Divisions?

**Yeah. Did you go back after that?**

No. No. Next week back in the funnel. Yeah. In the end they started to wake. We ended up going in the coat locker. On the end of every mess there was a little locker. It was just a space with hooks on it and we used to put our Burberrys, which was a raincoat. Not a raincoat but a gaberdine

15:00 coat and all hooks and we used to put them up there and we used to hide back in behind them. We'd just about suffocate but we'd hide in there. All these coats draped down. Couldn't see us and then petty officer'd come down and go through 'em. "Come out of here." "Oh well we gotta find another spot," but oh we never run outta places. We always found some place but when I look at it I often laugh. I think, "How stupid. All we had to do was put a bit of blanko on

15:30 our cap and get a bit of clean gear and stick it change our gear but oh it was just a ritual with us. "No we don't go to we're not goin' to divisions and we're not goin'."

**Yeah I was gonna ask, was it kind of you went through a lot of pain to miss it.**

Dogmatic really it was. It was just saying, "Oh we've never been and we're not goin' now. Where can we hide?" And I think it was a dare. "Where can we hide? Where we can get outta these likes?"

**Well how**

16:00 **bad could some of the punishments be if you were caught doing**

Cells was the worst. Cells was a little cell right up forard. Right up in the fo'c'sle right opposite where I was in the locker. Little companionway went up there and it was under the flares. If you know the bows of a ship, they point up and they flare down to the water. Just a big flare and there's a cell in there and the punishment they give you might get seven days cells and

16:30 they'd give you picking oakum. Now oakum is, what'll I say? It's like a hemp and you tease it out. Comes in a big ball and you tease it out and you had to pick so many pound of hemp or so many balls of hemp a day. So all you sat there on a wooden pillow, that's all you had. A block of wood carved out for a pillow and on a slab of wood and you'd pick oakum all day and you just got a mediocre

17:00 ration because a friend of mine was unfortunate enough to get in a in the cells. So we used to get a bit of food from the canteen or a tin of grapefruit were the going things in those days. We'd tie it on a rope and we'd swing it when it got dark and he'd try and grab the rope as it went under the flare and the boat was flared out like that and we dropped it down. It'd be six foot out from the thing and we had to swing it and he had to grab it. So

17:30 we used to feed him in that respect for seven days and funny thing, this fellow his name is Jack Galloway and we used to call him Boob after that and he's written quite a few he's written that book. He's written quite a few books. He wrote a book about Blamey called The Odd Fellow and The Last Call of the Bugle and that orange origin about the football and he's become you know a handy author but he resented any authority. He'd challenge it. Anything. "Why have I got to do that?"

18:00 Why? But why?" This was his standard you know and they said, "Well you do it or captain's report," and he just refused to do things so they put him in the slammer. Into the cells he went but we looked after him alright. He got outta that okay.

**Were they locked in there?**

Yes. Oh yes. Yeah. Had a sentry.

**Would the sentry notice the cans**

He wouldn't know. It could come out the outside.

18:30 Come on the outside of the ship. See the ship the flares of the, the deck was up there and the when it came down to the water it tapered and if you hung it straight down it was like a triangle and we'd have to swing it in but there was a companionway into the door of the cells and that's where there was a sentry. Oh I think the sentry knew. If he didn't he was a goose.

**And what had he done to get in there do you know?**

I think he I think I'm a bit hazy.

- 19:00 He was always up on captain's report. He refused to do some job and I just he challenged their authority to do it and why should he do it and it was senseless and you know but he was that was the nature of him. He was always like and he still is. He still challenges anything that happens.

**And what you mentioned quickly that he was an okay captain but describe what he was like as a man?**

Well we never really got to know

- 19:30 him as a man. He was he was a rather private skipper. He kept to his cabin. He had a big cabin, sea cabin, and he sort of only on official occasions that we very seldom saw him on the deck. Maybe see him walking the deck for a bit of exercise on occasions but never saw a lot of him.

**What was the feeling like when the captain would walk by? Would how do you feel? Is**

Oh well you felt good towards him because

- 20:00 we all felt that he was a pretty good bloke. We all thought he liked a drink but okay, all of us did but we treated him we felt he was as good fellow and I think we were all appreciative and say, "Well look no matter what his failings are well he's seen us through this and we haven't run into any reefs or had any mishaps or been bombarded or torpedoed and we come through unscathed. So we gotta give our skipper a bit a credit."
- 20:30 He got the DSO [Distinguished Service Order] for he was on a corvette, the Kiama, at Buna. You know where they were bombarded and he you know his evasive skills I believe he was recommended for a citation for it so but he was a one of the very few four ring captains that were around. So he was pretty highly he actually we were flotilla leader for the three ships and on all the assault landings we were he was the head man. 'Cause under the Yankees'
- 21:00 7th Amphibious Fleet. We were attached to them and they were the directors of it, but we were in charge of the Australian ships, or Manoora was, but oh no we had pretty good blokes. We had one rotten one. I've gotta say rotten because that's what he was. He was a disciplinary officer for the navy and most officers you salute them once a day. First time of a day on deck salute him
- 21:30 but this fella wanted a salute every time you passed him and if you didn't, "On report," and you'd get some punishment for it and of course the ratings disliked that and they got a dislike for him. So his name was Menlove but, Lieutenant Commander Menlove, but he wasn't very popular at all. He lasted about six months and we had another one called Lansdell and he was a pretty good bloke.

**Just his name kind**

- 22:00 **of make did anyone make any jokes about...?**

Well he used to when he read out any charges it was the habit of reading out his full name and the rating's full name and the charge and the procedure was to clear lower decks, put you up on deck. Off cap. The first thing you took you off capped while they sentenced ya, tell ya the sentence, and he alone made the sentence and it was off caps and his name was Aubrey and he said, "I Desmond Aubrey

- 22:30 Menlove, lieutenant commander executive officer HMAS Manoora hereby nah nah rating so and so off cap." Pull your cap off and put your wherever you had a go and but yeah oh they'd say, "Yeah dodge him," you know. We'd always take a detour to dodge him.

**I guess I was making a comment about Menlove.**

Yes. Yes I know. Yeah.

**Would anyone make a joke about that?**

No,

- 23:00 but I believe some off the boys off Manoora run into him in later life and he was an insurance assessor for an insurance company in Sydney and one of them had the occasion to front him for some claim or something and when he put his head up outta the thing he said, "You," and he said, "I'm gettin' out of this company. I don't want anything to do with this company," and he just wiped him.

**And how harsh was his punishments to...?**

Oh he

- 23:30 didn't miss ya. Like for not saluting you might get seven days number 11, which meant an hour and a half's extra work every afternoon chipping paint and a course the old thing the you know when you get unwarranted punishment the chaps'd just go out there just put the hammer on the steel. One with a hammer, one with a pot a paint until your arm got tired and just do the other one. Negative really.

**Was**

24:00 **he oh he must be you said he was the only one but was it a real sense of pettiness or what was the sense of what he was doing?**

Oh power tripped I always called it. They were power tripping. "I'm a lieutenant commander and you're lower deck and you'll do what I say," but our captain was never like that.

**Did you cross him yourself?**

Oh I got pulled up for not saluting but I never thought it was necessary you know. All day long pass him six times

24:30 a day and I'm sure he'd parade up and down the deck so you'd have to salute him.

**Oh yeah. Would you have a nickname for him at all?**

No. Only 'the bastard'.

**Tell us about your first kind of trip out on the Manoora out overseas.**

Well the first trip I did was a trip to Milne Bay. We took up some reinforcements up there.

25:00 I think, I couldn't tell ya the date. That was the first time I went really went to sea. I'd done Sydney to Melbourne and that but first time out of Australia was to Milne Bay and then I think we I'm not sure, but I think we came back to a place called Cape Cretan. That was somewhere down on the New Guinea coast but we were runnin' out of Madang, Lae, Finschhafen,

25:30 Alexishafen. All up and down, Langemak Bay, we were in and out of there a lot. You know picking up American troops, giving them a couple of practice landings to take 'em to assault landings. We'd load up all equipment. Truck, cars, artillery, supplies, troops. 'Cause we handled about twelve hundred-odd troops. I think twelve hundred and fifty was our capacity. So you

26:00 can imagine a ship like that. It'd be crowded out. Oh

**Well describe that first trip. Like you were sending reinforcements but describe like how many people or roughly got on board? What was it like leaving and where did you leave from?**

Well we I think we went from Milne Bay to Cape Cretan.

**No I mean from Australia that very first trip like?**

Oh...

**Where did you...**

Let's get out. Hey. We're in the war," you know. "Let's get out. Come on. Bring on the Japs [Japanese]."

26:30 It was pretty gung ho and we were just pleased to get out at sea. 'Cause we'd never been, none of us had ever been to sea and it was excitement. "Oh where are we goin'? What, wow, New Guinea," and I can always remember Milne Bay and if you've ever been to Milne Bay it's a pretty dowdy place. Its foreboding. The mountains come right down to the sea and there's always cloud on the mountain and it's always

27:00 raining and we pulled up, we had a reinforcement supplies and we pulled up and I could never get over this. We're from here to that case of yours off the shore. The water must have went straight down and cloud was over the mountains and we were unloading gear onto a little bit of a jetty there and the Yanks were with trucks. We were putting it on slings straight onto trucks

27:30 so they could mobilise it and get it away and then at about half past two in the afternoon down come a tropical deluge and the trucks were gettin' bogged and they're walkin' in muck and I can remember looking over the rail. I thought, "Oh good God is this joint thank God I'm not in the army. Walkin' 'round in that mud," and it reinforced my perception previously that why I joined the navy and I thought, "Gee I think I've made a pulled the right rein here and I've gone the right way. I couldn't handle this"

28:00 but it was known for it, Milne Bay. It was oh it was a wet place and the mountains come straight down I suppose a hundred yards of the water. Sheer mountain drops.

**And what was it like on board with all these army guys going off to...?**

Very crowded. The Yanks we sort of made friends with them not on any permanent basis. "Oh G'day mate," you know. "Have a go at it."

28:30 We'd get 'em playing cards. We used to play cards every night on our mess deck. Just Knocker and Nappy and three or four of us 'til lights out. You know we'd just play cards and oh actually it was pinochles we used to play. Five hundred and pinochle, 'cause we learnt that off the Yanks. Oh we'd get a few of their emergency rations, which were pretty good stuff in comparison. We'd we weren't past getting hold of a few of those things and devouring 'em.

**What would they get off you?**

29:00 Very little. A push over the side when they had to go down the landing nets. Yeah. Hurry ups and...

**So on this first trip was it mainly American army or**

Yes. It was all American until we done three landings on Borneo with Australian troops. 7th, 9th and 7th Divisions.

**So they you were taking them to Milne Bay, the Americans?**

No. We were taking reinforcements up and supplies.

29:30 Australian. The Yanks had very little to do with Milne Bay.

**Oh well on this first trip to Milne Bay, what was that like with all the army blokes on board? The Australian army blokes?**

Oh it was good. We was right at home joking and laughing and if you made a friendship for the three or four days, "Oh come down the mess deck," and we'd always get a little bit of food for 'em you know. Better than that the army cooks were trying to make up for 'em.

**And what was it like being out at sea**

30:00 **properly for the first time? At like I know you'd been out to sea**

Yeah.

**But just on a long journey?**

Well it was a challenge. It was excitement of, "Where we going?" We were never told. Sometimes we were told after we were a day out or something but no one knew. It was all speculation and excitement. "I wonder what it'll be like. Oh crikeys. What'll be there?" You know. "Place blowin' up." There's," oh and more excitement.

**Did you feel a sense of danger**

30:30 **on this first trip?**

No I didn't but I felt several senses of danger later, but not extreme. You know I thought, "Oh gee what hey what'll I do," I always had a plan if the ship was ever torpedoed what I'd do or what I'd try and do but I always thought that was a survival, little survival mode I kicked myself into.

**What was the plan?**

The plan was to, "Don't go as soon as it goes down

31:00 but dive out as far as you possibly could and swim like hell so you wouldn't get sucked down with the vacuum." And then when you went out look for something to hang on to.

**Were you told much about this vacuum effect?**

Told nothing about it. We were told absolutely nothing about survival at sea. We had boat drill where we had to go to in case of that to go to carley floats [inflatable rubber boat] which push off the deck and float but

31:30 it was more or less every man for himself. 'Cause you never know where you were gonna get hit you know. Like if you were hit in the engine room, down aft you wouldn't know where it was hit. You wouldn't know which way. "Hey will I go forward or will I go aft." Like go the closest point?

**So how did you know about the vacuum effect yourself?**

Oh fellows talking you know and listening to ships that have gone down. How the vacuum's sucked them back down and I think it was a bit over

32:00 rated but it did happen and you can imagine it happening. Like pullin' the plug out of a sink isn't it and so oh I had a plan. I thought, "I'll go like hell as far as try and hold my breath and look for somethin' to hang onto." I wasn't worried about blowin' me blimp up because we all had blimps which you used to blow up.

**Was kind of this kind of talk discouraged by the those in charge?**

No I don't think so. I mean I never noticed

32:30 any discouragement about anyone. Everyone I suppose had their own thoughts about it but I know my mates hadn't 'cause we had, "Oh we're goin' for our life over there," you know. "Go like hell." Yeah.

**And so where were you thinking you were going on this first trip if you weren't told?**

Didn't know. We knew we were going up New Guinea but where we didn't know but we really didn't

care. We thought, "Hello. We're out. We're into the war now. We're we've come for

33:00 what we've joined up for. We're gonna do something." You know, "We're going to New Guinea. Great. Wonder what it's like," you know.

**Were there any submarine scares on that first trip?**

No. The only submarine scares we ever had was off Gabo Island coming up from and there were a few up 'round the Philippines but we had such a massive escort thing that they

33:30 scared them off before they come up. Kamikaze planes were our worst enemy. They we had plenty of those come at us.

**So what was the procedure if a sub was spotted? How what would people call out? What would people do?**

"Action stations." First thing the bells'd go. "Man the action stations." Everyone knew their action station. "Man your action stations. Load up," and then you'd be waiting for your radar to pick it up, or your ASDIC, which was

34:00 a anti-submarine detection. They'd pick it up on a sonar. You'd pick up surface with your radar and underwater with your ASDIC [Anti Submarine Detection and Investigation Committee] and if you the beeps it'd tell you how many kilometres and what area but most of the time the escorts that was their duty. To protect us from that, which they'd zig zag course. Zig zag here, there.

**And you've told us a bit about arriving at Milne Bay and what it was like there but what were you doing**

34:30 **on that first trip? You were unloading or**

Unloading. Mainly unloading. We never used our barges at all. We were up alongside a little tiny wharf ten foot from the bank and we unloaded these. Our derricks reached over to the bank and dropped all these supplies and reinforcing stuff they wanted and oh I think then we went over to New Guinea and I think it wasn't 'til this would a been '44 but I don't I think it was the first assault landing we

35:00 done was Tanahmerah Bay in Dutch New Guinea in I think April '45 but they were all Yanks but in the meantime we'd been training the Yanks. We'd go into Finschhafen, Madang, wherever the Yanks were camped, put them on board all their equipment and unload it on a beach. Just giving them practice of how to go about it you know. What you had to do and of course the idea was the principle of assault landing was to get your troops ashore

35:30 as quickly and as dry as you possibly could it was but a lotta beaches didn't allow it. Some beaches we were a hundred and fifty yards off the beach and we had to put them over because the barges went ashore, went aground and they had to tip 'em over. Trucks, tanks. All up to their engine and of course a lot of them couldn't make couldn't start it and they had to get dozers in and lines in and snig 'em out and churn the

36:00 mud up and I think the worst of those was Morotai. We were a long way from the shore line at Morotai and Tarakan they had all underwater obstacles and you only had a little strip we could land on for underwater demolition the day before had blasted them all out and left a little fifty metre channel for us to land in but oh that was that's how it happened. Some good beaches. Balikpapan wasn't a good beach either, very shallow, but

36:30 you'd really we had little maps of 'em all but it never always went according to plan. We all did it a little different or some barges got broached on a beach, say it was Red Beach one, "Nah. Go to Red Beach 2." They'd redirect you, you know because there was a couple a barges held up there with a truck half off and three foot of water.

**Would they do any like little reconnaissance trips with other craft to check the...?**

Yes.

37:00 The underwater demolition the procedure for most assault landings was, the day before the warships'd come in and bombard hell out of it along with the air force. They would be doing spotting and telling the guns off the ships and the air force'd be bombing shore line targets to try and eliminate most of it. Well while that was going on they used to have an underwater demolition team and they'd go in and they'd do all the soundings and

37:30 they'd any underwater obstacles in the way, blow 'em up. Like they done at Tarakan. They had all these piles, stakes in the water. Hundreds and hundreds of 'em and they had to blow 'em up and just but blew up tracks through so that we could land the troops on the shore.

**Would there be concern about this giving away positions and giving away to possible enemy where these channels were?**

Well yes, possibly

38:00 but they were fairly well bombarded. The big guns from the navy and the aircraft they bombed 'em up

pretty well and we never met a terrible lot of opposition. There was always the odd shots of you know that they hadn't wiped out, which sniper and bunkers and all that that they didn't eliminate and a lot of artillery. I remember into Balikpapan I think we were on, I don't know wave six anyhow, but the barge

38:30 I had was such a big barge that it was a good target and I remember going into the beach. After we left the line a departure was about a mile and a half out from the beach. This Japanese artillery opened up and oh I suppose he was sixty yards off us. He was having a go at us. Had half a dozen rounds at us but we just you know had to go straight in 'cause we had the I think we had a two ton truck with an artillery piece towed in behind it

39:00 and coming out he had another crack at us but he was a way off it but oh the boys looked after him, the Aussie boys, when they got a big hold on the beach head because the main thing was to get troops and then equipment and then we'd go back and get reinforcements and new supplies and we'd bring in fuel and food and ammunition, TNT [trinitrofluorene - explosive]. Bring whatever they needed to secure the

39:30 place.

**Alright well we'll just stop there 'cause we're at the end of the tape.**

## Tape 5

00:36 **Well to start off with tell me your opinion of the Americans during... the ones you came in contact with during World War II?**

Oh they were okay but they were a spoilt lot really. They lived on ice cream and all the goodies of life whereas we didn't do it and I think as far as a fighting force went they had excellent equipment

01:00 but I don't think they had quite the ticker that the Aussies did and I think they proved that at Buna, at Buna when the Australians come down from the Kokoda Trail and they were trying to take Buna village. They came in from the Western side and the American divisions, I think it was the 61st I'm not sure now, they came up the coast and they met heavy fire and they went to ground

01:30 whereas the Aussies just kept going with their little Matilda tanks, come in 'round behind them and they're waiting to seize the village and they looked around and there was no Yanks there and the Yanks had all gone to ground as soon as they heard fire and I don't know whether it was Blamey or one of the Australian generals got wind of this and they changed their American general and they put another general in charge and he got them fired up.

02:00 He said, "Look you just don't lay down. You get up and fight and here's the Aussies holding a place out and they're waiting for you to close in to take it and they can't do it." So eventually they took it but there was very heavy losses, very heavy losses both sides.

**And where were you picking the Americans up from for the training run you were doing?**

Well anywhere along the New Guinea coast. Some at Alexishafen, Lae, Madang. I think we even got some at Wewak.

02:30 Langemak Bay, yes. Wherever there were ready enough troops to prepare for a landing. The American forces had control of all this because we were governed by the 7th Amphibious Fleet, the American 7th Amphibious Fleet, and we were just attachments to it, even though we were Australian and thus all the assault landings were done with American troops until we hit Borneo and they were all Australian.

03:00 **And how would you pick the Americans up from these places?**

Well I guess it all it came through signals to ships and we were told to rendezvous at a certain place and take on board so many thousand American troops and give them a training run. We wouldn't go we'd only go out to sea and then put the barges back on the beach. Never went from one position to another. We just took them out

03:30 four or five mile offshore and, "Okay drop the barges," and done a sort of a dummy run. It was really training runs in preparation for assault landings that MacArthur had in view. 'Cause at that stage his plans were to skip places. Like get around behind the Japs and isolate those and don't fight that. Take that and go 'round again and take another strategic point and

04:00 well it worked. It was a great idea and that's how they didn't fight all their way up the coast. They just jumped 'round and made assault landings but once we got to Hollandia, which was the first landing, that was a great jumping off spot for the Halmaheras, Borneo, Philippines. It was we had air space. He had airports. He had everything.

**And take me through the process**

04:30 **right from the beginning of how you what your job was of getting the barges off where they**



**were stored on the Manoora and into the water and into the shore. What was your job through all of this?**

Well we were all piped to man boats and they'd, piping is a call over the loudspeaker, to man your boats and then the we had an army contingent of engineers that manned all

05:00 the winches. Every winch on the ship and there were there were that'd be twenty five or thirty of them. Twenty five I think, one for every barge, and they used to we used to hook them onto the hook. They'd take us up in the air, drop us over the side and lower us into the water. Well one incident, and I don't know whether it was Madang, but I think it was somewhere 'round there or Finschhafen and we had another LCVP

05:30 inside our boat because we had a big pretty big boat and it was fifty foot long oh and to get us in the water we had to unload the LCVP. So we they hooked it on, put it over, put it into the water. It got out of the way, we hooked on and as we came up the derrick, the crane snapped. It didn't snap it just bent at a right angle and of course it swung us against the side of the ship and we were like a pendulum on a clock

06:00 just swinging up against. So after very little consideration, a lot of fear, I took a dive over the side. I dived off and I was out in the water oh I must a been ended up fifty foot off the ship and of course it hung there and they just had to lower it down and there was no more damage done but I didn't hang around too long to find out the final result and I remember we could not do any more exercises so

06:30 they sent a signal through to a floating dock, which is at Manus Island and the Yanks had a big naval base there, dockyard, and we sent a signal over and they left all work and got onto this because we had the landing in view of going to Morotai and they patched it all up real nice and we got it back working order and I think

07:00 from then on we took those trips from Madang, Finschhafen wherever it was over to Morotai Island.

**And tell me about this dive that you took off the...?**

Well it was pretty quick. I just I hung on until it hit the ship's side and I was hanging onto one of the ropes that holding the thing onto the hook and she hit the side of the

07:30 ship with one hell of a bang and almost threw us off balance and I thought, "Well I don't think I should hang around for the second one." So when she hit the ship and she swung out again I dived over the side.

**How did**

So they got me out.

**What did**

I think two of the... two of us went over.

**What did it feel like hitting the water?**

Oh I don't know really but it must a been a bit of a shock but it was a greater shock standing on board the barge dangling like

08:00 a pendulum on a string.

**Were you supposed to dive off?**

Well I we weren't under any instructions but I thought, "Well, what the hell." Like, "I'm gone." I didn't come back for seconds. Yeah.

**How did you get out of the water?**

Oh a scrambling net. A Jacobs ladder over the side and a scrambling net and we just scrambled back up.

**Onto the Manoora or**

Yeah. Back onto the Manoora, yeah. Yeah. Yeah we weren't that

08:30 far off of where it hit. You can imagine just the width of a barge, which is fourteen foot, and we were out another thirty foot out further. Just done one hell of a swallow dive or whatever. The quickest way to the water.

**Did anyone comment on your diving?**

Oh no, it was a bit of an inquiry what happened but it was fairly obvious because the crane was over at forty five degree angle.

**And from standing on the barge describe what it felt like when the crane went.**

09:00 Well wondered what the hell happened. We're just waiting to hit the water, which it usually goes down with a bit of a splash, which you become accustomed to, but when she flogged against the side of the

ship and the sudden movement 'whoosh' I thought, "Hell what's goin' on here?" So I when she hit the side and she came back out and I could see her swingin' back in I decided to make an exit.

**Was anyone injured?**

Ah no. No, they weren't.

09:30 We had another incident too. There was a barge inside ours was M25 I was on and M13 was inside of ours and just after this incident it was being raised up to lower into the water and one of the guide ropes, a derricks [hoist] up like that and it's got two guides. It you can swing it around or swing it that way and one a those broke while it was up in the air and it done the same thing and

10:00 a friend a mine who was a on it he hurt his back on that. Nothing serious but he was in sick bay for awhile with it.

**And just describe the set up at Manus Island.**

Manus Island was only a small island but the Americans had made it a huge sort of a naval base for repairs. Any damage to ships that they could rectify was done there rather than send them to Sydney or Brisbane or

10:30 wherever and sort of a running repair shop. They had a big floating dock there. They could put fair lumps a ships in it and repair them if they'd hit mines or any underwater damage. It was quite huge. So we were we went over there and got it all repaired. I can remember them putting great big reinforced plates up the side of the derrick to strengthen it but I know a signal went to Sydney to prepare and make another one. Instead of a

11:00 forty ton crane I think they got a sixty ton, which I think the boats were fifty ton. They were quite huge.

**Was it a problem that you had had two boats on one boat inside another?**

No. Well it wasn't a problem because envisaged that the LCVs were for personnel. They carried ninety per cent of their time was personnel and their job was to go in onto the beaches

11:30 with troops and unload as many troops on the beaches as they possibly could in a very short time. Barge I was with was bigger and it could carry sixty troops, which we did do on occasions. All depends on the size of the convoy that we were bringing in and the number of troops on the beach but normal circumstances the LCVs would hit first with the troops. We went in about wave five or six with their equipment.

12:00 We'd have we'd load on say two jeeps and two trailers or a thirty ton tank or a truck with a artillery behind towed behind it and that was so when the troops got ashore, they could establish a beach head and then we come in with the machinery to move them further in and after that, we'd be nearly all day loading or unloading and putting on shore and

12:30 various parts of the beach were all marked with flags. A just for instance say a red flag. That's where you if you had ammunition on, you went to the red flag. If you had white ammunition on, ah white flag on, you would go to stores or somewhere else green for fuel or they had it all different parts of the beach designated after the initial landing and they stockpiled it on the beach. So if you wanted fuel, go to white flag and it's all there and after the

13:00 initial waves, they all went in V shaped, five hundred yards apart and you come to a line of departure, which was about a oh at least a mile off shore. Then we'd open them up and flat chat them in but the ship, the mother ship, the Manoora would be oh anything from four to seven mile out at sea and we'd have to drop the barges there. Safety point of view I expect that was for.

**What sort of**

13:30 **protection was given to the barges from coming under fire?**

Well if you were unlucky enough to have a Jap plane swooping down strafing beaches, you're on your own with we had two .5s on the rear of my barge and we used to man those. The others had one. Couldn't use 'em much really because your line of fire was usually in on the beaches and we had our own troops there

14:00 and we didn't want to do damage with friendly fire. I know later in the war when we were doing the Philippines landings and practically every night and dawn we'd have kamikazes coming in out of the sun at eye level and you couldn't see them because they'd make a point of this and I know ships in the convoy, ammunition'd be flying through our rigging. They'd follow them down and, "Hey, we'd better stop. We're gettin' close"

14:30 but friendly fire was a danger. We all worried about that.

**Would ships like the Kanimbla provide more long range firing of shells and things like that?**

No. The biggest guns we had were 4.7s. We only had one of those and we had a couple of three inch guns. For anti-aircraft, they were quite big for anti-aircraft and the proximity of these kamikazes I mean, goodness me

15:00 they were only seventy, eighty feet off ya coming down you know. 'Course everybody's following 'em into the water.

**And during a landing, a big landing, would there be other ships around the place that were providing fire support further inland?**

Oh yes, well for one instance in Lingayen up in the Philippines when we took back the Philippines, it's oh quite some distance North of Manila there were three

15:30 battleships and they were firing shells thirty-odd mile inland and we'd go in underneath these things and a strange phenomena. Well we were anchored in behind them. We'd go in the barges and they were firing these big sixteen, eighteen inch guns and eighteen inches 'round, the shells, and after every shoot they'd put an air hose through it and blow the cordite out and all the cordite smoke was

16:00 a creamy white and it'd bellow out of these big eighteen inch guns and oh just about deafen you. We used to go in underneath the line they'd be shooting over our heads. 'Course thirty mile inland but we got a bit of the flak off that and I remember well the ship, on Manoora, even though we were a fair distance away from them we could feel 'em move in the water when they fired a salvo. From the force of the thing the ship'd move. You could feel it

16:30 move. A quite a strange experience you know. A little bit of fear. You think, "God if one drops out of here we're gone," but they were their targets were a long way inland but yeah, a bit scary.

**And did you ever come under enemy fire during a dropping off troops?**

On the landings there was always a little bit but nothing drastic you know. We didn't take a lot of notice of it until we got to

17:00 Balikpapan where I mentioned where this Japanese artillery had a little pot shot at us but he had a shot at us going into the beach but I think we were a bigger target. So he said, "Oh well I'll pick the something I can aim at." We were about three times as big as the LCVs, so I thought, "Well there's a target," and oh yeah. "Oh what's going on?" and then he had another go at us going back out to the ship. So we said, "He's fair dinkum. I hope they get this fella"

17:30 but when we came back in with future assignments to the beach it we had no more. So I presume the army or the air force bombed 'em out.

**And doing a landing what interaction would you have with the troops that were being taken in?**

Oh we'd talk to them all. They'd be down inside the barge and they had to have their steel helmets on and down below the gunwale so they weren't any

18:00 targets and oh we'd talk to 'em you know. "Good on you dig, go in there," and, "Good luck," and, "Don't forget to duck," and all those you know sort of things and no, they took it in good heart and you know I never saw one traumatised or quivering in his boots. I mean they looked after each other. The army was good.

**And of from doing landings with American and Australian troops, what would you say was the difference between the Australians and the**

18:30 **Americans in situations like this?**

Well without condemning Americans, a lot of them were you know just like the Aussies but there were a lot more that had showed a lot of fear I felt. They had trouble getting 'em down the scrambling nets into the barges. "Come on, hurry up," you know. Bit reluctant to move and in the barges, very quiet and get on their own and didn't want to talk and just sort of little signs that you picked up that you

19:00 felt they don't feel real confident. Whereas the Aussies was always laughin' and joking and you know. Just a slight difference. I wouldn't like to condemn the Americans as being fearful of it all but there were more frightened of it all than there were Australians, I felt, but we spoke on barge crews going in we spoke to them all. We mixed with 'em. "Oh good on ya mate"

19:30 and, "Don't forget to duck down," and, "Get that bugger over there that's shootin' at us," and you know.

**And how would they respond back?**

Oh yeah well some of them wouldn't answer ya and other you others, "Oh yeah we'll be right," you know and you'd give 'em a bit of a pat on the back and bit of a gee up and they'd be alright.

**Were they thankful?**

Well none of 'em oh well I suppose they did say, "Oh thanks mate," or something like that but no more

20:00 than that but we didn't expect that. We didn't expect a anyone to turn around and thank you for that, because we always felt they had the tough job when they got ashore. They didn't know what was behind the first line of defence and they could a run into anything, whereas we just turned around and scooted.

So different situations really.

**And during the time when you were training with the Americans,**

20:30 **was there ever any call to use the barge 'cause it was small to go up rivers or any**

Oh, yes. One time at Langemak Bay, that's just near Finschhafen, and I remember we'd pulled into Finschhafen. There was a quite a nice harbour there and we pulled in there to for about a week and we pulled in there to do over the side parties chipping rust and patching

21:00 up paint work and general maintenance on the ship, which when you were busy loading troops and the paint work got knocked about and that meant rust. So it had to be maintained and we were doing that and we didn't know where we heading off or when but the Australian army sent a signal through and they wanted to a barge. They wanted to ask the ship if they could borrow a barge with this crew to take some signals

21:30 signal people up the Napa River I think it was and the Napa River was a very wide river and it came to a junction. I don't know what the other river was, but we had to go up to this junction, which was about twelve, fourteen mile up and there were pockets of Japs in behind it all through the jungle but they just couldn't get them together and rout

22:00 them out and I believe that these signalmen that we took, their job was to go up there and pinpoint them out on radio so they could bomb them out or locate them. So anyhow this evening, I can imagine it was about eight o'clock, we pulled into Finschhafen. Landed on the beach. Took on a lieutenant and three signal chaps

22:30 with all their WT [Wireless Transmitter] sets and all their wireless equipment and we had to go up this river at oh nine o'clock at night but before we left, the executive officer, or the flotilla leader come and told us, he said, "Look," he said, "we're under sailing orders and we sail six o'clock in the morning. Now if you're not back or something happens well every man for himself. We can't tell you where to go because there's no

23:00 navy here. All you've gotta do is just you're on your own. Look for the army, look for whoever you want." So that didn't worry us but it put a little bit of fear in us 'cause we thought, "God if something happens and we don't get back, the ship's gone. We can't stop the ship for one, four or five blokes." So anyhow we go up the Napa River and we're idling and I think the reason they took us was we had a cockpit on the back and it was armour

23:30 plated and it was a little bit faster than the other boats, about two or three knots faster, and we had a little bit of protection should anything happen anyhow and it wasn't much but a little bit. So we chugged up there, idled up. Oh I think we were going up about three knots or four knots. We're frightened to rev the motors because the echo'd go off the water and into the jungle because it was enemy territory in behind. So we're chugging along and right on the opposite side bank sneaking

24:00 along, sneaking along and we came up to the junction of the rivers and army lieutenant said, "Righto, wherever you can put us ashore put us ashore." So we just headed over for the shore and we could hear cannon and flashes in the jungle. We could see them lighting up you know in the sky and we said, "Gee, we're not too far off of this." Anyhow we dropped onto the beach and luckily it wasn't too, well it wasn't a beach it was the river, the bank of the river, and we looked for a low bank and we dropped in there.

24:30 Unloaded all the boys and said to 'em, "Well, best of British luck to you and hope everything turns out good," and we wound up the ramp and we put her in reverse and we backed off and we give her full throttle all the way back home. We went for our life. We had it flat out about fourteen knots. So we got back a lot quicker and I think it was about one or two o'clock in the morning when we got back. So we didn't have a terrible lot a time but boy we were pleased to see the old Manoora.

25:00 Yeah. That was a bit of a hairy experience.

**Is it different trying to, I was gonna say drive, sail a barge in a river rather than in the ocean?**

Yes. Well one's calm water of course and you've got to compete with currents and surf and the surf was the biggest danger in landing craft because if you, it's like a body surfer. If he gets on the crest of a wave he'll ride it in and you had to be careful to back

25:30 off your power otherwise you'd over shoot it and the wave'd come over your stern and you know could swamp ya. So you just had to you rode on your throttles. You would ease them off and maybe if you screwed a bit you'd rev one and ease off the other one and try and get on a wave that would take you in, but if you missed it, it was you know you'd always get water.

**And in the river was there any danger of**

26:00 **submerged...?**

Oh could have been. We didn't know it. It wasn't we never we were never given a map. We were more or less guided by the army officer who must have done a bit of homework in the area, because we'd never been up the river before in our lives but oh we were just, "That's where you go and you take these guys

up," and we were on the way up we were a bit fearful of fallen logs because those rivers fairly run in the wet season

26:30 and they wash down logs and you know I thought, "Well crikey if we hit one of these with a prop we've only got one motor." You know it puts one motor out and but fortunately luck was with us and we got up there, unloaded the poor old soldiers. I felt sorry for them later. I thought you know, "Gee whiz that's a bit gutsy going in behind lines and spotting 'em and W'ing back to the back to their troops where they were."

**Did you find out what happened to them?**

No I didn't. We left the

27:00 next morning and never went, well we were back in there a few times but you know they'd moved on. They'd cleaned the place up and they moved on.

**And how did you when you headed back towards the Manoora, how did you alert the Manoora that you were there at two or three in the morning?**

Well on the gangplank, which was down until we were sailing, they lifted the gangplank up. It wasn't a gangplank, it was a set of ladders going down and there was always

27:30 a guard on watch and when we come alongside, 'cause we had WT and we WT'd wireless (UNCLEAR) stuff. We used to get on that and notify them that we were coming alongside and then the guard'd be on the gangplank and tie her up on the painter at the back and matter of fact they put us straight around to our davit [boat crane] and pulled us up on board. I don't think we did go up the gangplank that night.

28:00 I think they ordered us to go to number 1 hold and be lifted aboard. So they lifted us aboard. Well we only had three or four hours before we sailed so I suppose they thought, "Better get 'em on and get 'em ready." So that was the end of that little spree. Yeah.

**Did people ask you questions about what had happened that night or what you'd seen?**

Oh yeah some of the boys knew. A lot of them didn't. I suppose

28:30 half of them would have known it was on because when we were detailed off they knew, "Where you going?" "Oh I don't know. Pick up the army sigs. We're gonna pick up army sigs," but the mission they know but you know how rumours float around and they're like a bonfire. They once they're lit they you can't stop them right or wrong but anyhow a lot of guys knew, yeah and because we were we didn't hesitate to elaborate on the story.

29:00 Yeah. Put a bit of a lace on it and it went over well but that's the true story. We were we were fired on and we got them up there safely and we got back on time and yeah.

**And what was the environment like around the river?**

Dead silent. Dead silent except crickets and water insects and frogs I guess croaking and cicadas. It was quite eerie.

29:30 It was like a still before a storm. It was just the water was flat. There was no wind. It was just dead set calm and anything you said or did echoed. It'd echo across the water you know and we're talking in whispers and you could still hear it echoing across the water. So yeah, that was a bit eerie and a course we're sneaking along 'chug, chug, chug, chug, chug'. Yeah.

**Was**

30:00 **there any danger when you went out at full throttle that that would give away...?**

We didn't give a damn. We were just heading for home and ship was home and if someone come after us, well they'd have to chase us and they'd have to do better than fourteen knots. So, which wasn't extremely fast but we felt a bit confident. When we turned for home we felt a lot more confident because we knew the track up and we only had to sort of follow it home.

**And what was the**

30:30 **light like on the river?**

There wasn't much at all. A little bit of moonlight but a lot of cloudy that night. It wasn't a lot of reflection but eerie silence was the main thing. Eerie silence and everybody whispering. Talking in whispers so your voice wouldn't carry because even then we could hear anyone up the front talking when we were way down the stern of the barge. You could hear them

31:00 and we were fearful of arousing any of the enemy that may have been along the river but I believe they were inland a few miles you know. They were in little groups and might be in fifty and twenties and little splinter groups that were causing a lot of you know chaos amongst the Australians. They just couldn't go in and take the whole place. There was a little group there and a little group here and they just had to clean them

31:30 up. So, which they eventually did, and they went on their way and went up further North then.

**And tell me about what Morotai was like when you went?**

Morotai? From my recollection was the landing beaches were a bog hole. We couldn't get within a hundred yards of the water. The high water mark or the low water mark.

32:00 It was very, very shallow. It did have underwater obstructions, which were mainly blown out but you were always fearful that one'd drop the wrong way and you might hit it going in and our prime objective was to land troops safely and dry on the shore and we always felt it was a little slur against our navigation if we couldn't do that but on this

32:30 beach we couldn't because the barges went aground before they got within a hundred yards of the beach and resulting in drop the ramp. "Okay fellas. We can't go any further. We're stuck here. Sorry but ashore youse go."

**How deep would it be?**

Oh up chest height. Waist height. Wade through a bit of a gutter but it was boggy. It was all mud and they'd be bogging up to half way up to their knees in and they're trying to get out with all their gear

33:00 on and oh it must a been hell for them because I know a lot of our barges we had to tow them off because they become stuck. Went aground on it and we had to put ropes on and tow them off. Well that resulted that snowballed and when we come to taking the machinery off, like the trucks and the dozers and the tanks, the same thing happened and we were dropping them off the front of the barges a hundred metres off the shore. Naturally the weight of them

33:30 'whhhhhhhht!' and nearly submerged some of them above the tracks and a course then they had to have lines from the beach and winches and oh it created a lot of problems whereas it could have been a, you know, the tanks ashore 'boom boom boom!' and into the pillboxes and clean the beach up. This meant another half a day getting these things into action. So it was a rotten beach. That and Tarakan were the two worst beaches we done assault landings on,

34:00 mainly because of underwater obstacles.

**Well...**

They had miles of it at Tarakan.

**What kind of obstacles?**

They had stakes in the water and they had them oh maybe six, six rows deep and they had them for miles and the beaches that we had to land on, the underwater demolition had got in the night before and they had blasted gaps in the thing oh fifty, sixty, eighty yards wide

34:30 and they do three or four of these where we could get in to land and that restricted us greatly because we all had to manoeuvre for the one spot to get in and on a D Day [June 6, 1944], traffic is chaotic. I mean there's barges coming from everywhere and everyone's in a hurry to drop your troops off and get them into the fray and you get back out and get another load in and it was just oh hustle bustle you know. It was on a merry-go-round and this restricted us to

35:00 hell because we couldn't get in. We had Tarakan we did have on board we had Tom Derrick. I don't know whether you've heard of him. He was a VC [Victoria Cross] winner. He come on board and he wrote the little poem 'We've Captured Tarakan' and a matter of fact, I've still got a copy originally signed by him. Yeah. So and he got killed at Tarakan

35:30 unfortunately but no, another incident that happened on Tarakan when we when it all settled down and the place was taken. We used to go ashore. Tarakan I'm sorry, Morotai I'm going back to, and we used to go over there was an air base called 'The Graveyard' there. It's where all mainly American planes and Australian Beaufighters were there and I think Caldwell

36:00 was the squadron leader of those, he was quite famous, and we used to go over there taking the motors out of the ailerons on the wings, you know the little electric motors. What we were gonna do with them I have not got an idea but everyone said, "Oh you'll use 'em in civvie life [civilian life]." So little electric motors so big and we went over with spanners and screwdrivers and wrecked these Liberators that would been strafed and bombed out and no use and anyhow we used to go over there and on our one of our trips over

36:30 another friend of mine who's since died, Nappy Arnold, he was a tailor. He always loved tailorin'. He had a tailoring business on board ship, which he made alterations for sailors' clothes for a paltry price but something for him to do and anyhow we're going past these huts that were bombed out and here's he could see an old Singer sewing machine, a little model that you

37:00 put on the table, and he said, "Oh just what I want. I'll get that." So he took a few steps forward and we all at once three or four of us then said, "Hey, we've been told about booby traps. Everything's booby trapped. Be very careful." So, "Oh yes." Four wheel brakes went on. We stopped. So someone got the bright idea out of the lot of us a sheet of iron. So we found an old sheet of corrugated iron and we got that in front of us and we got a

- 37:30 sapling. I suppose it wouldn't be bigger than my arm and about eight or ten foot long and we we're creeping up on this sewing machine, which was on the verandah of a hut, and we're advancing slowly forward and pushing it over with this big stick and a course the machine was too heavy to really push. So we had to end for end it and get the butt end of it and we ended up getting it over and I don't know what a sheet of iron would a done. It would
- 38:00 never have saved us, it would a made it worse, but fortunately it was it worked. Anyhow we got the machine back on board the ship and it was quite a good machine and it lasted him for years and years and years and a strange thing, he must have had it in his blood because when he got out he started up a tailoring factory, a clothing factory called the Austral Tailoring Company and it's still going in The Valley today. Family
- 38:30 still run it. McLachlan Street, The Valley in Brisbane. Yeah. Austral Tailoring. Kenny Arnold. So we got that on and a course that meant that I got my alterations made free of charge because I helped bring the thing on board. So oh no, a lot of little incidents like that that go up.

**How much time did you get to spend ashore at Morotai?**

Well every second about every third day you were allowed ashore for of an afternoon

- 39:00 and back on and another little lurk we had that the Yanks were fairly careless with their motor vehicles and they'd leave jeeps anywhere and everywhere and a course jeeps don't have a key, ignition key, and their favourite trick was to pull a rotor button out of the distributor. You'd open the distributor cap and there's a little plastic button with a little lug on it that goes 'round and hits all the spark plugs as it rotates and they used to
- 39:30 take that out and a course you can't start the car. Well we just happened to come across one and don't ask me how we got it, but we got one, and any time we went ashore we never walked. We just put the rotor button in the nearest jeep and cruise around the place and have a free taxi ride. Our main venue for collecting a vehicle was outside the officers' mess, the Yankees' canteen, officers' mess. They always had a jeep
- 40:00 and we used to put the rotor button in and drive it. Leave it on the wharf for them when we come home right beside the ship. So they knew where it was and no harm was done. We got free we got free transport.

**What would you drive around and look at?**

Anything. Just the countryside and the paddy fields. The coconuts and the villages and do a bit a bargaining and things like that.

**How many Americans were at Morotai?**

- 40:30 Yeah, quite a lot. The Americans originally took Morotai with assault troops but all the invasions of Borneo, Australian troops came from Morotai there. They tried a lot of new concepts there. We were we started towing collapsible boats behind our barges to get more troops ashore quickly and we'd tow two
- 41:00 collapsible boats and they must have held oh twenty five troops and what happened was that in our training with the 9th Divvie, the 9th Divvie, yes it was the 9th 'cause we were going to Tarakan, they had amphibious tanks that would go in the water and they cut across our bow when we were towing this, 'cause we had to tow very slowly, and the wash
- 41:30 upturned one of these collapsible boats and I'm not sure whether it was four or six Australian army fellows drowned in the because of this. So they sort of half scrapped the idea and they kept it until we got the initial landing and then we brought other troops in on but it was a pretty dangerous practice and we never used it after that but it was designed to get troops ashore quickly. A lot of troops
- 42:00 quick...

## Tape 6

- 00:35 **Just on the end of the last tape you were talking about the story of some men drowning.**

Yes.

**Did you see this happening at all from where you were?**

No. I didn't. They weren't being towed by my barge. They were being towed by the smaller craft but all in the one exercise and it was a pretty sad thing when it happened. To think that we'd lost troops before they even got to

- 01:00 a landing it was very sad. Every everyone felt bad.

**So how did you know about this happening?**

Well as soon as you come on board, "Oh'd you see what happened?" and the disaster and they're trying to salvage boats and you see a couple of boats going back to pick things up and salvage people in the water and think, "What the hell's going on? What's happened?" you know and of course all the barge crews all the boats' crews, and that's barge crews, they were a pretty tightly knit lot of people and they all

- 01:30    confided in each other fairly well and you'd see the coxswain or see anyone that was on the barge. "What happened?" and you'd have a yarn to him. Say you know, "What happened?" and say, "Well this bloke cut across and the wash got us and swamped 'em," and all the heavy equipment they had on they had no hope of surviving.

**Is there anyone you knew who was...?**

No, there wasn't. They were all army. They were all the 9th Division.

**Was there anyone that you knew who was doing it tough because of this?**

- 02:00    **Particularly 'cause they were close to it or...?**

Oh no. None of the like not to my knowledge but you sort of I don't know whether you grow hardened to things but, "Okay that's what happened. So let's get on and you know pull your socks up and keep going." I don't think everyone sat back and was distraught about it. I just think, "Oh okay geez, gee that's crook and poor buggers." You know that was our attitude and, "Geez it should never have happened," and

- 02:30    you know once we knew what happened we understood it a lot better and I don't recall anyone going into shock or being depressed about it or fearful of the war or anything. I just think, "Well, look that's happened," and, "Gee whiz. Could have happened when they dropped 'em on the beach." You know.

**Where were you at the time when it happened?**

We were doing, in the exercise we were practising like we did with the Yanks taking Aussies out and towing 'em into the beach and landing 'em and it was on one of those exercises

- 03:00    that it happened. We were towing them into the beach. Wasn't on my barge but it was on one of the smaller barges and it happened in the same exercise.

**And so what was the first sign that you saw that there was something wrong?**

Well I didn't actually see it. I was probably they were probably in the rear of me. They might a been you know five, six hundred yards away from me and you don't take notice of everything, you just hold your position. 'Cause once you get in line,

- 03:30    a line of departure going ashore, you've gotta keep your right line otherwise everyone's going like this and one big tangle when you hit the beach. So you're just more or less concentrating on what your job is to get that boat in there and try and pick the right track and get it up on the beach as soon as you can and you don't you don't know this has happened until you're on the beach and when you're coming back and you say, "What the hell happened here? Look, rescue boat here. What's wrong?" and that's when you get back on board,

- 04:00    when it's all finished, you get to know the all the details and what exactly happened.

**Well what happened after the event? What was**

Oh well a discard of the boats. No more of this, but they did use them at Balikpapan but only at line of departures. They put the troops on on a line of departure, which wasn't in any rough weather, and they had a free run to the beach and they loaded them in there and towed them in

- 04:30    and then they just collapsed them. They were those fold in ones, they collapse in and they just left them on the beach but all the boats' crew had to do a little bit of first aid. We our job was any wounded, put them on your on your barge and take them back to the sick bay on board ship and we had to administer morphine and put in shell dressings for head dressings. Anyone with a bad shrapnel in the head

- 05:00    or bullet in the head don't give them morphine, just do it and had a tourniquet. Just general things 'til you got them back to the ship where we had a sick bay and we had doctors, they were our own doctors, and army doctors were there and they'd patch them up and we'd take them back if very seldom we were overnight at a landing spot. We'd wake up at three and they'd wake us up three in the morning, between three and half past. Breakfast at four.

- 05:30    All the chores all the action stations closed up, man your boats seven o'clock. In the water half past seven circling the ship waiting for troops to embark and we'd go out and we'd circle 'round and 'round about five hundred yards out from the ship and when the flag went down we'd go to the line of departure, which was usually mile and a half off shore, maybe more. Sometimes the ship was a lot further out. Sometimes up to as much as seven mile and when

- 06:00    we got to the line of departure we'd all go in formation to the line of departure and then we'd open them



up and we'd go in V, until we got within couple a hundred yards of the beach and, say, oh troops all straight ahead but if you had high octane fuel or trucks there was one for mechanical trucks and one there for tanks and one there for and you just went to that designated beach and dropped your load off and went back but we used to get out of there before dark of a night. We'd unload the whole

06:30 ship and get over there 'cause the idea was to get out before the Japs become alerted and started to bomb us and we'd go right back to New Guinea and pick up another load of reinforcements, another load of troops and all the gear. Load it on and straight back up there, unload again and nearly every assault landing we done, we done a follow up within a week with reinforcements to in case they had a lot of casualties and it built it up, built up the

07:00 numbers and gave them the equipment to carry on the battle.

**And when you were in that formation how would you communicate with each other?**

Every barge had a WT set. Wireless communication set, like a radio telephone thing and we got instructions from a flotilla officer, who was sitting always in a barge sitting at the point of departure and he'd say, "Oh M25 you're out of position." He'd position you all the time

07:30 'cause we had to keep going around in circles at four knots. Just milling 'round waiting to come alongside and load up. Prior to going in the water we were all given our the number of the net, like net 1 was up in the fo'c'sle, whale deck, and they were all numbered and, "You will come alongside net number 1." Well you knew where it was and you'd just go in there, hang on the side. Get your troops or your cargo in and away you'd go then you'd

08:00 go out, circle 'round 'til the whole lot of barges were loaded. You'd circle 'round and 'round and 'round then the flotilla officer'd say, "Into the line of departure." You'd go to the line of departure at a slow speed and as soon as you hit the line of departure he'd drop the flag and full bore into the beach. Get in there as quick as you can and get out quick as you can.

**Would you ever change the pace to keep formation or**

Yeah well you had to. Yes. Yes. You had to ease back on the throttle or

08:30 give her a bit of gun. If you got on the wash of somebody it pushed you out or pushed you back and keep station. You had to hold your station.

**Well how would you get your bearings on how to keep it straight and**

Well within the mile you had bearings on the beach. There were flags on the beach and you headed straight for them. That was your goal, that beach there, but you were very seldom given compass bearings but it was all marked with buoys. They used to have buoys at a buoy each either end of the line of departure.

09:00 A boat with a flag on for circling 'round preparing you know. It was pretty well organised, yeah. Very well organised really.

**Who would get the flags out? Who would get the buoys out and**

Oh that was all prepared the day before and flotilla officer, who was in charge of the flotilla of barges on the ship, he would organise it all. I have copies of, even though they're top secret, but we were each given

09:30 a copy each barge was given a copy of the instructions of what times and, "Synchronise your watches," and of the procedures and what flags were what. I've still I've kept copies, even though they were supposed to be destroyed but I've still got them.

**Well would wouldn't this if they were on the beach already earlier, would this give away positions or that there was gonna be a landing to the**

Yes. Yeah. By the bombardment they would have known that this was the spot

10:00 that was gonna be attacked but the naval gunfire and the aerial bombardment I felt kept them at bay and that was still going on while we were in the barges going onto the beach and about a hundred yards from the beach it they stopped. So they really didn't know exactly when the barges were going to hit the beach but it was a strange thing it was nearly always 'round about eight o'clock

10:30 'cause it was all worked out with tides too. We couldn't go in on a low tide. We'd be stuck on a sand bank well out and couldn't get near the water line but no, they were fairly well pasted. The air force and the navy done a pretty job of bombarding the place and so it should have too for the poor old the old soldier. He had to go and do the dirty work. He was on the hand to hand stuff. We were alright. We'd drop you off and clear out.

**Were there any different**

11:00 **issues about going back as opposed to going forward to**

No. We couldn't get off the beach we couldn't drop the loads off quick enough to get out and get back because one, we felt we were out of danger and secondly, we thought to get the ship unloaded and get

out of this place before the Japs put an air raid on and that was our the urgency of it and I think most of the crews felt the same. 'Cause I know Manoora

- 11:30 of all the Yankee ships and the Australian ships involved, we were the quickest ship in the fleet to discharge its troops and cargo and I think it was seven minutes to discharge away boats and all the troops. Twelve hundred troops in seven minutes, which wasn't a bad thing. It was pretty record and matter of fact there's a commendation from the Admiral Halsey congratulating our skipper on it but we prided ourself with that.

**Well tell us about the**

- 12:00 **procedure as you land. What's being called out? What's being said? How did it how do you get the troops so quickly?**

Very little. Very little except you're talking to the crews and you're sayin', "Oh get over a bit. Give us a bit of room. What's it like there?" and you know and, "There's gutter here," or, "Geez the surf's crook," or you know. Wasn't a lot of back chat because everyone was so intense on getting on and not getting stuck. 'Cause if you got stuck on the beach we always considered ourselves sitting ducks.

- 12:30 There was nowhere you could go. You were stuck there. You were and you couldn't leave your barge. You weren't allowed to leave your barge. You had to stick with your barge.

**So as the barge lands and opens it doors**

Yes.

**Are there any calls or orders being given?**

Oh yeah, the lieutenant, whoever's in charge of the troops, "Out," you know and they just they all know as soon as the barge soon as the before the ramp's fully down they're half

- 13:00 way out of it. Yeah, they get out in a hurry. We couldn't do that with machinery because we had to get the barge onto the ground and a course that made a few difficulties because if the barge was stuck on a sand bank all the weight of a thirty ton tank was anchoring it down and as it went forward, it'd lift the back up and the next wave'd push you further up the beach, which meant you were in shallower water, and then, "Oh better get off here. I don't want to be stuck here." So you'd have 'em sort of just

- 13:30 churning in reverse, both motors, just put 'em in reverse and just have 'em sort of idling whether or give 'em up a rev up and as soon as that tank or that truck was off the end of the thing, up ramp and matter of fact you'd be going astern before you got the ramp up.

**And would you go all the way back in reverse or would you turn around**

Oh no, no. Just get out and give yourself enough room from the other traffic coming in. Might be get out a hundred yards and whip around and oh yes, go a lot faster ahead than you can

- 14:00 astern. Yeah.

**And so there was just another question I had about that incident where the army men drowned**

Yes.

**And that's was there any was there a ceremony or anything like a burial or a ceremony?**

No. Well we didn't see it but I know that it was only within a few days that we done the landing on Tarakan and there wouldn't have been a lot of time to but no,

- 14:30 they just they would a been just buried quietly on Tarakan. I mean our instructions were to administer what first aid, the little bit we knew, to anyone wounded and bring them back to the ship. Well we bought quite a few wounded back and a couple of them did die on board but we buried them at sea on the next day when we'd left the landing site. On our way to pick up reinforcements we just buried 'em at sea. Matter of fact I've got photographs here of they just had a sea burial the same as any sailor.

- 15:00 **Well describe that sea burial for us.**

Well, anyone that dies at sea they projectiles, they get big projectiles which are three inch projectiles. They're about that long. Shell casing with the projectile on the end and they usually get two of them and they put them under their arms and then they sew them up in canvas. It's a job for the sail maker. He stitches them all up in canvas and then they the next

- 15:30 morning still go, don't stop for it, keep going and they put them on a waxed plank over the side, pull a bit of the railing down and the padre, the old sin bosun, comes along and we all line out and off caps and he reads the burial service and as he's saying it they just tilt the board up and they slide into the deep. Flag remains there.

**And what's it like...**

Well to save time.

**Yeah, what was it like at this**

16:00 **part at these particular one?**

Well I remember the day. It was a dirty rotten day. It was a misty, rainy, drizzly rainy day and we're all line out but no one cared because all our thoughts were for the poor dear poor buggers that were that didn't make it. Just how tragic that we'd lost them on board our ship and we didn't like that but no, it was marked on the charts where they were buried and

16:30 end of story and no more about it and the projectiles was enough weight to put them to the bottom.

**And there was another thing you mentioned on the last tape which was interesting was the sewing machine and the business.**

Yes.

**Were there any other businesses on board?**

Oh well there was a lot. There was a there was an ironing firm that they used to call them dhobying firms. Washing in the navy is called dhobying. That means

17:00 washing your clothes. So quite strange I know but that's navy language and there was quite a few dhobying firms that anybody that was didn't have the inclination to wash their clothes give it to the dhobying firm. Small charge and you'd get it all back and then they some of them used to iron it and I think there were two jewin' firms, which used to do the my friend with the sewing machine they used to they called 'em jewing jewin' firms because they were tailors. They used to do

17:30 a bit of oh alter your uniform or take it in here or sew a patch or had a rip or put your good conduct badges or whatever you had on. Chevron, sew all those sort a things on. They were about the main businesses. Quite a few chaps run gambling things, especially when the troops come on. We'd take them down the holds and play crown and anchor or two up or dice. We used to play crap with the Yanks.

18:00 Couple a sailors I know made quite a tidy little packet but oh no, that was shipboard life and you had the troops on and it was that crowded you couldn't move really and you'd get them up on deck and you'd be throwin' dice on the deck or anything. Play cards.

**What would happen if the officers caught you playing craps?**

I think they knew it was going on but no one interfered but it was never done blatantly in the open. It was

18:30 "Oh go down on the mess deck and do it and if anyone comes, sing out," or go down one of the holds or go into a locker and you know and play it there.

**Well what was the protocol with setting up a jewing firm or a dhoby firm?**

Dhobying firm? So okay, "Oh geez you've got chatty gear." Chatty gear was dirty. Chatty was always never called dirty, chatty and you'd say, "Gee you're gear's pretty chatty.

19:00 You'd better give it to me and I'll do it up. Ten cents for," or what, tuppence or whatever it was to do a shirt and a pair a socks. "Oh yeah, righto take it down," and they'd bring it back all folded up and if you wanted your good suit ironed, they'd iron that and that was x amount. I never had to do it but I used to do my own but maybe I was too miserable to spend a few bob but I used to look after my own good gear. Me other gear I didn't worry about much but no, they had that and

19:30 oh it was a busy time with troops on, especially meal times. 'Cause we had a big galley but we had army cooks down there and oh it was no cafeteria style. It was all line up and get it. Messes. Navy you'd go down all messes were numbered and there was average about ten to a mess and you'd go down to the galley and you'd say, say it was 10 mess, "Scran," which was food, "Scran for 10 mess."

20:00 "Righto," and he'd look up the chart. "Oh yeah, ten people in 10 mess." 'Bang bang bang.' Ten dollops of potato or whatever and you'd bring it up in a big dixie [pot], a big tray like that and it was help yourself from then and of course if someone's a bit hungry one bloke at the end got you got that much, but you never you were never late for a meal time in the navy. It was a necessity.

**Well**

Set menus. Always set menus. Every

20:30 Monday was red lead and bacon and Sunday was pusser's duff and pork and

**I was interested in, this might be a silly question, but setting up one of those jewing firms...?**

Just started it. You just start it. Just say, "Anybody want some dhobying done," or, "I'll do your repairs."

**And was there**

Word of mouth. Yeah, go down the mess deck. "Oh

21:00 gee my gear needs a bit of sewing up." "Oh give it to Nappy. He'll fix it," and that's how it went.

**So it was totally a private...?**

Oh yes. Nothing to do with the navy or the ship. It was just a private enterprise, yeah.

**And what did what was the navy's reaction to this? Did they want to cut it or...?**

Oh no. No. Took no notice of it. They knew it was going on. No notice and I mean just a little private enterprise that was going on aboard their ship and no one got hurt and

21:30 it was a service to everyone and everyone had their good gear.

**Was there any competition between different firms or**

Oh yeah, there was there'd be two or three dhobyng firms and a couple a jewin' firms but no, no one it wasn't a life or death situation. I mean it was just pennies to spend when you went ashore and if you got a hundred clients and I got four, who cares? You know. Good on you.

22:00 **There was never any**

No competition, no. No.

**Any specials?**

Oh no. No. It was pretty well all a flat rate and I know early in the piece when troops were on water was a premium. It was very scarce because all the troops showering and all the extra for preparing food we need a lot more water than what we were used to. So we they put in they gave us all

22:30 salt water soap and we had to get underneath the salt water showers and but it was shocking. It was oh your hair was like a board. It was it was all spiky and you always felt hard and sticky and but they ended up doing away with it and they put in a [de]salination plant with a couple of big things down in oh down in the bowels of the ship and, condensers and they used to condense the salt into fresh water and it wasn't much better

23:00 but that's where the dhobyng firms used to operate. Outside this and oh it was stinkin' hot, like a boiler room, and they used to do all the washing down there near the plant. I reckoned they earnt every cent they got.

**What about other luxuries on board? What kind of luxuries would people have on board?**

The we had, except in combat areas, we had pictures oh once a fortnight and we played on

23:30 board played a bit of deck hockey. When we got ashore in New Guinea in non-combat areas we'd we had a football team. I've got photographs here of us in the football team. We used to play rugby league on coral air strips and a lot of infections come out of those and we used to have boxing tournaments. Inter-ship boxing tournaments. At Morotai there was a big boxing tournament with the Yanks 'cause they were mad, a lot of negroes there and they were all mad on the boxing, and

24:00 some of them were pretty good. You know that Dawson, I don't remember him, but he was a top knot fighter out here. He came out here I think he was welterweight champion and he was boxing up there and we used to go ashore. That was on of a night and they had it all floodlit like these lights here and we'd all go ashore and watch. It was a big night out for the boxing. It was quite good entertainment.

**Was there kind of different service kind of boxing kind of matches**

Oh yes. The army'd fight the navy and the HMAS

24:30 Manoora would fight a team off the, in their weight divisions, off the Kanimbla or off the Westralia or off the Shroppy [Shropshire] or whatever. Whatever ship was in and they had enough to participate in the weight divisions. Used to fight three, three minute rounds and the old, well I was gonna call him a God botherer but he was the sin bosun, he used to be the referee. He used to referee it and his

25:00 decision was final. So oh no, we used to have good it was good fun.

**Would the men get into the matches, like shout and**

Oh yeah. I was in a couple of them. Yeah we had pretty good stoushes but it only lasted three minutes, see. Three rounds. It was over before it started.

**Had you**

No, no betting. The padre'd put on five shillings or something or a quid for the winner and you know a clean towel to wipe up

25:30 the blood for the loser.

**How did you go in the boxing?**

Oh I only had one inter-ship thing and I fought a chap from the AIF [Australian Imperial Forces] and I

was fortunate to win that one. I don't know how, but I was lucky. Yeah but I used to love the training. We used to do a lot of skipping and ball work you know. Just fill in time at sea. That's what started me and then we had inter-ship boxing and inter-army boxing. I thought, "Oh well, might as well have a go." 'Cause you know

- 26:00 what the mob a young blokes are like. "Go on. Have a go. Get in there." "Oh no I don't wanna fight." "Go on, get in there," and someone'd nominate ya and you were left with it and you couldn't back out but no, I only had the one intership fight. Oh no, good experience. I'm not sorry about it all. Quite pleased.

**And was there anything like drinking on board?**

No. We used to get, only in port we were allowed we used to get a bottle

- 26:30 it was never regular. It was oh maybe every six weeks you got a bottle. I can always remember it was either Reschs or Cascade Ale and a few chaps didn't drink and we used to do a deal with them. "We'll you give us your bottle of beer and when we go to Sydney, it's your home town, I'll do a sub for you." Meaning that, "When you're duty watch I'll stay on duty for you and you can go ashore," and that was a

- 27:00 pretty well widespread deal. When you got in your home port, it was no use to me because I come in Brisbane and if I was in Sydney well might as well let a guy from Sydney go ashore and I'd drink his beer. So they started off opening every bottle in front of the chief petty officer. Every bottle had to be opened but it ended up getting a bit slack and it started that way we'd put it away you know and a course sometimes we had a quite a little party. We'd have a good old time on

- 27:30 that, yeah.

**What were they like, these little parties?**

Oh just a bit of skylarking and I remember one we had this Nappy Arnold's brother, he was in the army at Morotai and we all played a bit of football and he played football for the Brisbane Brothers in Brisbane here and he'd come over and we'd had enough strong drink in us to be a bit stupid

- 28:00 and down the alley, down the mess deck there's a companion way oh from you to there and demonstrating how to tackle, on a steel deck mind you, and there's dead lights about as high as that TV [television] with a grill over 'em and they're blue and you have them on when the ship is darkened and it only casts a shadow down. Well someone tackled him and he went flying into this thing and ripped all his shoulder open. All the

- 28:30 the back of his shoulder and we couldn't stop it bleeding and we're panicking because we're all half hit and we shouldn't have been doing that on board. So the first thing we could do was luckily we had the good old rotor button and Yankee jeep was on the wharf. So we had to take that and took him to the army hospital. Still got the scar too. Oh it's a beauty. Ripped him. Really ripped him and we had a rethink about beer nights then but we never had a lot but I've learnt

- 29:00 since that the navy, you take your beer to sea and you can have a drink any time so long as you're not on duty, which really astounded me. Never thought it'd be allowed. Take your ice cream on board now too. Never saw ice cream. Never saw ice cream at all. Powdered eggs and dehydrated potatoes. Hydrated potatoes. Oh but still all it was good enough.

- 29:30 We were lucky 'cause we had refrigeration on our ship and we could carry fresh meat a lot longer than most of the smaller ships and that was a plus. That was good for us.

**You mentioned leave. Were there any leave that you had during the war time back in Australia?**

Yes. We went to Sydney for a refit and a course that was leave and I think I got

- 30:00 a week's leave and I went up to Brisbane up home, spent the week and then you sort of had a you had a leave pass for a certain time but you had to go to the regulating petty officer who was at South Brisbane station and they had an office. The services had an office, air force, navy and army, and you had to go up and say, "Here's my leave pass. It terminates on such and such a date. Can you book me on the train?" and he'd book you on a troop train to go back to Sydney

- 30:30 in time to get back you know in before your leave expired. I was only home I was home once after I had been to Flinders about a month and I went home on one other occasion in the four years I was in. I was never home again. Although we pulled into Brisbane but another little story that I decided the war was finished and I thought it was fair enough for me to be

- 31:00 finished too. So I decided to go home. Paying the penalty a course, which was quite an experience. Yeah, I we were in here at the war had finished and we were in at Newstead Wharf. I guess you know where that is? Where the wool stores are, And we were pulled in alongside there and we were sailing that morning for Sydney to pick up a load of Indonesians and take them back to

- 31:30 Indonesia. I don't know whether they'd been evacuated out of Indonesia because of the war or they had history or what but anyhow, that was a thing for the ship. So Knocker White and myself decided we said,

"Look, we haven't been home. War's finished. What do ya reckon?" He said, "Yeah. C'mon. Let's go out." So we crawled out the port hole and we got underneath the wharf and the ship,

- 32:00 tugs pulled her out from the wharf and we're sat underneath there. All the slime and the barnacles and anyhow we ended up, we got out and went home. He wasn't game to go to his mother's place because she was a widow and she'd just lost a son and a husband. So he said, "Oh it'll upset her." I said, "Okay. I'll you'd better come home with me." So we hopped on a tram. Out we go to Kalinga, which wasn't far. We were at Albion and first thing we do put is on a cup a tea and
- 32:30 "Yeah we'll have a cup a tea and bickies." Old bickie tin was in the same place when I left. So we're sitting there and my mother and me sister arrive home about half an hour later. Here we are sitting in the kitchen on the goodies and she said, "We've been down the wharf wavin' goodbye to you," and I said, "Well you should of saved yourself the tram fare. We're sitting here." So anyhow cut a long story short, we realised we didn't want to get a dishonourable discharge and we knew that if we were classed as deserters
- 33:00 that's what we'd get and to be that we had to be over I think seven days. So I think we went four or maybe five days and we went down to the depot to give ourselves up and the officer of the watch who was on duty had come off Manoora and he knew us. He said, "What the hell are ya doin here?" and we said, "Oh we shot through. We come here to surrender ourselves," and he said, "God you left me in a hole." He said
- 33:30 "I've got to put you in a cell," and we said, "Oh well you gotta do that, do that." So he did and while we were waiting to get weighed off we were in these cells and next thing a Master at Arms come down and unlocks the cell and he said, "Any of you blokes ABs [Able Seamen]?" "Yes." "Well we've got a ship needs to be moored and we've got no hands to do it. So you two guys have gotta go down and moor this ship," which meant they throw heaving lines and you pull the big line over and you put it on the bollard and
- 34:00 make sure the springers are right you know so it comes alongside. "Righto. Get back in the ute and go back to Moreton depot in Brisbane." Locked us up again. So oh it was quite strange. We done a couple a those parties and then there was a big fire at Mount Cutha and there was a big ammunition dump there and they unlocked the cells again. "Righto, up Mount Cutha and help fight the fire," see. So anyhow they give us big flappers and oh we flapped 'round for awhile. It was pretty
- 34:30 hot and smoky and we sat down for awhile and petty officer come up to us and he said, "Come on. Get off your backsides. You gotta fight this fire here," and I say, "We're supposed to be in jail. We're not supposed to be here at all. You take us back and put us in our cell." Like, "We're quite happy there," and oh a little bit of altercation and we half heartedly continued and but this is how stupid it was, that we were in jail and we were let out to do these chores. Anyhow
- 35:00 we got weighed off before the captain at Moreton and I had a good conduct badge, which is just like a lance corporal stripe. After three years conduct you get a good conduct badge, which gives you about a shilling a week extra in your pay. So they sentenced me to fourteen days detention and loss of a good conduct badge and Knocker, who was with me, he didn't have a good conduct badge so he had to do twenty one days and we ended up at a little place called Round Mountain.
- 35:30 It was an army camp and it a jail and it was out at Round Mountain it was out near Beaudesert and that was a sort of a joke and we got in there and the in tents, all in tents in a big compound. Barbwire. No huts. That was all it was. We all lived in tents and a course everyone had a calendar. Crossed the days off you know. Typical criminal thing and
- 36:00 anyhow the old sergeant came 'round. He said, "We've got a good library you young fellas," you know we were young blokes. "Oh you young fellas we got a good library here," you know. "Did you do any courses before you joined up?" "Oh yes," I said, "Yes. I've done a lot of art." 'Cause I hadn't. My grandfather was a pretty good artist and it just hit me and he said and I said, "Yes. I done a lot of art," and he said, "Oh," he said, "Look I'll there's no good books in this library. I'll get you up
- 36:30 a book from Brisbane on art." I said, "Oh geez," you know, "I thank you very much kind sir," and you know lickin' his boots and everything and anyhow he went to my mate, Knocker White, and he said, "Knocker what do you do?" and he said, "I wanted to be an ambulance man," and he said, "I started on a bit of St Johns ambulance work but I don't know enough about it but I'd love to study it." "Not a trouble," he said. "I'll go and get you a physiology book"
- 37:00 and, right. So anyhow after about a week, I'm nearly end of me time, and after about a week he come up and he said, "How's the book?" I said, "Oh gee it's a good book." Everyone was sarge or staff. You never called 'em sir. Sarge. Staff. "Oh good sarge. Good staff. Excellent book." "How far you got?" "Oh I'm up to here." Picked the book up. Started to ask me a few questions. I didn't have a clue on one of 'em because I'd never opened it and he said, "Hey," he said, "you
- 37:30 don't know too much about this do ya?" He said, "You haven't even opened this book have ya?" and I said, "No I haven't," and he said, "You're gonna be back on the stone gang you know." I said, "Okay. Fair enough. I tried and you caught me out and I won't whinge." So he went over to Knocker and Knocker had moustaches on the skeletons and cigarettes in their and he said, "Who done this?" and he blamed him anyhow. He said, "Oh I didn't sir and staff," he said, "that was there."

- 38:00 He said, "No it wasn't." He said, "You've done that," he said, "and you go out with him." So anyhow I got out and we come up here to Barry and Roberts who were near the treasury building in those days and me and another friend, who was in the navy, we bought a big hamper full of groceries and we caught a cab. We must have had money because we caught a cab and we went all the way to Beaudesert in this cab with this box of groceries. There was
- 38:30 tins of baked beans and camp pie and everything and we give it to our mate that was in the slammer but we got discharged. We had to go back and well you're probably aware of the points system. Married men with children got x amount of points and they had priorities to get out and then there was married men and then there was single men and of course I was single and I got out in March '46
- 39:00 and that was the end of a brilliant naval career.
- Oh well we'll go back into...**
- Sure.
- A lot more about that on the next tape maybe 'cause I've just got the tap.**

## Tape 7

- 00:36 **I wonder if you can tell me about the first landing you did in the Philippines? With the Americans?**
- Yes I can. It was the biggest armada ever assembled and off the top of my head I think there were eight hundred and forty or eight hundred and sixty ships involved.
- 01:00 It was the biggest armada that's ever been afloat, so they tell me. We landed on a little island called Panaon, which was very, very adjacent to Leyte and that's where we were to the main assault landing was to be. On the way up, quite scary of an evening because we had lots and lots of kamikazes
- 01:30 having a go at us and I think you may have read in history where the Australia was hit five times. Five of them landed on her. Well we took the injured off. They didn't have enough room in their sick bays to cope with it and we sent barges over and picked up the wounded and put them on board. Actually I think we had twenty three of 'em at one stage on board and down the sick bay they were all badly burnt you know and our medical
- 02:00 officers patched 'em up until we could get somewhere you know safely but anyhow we had those on and oh I don't think five or six or seven nights and mornings, mainly of an evening just on dusk when the sun got on the horizon they'd come out of the sun and you couldn't see them. Radar picked them up and the alarm went through the fleet. Everyone went to action stations, manned their guns and just on dusk they'd come in and they'd come in mast
- 02:30 head high. Fifty foot off the water and I suppose it's history now how they operated. They were full of explosives and they were to smash into a ship and then the flames'd burst the ammunition lockers and explode the ship or sink it but the one I recalled most was going on that trip and it was one evening, it was rather early in the evening, and the alarms went
- 03:00 and all the transport with troops on, like ourselves, were in a line ahead. We had an umbrella of destroyers and the cruisers were miles up in front of us. So it left them quite a few mile away from us but we had protection on both sides with torpedo boats and destroyers and all auxiliaries and this plane happened to get through it but I always felt that he was hit
- 03:30 before he got really close to us because he was on a downward slope when he hit the water about oh five hundred yards behind us. Just behind the ship behind us, which was the Westralia and I can still vividly see him in the cockpit of the plane. I can still see his face, just no expression. Just going straight into the drink. Now everybody
- 04:00 lay claims to shooting it down and I have no doubts that lots and lots of ships had direct hits on him but which one put the nail in the coffin I don't know, but I do know that the ship behind us, Westralia, got accredited for downing a Zero but as soon as he hit the water it just 'pooomp!' blew completely up, one giant explosion, and
- 04:30 that was the closest I've ever seen them but in the Philippine landings we had quite a lot of aircraft carriers, which had their planes on, they gave us a lot of air protection and we quite a lot of spectacular dog fights. The Yankee planes going up and shooting them down, shooting the Japs down, and chases. Oh we'd be sitting there with our mouth wide open and you couldn't shoot because our planes were behind them and the
- 05:00 danger was, if you weren't a real good shot, the danger was to shoot one of your own planes. So we just manned the guns but never fired a shot and just watched. Very spectacular, especially seeing tracer bullets go out. Every tracer bullet's like a streak of flame and you could follow them into these planes. Quite spectacular and I think because it was so spectacular to watch the fear half

05:30 went out of us. We didn't register a terrible lot of fear watching it but we did with the kamikaze because we thought, "Gee he's only got to tip the water on a wing and he'll slur into us," and the reason that the Aussie [Australia] got hit that he crashed into a three inch gun on the side of the funnel. He hit the funnel and exploded all over the guns crew and that's how they all got killed in that.

**When you were getting the injured from the Australia, how did they cope with scrambling nets and**

06:00 **ladders and...?**

Well we slammed them on. On a sling. They have a special stretcher and we lowered them into a barge and we took them alongside and, I just forget the name of the stretcher, but there's a special stretcher. While you're going along you can transport 'em from one ship to another on a flying fox type a thing and we used to just pull them up and put them on and I think we had twenty three of 'em, I'm not sure, but we had a quite a few and you

06:30 couldn't go down the companion ways to the sick bay and human flesh is just like bacon, smells like bacon, and these poor guys you couldn't see for bandages but fortunately none of them died on board. I don't know how what happened after. Of course after that we went straight back to a landing, another load and offloaded these guys, which they would have been flown back to mainland I would have thought.

**And what kind of troop**

07:00 **landings were you doing at this at the Philippines?**

Pardon? What sort?

**What sort of troop landings?**

Yankee? The American troops? Yes. Oh well MacArthur had he'd promised he'd return and he had to be there and there's quite a pose about all that too but that's another story.

**And just describe in a bit more detail what these hundreds of ships looked like all together.**

Well

07:30 in the Philippine landing at Leyte the Japanese battle force was coming down through Surigao, I think it was, Straits North of Mindanao and there was a big channel through there and they were cutting down through there and our battle fleet, the Aussie and the Shroppie and the Warramunga and the Arunta, ah they were all went forward to meet them, challenge them and they actually they lay in wait for them to come through

08:00 the Straits and when they appeared they bombed hell out of them and I think they sank a battle ship and an aircraft carrier and the Japs turned tail and got out of it because they realised they were running into a trap but they were coming down to defend Leyte Island from the invasion troops and actually there wasn't only Australian ships in it. There was a lotta Yankee ships too, battleships and cruisers, and that's what turned the tide

08:30 on the Philippines really. That they hunted them and they turned tail and that let us go on to the landing unopposed. There was no opposition for about three or four days when they kept sending planes over from further away airports to bomb but there was no opposition on the Philippines at all on that landing.

**And what were the conditions like landing at Leyte Island?**

Well it was a pretty it was a low island. Had no contours

09:00 on it. Was rather flat. The beaches were quite good and peaceful. No surf rolling in. Pretty flat. Was quite easy to approach and land and get rid of your gear but we had quite a few even while we were at anchor, 'cause we anchored while we unloaded because the ship couldn't drift around in the ocean for us to come and pick it up and very difficult to unload while it was moving. So we used to anchor but we had a few scares, a few planes came

09:30 over. I don't know whether they were bombing or whether they were spotting. I presume they were spotting for the bombers to come over and say, "Well there's a ship there. Get it." So I know our captain had great urgency in getting out of it. He said, "Look, let's hurry up fellas and get rid of all this cargo and let's get out of here," which we did, and I remember we went out late afternoon out of that place. So we missed the fireworks again.

**And how**

10:00 **close together were all of these ships that were at the**

Well we were in convoy and in oh they'd be over miles of ocean, literally miles in imagine three lines ahead. Just three big lines of ships straight down flanked by escorts every second ship or every third ship there was an escort, destroyer or sub chaser or whatever, and up front the spear head of the attack would be



10:30 half a dozen big cruisers escorted by half a dozen or ten, actually I think in the Philippine landing there was ninety-odd destroyers guarding it, guarding the fleet from attack and we never worried about zig zag unless there was air raids sirens went and were picked up on radar then we'd zig zag course.

**How did it feel to be part of this?**

Well I suppose a lot of excitement.

11:00 A lot of excitement. I don't I think I don't think I ever felt fearful. I think if I ever had any doubts about whether I'd get out was when I went up the Napa River in the barges to drop the signallers behind enemy lines. I think that may have been and I think maybe a kamikaze may have you know put a doubt in my mind but I don't remember being oh you know really frightened

11:30 of it.

**But how...**

More excitement.

**Well how did it feel to be a part of such a huge mass of ships?**

Oh, good. Yeah. You felt safe. You felt, "Oh I've got plenty of 'em 'round. If we go, someone else is gonna go," and yeah. Oh no, we never worried about that.

**Was this a big sign to you that the Japanese were going to be beaten?**

Well we felt when MacArthur employed the tactics of island

12:00 jumping, bypassing the Jap strong holds and attacking another part and that's why Rabaul was never taken, because it was a terrible big strong hold for the Japanese and it was pretty well oh impregnable. We couldn't get into there because it was so well armed with submarines and barges and aircraft. So he bypassed it and he went around it and he jumped in behind it, which sort of made the... a little obsolete and he that was his strategy was to do that all

12:30 through the Pacific war and it really worked. He just cut them off, isolated them, starved them out and it really worked.

**And was there any complications with your landing barges at Leyte given that there were so many ships around the place?**

No. None at all. It was all well organised. Each ship had its position at anchorage. Sub chasers were out there patrolling up and down the ocean behind us.

13:00 The battlers were up in the straits of Surigao.

**Ooh.**

Sorry about that.

**That's alright.**

Well no, there was no chaos really. It was all well organised and everything went you know as orderly as you could with all that number of ships but no, they were only the only problems we ever had at any landing was broaching on the beach or not getting into the shore close enough and going aground. That was they were our biggest problems. Unloading troops and vehicles

13:30 in three foot of water and because we disliked doing that greatly because we felt the poor old diggers how to go and do the hard work. We'd should land them in a in good state instead of wringin' wet and give 'em a give 'em a sporting chance.

**And were there other barges not from the Manoora doing landings at**

Oh yes. Oh yes. Yeah there were three Australian

14:00 ships and there were oh there was about three or four American ships doing the exactly the same thing and then the LSIs [Landing Ship Infantry] and the LSTs [Landing Ship Tank]. They were great big things with jaws and it'd open up and they'd get out hundreds of troops at a time and they'd also take tanks and trucks and artillery and like oh ugly looking things but they were always in a convoy with us and they'd cart a lot of the heavier gear.

14:30 No, they stuck to their line ahead. We stuck to ours and we all had a position in the convoy and stuck to it. Everyone kept in line. Reduce speed or bring up speed and but no, it was pretty orderly.

**And approximately how many men do you think the barges dropped at Leyte?**

At each landing we carried twelve hundred and fifty and the Kanimbla would be the same

15:00 and the Westralia would be a little bit less, but you could say oh close to four thousand between the three ships and then there were three Yankee LSIs, Landing Ship Infantries, would carry approximately

the same. The Blue Ridge, the Henry T Allen and oh some other ones that I can't remember. They'd be the same and then all the troops on the LSIs and they were all hitting the beach and

15:30 oh there'd be thousands a troops on at a landing. Thousands. Loads and loads. The beach'd be oh fifty, forty foot high with stores piled up above high tide mark.

**How many different runs did you do into Leyte from**

Oh well initially you'd go in with troops first and then you I've never counted to be honest

16:00 but you just kept going until the holds were empty. You'd come alongside and you'd run in and if you had aviation fuel there was the flag, you went to that beach and you dropped it all off there. It was all in slings and it was unloaded in slings. You were turned around and went straight back out the ship. Went alongside the hold again if there was no one there. Another lot'd come in. Back you went. It was sort of random. There was no there was

16:30 no sequence. You had to wait there. You went alongside if there was no ship there, or no barge there. You go in there. Get loaded and get and haste was the prime factor.

**And who was loading you primarily?**

The we had a contingent of army engineers that used to work all the winches. We had them down the hold. All the stuff was in landing nets, big nets. You know the cargo nets? They'd just hook 'em on, up and while the next lot the blokes down below'd be preparing the next load.

17:00 **And were you always getting loaded from the Manoora or**

Yes. Sometimes if we were done early and someone was behind we'd go over and help 'em, mm. We'd and normally we were first ship finished and we'd go over for a couple of hours or an hour and a half and take a couple of loads into the beaches for them just so they could get out. You were a sitting target when you were there. You were you weren't mobile. You were just at anchor.

17:30 By the time you got all hands on deck and raised the anchor and got the ship under way, twenty minutes.

**And when the barges were ducking in and out were there any sort of even just casual communication...**

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. "Come on, what a you been doin'?" and, "Hurry up. Geez, I've done ten loads and you've done one. What's wrong with you?" and all the shyacking that you know fellas go on with.

**How 'bout with the big ships that you might go past? Would you**

18:00 **wave or**

Oh well if you saw yeah you know give 'em a, "G'day," you know but too busy on concentrating on your own job and that was you know our prime thing was to get ashore quickly and get 'em ashore dry. That was our main objective and you all that's all you concentrated on. You didn't worry too much about the next bloke unless he was getting close.

18:30 That was the flotillas officer say, "Hey, you're outta line. Get back in line," or but it was on it was on individuals. I mean you knew when you were too close so you'd veer out or take a few revs off your motor or speed it up if you were lagging behind. Keep formations was the name of the game but we had no dramas really. It all went along pretty good.

**And the other landings that you did at the Philippines**

19:00 **at different islands around the Philippines?**

No we only done the two in the Philippines and that was at Leyte at on Pagadian and the other one was at Lingayen Gulf on Luzon Island, which is a big island. Lingayen Gulf, a great big gulf up there. Met very little resistance because the Japanese force had left further North and they'd gone about twenty mile inland and they were marching down to Manila where they thought we were going to strike and a course

19:30 they were inland when they landed in the middle and we cut them in, well we the American army cut them in half and that's how they beat them.

**And what was this gulf like?**

Great big gulf. Huge really. It or there were three battle ships in line ahead of us, in front of us, and they were just bombarding the beach and I remember well the beach was where you were and the guns were shooting over there and we had to come in underneath the

20:00 line of fire and oh deafening. Oh mind you hundred and fifty yards, maybe two hundreds away from the ship but all the cordite. They'd put the compressed air down the barrels and the cordite'll come out and bellow out like orange smoke and guns going off and you'd see the ripples in the water. She'd shift the ship back firing a broadside. Well you takes finding three and three, six, three, nine, twelve, eighteen

inch guns

20:30 and they're as round as that. The projectiles [projectiles] are going thirty mile inland. Quite a din. Oh come out half deaf after it and ringing ears and...

**And was there anything tricky about the landings at this island?**

No. It was fairly peaceful. There was a little I remember on the beach where we landed there was a little knoll on the end, a little rocky knoll, and there were a few snipers in there that were

21:00 rifle fire and machine gun fire. Just random stuff. You know nothing serious but I do remember when we hit the beach, all the Filipinos that lived in the little village there come down the beach to meet us. Kids, the whole lot, waving, "Oh God bless you," you know. "You're here. You're we're saved." You know. We said, "We're saved too." Yeah. That was pretty good and then they marched down to

21:30 Manila from there and they took Manila and we went in with reinforcements to Manila Harbour and we had to go in past Corregidor, which at that time it wasn't completely taken. The Japs still had control of it and I'll never forget all the sunken ships in Manila Bay. They were everywhere you could see was just the tops of funnels and masts. Pretty shallow bay and they were everywhere and we were allowed to go ashore

22:00 and everyone said, "Okay. San Miguel breweries. Let's go to the San Miguel breweries." Big brewery there. So we were lucky. We commandeered a jeep again with the with our little rotor button and come to the brewery. Then someone said, "Hey, the Japs have needled all these bottles. They could have needled 'em all," which they did do. They poisoned 'em through the cork. Like the sake was all corked, not capped and they'd needle 'em and

22:30 poison 'em and then anyone getting in to drink 'em'd either kill 'em or make 'em sick so, "Whoa, whoa, whoa." We were outside the brewery. "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa."

**How did you know that they'd done that?**

Someone oh we were told, and it was rumoured, and then it hit us. 'Cause we said, "Oh get into this grog," and, "Free grog." So anyhow that we put the brakes on that. We said, "No." So we're coming back to the ship in this jeep and we're going over a bridge in a canal there and they were all just straight over bridges,

23:00 arched bridges, and we luckily we got nearly to the top and whoever was driving hit the brakes and she'd been bombed out and there was a big gap of about twenty foot in the bridge and we'd a been in the drink. So we had to back off of that and we got back to the ship but Manila was shocking. There was, I don't know whether you're conversant with Manila but there's a little part of Manila called The Wall City and The Wall City was just out of Manila a little bit to the North and it was a

23:30 convent. It was used as a convent but the Japanese used it to keep prisoners in and they imprisoned a lot of nuns and people in it. I didn't see it at this time but I went back and saw it years and years later but all through the streets down the main streets ... nearly every street corner there was someone strung up and bayoneted straight down, from throat straight down, and just hanging there and they'd

24:00 been hanging there a week and they you can imagine what the stench is like and what it looked like and it was absolutely you know we were really disgusted that they'd be so barbaric and do that to a human being that I mean it it's fair game to kill 'em but not to do that to them. Split 'em open and just leave 'em hanging there.

**Would they be like what types of people?**

Women and men and kids. Filipinos. Nearly all Filipinos.

24:30 Ones that probably knew the allies were coming in to liberate them and the Japs have sorted them out. "Ah, you're a collaborator. 'Bang' you're gone," but that was it was shocking. 'Cause they torched the whole city too and bombed it out and but and then coming out, I'll never forget coming out, we're going past Corregidor and they have a couple a shots

25:00 at us going out. Japs still had a couple of big guns there because MacArthur had a cave, as you've probably read, built into the cliff and he'd resisted them there until it was inevitable and then he got out with his wife and his child and flew to Darwin. He went down to Mindanao and from Mindanao to Davao and from Davao down to Darwin and then back to Australia or he's in Australia at Darwin. That's right. They wanted him to go on the train. She was

25:30 his wife was frightened of aircraft and she wanted to go in the train and the train a 'course didn't go there too far in those days and they ended up gettin' a car and took her down by car, the Australian government, and arranged for that. Fixed that up but anyhow.

**And in Manila what were the locals behaving like when you were there?**

Good. Oh they were that pleased to see us. They couldn't do enough for us. They took us

26:00 into their homes and anything they had they would a given to us and it was always a bit suss you know

going into a foreign country like that and poor country and their diet may not have suited our diets and some of us had something but not too many of us. You know we'd go into their house and they had sake and we'd have a little sip but it's a terrible drink. I don't know how they ever drank it but, it's shocking, but just to be sociable and

26:30 oh you know we become very friendly with them and I mean just on a casual basis but they patronised us down the ship. They'd all come down to see you and wave to you and carry on.

**And can you describe a bit more what the city of Manila looked like due to the bombing and the war and**

Yes, it was I can remember some high rise buildings, six and seven storeys, and they looked like they'd been collapsed in the

27:00 front because all the storeys had been blown out and they lay overlapped each other. Like a layer, layer after layer right up to the seventh floor. The other half was still standing. Terrible lot like that but I blamed that to the bombardments to get the Japs out. Or maybe the Japs done some of it too. They torched a lot of places when they were getting done or and I think it might have been a bit of both. I think the Japs would have torched it because they

27:30 tortured the people. Shocking. Really shocking what they done to them and...

**What other evidence of what the Japanese had done did you see around the city?**

Well mainly I'd say killing ill innocent civilians and torching the place. Bombarding it and burning it down but I think the allies have to take a little bit of blame for that because I

28:00 think they helped in the bombardment. So I'd say fifty-fifty on there. That's to be fair.

**And what did you observe about sort of hunger or poverty that the locals were living in?**

Oh yes, they were poor. They were they had nothing. I mean well they had entirely different diets. They all had a couple of chickens in the back yard and they coconuts and they could make a dozen different meals

28:30 out of green coconuts and bananas and jackfruit and you know they there was nothing what you could call really gourmet meals but they survived on it and there was survival and I don't know how they I think they grew a little bit of cereal somewhere. I know they had big rice fields at a place called Baggio. That was up North of Lingayen Gulf and I you probably read about those. They're all tiered down the mountainside.

29:00 It's a almost a wonder of the world. They were only narrow things as wide as this room but they went around the hills. I don't know how they got the water there but they did. So that was their staple diet, like most Chinese and Japanese, was rice and I suppose with these other things that they survived okay but they weren't over abundant with food.

**And where were the Americans setting up base in Manila?**

Yeah well

29:30 the only part that wasn't really bombed, which makes me say the allies were partly to blame, was MacArthur's old headquarters. It was never touched. It was never touched and all the souvenirs and the carvings, they were still there when they went back. I've just finished reading a book on it all and they it's a wonder that they walked back in. Things were the books were in the library. Hardly a thing hardly a thing touched.

30:00 I think I don't know whether it was the embassy or there was some famous building there that he lived in while he was there. So who knows?

**And why was it that you were given some time to look around Manila?**

Well we came in and we had to unload and we had to wait. There was so much congestion in the in the bay with ships being sunk. Oh there must have been fifty ships sunk in the bay

30:30 and you had to wait to come alongside anywhere. Even alongside wharfs ships were sunk and you couldn't use 'em and you sort of had to wait your turn to unload and we were allowed oh half day shore leaves you know. Go ashore at lunch time. Be back at dinner time at night. Nobody wanted to stay on any longer anyhow but I do recall in the Philippines they educated themselves fairly quickly and I remember hanging

31:00 over the stern one day. I was on duty watch and they came out in one of their canoes and he had a big pole about ten foot long out the back of the canoe and he had all these game roosters sitting on it. Must have had a dozen of 'em all with a tether on their leg tied on there and we I think we'd bought a hand a bananas, a bunch a bananas off him. "How much for the chickens?" "Oh," so many pesos and so many centavos

31:30 or whatever. "Oh yeah," and I got my mate, Knocker, and I said, "Christ we haven't had chicken you know. We don't have chicken on board this ship. What say we buy three. We'll have one each and we'll

give one to the cook in the galley to cook it for us." Well we had the plan good. So, "Yeah," so many centavos and pesos. So we dished it out on the string and he had all these chickens on. He had 'em on the other end of the rope. So we paid him. We put 'em up on the deck. As they come up

32:00 on the rope untie one, put him down there and just left him there. So he paddles, he paddled off. I suppose here to the back door off the ship. Gave one whistle and all the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOKS just took off. We ended up with nothing. He'd duded us. So I thought, "Well fair enough." I we couldn't do anything about it. He was sittin' out there, "Ha ha ha." So oh no. That's how you get

32:30 educated I guess.

**How did you have the right kind of money to pay him?**

Oh we used to get money. Centavos and gilders for the Dutch and we always carried a little bit of foreign currency, yeah. When you were comin' to a place you knew you were going to do it.

**And when you were wandering around Manila or driving around, was there still any threat from the Japanese?**

No. See the initial landing had been and Manila had

33:00 been taken and we were back a week later after they'd all the Japanese troops had gone. They went back to the hills that those that weren't killed and they vacated the place and it was just Filipinos and the Yanks and a few Australian navy guys that come off the ship for the day but I can't remember any of us having a night ashore there. There's nowhere to go.

**Were there any places starting**

33:30 **to set up like bars and I guess entertainment for American troops?**

There wasn't then, no. It was a little bit too early for them to get organised but they were past masters at that but not at that stage, no. It was too soon after the battles really for them to get organised and settle back in and besides, I think they had a fear of the bottles of sake and that being poisoned. Even

34:00 though they could have got all they wanted free.

**And after the Philippines, was it then that you started with Australian landings?**

Yes. Yes. We went back I think the Philippines was close to September and it was very close to the end of the war and I still cannot comprehend why Australian troops were sent to Borneo, because we could have starved them out and isolated them out

34:30 of it really and, just like MacArthur had done, but I think it was a payback from MacArthur. He was saying, "Well I've always used America..." he wouldn't have Australian troops in the Philippines. "No Australian troop goes ashore at the Philippines," and I think it was a payback to the Australian government that, "Okay, we're using Australian troops to do these Borneo stints," and no Yanks were involved in it. Yankee ships

35:00 yes, but no Yankee army and I think that's really why it dragged on. We needed Tarakan because of the oil wells and likewise Balikpapan, because Borneo was oil rich nation and 'cause the Dutch had part of it and the British had a little Brunei and well, you've all heard of Sandarkan or Sandakan, whatever you like to call it. Anyhow, coming back a strange incident. We brought a couple of

35:30 soldiers back and one had been a prisoner.

**Sorry, brought them back from?**

From Tarakan and we talked them back to Morotai and from mixing around you say who's who and there wasn't a terrible lot, there was only a few of them, and blow me down I run into this chap called Rod Brown, who lived five doors from me at Kalinga and he said, "Oh goodness me," he said, "Sandy Wilson

36:00 and Kevin Lukey's here." I said, "Oh get out." He said, "No." So I go down. Kev I went to school with 'em in my class at school, two of them. So and I've since seen them but one has two of 'em has since died unfortunately but yeah I took 'em down our mess deck and I said, "Well, you're not getting much with the army food. You'd better come down and have a bit a navy food." So they come down there for the three to four days on a journey back to Morotai.

**What sort of condition were they in?**

Ah Rod was pretty

36:30 good but pretty weak. Facial wise he looked okay. I think maybe he had a bit of beri beri [lack of vitamin B]. He was sort of puffed out but very white, very anaemic looking, but Sandy and them Sandy and Kevin weren't prisoners. They were in the army on their landing and oh they something happened with them. Oh they got a malaria and they were sending them back. So that's how they all happened together. It was quite a coincidence.

**Where had they been prisoners-of-war? In**

In

37:00 Borneo. Rod Brown had but the others hadn't. They were just in the army on the landing. I think they may have had bouts of malaria or got some shrapnel wound or something happened to them and they were invalidated out and they went back to Morotai of course. Morotai was a great centre for all movement from Borneo to the Philippines.

**And did Rod tell you any stories about what had happened to him as a prisoner of war?**

No, well we didn't like to pry too deeply

37:30 into he was just out and we didn't like to pry too deeply and it was just good to see, "Hey old mates from school," you know. Yeah and reminiscing on old times like, "Oh you remember so and so at school?" "Oh yeah I remember him," and that was the sort a conversation we mainly carried on with and a course I had my duties to do all day and it was only at meal time only of an evening I'd invite him down to our mess. I'd scrounge a little bit of extra food so they

38:00 could have a meal with us and I only saw them for an hour and a half you know a day and we'd more or less talk about school days but it was quite good and quite good to see them. 'Cause I've got a photograph here of them somewhere, the three of us, on board the ship. Yeah.

**And you mentioned that Tarakan wasn't the easiest place to land at?**

No it wasn't because it was all underwater obstacles.

38:30 Submerged really at below water level at low tide and they had to be cleared for us to get into the beach otherwise we could never a got past them. They would have held us up and we would have never got anywhere near the beach and the troops would have had to swim and we would never have been able to unload trucks or tanks or guns. It's it was number one priority to land on a beach because of these obstacles and the underwater demolition they done a very good job

39:00 on well every landing. They went through it blew them up. You know just blew them up with dynamite, TNT and blew 'em out of the water to give us a passage in. So I would never a liked to have been a underwater demolition. I wouldn't like to go into that unit. Like unexploded bombs. Delousing bombs. Yeah.

**We're just at the end of that tape.**

Aha.

**Again**

Righteo.

**So we'll switch over.**

39:30 **End of tape**

## **Tape 8**

00:35 **Okay Les, you were just going to tell us some stories from Tarakan.**

Well one incident I recall. A Liberty ship was sunk just off Tarakan Island, beside another small island in the vicinity, and it was rumoured that it had a load of beer on for the troops. So I thought it needed investigation.

01:00 So chugged over in our barge and got one of the crew members to dive in underneath the wreckage. Had a giant hole in the bow just behind the bow there where it had been hit with a bomb or torpedo, I don't know what, but anyhow they dived under and there were there were some beer there was some beer there, yes. Got about a case out but it was that damn difficult. You had to dive right down to get up through the floor of the hold to get back up into it for air. So

01:30 oh we had a merry time on the case of beer anyhow but it was all it was it was funny, it was Yankee beer. It was that Budweiser and all those little small stubbies. So we quite enjoyed that. So the war done some good, some benefit to us somewhere. Yes.

**And when they were blowing clearing away the obstacles what would their explosions look like?**

Well we never saw them because they were usually done the night before. Ah the

02:00 day before they'd bombard it and while that was going on the underwater demolition, it see the

bombardments would occupy the Japanese ashore and they were busy retaliating to the bombardment and these guys used to go in and go underwater and never ever saw one never saw an explosion.

**How deep would the barges sit into the water about?**

Ah about I suppose the small ones, eighteen inches.

02:30 That was empty. Loaded, two foot. The one I had was probably take two foot six. Very flat bottom but they carried a lot of weight. We'd carry at least thirty ton in the one I had. So

**And what did the area the bay the beach look like at Tarakan that you landed on?**

03:00 It was a bit of a mess. There were a couple of little minor little, you wouldn't call them jetties, just something like you'd tie your boat up, your rowing boat, up to out here. Bit of mangrove along the bank and at random you'd see these stakes sticking out of the water. Some were they weren't all level. They were up and down like teeth in a hacksaw blade and but there were rows and rows of them. Might have been eight or nine rows of them. So if you got through one you'd hit the next one but they were

03:30 hundred yards out from the beach. All out below low water mark so and it was a bit messy that beach too. It wasn't a nice sandy beach to land on. It was a bit mucky, muddy and it was like Morotai. Morotai it was shocking. It was just mud and muck and get out and you'd go up to your knee no trouble at all.

**Could it have been a better place at Morotai then that they**

Well I suppose but they had a I suppose the objective was, as always, was

04:00 an air strip and the allies' main objective was to go straight for the air strip. Secure the air strip. Then they could run their own bombing raids. Instead of their bombers coming hundreds of miles to bomb it and running out of fuel they'd have it on the spot and they could do fighter strafing and they could bomb the whole area and I think that was the strategy throughout most assault things was to secure I know how that's how Derrick got killed at Tarakan. He got a bit ahead of them all and

04:30 he was gonna take the air port I believe single handed and that's where he met his fate unfortunately but that was always their objective was to get the air strip. Secure the airstrip. Play it from there. So it had big priorities and the I suppose the landing spot most accessible to it without mountain ranges or whatever in the way they took the level or the least line of resistance to it and

05:00 they blew these stakes up.

**And were these were stakes placed there?**

Hammered into the dirt and I some of them I think they must have had pile drivers to do it because you just couldn't push them over. They were in pretty solid.

**How thick were they?**

Some were like fence posts. Some were thinner but oh I'd say the average of ooh six, eight inches across.

05:30 Yeah.

**How would have they have put them all there?**

I don't know. It would have been a lot of work but there were rows and rows of them. Weren't just one row and they had the same at Balikpapan. They done the same thing along the foreshores but nowhere near as intense as Tarakan. Tarakan was fairly thickly, fairly densely put in there.

**And was that all around the area?**

No, it was a fair way

06:00 at Tarakan. It must have done a couple of mile. Couple of mile of the accessible beaches. See they only done the accessible beaches. The other ones you could have had a headache. They could have been a mountain coming down to the sea and impenetrable and it was the way the town was there and once you got through where the beaches were, the town of Tarakan was right behind it and it was a roadway straight through to the airport. To the airport I say,

06:30 airfield and least line a resistance.

**What other defences would they have?**

Oh they had a fair bit. Ah the army ran into a lot of opposition once they got ashore. There was it's pretty rich in oil, but that was on the other side of the island, the oil and they used to pipeline it through to this side of Tarakan where there was a deeper anchorage out further and in close it was no good and they

07:00 protected that because it was vital. Fuels really half stymied the Japanese forces. Lack of fuels to keep going and once, that was the theory, cut all the oil supplies off Borneo and Morotai. Starve 'em.

**And I mean apart from like obvious defences of guns and that kind of thing, did they have anything other than like the stakes in the water or anything**

07:30 Oh yeah they had pill boxes all along the beach. There were pill boxes but fortunately the naval guns and the air bombardment bombed most of them out. I'd say eighty per cent were bombed out the day before the landing. There was always the occasional one that was returned fire, yeah enemy fire at you but no dense fire or you know it was you sort of expected that.

**And what differences were you noticing about**

08:00 **now working with Australians in the landings?**

Oh well it was I think we really got behind them and got more on side with them. We had a friendlier attitude to them because they were one of us and I don't know, we just felt we welcomed them more openly than the Yanks. Look we never had conflict with the Yanks. I mean they were here and they had to do it and I think

08:30 a little bit a jealousy amongst Australian troops in respect to the uniforms and all the food they have. They wouldn't move without ice cream and iced tea and all these things and we were on pretty basic rations and I think, yeah I think a little bit a jealousy crept into it but no, we felt more comfortable with the Aussies and we felt, "Well let's get behind these boys," and we felt more like that about it than we

09:00 did with the Yanks.

**Was there more talk on board the barges**

Oh yes we fraternised a lot more with the Aussies. We'd invite 'em all 'round the ship and put 'em onto a few of the perks you know. Where you could get this or get that or you know it just more friendly atmosphere, yes.

**Was there anything which was uniquely or significantly different operation wise?**

No. I think the Yanks had a lot

09:30 more sophisticated machinery but the old Aussie he improvised a lot, which is a trait of the breed isn't it really and they just they got on with it and done the job and main didn't have the good equipment but they done it.

**Was there anything different in the way you would conduct the landing or**

No. Exactly the same. Exactly the same way.

**And was there**

10:00 **anything you noticed in the way they would go off the barges or anything they did in any movement or anything that they did?**

Well there was never any hesitation with the Aussie. He got out and he went up the beach and went for cover as quick as he can but some of the Yanks, not all of them, just some of them were a little hesitant and, "At which end, which way to go, where do I do, what how do I go or someone tell me," and but the Aussie he didn't need that. He just beelined for a bit a cover.

10:30 I think that was the big difference in them.

**Well tell us about Brunei. Was there anything well tell us about the landings at Brunei?**

Well Brunei was really almost part of Labuan and sections of the army, I think it might have been the 2/14th. I'm not sure on not up with the army regiments but they got in there and they done landed on three different spots but it was a sort of a carry on from Labuan,

11:00 Brunei. They were very, very close. Labuan ah not Labuan, listen to me, Tarakan was a little island on the Northern end of Borneo. Labuan was across the straits and Brunei was right next door to it. 'Cause Brunei was a British province. It had a sultan and very rich place. Only small but very rich but we never had a great deal of involvement in that one. Mostly Tarakan, ah

11:30 Labuan and the other one. We didn't have a lot at Labuan really. It was pretty peaceful in comparison. The other two far more significant than the others.

**So did you do much did you do many deliveries at Labuan?**

Oh yes. Every there wasn't a landing went that we didn't back it up within a week with reinforcements. Either troops, usually troops, and supplies and after that, that was the end. We never went or very seldom went back to them

12:00 and we just ah milled around at Morotai waiting for the next project to come into force, which was, well after Morotai was the Philippines. After the Philippines were Borneo. So we'd go back to Morotai, wait around, train a few more troops, put 'em through the paces, on your way again.

**And what about Balikpapan? Was there tell us the stories of the landings there.**



Well Balikpapan

- 12:30 ah we had a fair bit of resistance there but mainly inland. There was a town back in off the coast a little bit and had giant oil storage tanks where they used to transport oil by ship to all 'round the globe and our bombers bombed all the oil tanks up and destroyed all the filtration works and I don't think I've ever seen a more spectacular fire in all my life as on, I think it was Oboe,
- 13:00 Oboe One, I think we called the landing there but anyhow I'd never seen smoke and that belch out of the sky and all the beach I can't remember very many palm trees being intact. They were all flattened as if a bull dozer had gone through and knocked everything down. It was really bombarded and quite a big long beach front, shallow beach again, and obstacles in some of them but nothing like
- 13:30 Tarakan. Had a little bit of resistance there once they got in 'round the town. The town was over a ridge and in a hollow when it was 'round the point. Balikpapan was on the front and the town was in behind, in a bay. Quite a sizeable town run by Dutch but the Japs had control of it and well that was the finish of it all.

**Well what were you seeing or hearing of the resistance that you mentioned? The Japanese resistance at Balikpapan?**

- 14:00 Well the only thing that we heard about it was when we'd taken the town. We'd news would filter through to us, "Ah the boys got there. They've taken it," and ah I suppose on the buzz on the bush telegraph. Things have a way of transmitting around the fleet and one soldier might come back with it. "Oh the boys have got hill number sixty two," or whatever and you'd say, "Oh that's good," you know, "How we going?" "Oh I think we got control." "Oh great," and
- 14:30 it was like a bush fire then. "Oh good, we got that."

**Were you hearing any of the fighting? Like the shots the...?**

Oh yes. Yeah all the time going in. Yeah. 'Round of fire, hear explosions and yeah.

**What's it like to travel towards that?**

Well all you were your focus was on getting to that spot on the beach. "That's where I'm to go and that's where I'm goin'." Get there as quick as you can and get your troops off and turn 'round and get back

- 15:00 and you it was it took up all your all your energies and your focus really because that was your job and you didn't have time to worry about, "Oh Joe, how's Joe," or, "Hope these troops look, there's a fella fallen over." No, get out you know. That's his business. Let him look after him. We just couldn't afford to stop and help one soldier. Like, we got rid of our load. Get another one on the beach and
- 15:30 that was that was the whole that's the way it all went. I mean if a mate was stuck and on the beach and you had to get back well you'd throw a line and tow him off as you were going out. If you couldn't get him, leave him. There was a boat especially at anchor, or not at anchor but standing by to help those boats. If he was busy with another one you'd help get him off.

**Well what would happen to injured people?**

Well we'd if we could put them on board our

- 16:00 barge, take 'em back to the ship. Get them in the sick bay and get our one of doctors to patch him up and send him back to his unit if it wasn't too bad.

**What was the sick bay like on The Manoora?**

Wasn't big but it could hold about twenty five people. Operating theatre. Dentist's chair. Doctor was the dentist. Had two doctors, a Surgeon Commander Mattis and a lieutenant surgeon.

- 16:30 **Did you do much work in there at all?**

No, the only thing I did was a chap was shot I think no, I think it no I'm not sure now whether it was Morotai or one of the Borneo landings. He stood up in a track vehicle, armoured vehicle, and he got shot in the stomach and we

- 17:00 pulled him back on board the ship. He was right next to us and we just loaded him on 'cause that was the law of the jungle. Any wounded, take them back to your ship. Put 'em on, administer morphine, tourniquets whatever. Get 'em back to the ship as quick as possible. So we got him back and the surgeons were busy in the middle of one. Anyhow when we come on back we'd finished at finished the landing and they called on volunteers to assist in
- 17:30 the in the sick bay. Well sick bay was full and we went to a mess deck up on B deck, which was a sort of a big room, as big as this, and a couple of mess deck tables and they laid this fellow out and I can still remember it, Doctor Hirschfield, an army doctor, who was a specialist here in Brisbane. They put him on the table and they had him up on these hammock hooks and they he was shot through the intestines and they were pulling 'em out of him and they were going
- 18:00 through it looking for the bullet holes or the wounds and as they did they had it on a hook on a oh I

don't know what it looked like, a bit of plastic but it wouldn't a been plastic in those days a bit of gauze and they examined it all and they had yards of it up there and they were trying to patch him up and I was in the sick bay oh getting swabs ready and making sure the autoclave was working and you know just nothing

- 18:30 no hands on with the thing. Just assisting, taking dirty swabs out and things like that but the poor beggar died. He died. He never survived it but oh that's just one a those things but quite a few of the guys went on and assisted because God, you couldn't leave 'em pass on without you know doing something to help, could you? I couldn't anyhow.

**And what's it like to see some of these kind of gruesome scenes?**

Oh,

- 19:00 I don't like it but it used to upset me a little bit and I used to think, "God how they're dragging this guy's gut out and how you know how what chance has he got," and then I can remember him lowering it down and he's kneading it in with the back of his hand, back in this big wound in his tummy and I thought, "God, he's got no hope this bloke." You know you look at it and you go, "Ohhhh," but I suppose necessity is why I done it but I wouldn't volunteer to do it again 'cause

- 19:30 I wasn't real happy with it.

**Were there any other kind of problems with some of the Australian landings? I mean that's a problem essentially of bad luck, being hit...**

Yes.

**But were there any other kind of issues or any other stories that came up with these Australian landings?**

No everything well most of the landings we were on went reasonably smoothly except for air attacks with kamikaze. Ah the odd shot from shore but

- 20:00 and an odd air raid that the Japs'd come over and start bombing but they always seemed to go for the man-o-wars. Like the cruisers and the aircraft carriers rather than the smaller fry, which I suppose you can understand that, but we was always at action stations you know. "Close up action stations. Zero at so and so and so and so you know. Bearing so and so," but oh a few shots were fired at them, yes but a lots a times

- 20:30 we had aircraft cover from the carriers and you never got a shot in because our planes were in the air trying to dog fight them and shoot them down so it'd been a no-no.

**Well what kind of protection did you have on board the boat?**

On the barges?

**Yeah.**

You had 2.5 machine guns on the rear, on the stern. That was every man for himself on the way and if a bomber dived on you, well you had the two of 'em and give him everything you had in there

- 21:00 or if someone ashore did you had to be very careful because if some of our troops were ashore and you weren't in the first wave you could be shooting them. So virtually we hardly fired a shot at the shore. It was only if something come from above.

**What about the arms the men were carrying? Would they ever use them?**

The .303s? No, the army always went ashore with bayonets fixed. Once they got outta the barge fixed bayonets and charged up the beach

- 21:30 and I dare say they were all cocked, all the rifles were cocked, 'cause they didn't know what they were gonna run into. It could have been a slit trench full of Japs.

**Was there a certain way they had to stand and hold their equipment on the barge?**

No. A lot of them used to drop the pack off the back and just put it beside 'em with one arm on it you know and just swing it on when you know we'd say, "We're gettin' near the beach. Better load up," and they'd load up and prepare to drop ramp. They'd hear the orders and then and we'd just say, "Righto. Two minutes.

- 22:00 Ramps down." "Righto," and they'd all be prepared. They'd have their back packs on their back and their rifle and out they'd go. Charge out like bulls at a gate.

**Was there ever any talk about amongst anyone of the purpose of these last landings?**

No. We didn't realise this until we analysed it later in life and I think years after. Not immediately, but years after.

- 22:30 We thought, "Why did we do that? The war was virtually finished," and the only conclusion we could

come up with was that it was a pay back for MacArthur because he wouldn't allow Aussie troops in the Philippines. That was his promise and he was gonna do it with the Yanks and I think he said, "Well okay here's a throw 'em a pittance here," and

**Well tell us about coming towards the end of the war?**

23:00 **Where were you when you heard that the war was...?**

I was coming home. I was coming home from Sydney and I got to Coffs Harbour and I think I mentioned I'd chatted up a little girl there over the years but nothing serious, just pen pals and friends and I was at Coffs Harbour and I got off the train. She wanted me to stay with her parents for a couple of days, which I'd accepted,

23:30 and war was over when I was there. 'Cause the town went mad but I was the only sailor in town. I was a duck outta water to be quite honest but no, no matter where you walked you were shouted a beer but I always thought of the headache next morning so, ah not that I refrained. I had my share but I didn't make a mess of myself and the day after I went on home for leave.

**And**

24:00 **how'd you enjoy your leave?**

Well um you always went on with another mate and every day we would meet in town. Meet in Brisbane. I only lived oh four mile out, it was an inner suburb really, Kalinga. Well you know where that is and I used to catch a tram or a train, I was between both, and ten o'clock pub opening. Meet all me mates in at the Grand

24:30 Central and we'd stay there 'til lunch time and I'd go 'round and I was going with Denise then and I'd go 'round and she worked for Evans Deacon and I'd go 'round and I'd take her out to lunch and then go back. I'd have an afternoon session with me mates and then go home for dinner of an evening. It was quite a good day and I was still in the navy then and then I ended up getting discharged and things never altered much. We kept doing that for about twelve months

25:00 but I was waiting to do a rehabilitation course and I couldn't do much. I couldn't get another job because I might a been called up and I just had to sit on my hands and I had a little bit of blood money, which you might be familiar with. The navy any captured bounty that ah like ships and cargo that were captured by the Australian navy in war, there was a bounty on it and we all got a share of it. From captains it

25:30 scaled right down and I think I got a hundred and ten pound. So that was a life line because I was pretty broke. Ah I'd allocated half of my pay I deferred it to my mother to keep the old place going you know and I didn't have a lotta money and I remember I was going with Denise then and there was a block a land on top of Wavell Heights, just off Spencer Street, and it was

26:00 a hundred and it was a hundred pound and we both decided we thought, "Oh we should buy it." Way up the top. It was a beautiful block. "No, no. It'll get cheaper. They'll get cheaper." It got cheaper alright. About a hundred and one times dearer. Never bought it and spent the money. 'Cause it went down the gurgler. I always put it down as rehabilitation. Some call it gettin' on the grog but oh never ironed ourselves out but we had

26:30 quite enough.

**What had you got the blood money for? What...**

It was a bounty for like captured ships. If you captured a big ship, the value of it and they could utilise it the governments at the time said, "That ship is worth oh half a million to us," and all the and its cargo might have been worth another half a million and they'd put all that down and they scaled it down and, the navy were the only ones who got it, and we used to it was called bounty money

27:00 and I got a hundred and ten quid. I remember that.

**What ship or what bounty had been captured?**

It wasn't from our ship. It was all the navy, all the Australian navy, no matter what area of war you were in, that's what you got. Every one in the navy every AB in the navy would a got a hundred and ten quid. As they went up as you were leading seaman or petty officer got a bit more, bit more, bit more and way up to captain. I don't know how much they got but

27:30 I know we all got a hundred and ten and it was a fair bit of money in those days.

**And just before we talked about some of the end of war stuff there was the time in Rabaul with the peace treaty.**

Oh yes.

**Can you tell us the story about that?**

Yes. We took the occupation forces in and they were Australian and the HMS Glory, which was a an

aircraft carrier, British aircraft carrier, was on it and they done the signing over on board her

28:00 and we went alongside. There was only one wharf at Rabaul and there was two ships sunk at it but it was very you could an it was very deep water. You could anchor very close to it. Anyhow Knocker White and myself, we were very good friends as you gather, we went ashore and we decided we'd go for a joy ride. There was a jeep waiting for us and we had a rotor button.

28:30 So we hopped in it and we decided to have a look at Rabaul. So we drive up this big avenue of trees. You been to Rabaul? Oh it's very cliffy one side and rather flat on the inside and avenues a trees, big trees. We're driving up this avenue. We must a went up half a mile and all these Japanese are up like toy soldiers. They're all lined up waiting for the surrender and the occupation force to move in and they were giants. They weren't little Japs you know,

29:00 the little Japs you usually get. These were blokes six foot and big lumps a blokes. So we're driving along and, "Oh yeah. I wonder what they're doin'?" When do we run out of these fellas? They're everywhere," and Knocker said to me, he said, "They've still got their rifles." I said, "Yeah." He said, "What if they got in behind us and cut us off? We're dead ducks." I said, "You're not wrong." We whipped her in reverse, turned around and hot footed it out of there as quick as we can

29:30 because we did have that worry. We thought, "God," you know, "We can't trust these guys and occupation hasn't gone on yet." So oh that was a bit of a scary time. Made us rethink but they everything went alright. They didn't worry us but they were, I'll never forget and someone said they were Tiger marines. Now what that meant I don't know but they were a selected group of big fellas anyhow.

**Well what was the scene like**

30:00 **at Rabaul? Like was there a ceremony or anything**

Yes, there was. On board the Glory there was a bit of a ceremony.

**Did you see this at all?**

No. We were on I was on duty on board ship but I do remember Rabaul, we were in Simpson Harbour and there was a volcano right on the edge of Simpson Harbour and it was still active and of a morning when you'd do down decks, hose down decks, they'd be covered in pumice stone ash. This old volcano'd give a bit of a, "puuhhh!"

30:30 and all this ash'd float through the air and oh we were half a mile from it really but it'd all land on the decks and, "Hey, let's get outta this place. Like, she could blow up," but it never did. We were only there for a few days. I think we brought the Australian troops from a little place called Wide Bay or Jacquinot Bay, which is down the inside oh hundred and fifty kilometres South, miles South of Rabaul, and we brought them up for the surrender.

31:00 **And what was the feeling like doing some of this work in the kind of post-war period of the kind of clean up after the war kind of thing?**

Yeah well I suppose it was interesting because you were seeing different things and going to different places but a lot of a lot of enthusiasm went out of it because I suppose our attitude was taken that, "Oh the war's finished now. Let's get home. Let's see what the next what's in store for us now"

31:30 and oh sort of mundane things. You know part a ship, mind a watch, do your trick a the world, get up the mast head, scrub the decks, get your paint logger and I thought, "Well let's get back to Sydney. Sooner we get back to Sydney the better." So

**But was...**

But there was always rumours, "Going to Sydney." We'd never get there. We had a, story I could tell you, we had a he's a great mate and he's still a great mate a mine he was in the army and he was with the Australian

32:00 army at Morotai and on ack ack gun, which is an anti-aircraft gun, and we were at Morotai and the rumour had gone around the ship that we were heading for Sydney. We weren't going on any more landings. We were going to Sydney first and then we were coming back. So he used to come down to the wharf in a jeep and see us and we told him, "We're going to Sydney." He said, "Oh," he said, "I'm comin' with ya." So I said, "Oh well, that's up to you."

32:30 He said, "Well look you've gotta come over," there was only about twenty of 'em in only one gun's crew and he said, "You've gotta come over. You're my brother and tell the lieutenant in charge of us that if I can have a night's leave on board the ship with ya before you sail," and he, "and tell him the story you haven't seen me for you know since the war started and you know blah blah blah." Tears running down my eyes. So I went over and I saw the lieutenant and

33:00 "Oh gee it's good to you know for him to run into his brother," and of course, "Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I just wondered if he could have overnight leave to stay on board and I've got a bunk for him," and, "Oh yes," he said, "I think we could spare him." So righto. He's got permission so he comes on board. We sail but we don't sail for Sydney. We sail for over in New Guinea in somewhere and he was on board ship

and a course he had a moustache and he was in

- 33:30 the army. Army uniform, no navy uniform. So we rigged him out and shaved his mo off and hid him around the ship. He'd be in my mess today for lunch and he'd be at the other next mess for dinner and oh we had him on there for about three months and nobody really worked, talk about McHale's Navy, and that no one really knew but we didn't go to Sydney and that was the ploy. So anyhow after about three months
- 34:00 I think, I really think some one on the ship knew some authority knew but they give it a blind eye but he done nothing. He'd do nothing all day and anyhow he went and told 'em he was AWL [Absent Without Leave] when we got into Lae somewhere and he said, "Look I'm AWL. I my wife is had a baby and she's not very well. She's very, very sick. She's in intensive care at blah blah blah and I have to
- 34:30 give myself up and, I had to shoot through." "In that case we'll give you fourteen days compassionate leave. Fine you ten dollars." Ten quid and he's still here. Actually he was president of the RSL [Returned and Services League] here for the last four years. Yeah.

**Um and was she sick at all?**

No, of course not. He was trying to beat the slammer [prison] otherwise he would have been in the boob. [brig- military prison]

**How had he enjoyed his time on board for that**

Oh he loved it. He done nothing. Well actually

- 35:00 any Manoora reunion he comes to it because he feels he's more part of Manoora than he is of the army because everyone took him under their wing. They all the ratings knew and they looked after him. "Oh Nippy hide here. Here comes a PO [Petty Officer]," or, "Here, jam this hat on," or, "Grab this brush," or you know made him look busy but oh he was on seventh heaven. Done nothing. Yeah. It's a wonder he comes down here every morning, every morning of his life, doesn't he 'Nise and has a
- 35:30 has a cup of coffee with us and we're still great mates but we still laugh about it. So you get away with murder. He said McHale's Navy. Ah oh no, good fun times. No one got hurt. That's one thing, all the larrikin things we did do. No one it done no one any real harm. They were just fun things and dares. Just bit of entertainment. Liven
- 36:00 the show up a bit. Oh no, I they actually my life in the navy I thoroughly I didn't realise 'til later years but I thoroughly enjoyed it and I learnt a lot of skills that are still very, very handy to me today. Like all the knots that I learnt and the splicing and I can still do that like it was yesterday. I can do signals. I can you know do lots of nautical things.
- 36:30 Row, sail whatever and it's marvellous how often a week you use those. You use that every week, something that you've learnt, and I appreciated that but 'Nise and I were going together just after the war and going back to Miriong, the cattle property I was at, they come and saw me and they wanted me to go back and sort of run in
- 37:00 as manager on the place and I wasn't ready for that and 'Nise didn't want to go back to the country because she was a country girl too and we decided against it and I stuck with my rehabilitation course to do a plumbing course and from there I went and got my builder's licence and I went into building and run a successful companies for forty eight years 'til I retired and I can't say I
- 37:30 loved my job. I don't think anybody not many people love the job they're doing but it was a livelihood and I had a family. They had to be educated and go to school and uni and we managed that and we're comfortable enough. We're quite happy with what we're at right now.

**Well looking back at all your memories, what do you think is kind of your best memories of the navy? What**

**38:00 would that be?**

- I think of the friendships that I forged. I dearly treasure them more than most things. I mean the friendship and what I really love about it that mates I haven't seen for twenty years I can walk into their house and sit down as if I'd never left and they treat 'Nise, and she knows most of their most of their wives, and they treat us the same, don't they 'Nise? Every
- 38:30 one is you know they're just genuine people and the thing I've found out most with them, you learnt to rely on your mates and you never turned 'round and you'd say to him, "Did you tie that boat up properly," because you knew damn well it was but today you've gotta say, "You're sure you done that boat? Have you tied that up? You sure? Give us a look." You gotta go and check it but in those days it was an insult to ask a fellow twice to
- 39:00 do a job and if he and a hundred times out of a hundred if he was your mate he'd done it exactly how it should be done and it was reliance on 'em but you were in a position where you had to rely on them because if he made one false move there was so much at stake. There was a barge full of troops. You know five ton truck. Barge load of high octane amm fuel or ammunition. One bloke do

39:30 a silly move so you're relying on and trusting but I've enjoyed my friendship with my mates and I'm very proud of them and I'm proud that without the navy I would never have had I always feel it would have been different because I've noticed men I've had working for me at different times, you get to trust them and rely on them to do a certain job but it's not done properly and I'll

40:00 always reflect back and say, "Well if I had one of me mates here that would never happen. I wouldn't have to do this," and I've found myself going back checking jobs that I should never have to do only because of this wouldn't be mistrust but well I suppose in a way it was but I couldn't rely on them to do it how it should be done. They'd take a short cut and that's typical of the world today. It's the same with these needles.

40:30 I'm very disappointed in the navy, especially the ratings that refuse to take the needles. We weren't given an option. Just line up. Jam jam. Cop it. That's it. Don't even know what they're for. Just get 'em.

**I don't know if we have time for a last question but um no.**

You haven't? Oh well.

**Yeah stop it there. Oh but do you have any final words to add? Because I think it's quite close to**

41:00 **the end of the tape?**

Well I think the services for any young person today I think it's a great life for them. It's a good clean life. You learn a lotta discipline, which this world lacks today and I think you can do nothing but good for young people to equip them for later years in their life. I'm happy about my life with it.

**Excellent. Well done.**

**INTERVIEW ENDS**