Australians at War Film Archive

Peter Smith (Smudge) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:45 **Could you share with me a brief overview of your life?**

Well, I was born at Launceston on the west coast of Tasmania, and grew up mainly at Devonport.

01:01 I left school when I was almost sixteen. I tried to work in Launceston and couldn't, so I managed to finally convince my family I should join the navy, which they allowed me eventually to do. I went to Victoria, and did my

01:30 naval training. I spent my most of my time in ships, my first three years in ships, then I volunteered for submarines and spent the last three years in submarines. I left the navy. I worked for a little while at the Bourbon and Beefsteak [Kings Cross] while I tried to figure out what I was going to do with my life, and I decided to join Qantas. I spent eighteen years with Qantas, then the last year after that I was very ill

02:00 with rheumatoid arthritis, so they laid me off, so I actually did nineteen years with Qantas. Since then I've been a pensioner on the disabled support pension. I do some volunteer work for the navy by looking after the submarine collection at Spectacle Island. I'm also the secretary for the Submarine Association.

02:34 **I'd like to take you back to your childhood memories. What are your first memories of growing up?**

My best memories are probably of Devonport. It was on the west. A lovely little hamlet. We grew up on an orchard, even though my parents didn't own the orchard. So that was great as a kid. There was a beach, with

03:00 a yacht club. Behind the orchards was a huge hill with quartz, they were mining quartz there, so whole families in the area, we used to go up there and play in the quartz pits. We played all sorts of games up there, depending on what the movie was at that time, whether we were play swashbuckling pilots, or whether or it was western. We'd imitate John Wayne.

03:30 I loved the orchard. I think that was probably the best part of my life, living on that orchard. And also the pine trees, I enjoyed climbing, I don't know why. But I'm not scared of heights, so I suppose that was one of the great things that I liked about that area. I went to extra area school. I was good in some subject and not so good in

04:00 others. When I was good, I certainly excelled in those, especially woodwork, mathematics, which quite surprised me, a few other things. I finished school, just before my sixteenth birthday. I was born in January, 1950, so I finished my –

04:30 **In respect to school, what was discipline like at that time?**

I think it was fairly fair. We had one teacher, who was deputy headmaster; he was very keen on using the cane for anything that we did. I think I got caned several times.

05:00 **Can you tell me what you got caned for?**

No, I can't remember. I probably rubbed it out of my mind. Probably fooling around. I don't know what I was doing at the time.

Of course totally undeserved, I take it?

Always. Always. But no, life was good. We had some very good teachers. They certainly brought the best out of us, at least certain teachers did. My love of classical music was brought on by

05:30 one of the teachers. Now I understand why. She was only probably six or so years older than the rest of us, and she found that classical music soothed the savage beast, sort of thing, so during the time when the girls were during their education, I don't know what it was now, it could have been sewing or typing, we'd have an arts class and she'd put classical music on. I think she instilled something

06:00 wonderful there. She always had the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] on.

Did you have any teachers that had served in World War 11 or World War 1?

Not that I'm aware of. If they did, they didn't seem to talk about it. Our headmaster, I have a feeling that he could have been in the war, but in what capacity he never spoke about. But, the others, no. We had very few

06:30 male teachers at the school itself, it was almost all female, now that I come to think of it. There was a crabby old one, I think she was from the 18th century or the 19th century. I got smacked with the ruler from her for making noise. I was very young then.

So you're primary school, was that the same school as your high school?

Yes, it was.

07:01 This particular school was actually called a secondary, so we didn't actually have a high school, but it was the equivalent of high school here in New South Wales. We only went to third year secondary.

And what were you learning about Australia and culture, places like Sydney and Melbourne?

During our education, each

07:30 year we went through different stages. We started off with the state, then the following year it would be Australia, then the following year it would be the British Commonwealth, Canada, Britain itself, and then the rest of the world itself as we got older, America, South America. So that was our education system throughout, and of course, obviously the standard English and geography and things like that.

08:00 **Given that Tasmania is a separate island, did Tasmanians, when you were growing up, feel part of Australia or their own island?**

Yes I think so. It's quite funny about Tasmania, now that I look back at it, they have an island mentality. And I can remember going to Hobart, it only takes about two hours, but once upon a time it used to take two days, because people used to stay overnight on the way down at places like

08:30 Ross, and make the trip the whole way the following day. Back in the '50s and '60s, if you saw the roads you can understand why it would have taken them two days. They still have an island mentality and I've noticed with my siblings that they don't like the idea of travelling. They're quite happy staying there.

Can you tell me something about the roads back then?

They've improved immensely now, but back then

09:00 they were certainly twisting. They followed the contours of the hills and properties, who hadn't sold their property, otherwise they would have got a straight run on that. But they've all changed now, like most roads in Australia, so I can't really make a great comment on that.

Growing up in respect to school, was there much education on World War 11, World War 1, the Anzac tradition?

Usually around about the 11th

09:30 of November, we'd always do Remembrance Day. I can remember one class where we actually made paper hats, but that was when we were very young. We certainly did. Yes, Remembrance Day was very big. Anzac Day, I don't know why it wasn't a big thing. I think that was individual. It depended on the family. I think a lot of soldiers didn't want to remember. It's only now that

10:00 I think we actually getting them to talk about their service. I've actually seen DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] recordings, of a film, and especially I think it was Mr Campbell gave an interview. And for the first time in his life, he was actually getting it off his chest and it was quite a sad thing. And I think that we should be doing that with more people.

10:32 What you're doing today, I think, not just for me but for more other senior servicemen, they're probably talking about things that they've never spoken about before, and I've certainly seen that. Even with our submariners, some of them don't like talking about World War experience. It must have been horrific for some of them, especially depth-charging and things like that.

So was the school at all involved in Anzac marches?

11:02 No, because we were a small country town, and most of the people came off farms and orchards. No, I don't think they were really pushing the defence button as such, back in the '50s and '60s. I think the later '60s, with Vietnam, people started to take notice, because all of a sudden there was a war again. I certainly don't know what impact Korea had on Tasmania, or schools at the time.

11:31 Obviously I was far too young to even know about that, but I didn't hear the impact later. But with Vietnam, yes, it was certainly a big change. It was because of Vietnam that I decided to join the navy a little later.

Just to continue on this theme of military history, your family, were they involved in World War 11 or World War 1?

No, not one of them, unfortunately, not on my father's side of the family.

12:02 Unfortunately, my mother doesn't know anything about her family. She only just found out recently that she was adopted. The people who adopted her, yes, some of them were involved in the army. In what capacity I'm not sure. I think the gentleman she called her father was a blacksmith during World War 11, so he was used in Tasmania, but exactly where or what, I don't know. Again, they didn't like talking

12:30 about it, I don't know why. One of her brothers as such, he was called up sometime in the '60s. In fact, I think several of them were actually called up, but that's all I know about their war service. On my side of the family, the Smith side of the family, unfortunately all my uncles and aunts all had disabilities

13:02 which precluded them from service. My grandfather was always limping. I can remember him always having one leg or both of his legs in plaster. My father was born with a disability so. In fact, I think they were all born with disabilities, so they never got to see the war in any form. My father would have been too young for World War 11, and

13:30 of course he would have been old enough for Korea, but he certainly didn't make it.

Just coming back to memories of your family, what are your memories of your grandparents growing up?

Grandfather Smith, he was a funny old man. He was Irish, and even though he had disabilities, he still did the Irish jig, which was funny, even when his leg was in plaster. And I think he had his legs in plaster

14:00 because he kept falling off the footpath, coming home from the pub drunk. I never knew my grandmother. She died before I was born, as far as I know. The other side, typical English. I don't know how many generations Tasmanian they were, but probably second generation. They still had all those English values.

14:33 I suppose once I joined the navy, I moved right away from the family itself. I got to find there was another world out there and I didn't go back to Tasmania much, and I lost contact. Particularly when we found out Mum was adopted, and the way she found out she was adopted. I think I just divorced myself from that side of the family. They're not relatives, so why bother? That's a

15:00 bit harsh, I suppose, but anyway that's my thinking.

Can you share that story of how she was adopted and found out?

I don't think my mother would like me to tell that story. It's not a nice story. No.

The Smith side of the family, you mentioned that your grandfather was of Irish background. Was he your first immigrant to Tasmania?

15:33 No, I'm fifth generation Tasmanian, so he would have been third generation Tasmanian, yes. They worked on the land all their life. They were involved with horses, blacksmiths. As far as I know the whole Smith family had been involved with horses, up until my father was born. He was just a council worker. One of those who lent on a shovel.

16:00 **How did your Mum and Dad meet?**

Pemberton Hospital, my mother was working as a nurse. I don't know why my father was in hospital, but that's where they met and it started from there. I don't know who started the wooing, I never asked them much. I think that was about 1948, they met, and

16:31 they were married in 1949, and I was born in 1950. My parents made sure they'd been married a few months before they decided to conceive a child. I don't think they wanted the neighbours to talk. Well, Tasmania was, back in the '50s, small time.

17:00 Everyone seemed to know everyone else's business, and everyone talked a lot. I think you didn't want to supply ammunition to your neighbours, yes.

Was it a religious community?

My parents are very religious, being Catholic. No, I think they had all denominations in Tasmania. Where we lived, the High Church of England,

17:30 it's not called that now, obviously, Protestants, Methodists, you name it, we had it. They all lived in Tasmania, in our area.

I take it you went to Sunday School?

No, not as such. The Catholic Church don't have Sunday schools as such. Well, not in our parish anyway.

18:00 But we did actually have a type of teaching at our school itself. Thursday, there was an hour set aside

for religious study. I think that's all gone by the way, now. I don't think they do that sort of things in schools anymore, but they certainly did during the '50s and 60s.

Growing up in a Catholic family, was there tensions at all between

18:30 **Protestants and Catholic kids?**

Not in our area. I don't think those sort of things were imported into Tasmania. I just think everyone minded their own Ps and Qs, as it were, and didn't worry

19:00 too much about religion. Our school everyday, we used to have assembly, and the first thing was we recited the Lord's Prayer, then sung God Save the Queen, then marched off to military music, so I suppose we did really have a military type of schooling. I haven't thought about that in years. God, Queen and Country,

19:30 as it were, yeah. So they tried to instil that at school.

And the Catholic Church, did they try and instil.

We had an Irish priest, Father Hanratty. He certainly wasn't pushing the envelope as far as Ireland and its problem between the Protestants and the Catholics. But yes, I think it was very fair with the way he tried to give us religious instruction at school. One of my brothers was actually an altar boy.

20:00 I don't know why I was never chosen. Maybe I wasn't the type, but then again my brother had red hair, so maybe that said something. The priest was actually red-headed as well, so that was probably the reasons why he was an altar boy.

Your Mum and Dad, what can you tell me about them as people and characters?

My father was very hard working, he had to be.

20:34 He had to be to bring up eight children. He had a job on council where he had a truck. He would go out and chop wood to sell and fence posts, he actually did a lot of fencing, things like that. And sometimes he got contracts to cut down timber for power poles and light posts.

21:13 Yes, he worked a lot, so we didn't see him at home. My mother was a typical home body I suppose, cooking and looking after us. Mother wasn't exactly a baby making machine or anything like that, but she always seemed to have a baby there that had to be looked after. As I said, eight of us,

21:30 that was certainly a handful. That's funny, we did have a baby making family, in our area. Eight children, so yeah, she must have started young. The government back then was pushing for large families and the Catholics were very good at producing large families. And I think the Catholic Church were hoping that, oh yes, a couple of them would become nuns

22:00 or priests or whatever, so why not push that line of thought. And I think the government had allowances to help poor people to have large families. Yes, it's very hard to talk about my Mum. She was just Mum, she was always there for us, washing, cleaning, making sure our clothes were okay for school. I know she was always very proud of us,

22:30 making sure that we looked our best at school, and when we went out, into the city. We always wore the best and she made sure we were looking the best.

So you didn't do without, given you had so many siblings?

No, I don't think we – we never had toys, we always made our own toys. Which his good. Depending on what cowboy movies we saw,

23:00 we'd make our own guns out of bits of timber, or we'd make swords for when we were playing pirates. We made our own. In fact, my mother apologised a year or two ago. She said, "I'm terribly sorry we could never afford to buy you toys." I said, "We didn't need any." I said, "We had a huge orchard and sand pits to play in, and what toys we needed we made ourselves." And I think that was a weight off her mind to know that we

23:30 thought we had a very happy upbringing. Those sand pits were quite wonderful. My brothers and sisters love telling this story. They were putting major electrical cables through from Launceston through to Bell Bay, a major aluminium smelter, and they had these huge cables, the reels that is, and we decided we wanted one, so we knocked it off.

24:01 And we were pushing it up hills, and we got to the top of the big hill and we thought, "No, we don't follow the road down because it's going to get ahead of us and we won't be able to stop it and it will take a fence out." There was a brand new fence on our neighbour's property. So we let it go down the hill and it wiped out two pear trees, which didn't belong to us. And we tried to stop this thing from rolling down the hill. My brothers and sisters laugh at that story, they love telling that story. Me trying to chase after this thing, to make sure it wouldn't

24:31 hit the trees and do more damage. But yeah, we had a lot of fun growing up. I was probably about thirteen, then, so these are the things you do when you're a kid.

What can you tell me about your house? Can you describe that for me?

The house at Devonport was a four bedroom Edwardian house. To me it seemed huge. I suppose growing up, all those places look huge. I've been back to it, but not inside.

25:05 I can remember the dining living room was quite a large room. It had verandas on the front and back. The sort of place I would like to live in, if I was back in country again. Built of timber, as most of the houses were down in Tasmania.

25:34 There was a major building program, must have happened around 1910-1913 period, because a lot of these timber houses were being built. I go back now I have a bigger interest in architecture itself and just start looking at things, "Oh the same builder must have built this, or the same company must have built this."

26:00 Obviously they didn't have very many choices, even back then. But yes, it was a wonderful old house.

And sewerage, electricity, those sorts of things?

We lived in a few houses, prior to this one, outdoor toilets. But this one actually had an indoor toilet and a bathroom, as such. Even when we lived in Launceston, when we were quite young, I think there was an outdoor toilet. I was

26:30 two years of age when I left there. I have vague memories of it. Playing with a tap. I asked my mother recently "Was there a tap in the front yard?" She said, "Yes, I couldn't keep you away from it." We moved a couple of times, but the place that I spent most of my time was at Devonport.

You mentioned that it had four bedrooms. What were the sleeping arrangements with eight kids?

There were two to a room, single beds.

27:00 Now I stop and think about it, they weren't big rooms. Single beds and a small aisle between them. They were long rooms, I remember that, off a hall. But we weren't all living there at the time. We all moved to Exeter where the school was. In fact, just around the corner from the school. The person that owned the house we were living in at Devonport, he sold up and

27:30 moved away. He sold the orchard itself, and the house got purchased by somebody else. So we had to find another place, so we ended up in a council house. That had a couple more bedrooms, and of course I joined the navy and about that time my mother had fell pregnant again. So there was always a bedroom for everyone. I think at one stage three of my brothers were sharing

28:00 the same room. We weren't cramped, I know that much. We certainly weren't living in squalor, either. So my parents did really well. I'm certainly proud of them, they certainly looked after us properly. We never wanted for anything. They made sure there was food on the table, even though there wasn't pocket money and things like that, at least

28:31 we did okay.

Given the role of women was beginning to change after World War 11, did your Mum work or think about working?

I know that my mother worked at Kodak's, a shop. I think everyone just called it Kodak's. Obviously that's where all the film was taken in and processed. She worked there for a while, and I know she worked as a trainee nurse.

29:01 That's all I know. I think once she got married, whether she worked after that I don't know. But certainly after I was born, she wasn't working then. I think the pressure from her adopted mother would have made sure she wasn't working anyway, because she still had this English attitude that

29:33 "You should be at home looking after your family." I can't remember anything else about my mother and whether she worked after that. Certainly not during the rest of her life, other than looking after us kids, and my father of course.

Did your Mum and Dad bring you and, say, your sisters up differently, boys and girls?

No, I don't think so.

30:01 I think we were all treated fairly fair, except being the eldest sometimes I got a slap or a beating, because I was old enough to know better. But in the long run, I don't think it really affected me. I think we all got a beating at some stage during our life. And

30:31 probably made me better for it. A little bit of discipline helps, and I certainly learned a lot more about discipline when I joined the navy.

So share with me the discipline of the household, who would give it out?

I think, look back, it was more my mother, I think, because she was there more often. If she had to wait for Dad to get home, the whole thing would have been forgotten.

31:00 My father had a big hand and a belt, which I didn't particularly like. Dad was a stronger person than Mum. I probably didn't think it was fair.

If he gave the belt, what did your Mum give?

Whatever was handy. Whether it was a ruler, or,

31:31 I think one day she grabbed the tea towel, she twisted it. I remember once she told me to go out and get a cane cut off the pear tree, in the orchard. She said, "Make sure it's a strong one." So that really did hurt. You had to go out and choose your own punishment cane. That really did hurt. A couple of whacks

32:01 across the back of the leg. That was the days when we all wore shorts, so it did sting. Brought some memories up there that I've forgotten about.

Any particular stories attached to those memories?

No. I think I mainly. I was told to do,

32:30 things. When I didn't do them, that was when I mainly got caned. There were certain chores around the house, and if you didn't do them, Mum would get angry about that, if we didn't do that correctly. But other than that, I can't think actually remember any particular reason, other than doing my chores.

In respect to chores and your role being the eldest in the household, what was expected of you?

33:02 Gathering firewood. In this house, even though we had an electric stove, my mother wouldn't use the electricity because it was too expensive. So we had a wood fire, which would have come with the house, originally built in there. The house, one of the councillors on the council used to live there. I think he was the mayor, so the house was actually set up in such a way

33:30 that it was. a gentlemen's home, I suppose you could call it. So the kitchen was quite a fine kitchen, a decent wood fire, so that was one of the chores. We had to chop wood and have it brought up to the house, and of course, kindling was stockpiled in the morning. That was one of the major chores. And of course every day we had to clean our shoes. That was very important. And schoolwork was very important as well.

34:00 I look back now, and homework wasn't a huge thing. If we didn't get our work finished at school, we had to finish it at home. But that was mostly drawing, or finding pictures to put in. But we did mostly written work at school, and finished off at home. So yes, that was important. I think they were the only chores that we really did have back then.

Mealtimes. What sort of things did you eat?

34:37 Whatever Dad shot. Sometimes it was wallaby, rabbits, roast lamb. Mum used to do some very good stews. There was always dessert. I don't know why Mum always put dessert on, but when you have an orchard next door, it's very easy to do dessert.

35:02 But yes, I know we always had roast lamb for Sunday lunch. We'd come back from church and there would be the roast. Mum did that religiously. She'd do that in summer as well as winter. It was always done on a wood fire. Having a wood stove, it was quite incredible. I just remembered something. When Mum was cooking or baking,

35:30 she would order certain type of wood. If you wanted a fast fire, a lot of heat very quickly, you used pine, pine cones, or bark, stringy bark off the gum trees. If she wanted a medium fire, she'd ask for wattle, and if she wanted a log fire when she was doing a long roast, gum, eucalyptus. Of course, my father always supplied that sort of stuff. We always had it on the wood heap. Yeah, incredible.

36:02 Yeah, so that was always there and she asked for it. Of course having pine trees along the edges of the property, it was easy to go and collect pine cones, which we did quite often. And collect the bark off the stringy bark trees. Stuff like that. So, yeah, they were parts of our chores that we had to growing up. Of course, once we moved to Exeter, all things changed. Mum decided that we could afford

36:30 to use electricity. So there was an electric stove. It's interesting, while we were growing up, she actually used an electric fry pan. That was a major luxury, I think she got that for Christmas from someone, I don't know who.

Amazing the different types of wood .

Yes, I think it was just one of those things that you learned.

37:00 Generations of people would have been doing it here in Australia prior to electricity. And when you're living in the country, you have the benefits of all those different types of wood, and knowing how to use them. They were only small logs, but we didn't have the benefits of coal or things like that. We wouldn't use coal, not in that area anyway. Because she would have to go and pay for that. The wood was free.

Now you mentioned that your Dad shot a bit of dinner every now and then.

37:31 **Can you tell me about your Dad? Did he enjoy shooting, and guns?**

Well, he grew up on the slopes of upper Launceston, in Tasmania. He grew up there. I think he enjoyed shooting, he would go out occasionally.

38:00 I think he belonged to a rifle club. I know he belonged to a lot of different sports clubs. I know he was an archer. He used to play baseball, he was pretty good at that. He played Aussie rules. He was an all around sportsmen. He enjoyed shooting as well. He would go out and shoot a meal. Also there was a stage

38:30 where he was actually shooting and trapping rabbits, because you could get so much money for the skins, which would be made into felt. So I can remember there was always pelts lying around, drying. How much he got for them, I can't remember, but that was early in my life. Probably before my teens.

Did your Dad take you shooting and

39:00 **rabbit catching?**

A couple of times. When we did the traps, that was a learning curve. He tried to teach us about the various footprints. What had been sniffing around. Tasmania is quite interesting, because you have. Tasmanian Tigers and that sort of thing, which is quite funny, I never heard or never saw any when I was growing up. Or if I did, no-one

39:30 told me what it was. There were all sorts of animals lurking around that I wasn't aware of. Dad would show me footprints of what was there. Paw prints, I should say. So yeah, we trapped rabbits. But shooting, I think I only went out a couple of times. I didn't like that. I know we went out a couple of times at night. He was very strict. He always made sure we were quite a few paces behind him.

40:00 He went out shooting with a light, just to stun them and shoot them. But most wallabies and kangaroos, you spotlight them and they won't move, so you've got a clean shot then. If you're after the pelt, you want to put a shot through the head, which is quick. I can remember once we were out shooting, I was very young. I was quite in awe, because we went way up in

40:30 in the hill, near a place called Brady's Lookout, named after a famous bushranger in Tasmania. I could see the lights of Launceston, and that was probably about seven miles away, which I found fascinating as a kid. And I can remember seeing the Aurora Australis [Southern Lights]. Those lights are quite incredible. And when you're a kid, all of a sudden all those little science things quite amazed me. I was quite in awe of that part.

41:01 So I suppose I learned some things. Then I found later that I became gun shy, and I didn't particularly care for guns.

Tape 2

00:52 **Just in respect to Launceston, can you describe that as a city growing up?**

Well, it hasn't really changed from

01:01 when I was growing up. It's a Georgian type city. It's funny, the tallest building in Launceston, until Myers [department store] arrived, was the maternity hospital. And what made it even taller was the fact that it was on a hill. I think it was about six or seven stories high. Says a lot about Tasmania, before TV. Probably goes back to why there were such big families, no TV for a long time.

01:32 It was very much a Georgian city. It's on the mouth of the northern South Esk, which is the start of the Tamar River itself. It's very pretty. I think it's very pretty. I enjoyed growing up in Tasmania. I look back and I don't think they could have picked a better place to bring me up in. Unfortunately,

02:02 it was too quiet for me. I'm an Aquarius, so I think that probably says a lot about what I will talk about through this whole interview. Trying to find work in Launceston was pretty difficult, by the time I left school. The type of schooling I wanted, I wanted to go to TAFE [Technical and Further Education], but the courses I wanted to do

02:30 weren't available in Tasmania at the time. You actually had to go to Melbourne and they were pretty limited. I had my eyes set on window dressing, had to go to Melbourne, sign writing, had to go to Melbourne. All these things that they thought I would be good at, you had to go to Melbourne. My parents, obviously, couldn't afford to send me to Melbourne. They didn't have the spending money. Having grown up,

03:01 I think the only time I managed to save any money was thirty pounds while I was at school, for a school trip to South Australia. I did a lot of odd jobs everywhere, and I think that was the first time that I actually got any money.

So that was your first trip?

That was my first trip. I think I was thirteen or fourteen by this time. Yes,

03:30 fourteen. The school had arranged this trip and we had to try and find the airfare, which was twenty pounds. We flew over on, I think it was Ansett-ANA [Australian National Airways]. I have a photograph of us which is quite interesting. The photo tells me something about myself that goes into the future as well. So that was my first flight, we flew across to Melbourne, stayed in Melbourne overnight, then

04:00 to Adelaide. Stayed in Adelaide overnight. I think it was all up seven days, on this trip. We toured by bus up through Berri. Renmark, I think it was. Then the train back down to Melbourne and flew home. So, it was an interesting trip. I think after that.

04:39 I got that feeling that I wanted to travel, I wanted to wander.

Were your eyes opened to the contrast of communities between South Australia and others?

Yes, things were very different. Going to Melbourne for the first time was a huge eye opener. Obviously in the ‘60s,

05:00 Melbourne wasn’t as tall as it is today, but the buildings were certainly taller than what I had seen in Launceston. I think the average building was about two, maybe three storeys tall at the most. So yeah, that was quite surprising, seeing that. Of course the shopping was totally different. Huge choices available. Seeing the countryside, especially in South Australia,

05:30 was different. Obviously back then we didn’t have vineyards in Tasmania. That’s changed now, of course. All the orchards I remember, the ones that I stole fruit from, they’re all now vineyards. I stole a lot of fruit from them, whether it was blackberries or plums, even down to walnuts and things. Yes. I was probably a very healthy kid.

06:00 But yes, there was a huge contrast to Tasmania, in what I saw.

Culturally though, were your eyes opened in any area?

Not culturally, I don’t think. We started seeing Aboriginals, that was something different. Especially in South Australia. We saw an aboriginal community, and I’ve forgotten where that was. That was different,

06:30 because basically we don’t have full blood aboriginals in South Australia. I think they’re now called quarter-caste, if that’s politically correct. But there are certainly no full blood Tasmanians. In fact, most of are probably whiter than you and I are. That’s how diluted their blood is. So that was something totally different for me.

Was anything taught at school about the aboriginal community in Tasmania and what happened to it?

07:00 Yes, that was certainly taught to us. Truganini being the last Tasmanian [full-blooded Aboriginal woman]. Of course, I don’t know if the bones are still in Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston, or whether they’ve been reclaimed. But there are certainly statues of her around, because she passed away on Flinders Island, that was where most of the Aboriginal community were taken. I have met up with some of the Aboriginals from there.

07:32 As a kid growing up, we went to what they called a Sunshine Home. We were considered a disadvantaged family. Myself and my two brothers, three or four of us, went to this home down Lindisfarne, near Hobart. That was my first time on a train, because we went down by train to Hobart. We went to this particular place,

08:00 and of course they had some quarter caste aboriginals there as well. But as I said, they were just as white as you and I. So seeing a full blood aboriginal was something for me, I must admit. But we didn’t see any corroborees or anything like that during this trip. I know that we saw some of the cultural sites in Melbourne and also in South Australia.

08:33 Exactly what we saw in South Australia, I can’t remember now. I know we went out skating, the first time I had ever been on skate rink, or ring, or whatever you call it. But yes, getting back to aboriginal education, yes, we were certainly taught on that, and the fact

09:00 that they were rounded up, and shot out. Governor King, I think, there was a proclamation, about the aborigines murdering a white, then they’d be hung. They were pretty strong about that in Tasmania. I think that might have been after they were rounded up and moved to the island. Whether that was for their own good or not. But most of them died out from

09:30 Western diseases anyway, like flu and measles and that sort of stuff.

Just coming back to your father and trapping, did you enjoy the idea of shooting back then, when you were a kid?

I think the first time I went out with him, I found it interesting. But as I said, my father was very strict. Extremely strict. He didn’t want to be able to see us anywhere in the periphery of his sight.

10:01 He wanted to make sure that we were right behind him. I think my brother Brendan was out with him, quite a few times. He's two years younger than myself. They went out quite a lot of times, later. For some reason I didn't like it, so I think that I was already building up to disliking guns. I liked to play with the wooden ones, that was a lot of fun. They don't

10:30 backfire and things like that, as I found out later in the navy. Not backfire, but kickback and things like that. I'm getting ahead of myself there.

Christmas time, what did you do as kids growing up and where did you go as a family?

Well, each of the members of Mum's adopted family would invite us over for Christmas. I remember once.

11:00 My father's side of the family did it as well, so we'd spend Christmas with members of the family. It was always a huge get together. I remember now, the kids always got fed first, so they were out of their hair, so then the grown-ups could sit down at their leisure. They always seemed huge. The last time I ever went to a meal like that, I was already in the navy, and that was quite interesting too.

11:36 I'd been home on leave, in Tasmania. You didn't take money out, not back then, there was nothing open. You couldn't spend any money. I was walking across one of the bridges, I think it was Charles Street Bridge, and a car screamed up and these kids got out and demanded money. They were using a screwdriver as a weapon. Of course, I got this in my face.

12:00 I said, "You idiot. I don't have any. Where am I going to spend money? There's nothing open." Anyway, he came up to lunge at me and that was a big mistake on his part. By this time I had been taught some little tricks in the navy, and all of a sudden he found himself in the road, with my foot in his face. Anyway, I had the sense to take the number plate, because the others jumped back in the car. His face was pretty cut up by the asphalt, because they'd just

12:30 newly laid the road and hadn't properly rolled it, so there was a few cuts. I was able to give a description of him and the car number plate. We found out later that someone else saw it happen, they reported it as a witness, and we found out going by the description that these people had been holding up kids for their pocket money. Stuff like that. I'm talking 1968, this happened. And having the

13:00 description of the car and the number plate was the best thing that ever happened. I never did get to hear what happened, but I think they were caught, because my mother said there was a report in the paper saying these people had been apprehended. So some good came out of it. That was their mistake, picking on someone who could defend themselves. That was the last time I ever had Christmas dinner with the family at home.

You mentioned earlier as a kid that you

13:31 **didn't really have toys growing up. As a kid, what gifts were given?**

Things like handkerchiefs, clothing, socks. Things that we really required. I think my family was very practical, in handing over gifts.

14:01 I don't know how the other family thought about us, this was on Mum's side. Whether they thought of us as very poor, or disadvantaged as the school liked to call us, but I don't think we were disadvantaged. To me I had a normal life growing up. My parents tried to give everything they could to us. So I don't think we were disadvantaged.

14:32 As I said, the school might have, and these relatives might have thought we were. But no, I had a pretty all round education, actually.

Now, you've left school. I take it initially you tried to see if the TAFE had those courses running?

Yes, it got very difficult. Also the fact that we lived fifteen miles away from Launceston itself. Work was very difficult,

15:01 especially in the country. If you didn't know anyone, and if it wasn't the apple season and they weren't being picked, there was hardly any work around at all. I couldn't drive, that was one of the unfortunate things about growing up in the country, my father would never let me use the car. I don't know why but he never taught me to drive. So, I had to walk to work. I got a job with the local council up there,

15:30 but because I wasn't arriving at eight o' clock, they put me off. So I worked for Unilever. Which was a company that actually distributed to all the stores. By this time, we were starting to get supermarkets down there. I think Four Square, Rolf Rosser just started. In fact, he'd been in prison for starting a supermarket in Tasmania. As I said Four Square started, and I notice that Four Square in still around,

16:01 but mainly convenience stores today.

So why was this fellow put in prison?

For starting up a supermarket. He was one of the first, or was the first supermarket in Tasmania. By this time, he had got established and I think SOS had started. Exactly what SOS stood for, I don't know. Yes,

Unilever set up this big

16:30 store where food came in. They handled Campbell's, all the Unilever products like Rinso, Surf, various soaps. So I worked there, just packing pallets. When the orders came in, taking them off the pallets, putting them on the trucks. It was very labour intensive, and it got to the point where I wasn't enjoying it, so.

17:01 Then I was offered a job for a flower shop called Hinton Lloyd. Hinton was top florist in Tasmania, he had the whole set up. Nobody brought flowers unless you went to Hinton Lloyds. No-one had wreaths made for funerals unless you went to Hinton Lloyd. He just had the whole thing. I only heard the other day he passed away from

17:30 emphysema and bronchitis. He must had been in his eighties, this gentlemen. But he had heard from Gran Walters that I had won some floral exhibitions at the local show. I liked flowers. I liked plants. And I was starting to show a likeness for them back then. So I worked him for him, and the work I was doing was basically just doing sheaths and wreaths.

18:01 Wreaths were quite a job. You had a base and you put heath or whatever to fill the base, then you built the flowers up, and they were ready. He had the whole thing. There was probably an average of about three or four funerals a day, and he'd have something like a hundred and fifty wreaths a day to produce for funerals. So, he was very popular. It was a real production line.

18:30 I think he had about eight people working there, men and women. And I think four of us were just doing wreaths alone, and others were doing sheaths and just normal floral arrangements, stuff like that. I got to enjoy that. The hours were a bit more flexible. If I arrived a little late or a little early, he didn't mind, because if I arrived too late, he'd have me work Saturday mornings. It was quite a good job.

So what got you into the flowers in the first place? You said you won a couple of –?

19:02 At the local shows at Exeter, they had art and floral and other things, and I looked at the floral and thought, "Well, I can do that." So I did a couple of floral arrangements and actually won prizes for it. I didn't get first, but I got second or third and I think I won a prize for good attempt.

19:32 I used plastic flowers instead of the real thing. Obviously the judge didn't think you should combine the lot. I see flower shops now that do major arrangements and they use anything, plastic, cloth and the real thing. I was a bit upset they said that back then, but anyway, that's the way it went. But yeah, that was my start. I don't do floral arrangements today.

20:01 I'm a pensioner, I can't afford the flowers, yes. I had been working there for nearly a year. And of course, the Vietnam War was starting to rage by this time. This was 1967. And also they'd just started the

20:30 national lottery, where you could get called up. I figured that with my family luck, I was going to get called up. As far as I could see, going by the newspaper reports, we were going to be in Vietnam for a fair while. And I thought by the time I reach that age where my number is going to come. I couldn't see myself as a soldier, and my parents wouldn't let me go to Melbourne to do those courses that I wanted to do, because back then there was a lot of violence happening in Melbourne.

21:01 We had the mafia, the Italian mafia, and a lot of deaths were happening through that. My parents didn't want me to go, because they couldn't afford to send me. I didn't have enough money to go. They knew no-one over there, so they figured I would get myself into trouble. They knew me better than I did. They wouldn't let me go. They basically put the foot down. "No,

21:30 you're not going to Melbourne. No, you're not doing those courses."

Was there something about the army that you didn't like?

I don't know. I think growing up the in the country, and knowing you had to go into jungles. I had read enough by this time, I knew enough, that if you had to go into those jungles, there were things like leeches, there were all sorts of things that happened. Animals that I didn't know about. And I couldn't imagine myself getting around those swamps and things that I was starting to see on TV.

22:01 We were starting to get images back by then. I could see these images on the news, and I just could not see myself as a soldier. And by this time, I decided I wanted to join the navy. I thought, "Yes, I can get out of this. I will go and volunteer for the navy." So, in February

22:30 of '67, I applied for the navy. And got knocked back. There were two areas. I failed on the medical; I was told I had too much salt in my system. I found that very funny, because that's what an old sailor is called, he was an 'Old Salt'. And also I failed the mathematics. I don't know why, because I did very well at school. They said they'd give me an option. "Get your

23:00 salt levels down, perhaps go and do some studies. Maybe we will accept you again." So in May of '67, I actually went back down to Hobart again, sat the exam and I actually passed it this time, including the medical. It was quite interesting when I went down the first time, it was just after the major bush fires of 1967 that decimated most of Hobart.

23:30 It was pretty bleak down there. I got the train down, the navy paid for the train. It was quite incredible to see how black it was. Trees were just starting to get leaves back. I found it incredible going down there, that almost all the brick houses had got burnt down and almost all the timber houses were standing. They found out many years later the reason why. Timber

24:00 houses breathe, and brick houses don't, which means all that air's inside and it's not getting out, whereas in a timber house it's getting out. So all of a sudden it just gets to the point that the air inside the house heats up to a point where the windows smash and the whole thing bursts into flames. Whereas the timber houses breathe. Unless they get cinders in the guttering, they won't burn down. Something I learned fairly recently

24:30 from an ex-navy lady who works in the volunteer fire brigades. I was quite amazed back then to see all these burnt out houses. By the time I got back down in May, most of those trees had grown back, or grown back quite a bit, and I was accepted for the navy. And, of course, to go into the navy and do my training, I went to Melbourne.

25:00 **National Service, had that come in at this point in time?**

National Service was already up and running. That's why I wanted to join the navy. Because, as I said, I figured that on my family luck, I would probably get called up. So that's why I volunteered for the navy. To do my navy training, I had to go to Melbourne. So I got to go somewhere where my parents had put their foot down and said, "No, you can't."

25:31 I did my navy training at HMAS Cerberus, down in Westernport, Victoria. And I can tell you, September and October and November in Victoria, especially in that part of the world, can be one of the bleakest places going. It was always funny, people from the northern part of Australia, or northern parts like New South Wales or Queensland, even parts of Western Australia, South Australia, when they got down to do the

26:00 training, everyone agreed that Cerberus and Westernport were the arsehole of Australia, and they always used to try and upset the Tasmanians and say, "And Tasmania is the turd that hangs off it."

Your Mum and Dad, they stalled

26:30 **you going there beforehand. Once you told the news, what happened?**

I don't think they got the irony of the whole thing at the time, and if they did they didn't say anything to me. But I look back now and think "That's pretty funny." They were telling me "No, you can't go to Melbourne." Then all of a sudden you're in Melbourne. The gods are out there playing with me, I think.

27:09 **So were they pleased when you told them you were going?**

I think to a degree, yes. I never really thought about it. I think they were quite proud that I was accepted into the navy, and I was going to get some type of training. I think they thought the navy would teach me something.

27:32 I applied to go in as a cook, because I thought that was a pretty good job to get into. I didn't mind cooking, I enjoyed cooking. Anyway, when the time came to be allocated jobs in the navy, I didn't get cook. All they offered me was gunnery. There were two types. There was quarter master gunner

28:00 and flight control, that was all that was left. Unfortunately, everything was dolled out in alphabetical order and by education. And obviously my education and being a Smith, which meant I was way down the alphabetical pecking order, there was only the crap left. They put me into a job which I was beginning to realise wasn't suited for me. I found out on gunnery range, because we

28:30 actually had to train with guns, firing, 303s [military rifles], they wouldn't let us have the good stuff back then. The SLRs [self loading rifles] were just coming in, but for recruits, no, you had to have the .303s, and as I found out on the gunnery range, that they have a good kickback. If you don't hold it correctly, you can actually get bruises. Sitting on the ground, laying on the ground holding it. I'm not

29:00 sure how it happened if you were standing. We didn't do it that way in marksmanship. I did okay. No, I didn't get seventy five percent. If I had, I would have got crossed guns that used to go on the cuff of your uniform, which meant that you were a marksman, so obviously I wasn't a marksman. But I started to dislike guns even back then.

Were there any problems or accidents on the gunnery

29:31 **range during training?**

No, the quarter master gunners made sure the gunnery chiefs, nasty old bastards, walking around, swinging their swagger sticks. I call them old bastards, they probably were only in their thirties. But when you're a young kid, in your late teens, anyone over twenty you think is an old bastard. So yeah, the old chief made sure that none of that sort of thing happened, that there were no accidents.

30:01 Even if you looked like you were going to move your rifle in the wrong direction, they were down there with the swagger stick, tapping your hand. Sometimes it wasn't even a gentle tap. I can remember

when they were training us on gunnery, one of the old things was this, “This is a rifle, that is a gun. This is for shooting, that is for fun.” They were trying to get across

30:30 that a rifle, or any type of firearm, was a very important piece of your equipment, and it had to be maintained, and that safety was also very important. The safety catch, switch, had to be on at all times, even when it wasn’t in use. Of course during that time of my training, the Malay and Indonesia

31:00 conflicts were up and going, and they were pretty big. Part of our training was actually in street rioting. Sailors were often called off ships in the Far East to go out and quell a riot. We were actually taught that. And all we used was batons basically. In uniforms, a baton and a small shield. The

31:30 batons were pretty big, actually. Looking at them recently they were probably a metre long, roughly. So we had to train in that. There is a nasty part of that, because you’re actually marching, in a squad. And I always felt sorry for the poor person who had to go up and cross the thin red line, which was some type of tape, I don’t know what it was made of now, I can’t remember. But a

32:00 sailor had to run ahead and throw that across, and of course if the rioters actually crossed over that, you then wailed into them. We were taught to disable, which was actually using the baton to hit the shoulder blade, the elbow and the knee cap. I had already had this training when this poor idiot tried to attack me on the bridge, back in Launceston, that

32:32 Christmas in ‘69. Yeah, and he got the wrong end of my training. So it did come in good stead for me.

So in respect to this training, what did you actually do to prepare you for any future riots that might eventuate?

It was just basically training on how to use a baton.

33:17 I think the PTI [physical training] instructors were part of the training, because I think they were starting to do judo, that personal type of defence, and I can’t remember if we had

33:30 had that type of defence or not, but I know we were taught to use the baton itself, and to wail into people, and shown the right pressure points. I know we did that training about three or four times, so yeah.

In respect of practice, were you hitting mannequins and things like that?

I can’t remember.

34:00 No, I can’t help you on that. But I certainly know that the training we got did help me, it helped me personally in a couple of scraps that I got into. I think the discipline was good, I learnt discipline through my training down there.

34:33 **You’ve spoken a little bit about the shield and the baton. Was there protective clothing that you got wear during that training?**

Not for that type of training. I think we used something for fire fighting. I know we did fire fighting drill. Whether or not we used asbestos for that – but there were certainly fire fighting drills. There was a bastard of a drill.

35:02 Even back in the 1960s, we were issued with gas masks. I can’t remember exactly when they took that away. It might have been around 1970. Part of the training was to test these masks. We had to go into a building, and they put some type of gas in, the type they use

35:30 in riots, so your eyes water and everything else. Riot gas. And of course, you’d test the mask yourself. You’d sit in there for about three minutes, and then they’d say, “Right, masks off.” And they’d take them all off us and we’d walk outside. We’d have to stand there for a minute, and of course tears are streaming out of our eyes.

36:01 If you got it up your nose or inside your mouth, it was really quite something. The whole thing was to train us or tell us, “This is what to expect if you get that gas in your face, in your eyes.” And also they were interested to see that the masks were okay and there were no leaks. Anyway, they took that away. I think things had changed by 1970. But what changed I don’t know.

And your mask, was there a problem with that at all?

No there wasn’t.

36:30 There was just a problem after I took it off. Like everyone else I had a good bawl. You were told not to rub your eyes or you would only make it worse.

When the mask is on, is it hot?

Well, I can’t remember back then. This was during the spring down there. It was a cold spring in Victoria. I don’t know what it was like in Tassie, but it was certainly cold in Victoria. I can’t remember if the room was hot or not,

37:00 or what it was like behind the mask, now. But that was part of the training we had to go through. Whether they do that type of training today, I had no idea.

And how did you communicate with the mask on?

You just had to yell. You had to get up close to the other person and yell. I can't remember if they were fairly modern, or we were using stuff left over from World War 11. Yes, I remember we had to take it

37:30 with us for a few years on ships, then they recalled everything.

Could you just describe it for us? My image is of the World War 11 British mask?

It was basically rubber, and it had the breathing section in the front. I think the World War 11 type had them on the side, but this was on the front. And I think there was a –

38:00 I'm not sure what was in the front of it now, but I can remember there must have been a breathing filter of some description that would open and shut. I can remember a valve opening and shutting. I can't quite remember.

Tape 3

00:50 **First up, and if you don't want to talk about this, that's fine. You are gay [homosexual], what did you know about your sexuality growing up, or at the time you went into the navy?**

01:00 I didn't. I had no idea of my sexuality back then. My mother gave me sex education, my father didn't. I think he would have been too embarrassed about that. My mother, having trained as a nurse, it was probably easier. She gave me a couple of books and said, "Read that, and if you've got any questions I will try and answer them." Obviously homosexuality is part

01:30 of the education, I'm sure I read about it. But I didn't fully understand that back then. I think my hormones must have been racing. I was about thirteen or fourteen when Mum gave me these books, but homosexuality was something I certainly didn't understand, and I don't think my mother understood.

02:04 I certainly wasn't confronted with it. Though later, the florist who I worked for, he was bisexual, he never made a pass or anything like that, I only found out later. Because I was working with his wife and his daughters. So that was the closest that I ever came to anything like that.

What about girlfriends. Did you have romantic attachments at all?

02:32 I had a crush on a neighbour, but I don't think she had a crush on me. I think I was basically a late bloomer, [late developer] really, to the whole thing. I don't know, coming from a very Catholic family I was brought up with the idea that you save

03:00 yourself until your married, and having that religious background and expectations, I think more from my father, I wasn't thinking about that at the time. I didn't have a car, so there was no shagging wagon, as they used to call them back then.

03:31 **You moved to Melbourne, your parents were a bit frightened of this. How did that open your eyes in respect to that and being in the navy, I suppose, as well?**

The first thing that happened when I joined the navy, I flew across, I think, and we stayed at the Fleet Navy Club, which is in the Exhibition Building in Melbourne, we stayed there overnight. The navy bus came and picked us up, and other people from interstate sections, they

04:00 came in by air, by coach, by train, so we all met up at that area and we were taken down to Cerberus. Of course, the moment we got to Cerberus, that was home, and we didn't get out of that place for six or eight weeks. That was our home. We had no leave, we were just completely immersed in navy culture.

04:30 We basically ate, slept, did everything the navy way. It was propaganda to get us to think that way and make it our own. And this was breaking time, too, to find out who were going to be stayers, and who were going to be the runners, or wanted to be runners. I know there was a couple who couldn't make it. There was a couple

05:00 of times I was homesick, but I was going to hang it out because to me it was an adventure, it was a new adventure, and I'll find out what happens when I get to the other end of it. That has been part of my belief, my whole life. I was actually saying something similar to that to my mother, to help my mother, only fairly recently.

05:31 **You mentioned the navy way. What was the indoctrination focused around? Was it a disciplinary code?**

It was everything. Everything. Discipline, we were being taught navy history. When we weren't marching around, learning on

06:00 the parade ground, in the classroom, it was go-go-go. They didn't really give you much time to think for yourself. Right down to meal times. We didn't even get a chance to go to the cinema until the end of our training. We were just completely immersed in the navy culture.

How did you respond to the military discipline of being in the navy?

06:30 It's hard now, looking back. I think I must have responded okay. As I said, I was homesick a couple of times. But I don't think that I wanted to run away from it. If I went home, that meant I was a quitter.

07:02 My father, he never wanted to see quitters in the family at all, so I think that was pretty strong. My father was a winner. Even when he did things like chopping wood as a sport. He was up there with the best, in that particular sport, and of course he won a huge amount of trophies. So, he tried to instil in my father that you're not a quitter, so I wasn't going to quit. And I think also the fact that as a

07:30 going away gift I was given a watch, as a going away present at this little party that we had, and I thought that it was not only my family, but the whole group, had given me this present. I thought it would be very unfair to go home and say, "Well, thank you very much for the watch, but I can't stay there." And I would have had to go back to nothing. So I was going to pursue this as an adventure.

Is it right to infer that it was a bit difficult for you then?

08:00 **That you thought about quitting?**

I possibly did, but I certainly didn't. Six years later, they made the decision for me.

What about the other blokes who went in with you at that time? You were all thrown together, how did you get on with them?

I think I got along fairly well with most of them. To a degree, I was probably a bit of a loner.

08:31 I also think I had my father's attitude of standing back and watching, and working out the situation, then wading in and doing it my way. To a degree I was possibly seen as a loner, but I certainly wasn't. Once you're in the navy, specially in recruit school, it's an all in situation, yes.

09:00 **You had mentioned fear of getting drafted as one reason for joining. What about your ideals about the Vietnam War and the army and navy?**

I can't exactly recall what I thought about war back then. Maybe I thought by joining the navy I was going to be fairly safe. Vietnam, even then,

09:30 looked more like a land war, even though we has ships up there. I was aware of that. I'm not sure exactly what my thoughts were. I know I was in school when the rock star got

10:00 called up, we talked about that, whether he would go to Vietnam or whether they would use him for public relations.

Normie Rowe?

Normie Rowe, yes. I know we talked about that. But I can't remember where my politics stood at that point. At seventeen I was too young to even

10:30 vote, at that stage. You had to be twenty one to vote back then. So it's quite interesting, here I am already in the navy. I was seventeen, so I couldn't go to the front. If they had, they would have been sending children to the front. I've got a few comments on that later.

Were you patriotic? Do you think you

11:00 **had a notion of defending Australia in some respects?**

I think I was patriotic. I know I got very upset when John F. Kennedy died, so I suppose to a degree, I was red, white and blue. We discussed my school earlier, and I mentioned God, Queen and Country. Maybe those ideals were instilled in me. I probably was patriotic. I think all of

11:30 us were, I think that's why we joined the navy. And I think we would have had psychiatric tests as well, to make sure we were joining for the right reasons. I can't remember seeing a psychiatrist, but I remember seeing a doctor and having a complete physical when I joined. But I'm pretty sure we would have been red, white and blue.

The training. Can you tell us what your

12:00 **daily routine was at Cerberus, and what different aspects you undertook?**

The daily routine? We took it in turns, we were in two colour watch at Cerberus, I think it was probably red and blue. So one day, the blue team would go out and start exercising, which was a run around the perimeter of the base. Bastard of a run, especially in the middle of this cold spring.

12:30 So we did that, and then there were physical jerks at the end of it. So called 'warming down' exercises.

While they were doing that, the other team were actually cleaning the cabin. Eight to a cabin. The cabin was divided in half, with a partition. And there were bunk beds, one above the other. I think

13:00 each cabin was split into red and blue. So there would be four of us in one, four in the other, so they would be cleaning up the cabin, which meant scrubbing the floor, polishing, and I think the bathroom was cleaned as well. That was all happening while the other team was running. And then they swapped the following day. Then after inspection, which was around about seven o' clock, we then went to breakfast, which was called 'scran' in the navy.

13:31 I don't know if anyone's told you what 'scran' is? 'Shit Cooked Royal Australian Navy.' All food in the navy is known as 'scran'. And these were some of the things we were learning, these words, we were given nicknames and things like that. Being a Smith, all of a

14:00 sudden my name became 'Smoush', because all Smiths in the Australian Navy are called 'Smoush'. All the nicknames within the Australian navy are after famous people, either on stage, vaudeville, fighters, things like that. We got a lot of customs from the [British] Royal Navy, so these names came across. 'White' became 'Knocker', 'Brown' became 'Bomber.' As I said, 'Smith', 'Smoush'.

14:30 But when I joined submarines, all of a sudden I got 'Smudge'. All Smiths in the Royal Navy are called Smudge. So yeah, all that was happening. That was all part of the daily routine, because this was happening at the time. We were being taught this. In fact, most people didn't know their shipmate's Christian name. They just know them by their nicknames.

15:00 **Any other traditions or terminology that you were introduced to there that stick with you?**

They'll probably come up during conversation. I'm still called 'Smudge' by the Submarine Association. Those who actually served with me still call me 'Smudge'.

So after scran, what happened during training?

Well, after that, I think it was basically back to the

15:30 blocks, the cabins, obviously again ablutions. At some stage during all that, I think, after the run we had ablutions. After that we all fell in, then inspected, then after scran I think we had some time to ourselves, which gave us a chance to clean our teeth and things like that. Then it was found out what we were doing that day, which was finding out which classroom we were into.

16:00 This was either seamanship, we had to learn that sort of stuff, rope work. There was actually normal classes. History, geography, other forms of education. Because some of the recruits were actually junior intake. Which meant that they didn't go across to Western Australia for their training,

16:30 but they still had to have classroom training. What else? It was basically training to bring us up to speed to become a knowledgeable, working sailor.

What did seamanship training, on land, involve?

I'm not exactly sure which part of my training this started, but we had to learn on a mock-up of a ship's wheel.

17:02 We had to learn how to use the wheel. I steered the Lover Line, which some people can do, and will do, when no-one's watching. Some people go off and they try to bring the line to the point they're supposed to be steering, instead of taking it the opposite way around. So we had practice on that. There was rope making and splicing, knotting,

17:31 both ropes and wire. There was training for riot squads, gunnery, most of the time we were learning how to march properly. It's amazing just how much of that you do everyday, and just how much there was to learn. I think that's going by the by, from what I hear. Not so much training in that area.

18:04 Obviously there were medicals that we had to do. We were inoculated. Over a period, I think I was given small pox quite a few times, both at school and in the navy. All those things were happening, in those twelve weeks.

18:30 **On the subject of terminology and such, a naval base operates like a ship in some respects? Can you explain that?**

Yes, like a ship. Difficult to explain. Everything that is in a ship is certainly on the base. Like Cerberus has the cooking school. So you obviously have a galley on the ships, so we had a major one

19:00 where they taught that area. There's a sick bay on a ship, so there's a hospital at Cerberus. It's a major training hospital, along with the one at Penguin. Cerberus is a little bit different, it's actually got a music school, which is something you don't have on ships. Engineering, there's a certain amount of engineering, on both ships and at

19:30 Cerberus. One thing that our ships today don't have are chapels. There were two chapels at Cerberus. Catholic and other denominations. That was something else that we were taught, character guidance. I think we had one day a week in character guidance. That was actually taught whatever domination you were. In my case, I was Catholic so I was actually taught by the Catholic priest down there.

20:01 That was Father Mack, and Father Mack was quite an incredible gentleman. He was a boxing champion and also a top Aussie Rules football player. He loved both sports. I can remember in character guidance. It was also his part to teach us about sex. And of course, there were actual sailors coming in who had no sex knowledge at all. So,

20:31 he had a quaint way of teaching us all this stuff. We got to learn a few things. They used a US Navy video on sex education. It was quite interesting, because the woman gave birth and you actually saw this. She gave birth on a lawn in front of a house in San Diego, and all she's got looking after her are two

21:00 ambulance attendants. Obviously they were navy. It was quite a vivid movie. I think a few of our sailors were. I know one sailor actually ran out, quite sick, seeing all this. Luckily it was black and white. If it was in colour, there might have been a few more sick. It's quite funny, he ended up as sick berth attendant.

21:30 So he got to see a lot of blood. Then we got into other parts of sex education. Father Mack told us, "I know you're going to get out there, I know you're going to have sex. So use condoms. And please don't be like one of our sailors." He said, "He decided to go back for seconds, but he only had one condom, so he turned it inside out and used it again. And he wondered why he got gonorrhoea."

22:00 Yeah, so he was just trying to teach us, and he was very down to earth as I said. While he was teaching us this, there was a first generation Italian from Tasmania. He and a couple of other Tasmanians were sitting up the back of the classroom and they were having a good old giggle. And Father Mack. I'll say the exact words. Father Mack got very angry at them for

22:30 laughing at him. He turned around and said, "If you don't shut the fuck up, I'll punch the fucking shit into you." Well, these guys freaked. Obviously the Italian was from a very good Italian family. And they actually complained to our instructor. He said to them "Don't you know who Father Mack is?" He said, "If he said he was going to punch the crap into you, he was going to do that because he's the fleet boxing champion." So there was a bit more respect for Father Mack.

23:00 Unfortunately, quite a few years later, he got involved in a car accident that killed him, so we lost quite an incredible character from the navy.

Was he a bit of a father figure for young blokes like you?

I don't know if he was a father figure, because we only saw him once a week. I did got to Mass a couple of times, and he was very good at the fire and brimstone. But then again, when you're preaching the navy I suppose you have to be. I don't think he was a father figure.

23:31 I remember a couple of times that I met him at sea, he always seemed to remember your names. He was very good at that. If he didn't, he would still come and greet you like he did remember you. He'd sit and have a beer, and swear along with you. Especially when he was up in the line I'm told he was pretty 'blokey'. Which was quite unusual, I think, to come across a minister like that in the navy. It was a bit of an eye opener.

24:03 So I was learning something in recruit school about people and character.

Are there any other figures or instructors that stand out from your time at Cerberus?

Not really. Our instructor was a leading seaman. I can't remember exactly what department he was. His surname was Scott, so his nickname was Scotty, and he actually had a Scots accent which is funny I suppose.

24:32 One thing I did learn, at the passing out parade, we were standing there when they roared out "Bring on the guard and band," I thought it was the 'garden band'. I didn't realise it was 'guard and band' And he had been in the navy about ten years. He always kept wondering why it was a 'garden band'. Obviously it was just the way the people were roaring it out on the parade ground. You learn things everyday.

25:01 **Any other things about the terminology of the place? The quarter deck?**

The quarter deck was part of the ship. The foc's'le, the forward part of the deck, the stern. The quarter deck, the whole thing, goes back to the era of timber.

Did these have equivalents on the base?

25:30 Oh yes. They called it that on the base as well as on the ships. The quarter deck was basically the parade ground on Cerberus. The gunnery officer was very proud of his quarter deck. If he saw anyone even just walking across it, you had to double across his quarter deck. And I can remember, he may have been a warrant officer, with the

26:00 swagger stick of course. Not a paper, not a stone out of place. Cerberus was like that. I can remember in '67, everything seemed to be painted white. If it didn't move, it was painted white, for some strange reason.

You mentioned before about wanting to be a cook, but ending up as a gunner?

Quarter master gunner, that's right.

When did that happen? As soon as you arrived?

No,

26:32 they didn't give us those jobs until I think it was our last couple of days of our time at Cerberus. I think it was our last week. Yes, I was very disappointed because when I was offered the QMG [quarter master gunner], and not the cook, yes, I thought, "Well, I can't see that. I don't like the whole idea." So,

27:00 I wondered where I was going to go with this. It was quite a change. I was told by my instructor that I could change it when I get to sea, so don't worry about it. When I got to sea I started making moves to get that changed.

27:32 **When the decision came down that you would be a quarter master gunner, what was the main thing that you disliked about that?**

Well, I didn't like the whole idea because I was beginning to realise I didn't like guns. I already found that out on the gunnery range. And this meant I had to get involved with guns. I thought, "If I have to do this the rest of my life, I'm not completely happy about this." I was given the choice that later I could change it.

28:00 Maybe they might have other positions available, later, during my career.

Can you tell us a bit more about the gunnery range and exactly what you did out there?

Well, the gunnery range was only, basically, handling the rifles and getting down and actually shooting. Marksmanship at targets, at various distances. I think there was fifty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty [yards]. I don't know how much

28:30 further we went. I remember when I was on my first ship, we went down to Maroubra to retest. All ordinary seaman at that stage had to do that, as well. At this stage I was still just a recruit. There were also small hand guns, pistols, that we played around with. We were shown how to take them apart and put them back together.

29:00 That was all part of our training. There was a mock-up down there of an anti-aircraft gun. It was one of the first times I saw an interactive mock-up like this. It actually had lights moving across the sky, and it was set up with a gun and you sat there and tried to see if you could shoot

29:30 this aircraft down. And of course if you managed to home in on it, it burst into flame, so that told you you'd honed in on it. I wasn't very good at that. One of the things I found, I don't know whether the navy found this out, I was long-sighted. Which was good. But when things were getting close to me, I couldn't focus fast enough. I think that was one of the problems that I had on that as well. It was moving too fast for me to focus.

30:02 **Any other bigger guns feature in your training?**

No, not as such. I didn't fire any gun at Cerberus. I certainly practised on Anzac. But that's once I started going to war.

Were there any other training ships that you went out on during your time at Cerberus?

No, we looked over an old ship that was alongside

30:30 at Cerberus. Put there to give an idea of a navy touch. I think we walked across it a couple of times and we were given instruction about what parts of the ship it was. But that was about it. I can't even remember the name.

During the time after your initial period where you were locked up, as you mentioned, after that you got leave to Melbourne. Is that right?

Yes, I can't

31:00 remember if it was six weeks or eight weeks we got leave. It was in that period. I know I wasn't in the first group. I was in the second group to go ashore. Went ashore. It was quite interesting. This was a Victorian railway train that actually went into the navy base, at Crib Point. I picked up leave, and unfortunately it didn't have priority, so we had to wait for the trains

31:30 from Frankston to get ahead of us. But we went into Flinders Street, and we stayed at the Fleet Club, up in the Exhibition Building. I can't remember how much I paid for the room, but it was shared accommodation, with a bunk above the other. Quite interesting, because the accommodation was built in a major hall. And

32:00 it must have been about ten or twelve feet high, it was like cages. Thin ply walls with chicken wire across the top to stop people climbing in. Whether it was there to protect your valuables, or what, or

just to stop people from getting in. Anyway, I got a key and dumped my stuff in there. So that was my first leave.

This was in the main hall of the Exhibition Building in Melbourne?

Yes, yes. They used to have

32:30 major dances and things there. I can't remember who played there, whether it was the navy bands or they got bands in to play there. I know during our leisure time, on weekends down at Cerberus, the navy band from the School of Music used to play in the club. All the modern music of the time. It was good to see

33:01 sailors playing music other than the military or martial type music. To actually be up there playing Elvis and all that sort of stuff. Whether they were actually playing there, as well, I can't remember.

As a young boy growing up in Tasmania, were you exposed to rock n' roll?

Not as such. We had our country dances. I remember one friend who grew up in the next suburb from where I lived, Ken Jones,

33:31 was trying to set up his own band. But it was very difficult to get to these little town halls to listen to music. And that was about the only place that you could actually get to meet girls, and unfortunately most times there were more men than women. I think we all played wallflowers more than anything else, because half the time these were people we went to school with, and

34:02 I don't know whether it was social schools or whether you just wanted to get involved with that particular person.

Just on that tangent, do you remember the Beatles when they became huge in Australia?

Yes, my father disliked their music intensely. I can remember every time I'd be putting music up, setting music up, my father would say "Turn that rubbish down." I don't remember them coming to Australia.

34:30 My partner does. He actually went to a concert up in Queensland.

You were still in Tasmania, so.

I don't think they went to Tasmania.

Did you buy their records, though?

No, I couldn't afford their records then. Even then, I think I was only getting eight or nine pounds when I started work, and half of that went towards board. My parents were very strict about that, saying that I had to learn

35:02 this. By this time, while I was working, I had stopped hitch-hiking to work because I found someone that was working at the same time. They used to pick me up, so I had to pay some travelling money to them. I didn't have much money left to look at things like that. I was expected to clothe myself. I had to go and buy clothes. My parents were strict on the point that I had to

35:30 become self-sufficient. My parents have done that to all my brothers and sisters. Once they started work they had to fend for themselves, even if they were living at home.

It's probably something that put you in good stead.

It possibly has. It was probably good training. And also I think the navy discipline. I think that continued on what my parents had started.

It's interesting then that the leave in Melbourne would have been

36:00 **the first real time that you had been outside navy discipline or your family environment. What did you do?**

I drank. This was the first time that I was actually able to get away and drink, because we weren't allowed to drink on base. We weren't even allowed anywhere near that. Because being a recruit, you were in uniform, they always knew who we were. They could tell by our haircuts, because we got the buzz cut. Much, much shorter than what I have now. And I'm only wearing short hair

36:30 now because I'm going bald, and it's easy to look after, instead of trying to play the careful comb-over. No, it was very short hair ,so they knew exactly who we were. There was no insignia on us, so that told them straight away we were recruits. There was no drink. Of course, with the new mates that I had started to make, we went out, we drank.

37:00 I know we went to several hotels that were quite popular, we listened to music and tried to pick up girls. Basically listen to music, get drunk. That was all we seemed to do. I remember someone actually, on one of our leaves, rented a cabin out towards St Kilda. There were quite a few beds in it. It was a holiday place, because I know there must have been six or eight beds in there.

37:32 It was the first time I tasted mixed drinks, UDL mixed drinks, while we were there. Didn't score. I can't

remember the first time that I tried to score. I've looked back, and I've actually raised this with various sailors, and we think that we were being fed bromide [sex depressant], because none of us were really very randy.

38:00 Those that tried to score. I can't remember anyone boasting that they had, and as young men we would have. I certainly didn't. I always keep going back to bromide, because I know that I certainly didn't feel like sex. I didn't want sex at that stage. I wasn't really interested in the whole thing.

38:30 So, we think that. In recruit school, we were always made to drink from a particular tea urn. And all recruits drank from there. And I can remember now, that we all thought they were probably spiking the tea, and that was how we were getting it. How they were doing it on the ship, I don't know. Later, when I became an ordinary seaman, and went

39:00 to sea on Anzac, we were still basically under training, as such, and we still didn't have particular privileges. Some were still what we called 'Cinderellas'. On ships, we had to be back by midnight, hence we were called Cinderella. But once you turned eighteen, that was okay, you didn't have to. But we had some sailors who were

39:30 under the age of eighteen. I can't remember if they were still Cinderellas while they were at Cerberus, while they were still recruits, or whether they were allowed to go ashore. Obviously the navy had some type of discipline and care, duty of care. Even back then.

What about the uglier side of sailors on leave? Were there any brawls?

Yes there were. There was one particular sailor,

40:01 who thought he knew better than the rest of us, he always got into brawls. Even in recruit school. His father was in the navy and his father was a cox'n on one of the ships. Chris actually got thrown out of one of the navy bases, he had been in the navy before,

40:32 he was at the apprentice school in West Sydney. He got thrown out. I found out many years later what for. He actually threw a hammer at one of the instructors. Obviously he wasn't doing his work properly and they decided to give him his marching orders. But because his father had enough, he managed to get him back in. So he came back in as a general service to the navy, and he

41:00 ended up in our intake.

Tape 4

00:40 **You were talking about one particular bloke that got into a bit of trouble?**

I've forgotten the name of the hotel now. The Winston, or something like that down in Melbourne. He got into an argument, he may have been slightly drunk, and bashed up

01:00 one of my classmates and they left him in the gutter, and I thought this wasn't fair. So I went down and picked him up, and carried him over, got the blood off him and sobered him up a bit. All of a sudden we became buddies. We became good friends for a fair while. In fact, I think I was the only buddy he ever had. Though he had one or two friends at Narimba.

01:30 I actually met up with them later. He invited me home to meet his parents, up in Surfers Paradise. We used to go up to his girlfriend's place, over near Toorak, in Victoria. Her parents were both police people, she worked at the Water Police. That's all I can remember. We used to sleep on the floor.

02:01 I think half the time he didn't even sleep with her, so quite incredible. Especially when the parents weren't home anyway. So yeah, he ended up being a best buddy for a while, including at sea. But he ended up as an electrician. When we got back from our major trip on Anzac, he went to Victoria and I stayed here in New South Wales.

Was there bullying? Or what is

02:30 **now called 'bastardisation' in the navy at that point?**

Yes. I don't know how bad it was. But I myself got bullied. One day, just before lights out, a whole lot of them came and grabbed me and raced me off to the bathroom block and proceeded to

03:01 Nugget [brand of shoe polish] my testicles. What the reason was, I can't remember. There may have been a reason, but then again I might have blocked it out. That's the only time that I'm aware of. If it happened to anyone else, I certainly wasn't involved in it. I tell you what, trying to get black Nugget off your testicles is pretty hard. Especially with the type of soap that the navy had to offer.

It seems almost humorous now, but it can't have been to easy for you at the time?

03:32 I can't remember what their reasons were. There may have been a reason, I might have fouled up during the day and they decided to get even. I must admit that some of the marching steps that we had to do at the very beginning were pretty difficult. Especially trying to remember these steps. I understand how some of these choreographers feel when they're trying to teach someone with two left feet.

04:00 Yes, so I may have stuffed up somewhere, so I probably deserved it, but I can't remember the reasons why.

Are there any more sinister things that went on there?

Not that I'm aware of. Certainly not to me, and as I said, not to anyone else that I'm aware of.

Would you have kept that to yourself?

If you hadn't asked me, I would have probably kept it to myself.

04:30 I don't think I've even told my partner. I suppose it is embarrassing.

I think it's an important issue to deal with.

Well, it was happening, and to a degree it's still happening, I believe. But as far as I know that was the only occasion, and unfortunately I was the brunt of that particular one.

Do you think it was condoned by the naval establishment at that time?

05:03 I don't know. It's certainly not condoned today. But back then, I don't know. Something like that they'd probably have said, "Just a prank." And put it down as such. I don't think anything else would have been put into it. But now that the Australian Forces have care, and have to care, look after their charges, then

05:31 yes, this is certainly frowned upon, and certainly not condoned.

What about other funnier pranks? Were there pranksters?

The day we were supposed to have left Cerberus, we stripped our cabin and dumped everything out in the road, because we thought we were better than recruits. Because by this time we were ordinary seamen.

06:02 Somebody got offended by this, and we were made to run, with our mattresses up a mile road, and back. And lo and behold if you stopped. This was to teach us a lesson. We were just playing around because there was no-one there to supervise us, basically. Looking back then, the reasons that that was happening was the day we were supposed

06:30 to leave Cerberus and join our first ship, which was HMAS Anzac, The 15th of December, and that was the day that Harold Holt [Prime Minister 1966-7] disappeared down at Cheviot Beach, which was a couple of sand dunes away from Cerberus, a couple of paddocks, it was fairly close. And unfortunately, the ship's master-at-arms was the ship's diver.

07:00 And he was required to dive, so there was no-one there to actually enrol us on to the ship, and get us our billets, and where we were going to live, basically. And the work that we were going to do, all that sort of stuff. Obviously that's a pretty big job to do. He was a chief, I think in his 30s. I can't remember today if he shaved or whether he was bald. Probably shaved.

07:30 But totally bald all over. When we finally got to meet him, he was a very imposing gentleman. We were probably in awe and to a degree a bit petrified of him. Because he was the master. He was almost more powerful than the captain. So we joined, I think, on the Monday or the Tuesday, after. That was our introduction.

08:00 Anzac was in dry dock at Williamstown. We were required to live on Castlemaine. She was an old ship that was just used as a billet ship down there. So we were there from December until.

08:30 it must have been April when we left there, and we sailed up here to Sydney. I can't remember exactly when we got in. When we finally got here, there was one of the worst storms ever encountered happened that particular May, May '68. It was that bad that all the wonderful sand that used to be

09:00 at Rose Bay got stripped out, and it's never really recovered. We were required to go out and try to rescue a couple of yachts, which were out somewhere off Botany Bay. We got out there, and the Anzac had very low decks, and huge waves were crashing on top of us. I don't know how high they were. But I know they were certainly crashing over the top of the ship

09:30 and ripped off the rubber life rafts that we had. They took away the boats, just took the lot away from us. It got that dangerous that the captain said, "Too bad for the sailors out there. We've got to go back because we can't stay out in it." Which is pretty tough for a warship that is supposed to go to sea. Now, it was bad. I know that all my fellow shipmates that I joined with

10:00 were all sick from the motion of this. I managed to beat it, I don't know how. The point is that if you can

see horizon, you won't get sea sick. I got up into the gun turret in the front of the ship and managed to see the horizon, this was when I was feeling pretty queasy. Saw the horizon. It was quite incredible because through this you could actually see the waves crashing over the top of the ship.

10:30 It's funny now, they thought they were all gods. Back in the '60s, we all thought officers were gods, and especially the captain. It was an open bridge, so all those waves were actually crashing over the top. The only one not getting wet was the navigator, because he had his own little plotting closet. From that day on, I've never been seasick, because I've always looked for the horizon.

11:06 **At the start you ran us through a quick overview of your life. I wonder if you could do the same thing in respect to your career in the navy? Starting from when you joined the HMAS Anzac. Just in point form, where did you serve in these ships?**

In Anzac, I joined her in Victoria, we came to Sydney,

11:30 and in June, the ship was ordered to go defence while in Sydney and we actually went to Vietnam. So we got up to Vietnam, spent a day there in Vietnam, then sailed for Darwin. We arrived down in Darwin for a major festival, then we came back to Sydney, and

12:00 on the way back to Sydney I put my request in to change my rate and things started in the pipeline from that point. We got back to Sydney, and in the meantime all the people that I joined up with had got their billets to go to whatever schools they had to go to, which were either in Sydney or Melbourne. And I was kept on board ship because I was given the chance to become an [?UNCLEAR] weapons.

12:31 It was the only choice that I had. And I thought sounded pretty good. It was taking me away from rifles and guns and things. As I found out on Anzac that I was certainly gun shy. So I stayed on board Anzac for a couple of weeks. Then I joined Melbourne for two months while the next course at Watson started. In the meantime I had leave,

13:00 then I joined Watson to do my course. Then from Watson I went to Penguin to do my seamanship. Back to Watson, then to Stuart. I spent a few years on Stuart. In the meantime I decided I wanted to become a submariner and I put my request in for submarines. And ended up in New Quay to do my training. Came back in

13:30 1971 for that and joined my one and only submarine, Onslow, and did a trip up top, which was part of the Far East Strategic Reserve. Then back to Sydney, the base here in Sydney, then

14:00 I did some trips around here and Victoria, then I was discharged.

The Watson, is that a ship or a shore establishment?

That's a shore establishment.

Where is that again?

It's on the south head of New South Wales, at Watson's Bay.

And Stuart, what kind of a ship was that?

Stuart was a River Class destroyer.

14:32 **Back to the Anzac, the Anzac was a training ship but it was a destroyer as well?**

That's correct. She'd actually seen her life in World War 11, I think. She certainly saw service in Korea. Exactly when she was converted to a training ship, I'm not sure, but it would have been sometime in the '60s.

15:00 They took the second gun, the one closest to the bridge out and put a classroom on board. It certainly was the '60s, because it was all Formica [artificial veneer]. I think that was a very '60s thing. Father Mack came back to do part of his training in that classroom. They changed all that, so she was a classroom. She had Bofors, which were anti-aircraft guns,

15:31 which could work, but the big gun up the front, I've forgotten what size she is. She's inoperable. She could move around and make noises and look good, but they couldn't fire shots from it. I think they were too scared to, in case something fell apart. So she was only a training ship. So we joined her, just to get some sea time, understand what was happening.

16:00 There was no other ship available at the time, so she was selected to go as destroyer escort for HMAS Sydney, which was a troop transport.

Can you describe the ship in a bit more detail? How big, what was the complement?

I can't remember now. She was basically a normal type.

16:30 destroyer. Fairly small. We all lived in hammocks, except for the chiefs and the officers, they had bunks. I can remember stringing my hammock in the passage way, not far from the chief's mess, and you had to climb down through the chief's mess. Underneath the classroom I think there were more seamanship sections

17:01 underneath the gun itself, and they were fairly large areas. Underneath obviously there were flats, where originally the shells would have been kept for the guns. But that was where we stored our baggage. The ship used to have torpedoes, but they were taken off, I think, in the refit that we actually

17:30 had completed. Anzac was basically a rust-bucket itself. After we got back from Vietnam, I was doing work in an area where the torpedoes used to be stowed, tubes that is. And we went through the rust, straight into the engine room. And that was pretty tough. We had to report what was there,

18:00 and realising that there was probably only this much metal between the rust, holding it up. We could have gone through a few times. She was certainly old. I don't know when she was put in reserve. She was put out a couple of years later. She would have sat [moored]over near the zoo for quite a few years before she actually finished. I can remember doing various

18:30 watches [guard duty] on board her. The gangway watches. Also firemen watches down in the various parts of the ship. I also did that in Melbourne. I look back now and I'm a little wary of those watches, because I can remember on Anzac seeing the dockyard workers having a snowball fight. And the snowballs were actually asbestos. So I'm seeing all that stuff flying around me. It's just one of those things I always worry

19:00 about. I just hope I don't have asbestosis somewhere in my future. Nothing in my x-rays yet. In fact, all the ships that I was on, including the submarine, all had asbestos.

Let's talk about what you did on the Anzac. Apart from classes what were you doing?

19:30 I must have had something to do with one of the guns, anti-aircraft guns. So I would have been cleaning and painting. Chipping paint, that's all you ever did at sea, was cleaning, chipping paint, painting. There was watches that we had to keep, which were lookouts at sea. At shore, depending on what watches you were in,

20:01 on the gangway. Assistant quarter master, as they called it, looking after the gangway. At sea, there were also lifeguard duties, the port, starboard and aft, depending on your qualifications where you actually were. Which meant you manned a telephone, and you had to watch to make sure that nobody went overboard.

20:30 That was common on all ships, you had to do that. So it never really changed from whatever ship I went onto if I was on seamanship watch. That's what I had to do.

Who was looking after you? Who was in charge of you?

There would have been a leading seaman department, who would have answered to a petty officer. There would have been a couple of petty officers perhaps, and one chief, and that chief. In my case, would have a gunnery officer.

21:00 Gunnery officer would have been in charge of all guns on board. So there was a major pecking order, which was bottom heavy, in a pyramid style.

Is it unusual for a ship to be so bottom heavy?

Not really. No, in this case, especially on Anzac, we were all trainees as ordinary seamen. So we would have had to report to the able seaman, the ordinary seaman, able seaman to a leading seaman to a petty officer to a chief.

21:33 But sometimes I think. It was that pecking order all the way up. So there would probably be four ordinary seamen to two ABs [able seamen], to one leading seaman to a petty officer to a chief.

Your role was in the quarter master gunnery store.

22:01 **What were the two parts of that? Was the quarter master something separate?**

I was basically a gunner. I was going to end up working on guns. I was a seaman. So I would have worked in all facets of that area. I would have been involved not only in the anti-aircraft guns, but any other guns that might have been around. Rifles that were kept on

22:30 board, handguns that were kept on board. If I advanced through the system I would have been down there cleaning those sorts of things. They would have been tested at least once a week. If I remember rightly, at sea every so often they would be taken out and actually fired. There would be gun practise at some stage. I can remember that happening a few times during my career. I would have been in charge of that if I had continued through that. But basically at

23:00 this particular stage of my career, I was just a seaman learning the ropes.

What about the guns themselves, were they fired in training exercises?

At some stage, we fired the Bofors, the anti-aircraft guns. They were operational, so I got to practise on those. I can't remember, I can't remember what else we did on those.

23:31 But yes, I certainly did get to practise. Because my position was actually on the port side, which is left, side of the bridge, on this particular gun. That was my position and that's where I was when we

24:00 went in Vietnam. Obviously I was training there, I can remember being there a few times.

You mentioned before that this was when you became aware of your gun shyness?

I think this led right up to the whole thing. I was not happy. I think I also

24:30 started reading a lot of books. I was aware of books, McDonald's books especially. He wrote about the navy. I think too much knowledge was a bad thing in my case, or too much good knowledge is a good thing. Which ever way you want to put it. I decided no, I didn't want to be out there. People get killed, get hurt. I didn't want to be in that line of fire. I think that was my reasoning, but I was always gun shy.

25:03 **What were your symptoms, if you like, of that? Did you crack under pressure?**

No, I didn't crack under pressure. I just didn't like it, so I went to my divisional chief, I had a talk to him. He said, "Well, you can change your branch." So then it was a matter of going to my divisional officer, we filled out forms.

25:31 I think they were then presented to the captain, and I had to front the captain and change the job And he basically rubber-stamped the whole thing. It was up to him to say yes or no. He asked the reasons why, I told him I was gun shy, and he said okay. I think my captain at the time was Commander Kelly, so he was happy about that. Yes.

Were there any

26:01 **jibes from other people about not being able to take it. Or was everyone quite supportive?**

I don't think so. Because I think, if I remember rightly, there were other members of the group that I joined who decided they weren't happy with the position they were given, especially with the hands-on. I know that some others actually did, so I wasn't the only person. I know it still goes on today. People who are not happy with

26:31 the job in the navy they're given to do. They change horses mid-stream, as it were.

You mentioned some of this was due to reading, and too much knowledge can be a bad thing, or vice-versa. What exactly do you mean by that? Were you reading about pacifism?

No, I just think McDonald's books were pretty graphic. I started thinking. That's

27:00 possibly part of my problem, I started thinking and I decided, "I don't want that." You can still be involved in the action without having to be on a gun. And having that sneak up on me. I still hate handling pistols even when I know they're unloaded and they're quite safe. I still get that feeling.

27:34 **It must place you in a slightly interesting position, having joined the military, which is about killing people, and then deciding that you don't want to kill people?**

I think you're thinking there may have been one of the other reasons why I decided to go into submarines. Because then, you don't see anyone get killed in submarines. There's only one person who can see that, and that's the person who's got their eye to the periscope.

28:01 So I didn't know where I was going with any of this at the time. It certainly started to manifest itself as I got a little senior in my time. Of course, some years later there was more money, and there was a big huge program to get submariners. I think that you're probably on a line there, and I'm not exactly sure

28:31 what my feelings were about that, but they were obviously developing. Whether I was becoming a pacifist or not, I don't know. I don't think I would have been going out there marching in the anti-Vietnam marches or anything like that. I was certainly red, white and blue [patriotic], at that stage. I was still seeing the whole navy as an adventure.

Is that something that you encountered in Sydney, or anywhere during

29:00 **'68 or '69? The big protests that were building up at that stage?**

I was aware of it, but most of it happened in the city. I think there were some protests happening at Kings Cross at one stage. But that was away from me. And that was during the day when I was actually working. I think we were basically protected from that. I think most of that was happening in Macquarie Street, and as far as I know no sailors were involved with that.

What about reactions to your uniform, while you were on leave?

29:30 Well, that started to change. It's interesting that you bring that up. In 1968, by the time I got to Watson, after I left Anzac, we were still wearing uniforms. And we had to wear uniforms ashore. Somewhere along the line, someone brought up the point that we had to wear civilian clothing ashore. Because while I was doing my underwater weapons training,

30:00 we were made to wear coats and jackets and ties with our uniform. So yes, obviously we were seen as possibly in danger. So this duty affair was already starting by then, so we were out in mufti [civilian clothes], by that time. We had to go out and buy coats and ties. I had noticed, by this time,

30:30 that the navy officers were wearing cravats, and we sailors were getting jack of [tired of] having to wear ties all the time. They cost money and you lose them and things like that. So I went out and purchased a cravat, and fronted up for inspection before we left the base, and everyone started laughing. I was the biggest joke going. I had the last laugh, because the moment I stepped off the base, I took the cravat off and turned it into a

31:00 pocket handkerchief. Well, I started a fashion. Within two days, everyone was wearing cravats, and I thought, "This is a bastard. I started a fashion and now they're copying me." And this was a time when people started to wear handkerchiefs and bands around their necks, with the ring. And I decided to see if I could push the buttons and see if I could get away with it. So I started wearing those. And as far as the officers of the day were concerned, yeah, it was

31:30 neck wear, yes, you can go ashore. When they realised that I was setting a precedent, because you see, everyone was wearing the same stuff ashore anyway, we started to blend in. And if they didn't like it, you turned it into a pocket handkerchief. So yes, that all started in early '68.

Was that need to blend in because people didn't like seeing blokes in navy uniform?

32:00 Possibly it was anti-navy and anti-Vietnam. Because we had ships up there, we had ships in the line, they probably saw us as fair game. Going back to what I said earlier, the navy's duty of care, of looking after their sailors, the last thing they want is a group of sailors in hospitals.

Are there any experiences that you or those people you knew had that you counted as – ?

No, I didn't. And I don't know of anyone who did.

32:30 But obviously it must have happened or the navy wouldn't have done it.

In this context of you're being trained on Anzac, when did you get news that you would go over with the Sydney to Vietnam? How did that happen?

It must have been sometime in May, because we had been out, we got back in, and we were repairing from that storm, so.

33:00 It must have been the end of May, or certainly June. All of a sudden we were loading supplies to go up top [north]. I think we may have had another trip going on, visiting one of the ports, and all of a sudden we got this trip. She certainly wasn't equipped for the type of trip that she was meant to be on. And the trip that was chosen was the eleventh

33:30 trip for Sydney. I think we left on the 6th of June to go up there.

So it all happened very quickly. What was the reaction on board when the young recruits were suddenly going into an active war zone?

I can't remember feelings. I think we probably felt quite okay. We weren't

34:00 thinking about the action, whatever had happened. I think we were well informed enough to know it was only a guard duty, as such. That we weren't going on the line. We probably saw it more as a big jolly. It gave us the chance to learn something. I can't remember our thoughts back then or my own.

34:30 **It was almost symbolic, really, to send the 'rust bucket' Anzac out with the Sydney. What was her role?**

Her role was to protect the Sydney itself. It seemed like the Vietcong – Saigon – were saying they were really going to get it this time. And also the area she was unloading in Vietnam, there had been a lot of action up there in the weeks

35:00 prior to the Sydney actually leaving. That was the unloading area for the Australian Navy. I think even the day that we got there, or the day before, there had been a lot of action, sniper activity going on. I did have a piece that I'd written about this, but for some reason I can't find it. It's on a disc and I can't find the disc. It was interesting. I actually wrote all my feelings and thoughts about going up there.

35:30 We went up via Manus Island, and that's where we actually met the Sydney. Because she actually picked up. I've forgotten which one – RAR [Royal Australian Regiment] from Brisbane. And we met up at Manus Island, along with the refuelling ship, which I think was Supply. We were both supplied there with fuel. And we left, I think, that evening for Vietnam.

36:00 **You mentioned that in May you were back in Sydney when you got the news, what preparations went on there?**

I think we loaded extra ammunition for the guns, and obviously extra food. There would have been more fuel put on board. I think that's about all.

What about leave, or anything before you went?

36:34 Well, we lived on board. I just think leave may have been stopped. I can't remember on that, what we did then.

I know you were on a training ship, but did you have an action station yourself?

Yes, as I mentioned on the port pom-pom, on the anti-aircraft gun.

37:00 That was my action station for war itself, and that's where I was when we entered Vietnamese waters.

And you were on that because whenever the ship was in dangerous territory?

I was actually a loader. My job was to load shells into the gun itself.

Tape 5

00:40 **Do you know why the Anzac was actually chosen?**

I have no idea. I have no knowledge of that at all. But I have a feeling she was chosen at the last minute. Whether the ship that was supposed to take her up, like escort the Sydney up, had a breakdown or something like that, I don't know.

01:00 I don't know the history of that.

Was the Anzac the only ship chosen to escort her up?

I have no idea.

Just on your trip up, were you the only ship there?

Yes, we were only ship to go with her, except for the Supply, which was the refuelling ship. She only met us as far as Manus Island. And that's where we actually met the Sydney as well,

01:30 off Manus Island. The Sydney sailed in independently from Brisbane, and we sailed independent from Sydney, and we met up at Manus Island. The island used to be a naval communications base, and we've still got one prisoner up there, an illegal immigrant.

02:00 **This was your first big trip?**

Yes, it was. Other than my little trip from Melbourne to Sydney, yes, this was my big trip. It was the first time I had ever seen Sydney. For me, that was quite incredible, because you could just see through the Gap as you were coming up. And they were still building the AMP building [Australian Mutual Provident Society], the shortest one. They were just building

02:30 the Opera House, and also Australia Square, they were still building that. They were the first images I had, coming up harbour. And when I looked around, because we were falling in [lining up] up on the deck, as dress ship, as ships do when they enter a harbour, I couldn't believe it. I was on port side, too, as we were coming up, looking up the harbour I was just flabbergasted. I couldn't believe what a beautiful harbour and what a

03:00 beautiful city it was. We went into Garden Island for the first time. And then my first leave, I didn't get leave the first day. I got leave the second day. I went on shore by myself. You've got two choices when you come out of the dockyard gates, you go along one way. where all the yuppies ['young and upwardly mobile'] are now,

03:30 it used to be major cargo warehouses, or you could go up Wild Avenue. I chose to go up Wild Avenue. Well, in 1968, Potts Point was a totally different suburb to what it is now. The huge houses, the mansions, were still there. I noticed when I was up there the other day, one of the major mansions got pulled down, and there was a

04:00 big motel built called the Commodore. Now that's been pulled down and replaced by apartments. It's amazing the recycling going on. There were some beautiful homes up there, they've now disappeared. In some places they've been replaced. In other places there is just open space. But then I found that Potts Point, Kings Cross, was very bohemian. That's

04:30 when I started to notice the difference. I fell in love with that. That's where I started to drink in that area. Later, the Bourbon and Beefsteak came along, but that wasn't there in early '68. Bernie Houghton didn't start that until much later, when the American R & R [rest and recuperation] started coming out. He started cashing in on the American soldiers' cash cow [source of profiteering], sort of thing. They were the cash cow. He certainly made

05:00 a lot of money out of that. And that's when things started to change in the Cross, too. Not only did the Americans bring their money, they also brought drugs in. That's when the whole thing changed to what Kings Cross is today. And they're trying to move it back to that more gentle, to that more bohemian type of place it used to be. So that was my first introduction to Sydney, and I fell in love with the place.

05:45 **Now this particular trip, Melbourne to Sydney, was that on Anzac as you were heading up to meet the Sydney?**

No, that was the first one here. That's when we had to go out and salvage the yachts

06:00 which had got caught up in that storm that I mentioned earlier. So that was my second trip actually, going out to try and do that. I think we might have had one or two training runs out there. I can't quite remember if that's true or not. I'm sure we must have. Especially after we repaired all the damage. I know we got new ropes and new cable and all that sort of stuff. So whether we went out to train before we left to go up to Manus Island, to meet the Sydney –

06:30 but I know that we certainly trained on the way. That was really my third trip.

One of the guns was replaced for that training?

No, the guns came off, and a school training room was actually put in its place. But that was done years before, and it wasn't taken off.

07:01 **So when you went to Vietnam, that just remained there?**

It remained there, yes. That's why I think they didn't fire the large guns, because I think it would have blown the whole thing off. It wasn't exactly jerry built, but I think they thought it might damage it, yes.

Can you share with me the journey up to meet the Sydney?

As I said, I know that we were doing training in our parts of the ship. For, in case

07:30 we had to go into battle. I know many times I was actually up in the gun, pretending and going through the motions. We had action stations a few times on the way through. We sailed up around New Guinea, and to me this was the first time that I had ever been in the tropics. I found it incredible, and I spent much time on the upper deck, just looking at the islands go by.

08:00 Just going up to the Great Barrier Reef or something. But to get up around New Guinea, and see all the islands, it was getting very exotic. We went past the main part of New Guinea, there is a very tall volcano that comes right down to the sea. And of course, in winter that major storm must have been really good. Because when we have those storms up the coast, it usually puts a lot of snow up into Queensland. So,

08:30 there was actually snow on this volcano. Interstate people don't believe me. I was watching a documentary the other day, and they actually showed the snow in New Guinea and how it supplies water to certain areas, I thought, "Right. I'm proven right in the long run." I can remember going home, the first time, and my school mates never believed me. In fact, they didn't believe most of the things I told them. "Smith's telling stories again." I enjoyed

09:00 the trip up. It was quite incredible seeing all this. And then we got to Manus Island. Manus Island, as I mentioned, was the naval communications base, and we weren't allowed ashore. In fact, we weren't allowed ashore the whole trip, at this point. And then when we finally got into Vietnam waters, we had action stations close up, which was for real.

09:30 We did this about midnight. This time, going into Vietnamese waters, one thing that really struck me as we started getting close to the coast, about thirty miles, was the smell. Vietnam smelt like a brand new rubber boot, or gum boots. That's what it smelt like, brand new rubber boots. And it got stronger as we got closer to shore.

10:00 And right on sunrise, we started closing in about three miles. The Sydney was ahead of us. It was incredible. I don't think I've ever seen such a red sunrise. It was one of the reddest going. And as the sun started to slowly creep up, all of a sudden the sky became alive with

10:30 helicopters. And that was quite incredible. We could hear the helicopters coming in from shore. As I said, we were about three miles from shore. This is where we dropped anchor for a little while, because we had to haul the anchor back in again because they started gunfire again on the shore. And all those helicopters we'd seen, they were coming in and landing on

11:00 Sydney's flight decks, taking huge pallets and tanks and all sorts of things off the aircraft carrier. The whole morning it was incredibly busy. The sky kept moving. Obviously something had happened, I don't know when we got the order, but we raised anchor and we started moving off. We started in search patterns.

11:30 I know that we had people on board to listen, so we had a huge amount of extra people on board. We had extra sonar [underwater radar] people, and we also had extra radio people. So they were obviously listening in to Vietnam and anything else. Sonar was for submarines, then all of a sudden we started chasing a sonar contact.

12:00 And to this day we don't know whose submarine it was. Whether it was American, if it was they should have told us they were in the waters. Or whether it was Chinese, Korean, Russian. We certainly picked up contact. We held onto her for quite a few hours, chasing her around. I don't know if we lost it. That

part of the history I don't know, but we certainly had a submarine contact up there.

12:30 It wasn't Australian.

So you chased it for a while?

Yes, I think we spent a couple of hours on the chase, until we lost it. We didn't follow it through. We didn't drop any depth charges or anything like that.

13:04 Yes, we chased her until about four o'clock in the afternoon. By that time Sydney had unloaded her troops and trucks and whatever else they had on board. Could have been tanks.

13:31 Then they had the returning soldiers, I can't remember whether they loaded on their trucks and tanks or whatever, but they returned on that particular ship. Once they were finished loading, and Sydney got up to steam again, we moved off with her. After we got out about thirty miles, Sydney steamed off towards Queensland or Western Australia.

14:00 And we steamed off to Darwin. We were due in Darwin for a festival. I think it was called the Fanny Bay Festival, or something like that. Or a regatta. I know that we were a part of the regatta up there. We had the ship's waiters involved, still doing things like that, even back in '68.

What is a search pattern, or what do you do in a search pattern for a submarine to try and find it?

14:30 In this case, you steam around in circles, basically, with sonar on. Most times you are active or passive using the sonar. Sometimes the ship would stop, and just listen. In Anzac's case, I'm sure she would have been doing that quite a lot. I'm pretty sure we did stop and listen. And then if it picked up contact, move in, and

15:00 continue doing that. Anzac being an old ship, I'm not sure how far she was updated as far as sonar was concerned. So we would have done a search pattern, and once we got on top, we just continued chasing it and holding it down. I think that's what the captain would have been doing. The sonar officer would have been advising, to continue to chase it and hopefully force it to surface. If we could. I don't remember any depth charges

15:30 going off. There was a type of anti-submarine weapon we had on board, which is totally useless. I should know what it was called. It wasn't a Hedgehog or depth charge or anything like that. The charges were actually fired out of it. They were supposed to all go over the top of the bow,

16:00 but in our exercises on the way back from Darwin, we tried to operate them. The first one just cleared the bow of the ship, the next one actually landed on the quarter deck, and the third one shot up the tube and then plonked back down again. That was it. They decided we didn't need that anymore. It was obsolete anyway. We couldn't have used it, even if we had locked on

16:30 the submarine and kept it.

You mentioned earlier you were at action stations. Were you at your gun?

Yes I was at my gun, as a loader.

What were the orders from the captain if the sub had come up?

I'm not sure what the orders would have been, because ours were anti-aircraft, so I don't think we could have got down to a level to use it in that area.

17:02 That's a good question, but I don't think we could. I don't know how we would have forced that submarine out of the water, or what we would have done with it anyway. Probably fired Oerlikons [rapid fire guns] or something like that, machine guns, I don't know what we used.

Were you excited? Was there fear on board?

I think there was a certain amount of excitement.,

17:30 There's all this action going on around, with all these different type of helicopters flying over all the time. Gun ships protecting both ships, and also those on the ground, working there. Protecting the army, who we know were there, because there had been snipers the day before

18:00 and they were chasing up the snipers. So yeah, it was pretty easy all around. We had a lot to entertain us, I suppose. And such an incredible red sunrise. That was something to watch as well. And it was as if a major curtain had drawn back, and this was your scene. That was the start of dawn, red curtain, red scene, and Vietnam, in all its glory and all its war.

18:32 That's about the only way I can describe what I saw and feel.

Given that you were at your action stations for, what, almost twenty four hours.

I'd say we'd been at berth for about eighteen hours all up, until we pulled out. I know we had a meal break, when things were quiet. Half the team went off and had a meal, then as soon as they came back

the other half went off and had a meal. I can remember us doing that.

19:08 How gung-ho [keen for action] we all were? I'm not exactly sure now. We probably were. We probably were excited about the whole thing. The adrenaline probably was rushing to a degree. But I think as the day wore on and nothing exciting happened, that may have died away to a degree as well. And when we moved away and chased the submarine,

19:30 I think it got a little quieter. They didn't need our type of guns unless we were attacking from the air.

So after all this had happened, was there a sense of disappointment that nothing had happened?

I can't recall my feelings on that one.

Just coming up with the Sydney, when you crossed the equator, was there any tradition of crossing the equator that the boys got up to?

20:01 Not on this one, because we were going to war. Not even on the way back because we had a deadline to meet to get back to Darwin. It's quite interesting that you mention that, I've been over the equator many times on ships and I still haven't seen Neptune [Roman God of the Sea, naval ceremony at the crossing of the Equator]. He's never made an appearance. There was always some reason why Neptune couldn't make it. And he couldn't make it this time because we were going to war.

20:30 So I missed out on that. I'm intrigued about crossing the line ceremonies because having never seen one, I was involved with a whole of lot of photographs at Spectacle Island, which is part of the navy's repository. We were going back through a whole amount of old photographs, which involve even royalty undergoing cross the line ceremonies. Yeah, I would have liked to have had a chance, but never done it.

It sounds like Neptune was avoiding you.

21:02 There was a lot of very disappointed sailors out there, I know that much.

In respect to Saigon Rose [communist propaganda broadcaster], did you hear – ?

Oh yes, we were laughing at her. Because she knew we were coming. We were picking her up for days before we got there. And we were laughing that. "Oh Sydney, you're going to die." And she was giving names of troops, saying "You're going to die." She was just going on about, "die, die, die."

21:30 But I remember for days listening to her, we all just laughed. We thought she was the best entertainment going at the time. But we didn't listen to her all the time, just during certain hours we would switch her on, and we could actually listen to her rants and raves. I can remember. I think we had cheerios from home on that particular trip as well. I think we did. Oh, no, that was the next trip.

22:00 Sorry, I'm getting my trips mixed up. Yes, so we heard all that happening. It was quite interesting.

On the way up you had extra operators for some of the anti-submarine and radio operators. I presume the ship was enormously crowded in that respect?

It was. We were all sleeping in hammocks.

22:32 They would have been sleeping in hammocks or in camp stretchers. Some of those would have been sleeping in parts of the ship where they actually were. Yeah, we would have been very crowded. How many people we had on board for that trip, I have no idea.

Do you remember what the deal was with hygiene and ablutions and that sort of thing?

Yes.

23:00 Anzac was one of the old ships. She had problems making water. But, she couldn't make a huge amount of water, through distillers. We were rationed water on board. When we had showers, during our ablutions, we used to duck under, get wet, shut off, lather up,

23:30 and then shower again just to get the soap off. And if you wanted to get more water, you used salt water. If you were really dirty you started on salt water, then moved to fresh. The showers, on that particular ship, it was just one big room, with all these nozzles in the ceiling.

24:00 I think the taps were in the walls. So we were just standing around these shower nozzles above you. The toilets were actually bowls mounted on the walls, metal bowls. Because ceramic, when the big guns were fired, they would shatter, so they learnt that lesson in World War 1, I think, so they had already moved towards metal.

24:36 I remember these were funny on Anzac, because they were mounted up. Urinals were on the wall, and the bowls were raised and they had stable doors on the stalls themselves, which swung open and shut. I remember the idiot

25:00 of our intake, Bungy Williams, he went in to use the toilet and thought the urinals were wash basins. He washed his hands, then took a drink from them, and came out complaining that it tasted salty. Obviously

we were using water straight out of the harbour. He very quickly realised his mistake. The village idiot.

25:32 **He probably wished he hadn't told anyone either.**

Yes, there was one village somewhere missing their idiot, he was it.

What other things did he get up to that weren't too smart?

I suppose we were setting boundaries or marking our territories. When I first joined the navy. I suppose it was a bit like dogs sniffing each other out

26:00 to try and find out who you were, what you were doing. You'd be in a group and you'd talk about your life, up until that point. For most of us who were eighteen years of age, we didn't have much to talk about, really, in your life. You might talk about the cars that you owned, those lucky enough to own a car. So you sort of get to know each others' life a little bit, I suppose a bit like we're doing here today. We talked about our lives and the jobs we had.

26:30 Bungy used to go from group to group. He used to brag about all these jobs that he had. Anyway, one day we all got together when he wasn't around and started talking about him. And found out he had to be about a hundred and twenty years of age to have done what he'd done. We just realised how stupid he was. Funny character. I don't know if he ever made it throughout the navy. He probably did. Idiots like him seemed to.

27:00 I hope they never called me an idiot. They probably have.

With the showers, they were open showers I take it?

Yes, that was an open shower. Just a complete shower block, there were no curtains, no divisions, you just had showers hanging off the ceiling with the taps in the wall. The toilets were a bit more private, but you could see everyone there

27:30 as you walked past, with their heads above the stable doors. Quite funny, you'd see the legs. I don't know if there was a reason for it. Whether they thought it stopped people doing weird and wonderful things to each other in toilets. Whether it was meant to stop homosexuality acts or what. That was one of the things that struck all of us when we first joined the ship.

28:02 **Thinking of the showers and stuff like that, were there feelings that you didn't want to take all your clothes off, that guys showered in their underpants up front?**

I think in our case, some of them did. I think some went in their underpants, or with their bathers on and showered. Obviously there were some men who were ashamed of their sexuality or just prudes for whatever reason. Now that you mention it, I think there were a few.

28:30 I know that I didn't fit in that category, I was quite happy to be open. It didn't worry me. This is what I was born with, and this is how I will die, naked.

And finally just on discipline, we have discussed this but was there a different in discipline in respect to you going off to war now, opposed to what had been done to that point?

I think discipline had relaxed a little, because

29:00 obviously ship time discipline changed from shore. But as a recruit, we were having discipline pushed into us, so we had to go by what they said. "I say, you do." People who should have been disciplining you were actually workmates as well. As an ordinary seamen, you were bottom of the rung,

29:30 so, someone will tell the AB, "I will take a couple of ordinary seamen and do this." So the three of us were there together, getting to know each other, and that sort of thing. So discipline changes. Because you might have the leading seaman working with you as well, so you're getting to know that person. So it becomes much more relaxed. It's just getting to know yourself and your buddies on board the ship. Because

30:00 at sea it's totally different. You're relying on each other for your life. Even more so in a submarine. So by dropping some of that heavy purpose discipline, you're getting friends, you hope that you're getting someone who will watch your back if there was bad times. Like if the ship's on fire, or if you were in a collision, or just in war itself.

30:31 These are all things that could happen on a ship. And we also trained for that as well. Like if the ship breaks down, or runs aground. They were the things we were learning. How to do tows, how to fight fires. All for action, that's what it was called 'for action.' Fire, fight fire, and so on.

31:01 You break out hoses and race to that particular point. But that was part of the training at sea. They all came in good stead much later, but we're still on Anzac so I won't jump ahead.

31:30 **Just in respect to Anzac, you're training up to Vietnam, probably on the way back was fire drill training, was it?**

We didn't do so much, because by the time we got to Vietnam all that had changed. We could relax now,

it was just back to normal ship's routine. We were just pulling speed to get down to Darwin. We actually got

32:00 there about eight hours early, which was quite surprising. We were quite surprised because we didn't think she could beat her own record. Anzac was a very fast ship, she could do nearly thirty knots, I think. She was designed that way. She was a fast ship and we got down there.

So just in Darwin, what was it that you were going to?

I believe now it was a regatta,

32:30 and we were supposed to be the flag ship. I think originally that was where we were supposed to be going, and we would have been doing it slow time, except we got roped into going to Vietnam. I think we were supposed to go to Cairns on that particular trip. So we never did any of that. We were already programmed to do a trip and got roped into going up to Vietnam, so that put us a couple of days out.

33:02 I think we did three days in Darwin, as flag ship for the regatta itself. I can't remember too much there. I know I went ashore once and saw some of the sights. I was duty for one night, and then I did sub. 'Sub' is when you're standing in for another person, doing their duty. Usually you get

33:30 paid cigarettes or money for that. At that point I probably took a couple of packets of cigarettes, for that sub. By this time I was smoking. I took it up around about that time.

Some of the boys would have gone ashore after being up towards Vietnam for this particular trip, did they go ashore to celebrate their first big stint?

34:02 Yes. We had no beer rations during that particular trip. They used to be twenty six ounces, the big ones, one per person, per night, perhaps. That was the motto. I don't think we had any beer rations until after we left Vietnam waters. Then we went ashore, obviously we drank. I can't remember

34:30 too much of that. I know I went to one of the springs up there, because the army were having a luau sort of thing, a barbecue. So we went to that. I saw one of the regatta events, at Fanny Bay. That was about it.

35:02 Darwin didn't have too much to offer. I look back at Cyclone Tracy and I think, "Well, it didn't blow much away," I thought. Obviously I came away with a low opinion of Darwin. But as I said, I only spent one day ashore and I spent the rest of the time on board, of those three days.

Now at this time had you actually applied to do underwater weapons?

35:32 No, I think I might have applied, but I don't think I got permission until I almost got back to Sydney. Because I had to stay on board a couple of more months, before they sent me to [aircraft carrier] Melbourne.

And this opportunity to work in this area of underwater

36:00 **weapons. Did that come up because some fellow left?**

I don't know what happened, but obviously there were a couple of openings for that particular job in the next class. That wasn't going to be taken until early January, or February, of '69. So I had to spend some time on board, and I actually learnt a little bit about

36:30 the underwater weapons that were on board that particular ship at that time, which wasn't much. Of course, the torpedo tubes had already been taken off, and the thing down the back, I wish I could remember its title, it was virtually ancient. So I spent a couple of weeks working on that, and then they sent me ashore to join Melbourne. Now Melbourne was actually in

37:00 dry dock at the time, so I didn't get to do much on her. All I did was work on the foc's'le, which wasn't part of underwater weapons.

Just before we come to the Melbourne, at this point in your career in the navy, you were told that you couldn't be a cook, and you ended up a gunner. Did you know where you wanted to go?

I think by this time, yes.

37:31 I was willing to try the adventure of UW [underwater weapons]. I knew enough, and also I was put into Sydney and I rather liked Sydney. Now this was something that I might have taken into consideration. Yes, I think that was probably part of my thinking at the time that I can get to stay in Sydney, because underwater work is a Sydney based job.

38:05 **The Melbourne you were transferred to?**

Yes, she was an aircraft carrier, and she was under a major refit at the time, in 1968, 1969. And I joined her, yeah, around

38:30 about September of '68, and spent the next couple of months on board her. I actually lived at Kuttabul,

which was the navy base, which we called Hotel Kuttabul, which is in Potts Point. So, I got to share a cabin with three other people, who were also working on Melbourne, in different parts. My job was actually up on the foc's'le of Melbourne.

39:00 Scraping paint and chipping paint as well as rust away, and she was a rusty old thing. I actually joined her when there was a small uprising amongst the stokers. Back then there was a major problem about the pay and the stokers weren't happy about the new pay schemes that were being in introduced to the navy. So we

39:30 almost had this mutiny. I remember that all the people that were on board the ship at the time, we all mustered on the foc's'le. And Rear Admiral Crabbe, who was flag officer of Eastern Australia, came on board and tried to help us, tell them what they were planning for us, and what our wage scales were going to be like. Whether it worked or not, I don't know. And it was the first time in my life I'd actually seen anyone revolt against

40:00 an officer. He walked up, he had a foul weather jacket on, being early spring, he had a blue foul weather jacket with a big red crab on it. It was a personal motto. I remember someone shouting out "Look at the stupid old bastard with crabs on him."

40:30 And someone else, "Yeah, he got crabs." And going on like that. And it was the first time I actually heard anyone say something like that about the senior officers. At that time, I was still in awe, I suppose, at the glory that these people had.

Tape 6

00:00 (blank)

01:00 (blank)

01:36 **Is there any more details that you can give us of this bohemian Kings Cross, because it doesn't exist anymore, it was a feature of the '60s.**

It certainly was. I think it goes back much earlier than that. I think it goes back into World War 11, from what I can gather. There was an artists' colony in the Yellow House. Huge mansions, I think there were a lot of flats there. Elizabeth Bay House was also an

02:00 artists' colony. We just had a lot of people who were artistic living in the area. I do remember one or two small parties that I went to. They seemed to be very interesting people, and I certainly learned a lot about the art world through that. But the houses started to disappear, the really grand mansions disappeared,

02:30 Potts Point itself. In fact it was guarded. You couldn't go down the street at one stage, early last century. It's quite interesting. All the rich people who used to live in the city come out to the Sydenham, St Peters area, because of the huge mansions built in this area. This area was the summer home and that area was the winter home. They've disappeared and it's quite sad.

03:01 **Who would invite you to parties?**

I think sometimes it just happened at pubs. Somebody would say there is a party on, and you would grab a flagon and end up at the party. This is the days before we had cask wine as such. Brought a couple of bottles of Asti Spumante, that seemed to be the big thing back in the '60s. End up at parties. It was basically

03:30 invitations that happened at pubs.

You're in underwater weapons division, but you're not doing much on the Melbourne. You talked before about the fire job with the asbestos. Can you explain that in a bit more detail?

During refits the dockyard workers would come in and start welding and changing and putting up

04:00 cladding for air-conditioning or hot pipes. If there was any welding going on, we were there as a fire watch, to make sure fires didn't start. In fact we just sat there, most times, with a water extinguisher, and you hit whatever started burning. But in the meantime if there was cladding going on, sometimes the dockyard workers got a little bit carried away and started fights and things. Especially on the

04:30 Melbourne. The Melbourne and Anzac, I got caught up in it twice. That wasn't nice. As I said earlier, knowing that I've actually inhaled asbestos. Whether there is any in the lungs or not, time will tell.

Was there any knowledge at all about the possible dangers of that at the time?

Not back in the '60s. It was only around about 1980 that the navy started to realise their duty of care. I keep using the words 'duty of care', but that seems to be their catch phrase.

05:00 Health and safety issues were starting to happen at that time. So asbestos became quite a problem. I think that's when we started to change from asbestos to other types of situations. I don't know what they use today.

The duty of care has changed no end, I'm sure, but who was in charge

05:31 **of health and safety issues on board a ship?**

I think usually it would be the ship's doctor. Most ships had a doctor on board, depending on the size of the ship. Of course there was also the petty officer, and the chief sick berth attendant, if there wasn't a doctor. So that would be people in charge of all health. I'm not so sure about safety, but certainly in health issues. I think most of their duties

06:00 were probably there from cuts and bruises and things like that, instead of thinking of asbestos as the number one killer in the industrial world. They weren't thinking like that back then, not back in my time anyway.

Were there any other dangers, known or otherwise, that lurked around the ship?

I suppose slamming your head into hatch covers and things like that. Especially coming up from below,

06:30 or even hatches slamming down for some reason, and grabbing your fingers. Or a door slamming on your feet or fingers, which happened quite a bit. So those are the sort of things that the sick berth attendants would have been looking after at the time. If you are in rough seas, you've really got to be careful when going through hatches.

How did the moving around on deck work in rough seas?

It depends. On Anzac, we

07:00 weren't allowed to go out on the upper deck, because we were so low. If it wasn't quite as rough as this particular storm, there were cables that ran from superstructure to superstructure and you'd hook on and walk through. Which is a bit tough, because Anzac in particular had a couple of messes at the back, at the stern, and the only way you could get to the galley, or anywhere else in the ship, you had to go across open decks.

07:30 So that big storm that I mentioned, they were virtually locked down, no food, nothing, until we got back to harbour. On the other ships? Melbourne wouldn't have been a problem in a storm, itself. Stuart? You could move through the ship, there were no problems. You didn't have to go across the top decks to get to another section.

08:05 **While you were on Melbourne, you got news that you would be moving onto the underwater weapons, where did you go from there?**

If I remember rightly, I went on leave first from Melbourne, so I went home to Tasmania and had a couple of weeks leave. Then I went up to Surfer's Paradise, staying at Chris's place and meet his folk.

08:32 Unfortunately, we were involved in a car accident up there. I'm not sure why I am here today. He lost control of the car and we side-swiped a sign post, a telephone pole and a palm tree, not in that order, and the car turned over and

09:00 came back up on its wheels, we weren't really speeding that much and we were pointed back the opposite way. I was very lucky, all I got was glass in my knees and in my face, and when I slammed back down on the seats I got glass in my backside. So I suppose I was very lucky. Whereas he lost the ball of his ankle and ruptured his spleen. I don't know what happened after that. I went to Queensland first, then I went home to Tasmania.

09:30 Obviously I was in shock from that. I spent some time there. I actually paid to fly back to Sydney. Because back in those days, you used to catch the train to Melbourne then fly from Melbourne to Tasmania. But I paid the difference between the Melbourne and Sydney part of it. I got to Watson, I think it must have been very early January. I know

10:00 it was before the big major bush fires that happened in January, '69.

What was it like to go back to Tasmania on leave? Had you outgrown the place in some ways?

Yes, I think I had. It's sad to say this, but it was a bit like going home to Hicksville. It was actually my first trip home. It was really quite tough going home.

10:30 I hitch-hiked from Launceston, it was quite late, about nine o' clock. I could hear a car coming and I thought '"That's my parents' car." Sure enough, I was hitch-hiking in uniform with my kit bag on my shoulder, and the car just zoomed past. I'm told later my mother said, "I think that was Peter." "Oh well, too late now." They couldn't have picked me up anyway,

11:00 the car was full of groceries and the rest of my siblings. So I finally managed to get another lift and I finally managed to get home. I knocked on the door and my mother said, "I told you so," that sort of situation. I spent those couple of weeks at home, I went to a couple of country dances. My father made

me wear my uniform to the country dance. It's only now I realise that my father was proud.

11:30 He was a man of few words, and I don't think it was part of his nature to say, "Well, you've done good." So by parading me at the dance, in my uniform, I think he was just showing me off to my schoolmates and to his own fellow workers.

What about yourself? How proud were you of that uniform at that time?

I think I was pretty proud. I must have been, I wore it.

12:01 But I was very upset about that particular night. I think I made reference to it. I was telling stories of the things I saw, and especially being in Vietnam, what it was like, seeing the huge volcano with snow on top. And just what it was like. The island mentality, they just couldn't get past their own thinking, or mind state. They didn't realise that those sort of things happened out there. Obviously TV hadn't broadened their horizons by the time I got

12:30 back home. And I was very sad. I was very sad that they just though that I was telling porkies [lies], and not telling what I'd seen, which was the absolute truth.

Not exactly 'the triumphant war hero returns'.

Oh, certainly not. I think because of that attitude, I don't go home much. I go home to see my folk and that's about it. I don't think I've seen any of my school mates since then. I did go to a school reunion

13:01 about fifteen years ago, and I hardly knew anyone, from my particular era, anyway. There were a couple of people from the Vietnam War turned up, but I didn't know them. They were slightly senior to me. And they didn't want to talk, and I don't think I wanted to talk about it either.

How much more important was the navy, then, once you had broken your ties a bit with home?

Obviously it was my second home.

13:30 Home away from home, all those clichés, because we were living on board at those points, except when I was on Melbourne, we lived at Kuttabul, but still we were living on board. They didn't encourage people to go ashore and live in apartments, except for the married crews, they could go home to a home. But single people, no, they lived on board. I suppose it was cheaper, as well, for us.

14:00 But those rules have changed now. The sailors have to pay for their own accommodation and food. Exactly how much, I don't know, but it's changed since my time.

Did your parents and family farewell you, when you left on that occasion again?

Yes, yes, they were quite happy to see me off. They came out to the airport, and there were tears. I still get to tears today from my folk.

14:31 I left one of my nephews with tears. The only nephew I have, and he was only about two years old, and he was running down on the outside of the glass at Launceston airport and slammed fair into the other glass wall. That left him in tears. It was funny, but I felt sorry for him, too. He only just got to know his uncle, too, and I left him.

Do you think your parents were concerned about the

15:00 **dangers of the navy during war time?**

I don't think they were worried. It's a question I wish I was asked a couple of days ago. I could have asked my mother what they felt like, about that. I think that my mother and father would have felt that, "Well, he's in the navy, and they'll take care of him."

15:30 I don't know how that changed later, how they felt about that, but I know at that particular point they felt pretty good. I can remember one day, another leave, I came home and my mother was ironing overalls for my father, and she said, "I hate ironing overalls." So I said, "Look Mum, there's an easier way of doing it." And I showed her the navy way of doing it. And she realised just how easy and how quick it was.

16:03 Anyway, she asked the question, she said, "You don't need your mother anymore, do you?" I said, "No, I think the navy's taught me everything." It was only much later that I realised I probably upset my poor mother. She realised that I had left the nest. I was the first of the brood of eight to leave, and I wouldn't be coming back, as such.

16:30 Yes, I taught her a few things about ironing stuff. She hated it. But she was always proud to see us well dressed, in clothes that were ironed.

How do you iron overalls in the navy?

Well, you actually turn your jeans, trousers, inside out, you iron from seam to seam, turn it back the other way, and then put the creases in, if you want the creases. But that's the easiest way, you don't have the hassles.

Did you have to iron them and fold them up in folds? How did that work?

17:02 Everything had to be ironed, there had to be creases in everything. In the shirts, there were pleats down the front, and the pleats at the back. Sometimes you'd put two in. Everything had to be starched. That was just the working clothing.

17:32 Our work trousers were denim and the tops were a coarse cotton. Then there was the standard dress uniform, which was serge or wool or sometimes cotton, depending on the season of the year. Of course, the bell bottoms had to have creases in them. The tops didn't have to, but everything had to be pressed, ironed.

18:00 The collars, yes, so. We had to look pretty good all round. I see that's changed, too, the sailors wear overalls and they don't look as if they iron them.

What were the penalties for not being turned out well on the ship?

You could possibly go before your divisional officer, who might give you punishment. It just depends how major or how minor the incident was.

18:30 But ships were a little different. The bases, they were tough. Obviously because you never knew who was going to come on the base, so you had to be well turned out on the base itself. There could be politicians visiting, or admirals, so you always had to look pretty smart.

Would you compare that to on a submarine?

Submarines were totally different. We had 'pirate rig', which meant you wore anything you wanted to wear.

19:03 Right down to sandals. I think I have a photograph there somewhere in pirate rig. It was pretty easy. That's what I think I liked about submarines compared to surface navy.

Any other practical skills that you picked up in the navy that you showed off to you mother?

I suppose cooking. Later I became the chief's mess man, especially on the Stuart.

19:32 So as a chief's mess man, I used to make their breakfast, it was individual. It was probably the only meal of the day that was individual. I learned things like how to crack eggs with one hand, so there were some cooking skills, even though I wasn't a chef, I got to play around as a chef for a while. I don't think there's anything else I could really show my mother, but that was one thing she did learn from me.

20:02 And I found that very interesting. When I was actually showing her that, that little skill, I played a particular record, Albatross by Fleetwood Mac, a little forty five [disc]. And my father walked in and heard it, and he said, "Play it again." I must have played it to him six or seven times. He really fell in love with that piece of music. I think it's the only piece of music that I'm aware of, that he ever fell in love with.

20:44 **Are there any naval songs that you learnt during your time?**

There certainly are, and I sent Joan Vale a whole lot of sea-shanties [sea songs], on paper,

21:00 but I never heard back whether she got it. It was actually on disc, but the disc was a mess anyway, as I told her it would be.

These are from your own time in the navy, or earlier periods?

These are from probably the last one hundred and fifty years. From the Australian Navy and the Royal Navy itself. There was a modern one, Louise La Pink, which was included in there. And some very dirty ones. I told her they were going to be very dirty.

21:30 And that all came from a conversation at dinner, two Christmases ago, when she was telling the ABABs [?UNCLEAR] people that she had just been out on a ferry with a whole lot of Wrens [Women's Royal Naval Service], which are the Royal Navy women. And she said that all these grandmothers started singing some very dirty ditties, and she was shocked that these beautiful grandmothers could swear like they were. And I said, "Well, I can do better than that. I can actually send you the words."

22:01 I do have them. If the Archive hasn't got them, but I do have another copy here.

I'm interested though from your own experience in the '60s how many traditional songs might you have picked up, or whether they were new ones?

As I mentioned, Louis The Pink, I think, started in the '60s. And the navy very quickly picked up on that. I can't remember the exact words of that song, but obviously it suited the Royal Navy and the Australian Navy sense of

22:30 humour. It's just a ballad, I'm not exactly sure where it came from, but it's a very early '60s thing. A lot of other stuff goes back through both world wars, even back before then.

When would blokes sing?

In pubs, especially on pay day. They go ashore, get pissed and all of a sudden a song fest would start up. One of the best times that I can remember was in Long Po

23:00 in the Philippines. We were at the Civic Bay Naval Base, and we were being entertained. We were being hosted by the American host ship, at the time, I can't remember who it was. We were in a big mess there, they had a band at one stage,

23:31 playing, and they had a break, and while they had a break, an Australian sailor started into song. And we were teaching the American sailors some of our songs. And I can remember that two sailors from the Stuart got up and started the mating dance of the emu, which is quite funny because it's all done stiff-legged and bent over. They ran everywhere around the place, flapping arms, and I can remember

24:00 that everyone was in hysterics. And the Americans said at the end, "Gee, you Aussies know how to party, don't you?" And we kept getting that all the time, even later when I was in submarines. "Gee, you Aussies know how to party." But that was usually when songs broke out, with a few drinks under the belt. It could be in the pubs, in the entertaining clubs, or wherever.

Those songs, especially sea shanties, were often working songs. Was that the case? Were you allowed to sing while you worked?

We didn't use them in the navy as such.

24:31 I think it was more in recreation, when we relaxed we would do this. There was one person on Stuart who used to play Spanish flamenco guitar. Quinn was his surname. We used to have sing-songs. Most times it was listening to him play. It was quite fantastic. French name, Spanish guitar, though.

25:00 **You went up from leave in Launceston to Watson Bay to start your underwater weapons training. What was happening at Watson's Bay?**

Again, it was basically classroom work. It was learning about all the various types of anti-submarine missiles, about torpedoes, we practised on various

25:31 machines that we had at that particular time. Yes, there was a lot of class work. I think we spent a couple of months there. I know I was there during the major bush fires that happened in the Blue Mountains. Because we were actually put on stand-by to go and fight the bush fires. When you're standing over at Watson, on the South Head, and you can see the whole mountains aflame, it was quite something. And we didn't have the high-rise of Sydney at

26:00 that point, either, so you could see all that happening. And we thought we were actually going to get called in to fight that. But we weren't. I think the Army did a lot of work on that particular one. We went on with our training, and from Watson I went over to Penguin, which was at Middle Head. HMAS Penguin. That's where the Naval hospital is, and that's also where the seamen school was. So, we

26:30 learnt seamen skills. We were taught the basic stuff at Cerberus, but here we got into more intense seamanship training. Again, I think that took a month or two, then we were sent back to Watson to make way for the next intake, over at Penguin. And from there I was actually shipped out to Stuart. It was quite interesting,

27:00 even though I didn't mix with them, the Royal Naval 4th Submarine Squadron was actually based at Penguin, and they had separate billets there, away from where we were. I think it would have been quite interesting if I had actually got involved socially with them, but I didn't think about that at that time. I think I was more interested in being social with the friends that I was making on the course at that time.

27:30 **Underwater Weaponry. Exactly what are we talking about here?**

We're talking about ship born torpedoes. Ikara, which was fairly new to the system then. We had Squid. But that was still in service at that time in the navy. In fact, later they were taken out and I think

28:00 we had more Ikara put on board, because they were becoming obsolete at that time. So basically we were dealing with everything to do with trying to kill submarines.

Ikara was an Australian development. What was it exactly?

It was a rocket, fired from the ship, and it took off, and in the time that it was on the ship, it had been programmed

28:30 by the UCs, that's Underwater Control. It was programmed. So if they had picked up a submarine, all that information was going into the rocket, and the take off. At some stage the rocket would release the torpedo, and the torpedo had its own transducer on board, so when it hit the water it would then take on and continue to search from the last information given to it.

29:01 Yes, as you said, it was an Australian invention, and it certainly went on to other navies. I think the Americans actually adopted it. I know the British certainly did. It was already on Stuart when I joined her in 1969, so I think it might have been around for a year or two, at least.

29:31 Stuart was a fairly new ship anyway, so she may have been built with it on board. She was certainly built with the idea of having it on board, anyway.

What about Squid?

Squid was the little bombs that I talked about earlier on Anzac, which were becoming obsolete, so they were fired from a tube. Basically what had happened back then, the ships would run over the submarine contacts, so if they picked it up, they would run over

30:00 the top, then they would drop them. It was just an updated version of the depth charge. It was just that the ship could actually control where they put the charge itself. But these things, by the end of the '60s, were becoming obsolete. The rocket technology was taking over.

What about the ship borne torpedo technology at that stage?

By that time, we had no torpedoes on our ships.

30:30 I think the ships we purchased from America may have had torpedoes but I can't remember. I wasn't taught that anyway. If I was going to one of those ships, I would have had to go back to Watson, to learn that technology. They were given the basic technology for the type of ships that I was expected to serve in.

How technical was it?

I don't think it was overly technical.

31:01 Basically what we had to learn was levers and things like that. I think it was one of those things that you picked up in a couple of hours of doing it repetitively. You do it a couple of times and basically you picked the whole system up. You would have various parts of the ship where you would be involved. I think it was pretty easy. It wasn't very technical, a few valves

31:31 and a few buttons.

Can you give us an idea of what the firing sequence was for the Ikara? What did you have to do?

Well, that wasn't my part of the ship, and for some reason it was never my part of the ship. The only part that I ever got involved with was actually loading the charges. For some strange reason they took that right away from underwater weapons and they gave it to the electronics people in the navy. Obviously

32:00 because it was new technology and dealing with computers and things like that. So we were just the 'grunts' [term for infantry soldiers] that did the hard work.

So what was the hard work in loading the charges?

Well, most of it was bringing them on board from a lighter. Most of it was done by rope and tackle, hauling things in, stowing them,

32:30 placing them in the correct sequence, all that sort of stuff. Mainly pulling and pushing, that's the best way to describe it. Because if you weren't pulling on a rope, you were certainly pushing a charge into position.

When you joined the Stuart, where were you based within that ship? It was a River Class destroyer, similar size to Anzac?

It was a little bit bigger, I think, than Anzac. My mess was

33:00 right aft, I can't remember the number now. It was the one before the tiller flat, where the ropes and things like that went. That was my section. I lived in the starboard, which is right down the very stern part there, right above the propellers itself. To get there, you had to go through a hatch,

33:30 climb down, then through another hatch, to get into that area. It was a bit creepy, I suppose, to a degree, but we all got used to it. All the UWs and UCs, that's Underwater Control, we all lived down stern. PNG [gunnery] and fire control,

34:00 they all lived up the forward part. Obviously they were putting us as close to our parts of the ship as possible. The UCs were based in the centre of the ship because that's where the sonar shack was, if I remember rightly, near the mess area.

How impressed were you with the Stuart?

After the Anzac, very impressed, because by this time it was the first ship

34:30 I actually had a bunk on. So we all had bunks, which was pretty good. No hammocks, we said goodbye to the hammock era. I was pretty impressed, because it was still fairly new, she smelt good, she was clean.

Was she a happy ship?

I think she was.

35:02 I think more so than Anzac. Anzac was probably happy, but it was putting up with the amenities that we had available to us. Here we were on a fairly new ship that we thought was pretty good.

What about the crew?

I got along with them extremely well.

35:31 I ended up becoming the chief's mess man. I don't know why I got chosen. For some reason during my whole navy career I always seemed to be a spare hand, and ended up doing other people's work, which wasn't my own. As we will probably talk about more. Yeah, so I was chief's mess man. They must have enjoyed the type of service that I was able to give them. Obviously this is the start of becoming steward, which I wasn't aware that I was going to do,

36:00 because at some stage, when I was trying to change my rate they also offered me steward, I immediately said, "No way," because I kept hearing these stories that "all stewards are poofters [homosexuals] and the officers will get you," sort of thing. That was the type of story they were referring to, not realising that I was becoming a steward itself, by becoming a mess man and looking after the chiefs.

36:31 **Can you explain a bit more about the stewards role within the navy?**

The stewards in the navy, their job was to look after the officers. The captain of the ship always had his own personal steward. The captain's steward would look after his uniform, clean, iron it, all that, make the beds, after the captain was up, make sure the food's there, and just keep the cabin tidy.

37:02 The captain's steward had a decent cabin, as I remember. I've seen Parramatta's, that was on Spectacle Island, so it's quite a roomy area. His own bathroom and bedroom area in his own cabin itself. So that's what the captain's steward did. The other stewards? Well, they looked after the officers. Same thing, looked after their cabins. I don't know if they looked after their laundry or if the officers

37:30 did that themselves, but we had a laundry room on board anyway, so I think their laundry would have gone to the laundry and the stokers would have taken care of that and sent it back. Also the food, serving the meals at the table, organising drinks, bar work. That's what the stewards were doing. Myself, as a mess man, all I was doing was taking food in, putting it on the tables, taking dirty plates away, washing them, that was it. But it had a few perks [extra benefits].

38:02 There was a word I didn't use back then, but once I went into submarines I was called a 'day wallah.' Anyone who didn't have to keep duties was called a day wallah because he slept at night. On Stuart, I was always up at half past five, in the mess at six to be able to get the first meals in for whoever the watch keepers were amongst the chiefs. That

38:30 would be going on right through until eight o' clock, when the last watch keeper came off. The plates were cleared away about a quarter past eight, clean up the food area, because they never cleaned up where their bunks were. Their bunk area was very similar to the rest of the ship's, so they kept charge of that area. The chief's mess.

39:00 The president of the mess always said, "You don't go in the private area." Which were the bunks. I think I can understand why. They didn't want anyone embarrassed in case something happens, or somebody walks in and thinks there's something happening. So I never made bunks or anything like that.

Was there any substance to the rumours about the stewards?

Probably, probably. I certainly got to know a few gay [homosexual] stewards later,

39:31 but in my time then, I don't know really know. I certainly found out later, much later.

It was implied that they were having relationships with the officers?

It was implied by the seamen and the stokers. I think every different branch had a beat up, and that was just a beat up, that if you were a steward you had to be a homosexual.

Tape 7

00:48 **On the Stuart, what exercises did you go on and get up to?**

I think we did some work up the coast here with Stuart. Then the

01:00 Stuart was chosen to go to South East Asia for the Strategic Reserve Section. That was my first major trip about Vietnam. So we were up there, and we worked with various navies up there, in exercises. In

1969 or ‘70.

01:32 we were up there mainly doing major exercises. We went to the Philippines, Penang, Singapore obviously, Hong Kong, Japan. I don’t know what particular year but we were supposed to go to Korea, but we went to Japan again.

02:00 We did the slow boat to China, up past Korea, so I think we must have been listening in to what was going on. Both of those trips were up top for our part. I think we were working with the New Zealand Navy and the British Navy as well. I think the Americans came out a couple of times on exercises. I certainly got to learn a lot, see a lot. I wish I could

02:30 remember which particular year it was. On one of those trips, ‘69 or ‘70, the Melbourne ran into the USS Frank E Evans. This was the second time she actually sank a ship, cut her in two, very unfair of us but the Americans called their destroyers ‘cans’, so we Australians started calling the Melbourne ‘the world’s largest can opener’. I know it’s not fair on the Americans, with all their sailors

03:00 who died. I’m told that the night was exactly the same. We had one sailor on board the Stuart, who had actually been on the Melbourne when she hit the Voyager [Australian destroyer sunk in 1963 collision]. He said it was identical. That particular night, the misty mists, very poor visibility.

03:31 We were in. I’m not sure which colour, red white and blue, I know we were playing the enemy in this particular exercise. We were about thirty miles away at the time. I think it was about three o’ clock in the morning, when all of a sudden our mess was woken up, all the lights went out, rigged the ship for everything. Which we did, because we didn’t know at the time what was going on. We rigged for tow, which is quite something.

04:00 We rigged for a jacked state transfer, we rigged the ship for fire. We had stuff all over the decks, because we didn’t know what we were getting into. All we knew that a ship had been hit, and we were required to go in. By the time we got there, daylight had just started. Melbourne was dead in the water. At that stage, I think the stern was still tied alongside Melbourne,

04:31 and so we were ordered into search patterns [for survivors]. It was done in almost a square, which was quite interesting. Not quite square, but that was basically how we were searching. So we were running up, moving across, then back down. And our ship’s divers were there, waiting for something, and all of a sudden we thought we had found a body in the area. The ship’s diver went over, and swam across,

05:00 went to drag this body out of the water, or to help and he said, “I almost shit myself because I thought it was just a head.” And it turned out to be a coconut. So that was the only thing that we found in the whole search. The ships that were much closer to the search area obviously managed to find more of the US sailors.

05:30 Late that afternoon we had a bit of a service on the foc’s’le of the Stuart, for the dead. There were hymns sung, a naval prayer, which is always very moving, especially when the sailors are singing in fine voice, the whole lot. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the house, because all of us, I think, thought, “Well, that could have been us, and not the Frank E Evans.” That was certainly a tough call.

06:00 And as I said, I can’t remember which. Because I did two employments up there, in ‘69 and ‘70. I’m not exactly sure when we went up, it must have been the after part of ‘70. It could have been 1969, actually. The Stuart got to be chosen, obviously because we were still fairly new, and we looked fairly new as well,

06:30 we were chosen to do the Royal tour in 1970. And I was still working as the chief’s mess man. That was great, because we got to chase the [Royal Yacht] Britannia all around the ocean, and she was worth chasing. I can’t remember exactly where we started. I think we met up here in Sydney,

07:00 and we started on Australia Day in Botany Bay. The Britannia went in and they had a re-enactment [of Captain Cook’s landing in Australia], that I watched on TV, of the landing at Kernel. And some idiot in a power boat went through and ruined it. Because it was a proper re-enactment and they wanted to make it look good for posterity. But it didn’t happen that way. I saw it on TV anyway, I don’t know whether it

07:30 was edited to get rid of that power boat. I think we might have gone down to Melbourne next. That was quite interesting, because when we were alongside in Melbourne, the Queen. We didn’t know what the Queen was doing, so finally leave was piped [bosun’s whistles] and they said we could go ashore.

08:06 We were let ashore, and as we were going ashore all of a sudden the royal Roll’s Royce came up and it was actually flying the Queen’s standard. There was an admiral in the front and an admiral in the back - His Highness, Prince Philip, in his full admiral’s regalia, and of course the Queen. I was leading the group,

08:30 obviously I wanted to get ashore and have a drink. I freaked, and I thought, “What do we do?” So I called everyone to attention, because we were a huge rag-tag, all the way along, we were in our uniforms. So I called everyone to attention and saluted. Later, someone said, “Why did you do that?” I said, “Don’t you remember your rules and regulations when it comes to cars and the people in the cars?” I said, “That had everything covered. It had two admirals and the Queen, plus the

09:00 Queen's standard flying." "Okay, let me get past that one." It was quite interesting. During my time, the chiefs kept letting me go ashore. There were invitations given to the ship, and the master at arms [ship's law enforcement officer] used to make sure that

09:30 I was included in these invitations. The first one was the parade of the Royal Navy that was in town at that particular time. And it was quite interesting, because there were members of the ship's company of Britannia, members of the crew of the Stuart, and we were all standing up on the balcony, above the Queen, who happened to be on the steps on the Town Hall here in Sydney.

10:00 So that felt quite good, knowing that royalty was standing underneath me. And then down in Melbourne. I can't remember his name, we were invited out to the farm of the head of the AFL [Australian Football League] at the time, Sir someone and his wife, Lady whoever, took us around the farm, and unfortunately she didn't know much, so I was filling in the gaps for her, having grown up in Tasmania and going to a farm

10:30 type school. We found that interesting. We had lunch, that was the first time that I got to learn to drink gin and tonic, because they had beer, but I didn't feel like a beer that day. Then we went to Launceston. The Queen actually went down to Hobart, but that was only a flying visit. While we were there,

11:05 my parents came to pick me up at Beauty Point and went back to have lunch at home, and that was when I taught my mother how to iron trousers. And my father heard the record Albatross. We stayed around there for a while, at home, at Exeter. And then we had

11:30 to take the back roads back in case we ran into the royal caravan, as it were, trying to get back down there. I got back in time, and got back on board. The navy wouldn't let my parents on board. They reckoned it would have been a precedent, so they never saw over the ship, which is a pity. I would have loved to have shown them my home, which is was then. Obviously I must have been very proud. So then we went up to Queensland,

12:00 and again I ran into the Queen, along the streets there, and of course being in full uniform, the car went along quite close and I actually saluted again. I think she kept wondering 'Why is this guy following me?' The CWA [Country Women's Association] in Queensland invited the crew, those who could go, up to Toowoomba, so we went up there and had lunch, so we got to see that area.

12:30 I think it was about then that the Britannia left our shores and we weren't required to go with her. I think she may have gone to New Zealand, so the New Zealand ships, or wherever she went, someone else took over as her escort. They were great times, I thoroughly enjoyed that. And obviously being the chief's mess man paid dividends. They weren't paying me, but they allowed me to go

13:00 places and do things which I didn't expect would ever happen.

If we can just touch on a few areas. In Asia, you did the SEATO [South East Asian Treaty Organisation] exercises? Can you tell me a bit about those exercises?

They were just major exercises where all the various navies got together. As I started to mention earlier, that there was a 'Them and Us' sort of thing. A couple of times we

13:30 played 'Them'; which was the enemy. So we would have different groups looking for us. Sometimes, we changed the lighting on our ship, put various lighting in and tried to escape and get into certain areas. Play cargo ships, all that sort of stuff,

14:00 to try and trick the so-called enemy, 'them'. Surface raiders, I think, was the thing that we were playing. I can't remember the word that was used, but that's we should have been playing anyway. We did that a few times. Palat Tioman, which is an island where they do a lot of gunnery exercises, off Singapore, I think it's a part of Singapore anyway.

14:30 The Royal Navy used it all the time as a firing range. And when it wasn't a firing range, it was our picnic area. We used to go there for 'bangyangs'. I did that a few times in my navy career, went to that island. This was the time when all the beer, barbecue, get around the rocks and just have a good time.

15:00 We were anchored off there one time as part of the exercise, and we had divers try to put limpet [stick on] mines on the ship, so we had to try and stop them from doing that. It must have been scary for the divers, we had both RAN and Royal Navy involved in that particular exercise. I can remember, it must have been the '69 exercise, we had the gunnery officer, known as Uncle Bill Hackworth,

15:30 quite an incredible person. He actually made his way up the hawespipe [ladder: hierarchy] to become an officer. He was very gung-ho, and I remember one of my jobs as the UW, when I wasn't throwing over one pound scare charges to try and keep the divers away. We actually captured one, our own ship's diver caught one of the diver's coming in. In fact, I think they might have.

16:01 we caught Asian divers. If they were Ghurkhas, they must have been part of the Royal Navy system. The junior sailor's bathroom was used as the prison, on board Stuart. So we actually had them handcuffed pretty tightly, we had guns. We were playing it pretty rough and tough. This was an exercise in real time, this is what we would be doing.

16:31 I think back then we were still having problems with the Malays in Indonesia, so that was why we were up there in the first place. So he was gung-ho about this. There were complaints later from the other navies about just how we actually hurt those divers. They weren't impressed. But obviously we did the trick.

In respect to hurt, what are we talking about, what action?

Oh, tying them up.

17:00 We had the handcuffs, and there was headlocks as well. I don't know if we knocked them around or not, but there were certainly complaints that they didn't like the way that they were treated. He was a gunnery officer of the old school, so yes.

From a general overview, what sort of tensions were you feeling in respect to the Cold War? Russia and America plus Indonesia?

17:34 I think we were very much aware of it, that's why we were up there, to show the flag. To show that Australia was very interested. But I don't think we took much notice of that. The Vietnam War was, obviously, still raging at the time. We were there to show the flag and tell the Indonesians and the Malays that "We're here. If you start something nasty, we will be wading into it.

18:01 One way or another." And of course I vaguely remember that we did instructions on riot control. I know that we had the batons out and we looked at the procedures. On a ship, it's very difficult to really get involved in the whole thing. Not like we were at Cerberus, where there was a lot of stamping and making a noise, and

18:30 marching hard, and tapping sticks and things, just to get the other crowd apprehensive. You couldn't do that on ship obviously, but we certainly talked about it. And we certainly didn't put it into play, but we were made aware of that type of exercise. There were probably lots of exercises, but I can't drag all that up.

19:05 I know we had submarines up there. There would have been a lot of anti-submarines. The submarines were Royal Navy. I don't know if Oxley actually did trips up the top, by that time, by 1969. It was probably later that we were actually exercising with submarines, but it would have been Royal Navy submarines that we were exercising with,

19:30 and also American. There were exercises with aircraft, anti-radar, using our radar and using our guns, that sort of stuff, to understand the fire control, give them exercises. That sort of stuff wouldn't affect me. I would probably go about my job as chief mess man, unless we were at action stations within the UW section.

20:07 **You also went and showed the flag around Japan, is that right?**

That's correct, yes. The inland sea of Japan. That must have been 1969, because the World Expo was on, and I think some of the gunnery actually did guard duty at the Australian pavilion.

20:32 I know that we were involved somehow. But while we were there a huge typhoon came in, so we couldn't get ashore and we had to stay at a Japanese navy base, in the inland sea, I can't remember the name of it, but that was quite something. Sleeping on rice reed, grass paper, I'm not exactly sure what it was, but it's

21:00 similar to those mats you see on the beach, sleeping on that, with a blanket and that's it, while the typhoon raged past. From the inland sea, we went up to Osaka . We went to Osaka twice, two years in a row. The second time was obviously because we didn't get into South Korea. We certainly spent

21:30 spent some time on the slow boat to China, or to northern Japan anyway, and obviously we were listening in. But that was the type of thing we were required to do back then. We did a couple of stops at Hong Kong. The first time we had a Suzy Side party on board. They completely stripped back all the paint from the ship, all the woodwork, they did that a couple of times around. I don't know how illegal that was, but

22:00 when we had gunnery, we conveniently lost brass gun shells. I think we deliberately did it, so that this buffer could have all these shells to do trade. I think we left Sydney with old rope, nylon especially and hemp. Suzy would come on board and take these things as payment. And

22:31 she'd would also come on board and take all the scrap food. There were two side parties, both times we used Suzy's side parties. These women started this at the end of the war, to get food for the girls that they had. They had orphanages and the food was actually used in the orphanages. Obviously they didn't mind if the steaks were mixed with vegetables. But we were told that 'duff', which is pudding,

23:00 or dessert, we'd put in one area, and no tea leaves whatsoever, and all the meat and vegetables went in a separate area. And I assume that was used to make spring rolls and whatever else. Whether the public got to eat that, or whether it was just for the orphanages of that area. Yeah, she got that food. It was good, too, because I think part of the side party actually worked the scrubbery, where

23:30 we used to clean up all the plates. But I did that at one stage, worked in there. But the girls worked

there, I think so they could monitor the food that went in.

Where was this again?

This was in Hong Kong. Of course, we'd go back a couple of times.

24:00 This was done deliberately so we could get the ship clean and up to scratch, and it cost the navy very little, and we got our runs ashore. It was just a break between exercises, and we were showing our flag in Hong Kong, of course. A trip up the river to Bangkok, that was always quite interesting. And Singapore, obviously, because that was the Far East Fleet base at Sambawang

24:31 which was the big naval base. Actually based on major dock, the caissons were actually exploded prior to the Japanese getting there [in World War II], so they couldn't use the dry dock facilities. You'd get quite a lot of ships in that area, quite large. We went to Penang, which was quite interesting. I find it fascinating now that I only saw the tourist part, I wish I had taken more in because it was a

25:00 major German U Boat base during World War 11. There were submarines based there for a while until the British and Allies started bombing the place. That was in Port Swettenham. I only know that now, I didn't know that back then. If I knew I was going to get into submarines, and where that was going to take me, I would have taken more interest. That was the sort of stuff that we did on both tours.

25:30 No matter what I say about '69 or '70, I'm covering the areas because we did virtually the same thing.

Can you tell me about the nightlife and the R & R in these ports, what the men got up to?

Japan I think, people just went their own way

26:01 and explored. I don't think we really bunched together, in Nagasaki. That was one of the ports I went to. That was the second trip, in 1970. That was the year that we went over an American submarine, and this was the first time I got involved in submarines. Obviously in Nagasaki there was an American naval base, so they had their own wet

26:30 canteen [alcohol serving], or their own club, so we did a lot of drinking there. In Japan, we weren't involved with the geishas and the local population as such. I don't think they were really interested in us there at all. I don't think we got very far away from the bases, it was more a drinking area, monumental hangover sort of thing. In Hong Kong, people disappeared because there were brothels there.

27:00 In Hong Kong the sailors would have gone out to get tattoos. I myself went out and got myself a tattoo from Pinky. Pinky was considered the tattooist. I don't know how old Pinky was now, but I'm proud to say I have a Pinky tattoo, which he did himself. It was never completed because I sobered up too quick from the pain. And also I didn't have a watch at the time, so it's well and truly hidden under my watch.

27:32 That's the sort of thing that the sailors did in Hong Kong, go and drink. There were brothels there, so I know they certainly used brothels. I don't think they used condoms because they were reporting back with crabs and gonorrhoea. I don't think I heard of anyone coming down with

28:00 syphilis, because that was still basically frowned on even in the '60s and '70s. Certainly gonorrhoea was fairly easy to clear and cure. It just meant that you had to stay on board the ship for three weeks. I think a lot of the guys were careful because it meant it curtailed your leave, which meant no drinking either.

What treatment was there for gonorrhoea?

I'm not exactly sure. I never got gonorrhoea, so

28:30 I wouldn't know. The best that I ever got was livestock [lice], and unfortunately I got it off a bed. I think it was the second trip home. People used to use my bunk, by this time on the Stuart, to play cards. And obviously someone had a bad case of crabs. And I caught it and took it home.

29:00 Which is terrible. Because I used the toilet before my father. He walked in a minute or two later and used the toilet. I was sitting on the toilet and I thought, "There's something wrong down here," and I started seeing this livestock of mine. I went to the local doctor and he said, "I'm sorry, you're going to have to shave off and use some Brasso [brass polish]." Which is what the navy used. But he actually gave me

29:30 some type of medication. But the navy used to use Brasso. There is alcohol in Brasso, so that was just as good. Anyway, my father started freaking then because he thought that those crabs can jump forty feet and he was going to have them. I certainly got that from someone by the time I got back to Sydney. Because I came back to Sydney and went straight on leave. So someone got infected, and

30:00 was carrying their livestock for a fair while, or it was in the covers. Because I certainly didn't go ashore and play up, at that stage. In '69, I was still a goody-two-shoes [good boy]. I think I was still going to wait to find that woman.

So up to that point, had your heard stories in the navy of what guys got up to in

30:30 **brothels through to homosexuality?**

Well, all sorts of things happened. I haven't got to Singapore yet. Singapore was a bit different. I think most of the other cities, like Bangkok, there was always brothels there. Bangkok was quite incredible because there were dancing girls, and you could actually buy them and go out the back and have sex with them. And that's always been there. And some of them

31:00 are good dancers. Again in Bangkok there was a major club on top of the hotel. The Americans had purchased the hotel and there was major R & R for their soldiers coming from Vietnam. We used to go there because it was cheaper to drink. I met up with a few Americans who had no idea

31:31 what Australia was like, and tried to convince them they should go out to Australia on their next R & R. So there were brothels there. We sailors obviously drank where it was the cheapest. But Singapore was different. There were certainly brothels there, down at Sambawang, which is the little town attached to the naval base.

32:01 We used to go behind the Melbourne bar and there was certainly a brothel there, and that was probably one of the first things, all the sailors went straight out the gates, went straight across to the Melbourne bar. There was a whole strip of bars there, then, probably been there for a long, long time. Then you went around the back to the brothel. And also at certain times, if it was set up by sailors or set up by locals, but there

32:30 would be Crown & Anchor [gambling game] being played behind the bar, people trying to win some money or whatever. It was frowned on by the Navy Red Caps [naval police]. The Red Caps were the bastards, we were always on the lookout for them. The biggest spoil sports in the world. Occasionally they would come and check out the brothels, and woe betide if you got caught in them. You were

33:00 arrested and put on report. And Singapore had a major attraction which woe betide if you got caught there again by the Red Caps, but I think the people in Singapore who ran the bars there must have had cockatoos [lookouts] out, because when they saw the Red Caps coming, all of sudden the bar shut up. And if you were there, you were asked to step inside the bar. Obviously the Red Caps did not have permission

33:31 to knock on the door and say "Come on out." The same thing happened when there were fights down there, too. If a fight broke out, all of a sudden the bars were just shut up, and if you happened to be a patron you were asked to come inside and sit there, until the fights went away and the Red Caps went away. What made Singapore very different from a lot of places, they had what they called 'kyties'.

34:00 And kyties were drag queens or whatever you want to call them. In local language they were called kyties. Most sailors called them 'boogie boys', but they were boys dressed as women, and some of them were very drop dead gorgeous. If you were new to the area and you didn't know they were men, you certainly could get trapped into them. Now a lot of those boys had a bad habit of being pick pockets. And most of them used to hang around

34:30 where the taxis pulled up, and they used to watch where your money went. We sailors had a terrible custom of putting loose change in the top pocket. Well, they were onto you. "Come on darling, come and buy me a drink." What you didn't realise was that money was disappearing. I don't think a lot of them touched your wallet, because I think they respected the wallet more, but they were quite happy to pick up loose change along the way. If they got drinks from you, they were expected to go home.

35:00 So if they've got your wallet, they're not going to get paid. But very colourful. I was in Singapore as a flight attendant in the '80s, and it was probably one of the last times Boogie Street actually operated as it was. The Qantas flight attendants, when we used to get in went down, because it was cheap beer, and they had one particular bar where the barman used to

35:30 look after us. He knew exactly who we were. Again, he used to do exactly the same thing if fights broke out. I can remember, as a flight attendant down there. Customs hadn't changed all that much, even after. In the late '60s, this is in the '80s, there was a British ship in, and one of the sailors

36:00 got up in the toilet block which is down there. It was like a big square, there was a toilet block in one area. Pretty filthy, I don't think the Chinese kept it clean. We used to do what in navy terminology was called 'piss paddle' in there, because that's basically what you do, paddling in piss [urine]. And anything else, if the guys were sick that was there, too. Sailors used to climb up on top of the toilet block and do The Dance of the Flamers.

36:31 For those who don't know The Dance of the Flamers, totally naked, below, sometimes he wore his bell bottoms, roll up a piece of newspaper, stick up his anus, and then someone would set fire to it, and he would do a dance to try and get it out. Usually it ended up with him getting burnt or someone throwing beer on him. We were down there

37:00 this particular night, when I was a flight attendant. Of course, we were having a good old laugh at these sailors' shenanigans. And someone from Australia took offence to it, and threw a beer bottle at the guy which hit him on the backside. Well, all the other sailors were offended by that and started a fight. This poor guy really got bashed up by the sailors. So it hadn't changed much over the years.

37:31 Then the Singapore government decided to tear down the whole area and new buildings were put in. Well, Singapore lost something. It really died when they did this. So the Hindus, who are pretty broad-

minded, decided they wanted to try and recreate the whole area. But it wasn't the same. I've never been back, but I know people who

38:00 went back and they said it wasn't the same. You couldn't create that situation. The buildings were old, they were built probably by the Chinese, probably back in the 19th century. Some of them were probably bombed during the war. But it was like. any country would call the plaza, with just all bays around. That was great. The sailors enjoyed that area.

38:30 It was cheap, too.

Just in respect to you waiting for marriage, did you feel pressure?

No, I wasn't feeling pressure. I actually tried the brothel down behind the Milton Bar, that turned out to be a dud. Nothing happened, so I wasted my money.

39:00 I could have done better with my hand, I thought. Yes, a bit disillusioned by then. I had actually tried it once before with a prostitute when I was in Sydney, when I first came to Sydney, down in East Sydney were the brothels were. Again, she said, "You're finished now." I said, "What?"

39:30 Quite disgusted, I thought I could have done better with my hand. No help, lay back, wham bam and no thank you ma'am! So twice I was very disillusioned. So the thought process was probably ongoing from '68 onwards, '69, '70. So I still considered myself a virgin. And

40:00 so I don't know where it took me from that point on. I wasn't involved. I was still thinking that I might meet the right person, but it hadn't happened yet, and the sex wasn't a big issue.

Tape 8

00:40 **After those two trips in the Pacific on the Stuart, what happened to your career then? Did you seek to move it on or did someone move it for you?**

Well, a couple of things happened, as I mentioned. Following Nagasaki,

01:00 I had been talking to an American submariner in the club there, and he said, "Come down and have a look at the submarine." So we went down and had a look at this old diesel boat. I was impressed with the technology, even though it was World War 11 type technology. I thought this was incredible, and the way they were talking was like being a submariner was one of the best things going. I thought 'Yeah, that

01:30 sounds like a good idea." And it was about that time that we started getting Navy News on board, that were calling for submariners. So I read this, and they talked about the rates of pay, because I think back then they were earning about thirty dollars extra a fortnight, on top of their normal wage, and I thought, "That's pretty good, I could live on that." And my ship mate on board at the time,

02:00 Andrew Woods, I tried to convince him that maybe he should come across to submarines. All sledging [teasing] each other all the time. So we decided yes, and went and saw our DO [duty officer] and volunteered for submarines. To do that we had to go across to Penguin for a medical, then we had to go and see

02:30 psychiatrists. We were required to do the tank. The tank is where they take you down for decompression, to see if you had problems with the ears and that sort of stuff. I actually had a problem with my ears, but my problem was more lack of knowledge. If they told me how to clean my ears, I would have got through that straightaway. So I had to go back. I also had a slight cold. I wasn't told that if I held my nose and blew I would actually clear my ears.

03:00 I was actually swallowing and it wasn't doing the trick for this. So I went back a couple of weeks later and did that. Obviously I passed the medical and the pysch test, and Andrew and myself, and a couple of others who I had met up with by this time. Mark Diggle, Squizzy Taylor, we all ended up going across to the UK.

03:30 **How important was that pysch test you do you think?**

The psych test was to find out whether you were. Claustrophobic. I didn't realise then they could actually do a test, and find out by talking to you. I've since realised that yes, you can listen to people talk and you can figure out the level

04:00 that they might suffer. Obviously we all passed, so we found ourselves on the way to the UK.

Was that ever an issue for you? I imagine when you first checked out a submarine you thought 'Gee, these things aren't that big inside.'

Well, having gone over the American submarine I knew it was okay. And I felt okay in tight spaces. I did find out later, in Onslow that

04:30 yes, I was a little uptight about it. But there are other reasons that cause that, it wasn't really because I was claustrophobic. I had no problem, put it that way, with submarines. We arrived in England and we spent two days in England, because we arrived on a Friday. We met the Australian commissioner at

05:00 Australia House and spent the two days there, then left on Sunday afternoon to go down to Dolphin, which was then the submarine school, down near Portsmouth. We started our education there on submarines. It was a three month course, and we were immersed in the whole submarine theme. We

05:31 had to learn about all facets of submarines. Where we actually go with submarines itself, and then from that point. I did very well in the exam, there were two sections to the exam. I got a hundred and one out of a hundred and one. Why there was an extra point, I don't know. And I got a hundred out of a hundred for the next one. And I think I got

06:01 ninety five out of a hundred for the third. So that was all different parts. I was top of the class for all that, which quite surprised me. Then I started to let the books go a little, go ashore and drink scrumpy, which is the local apple cider, quite potent. Then we started our escape training. That's where we had to learn to make an

06:30 escape from a submarine. We used the thirty foot area, which was wet. And also the hundred foot section. So there is a ten metre and a thirty metre sections. So out of the thirty or the ten metre, straight out, straight up, and we had to do that using lifejackets and just a plug over the nose, pop up to the surface, and we had to breathe out all the way.

07:04 That was part of the training by the this time that we were learning to do. The next one from the hundred feet or the thirty metres. We did the two types. We actually did an escape with just the life jacket and no plug, all the way up, and that's quite incredible. Because there are free divers who just take a gutful

07:30 of air, and we found out later there are dimples where they can pop in and get air whenever they wanted to. And they were there waiting for you to come out, and if you weren't breathing out, they'd slam you in the stomach to make sure you'd breathe out, all the way the way to the top. And this was to stop the air in your lungs expanding and bursting the lung section. And as far as I know, the Royal Navy have

08:00 never had a mishap with this particular type of escape.

Were there any accidents in training for this type of thing?

No, as far as I know there was no accidents on that particular training. The Americans certainly did, with their training in Honolulu, but we never did, because the Royal Navy were very particular with this. The other training was doing it in the suits,

08:30 which was like your own personal life raft, and once you popped up to the surface you just ripped the face off it and you were in your own personal life raft. Then you massed all the people around you, if there was a proper escape, and you just tied yourself to each other and waited until you were picked up.

What did those suits look like? Can you explain how they worked as your own personal life raft?

They were big rubber suits, the best way of describing it.

09:00 You climbed inside, zipped it down. These suits have changed now, the technology has changed a lot, and you had a cover in front, I can't remember what it was now, but that ripped off after you got to the surface. When you climbed in, you were actually breathing inside the suit, and as soon as the hatch opened you popped

09:30 out. The other way to do it was, same way, wait till it opens and pops out, or the mass escape where you find another compartment .We learned all that, and we got a chance to go to sea and have a look at a submarine actually at work. The Australians went to sea on Sea Lion, and we actually went up to Portland and stayed overnight there.

10:01 When we arrived there we went ashore, to the hotel, which was right near the gates at the ship yard. While we were there a sub smash alert came out, and we were ordered back to our barracks. By this time we had learned what a sub smash was. There was a submarine in danger and it had actually gone down, and in this case it went down alongside a dolphin.

10:30 We stayed at the hotel for a fair while until we actually found out what was going on, and when they realised that [UNCLEAR] we were allowed to go ashore again and finish drinking. Of course, we got to put our newly gained knowledge, wondering what was going to happen. Because when a submarine sank, it didn't have thirty feet of water over it, so they had to wait until very high tide, and there were three sailors trapped inside. And once this

11:00 high tide happened, they managed to escape. Only one sailor was hurt. He hit his head on the hatch as it was opening, a bubble pushed him up and he hurt his head then. But that was it, the other two made it out okay. So we saw our action being put together, and I think it also made us more aware that

submarines are not something to play around with, that they can be dangerous, and submariners are there to

11:30 watch over each other's backs. Anyway, we arrived back that day and we weren't allowed anywhere near the site, because obviously they were doing salvage. And found out how it sank. Which was a lot of sloppy submarine technique, which realised it should never have been put in place. It was very interesting for all of us, and we all learned something from that. Having done that part of the training, I went to my part of ship

12:00 which was torpedoes and torpedo tubes and we learnt how to fire all those and use the tubes. The different types of torpedoes, how they ran. As able seamen, we were limited in our knowledge. That improved as we went up through the system itself. By the time I was an able seaman. I haven't mentioned this before, but when I joined the Stuart, I had actually left Watson as an able seaman,

12:32 so I was still an able seaman when I continued with this. So having finished all that in Dolphin, they shipped was back to Australia and we joined our first submarines.

How was your first trip out in a submarine, the Sea Lion trip?

Well, I didn't get to see much because they had quite a few of us from the school

13:00 on board, so that made it difficult. I ended up in the galley of the submarine and I was made to peel the potatoes. So all I got to see was the galley of this P class submarine through to the engine room, that was about it. So I didn't get to see the control room or the working part where I was. But this particular submarine actually had

13:32 torpedo tubes in the stern, but they weren't in use. I was impressed. I wanted to wear, when we actually dived, all that sort of stuff, it was so incredible.

What about the [submarine] Onslow then, can you tell us about her?

Well, I joined her in Sydney when I came back. She was a brand new submarine and we did a couple of work up

14:00 trials. She had only been back in Sydney for a while and we had a brand new commanding officer on her. He was Royal Navy and he wanted to feel out the submarine, and of course obviously I needed to learn it, because we had a couple of us who were brand new to the submarine. So we had a few exercises off the coast. And Onslow was chosen to go in the very first Rimpac [Rim Of The Pacific] exercises in Honolulu, in 1971.

14:36 It must have been the later part of the year, August I think, because I was in England for the summer ball.

What was the Onslow like on the inside? Was it a particularly big submarine?

Well, she wasn't much bigger than the P Class, that I could figure out,

15:01 because they were very similar. I thought certainly much different to the American that I had seen. The first mess, it was only the size of a standard caravan, which eighteen of us slept in, so there were eighteen bunks. Our personal coffins, because they were only big enough to roll over in. When you're a big person like me and you've only got an inch to spare to roll over.

15:31 I don't think I had much more space from head to toe. I had only just pulled the curtain shut and I was in my coffin. I think we had a light and an air conditioning lever, which blew air on your face. Unfortunately that was recycled air, so it wasn't clean it was just cooled. And that was it. The senior mess wasn't much bigger itself. I think every piece

16:00 of space was utilised. When I first joined the submarine, I had a camp stretcher in amongst the torpedoes, which is pretty rickety. As things changed and I started to complete my part three, which was the last part of my submarine training. The first part was the knowledge and the tank.

16:30 The second part was my part of ship, and the third part was actually on board where everything we learned was actually then put into practise. So we had to walk through with the book, getting it signed, and we had to operate every piece of machinery on board. So we'd had to learn to operate it, have someone watch us operate it, then get signed off that we could competently operate it without supervision. And you had to go through the submarine and learn all that.

17:00 And that was called part three, and it took up to three months to actually learn. The pecking order was pretty low. Submariners didn't think much of the part threes. The big constant thing, "Why aren't you in your book? Why aren't you doing?" They were always constantly making you learn the whole system. Once you became a submariner and you earnt your dolphins [submariner's badge], then that was totally different. You were one of them, then. And you could actually

17:30 socialise with them properly, without being pushed around. I can understand why, it was all part of that attitude. "The quicker you get to learn to look after my back, I don't have to watch mine and yours as well." Because if you did something wrong you could be killing yourself and everyone else. And that

created mateship as well. I think there was an incredible bond

18:00 in submarines because of this. I was basically training all the time when I wasn't on watch. So I'd be out there learning this. This was all part of my training. We actually sailed on the surface for this Rimpac exercise. On the way we went via Tonga, and spent a day or two there, which was great because we stayed in

18:30 a hotel. In submarines we always got to stay in hotels because we weren't allowed to live on board as such. The Health Department actually considered it too dirty to sustain life. That was the thinking, anyway.

You talked about there being a bond that grew. How did

19:00 **the close confines of the submarine influence the relationships on board?**

I think they grew very strong. It was brotherly. I think at times there was a love-hate relationship. I'd see guys who were acting like husband and wife. People outside submarines wouldn't understand this particular bond. It was always to do with

19:30 safety, and living together very close. I just think it created this particular bond. And if the boat was happy, and Onslow certainly was a very happy boat. Her whole history she was called a happy boat. Which meant that everyone on board seemed to get along. There was no snapping.

20:00 **What about the discipline on board a sub? You talked about the clothing wasn't as important.**

Discipline I think was very lax. You still called the officer 'sir', unless perhaps on shore, in a social situation. Never saw that happen on ships, it was always 'sir' and it would always be your surname. The camaraderie was close where it would be

20:30 first name terms, in a social situation. I found that difficult in the beginning, but as I became a little more senior I fell into that groove as well. We did our work, we did it well. I don't think anyone shrekked their work, and if we were doing it

21:00 correctly. In other words, if the head of the departments didn't have to go down and crack down on their junior staff, I think we got along very well. We certainly did in Onslow.

How long would a submarine go out for and how long would it dive for?

I suppose I'm not telling state secrets, because we don't have Oberons [class subs] anymore. I know we went out usually for about two weeks. That's

21:30 about as long as fresh bread or fresh milk would last for, or any of the stuff we had in cold storage. Onslow created the first record where we were out for three weeks. That was the ANZAC [Australian and New Zealand (Army Corps)] exercise up in the Far East, where we went from Manila through to Penang. We stayed underwater

22:01 for three weeks. We set a record at that point. Usually two weeks, sometimes it was just daily running. Depending on what the ships were doing, it could be weekly running, it could be up to a month. It just depended on what the exercises were, and what was happening with the ships. And also other submarines, if there were other submarines involved in the exercise.

Would you be under water for all that time?

22:30 The moment we went out the heads, that was when we usually dived. And most times we went out at least two or three hours before the ships did. That way we could get ourselves in a position where they weren't aware that we might be. They could take guesses where we might be. But yes, we found ourselves out there early.

What were you doing on those exercises yourself? You were in the torpedo room.

23:00 Sometimes it was closed up and we kept watches there. In the early days, when I was still training, I'd have my sea daddy with me. It was funny, my sea daddy [mentor] turned out to be younger than I was. I just found that out recently, by a couple of years. But yes, I'd have my sea daddy there who would be training me in the fore ends, all the equipment that we had there. He would be showing me how to do it, then I would be actually learning how to do it. Like, hands on.

23:30 And then there would be time when I could do it without supervision. He'd probably stand back and watch and make sure. But that was all happening. But basically sitting there, involved with the flooding of tanks, changing the trim of the submarine, all that stuff, so that's the sort of thing I would be doing back then. Later I became the senior sailor's mess man, so I found myself a day wallah as such. I was doing

24:00 cleaning and stuff like that, looking after the senior sailors, serving food. At one stage I became a cox'n, and Tankie was our person who looked after what we called 'the tanks' in submarines, and the cox'n, who was basically the master of arms in submarines, he looked after discipline, and he looked after food and the menus with the chef.

24:32 He took control of all foods. So what was down in the tank, where all the food was kept, the tankie looked after that, so it was an issue of food every day and things like that. During my 1972 trip, up top, I ended up becoming the captain's steward, which meant

25:00 I looked after his cabin and him, I looked after the ward room. I got that job because I obviously seemed to be a spare hand all the time. And the steward went sick and was sent home from Singapore, so I got his job for a couple of months. I suppose when I wasn't working in other peoples' jobs I was painting, scratching rust, in the forends, keeping watches in the forends, all that sort of stuff.

25:35 **Who was the captain?**

I've forgotten the first captain's name, British. Paddy O'Ryan was my first captain, he was lieutenant commander. He went across to the Rimpac exercise. My next captain was Lieutenant Commander Ian McDougall,

26:00 he certainly went places. My last CO who I never really had a chance to serve under was. No, I've blocked that out, I'm sorry. An interesting part of going across to Rimpac exercise,

26:30 we were playing the enemy in our submarine, and being diesel-electric we were obviously the enemy. Anyway, my instructor on sonar was trying to say "Well, all I can tell you to do is run and up down the band and listen to the sounds and if you hear anything unusual then give me a call and I will come and listen." And he tried to point out the difference between shrimp having sex, and

27:00 whale songs and all that sort of stuff, and basic stuff that seemed to happen all the time in those type of waters. Anyway, I'm moving up and down the bandwidth and all of a sudden I got this noise that sounded like heavy propellers. The type of sound you hear at, say, Circular Quay when the propellers are revving. I heard this sound and I got my instructor and he came and listened and said, "Oh my God, that's a Russian submarine." Unbeknownst to me at the time, he started taping

27:30 the sound. The next day after the exercise had finished, we'd actually got alongside a New Zealand destroyer and took on board some new Cs [underwater control – sonar], to give them an idea of what it's like inside a submarine and what they're looking for, and just general all round. And this leading seaman from the New Zealand Navy said to my instructor, who was also a leading seaman, said, "Did you pick up that Russian submarine last night?"

28:00 And he said, "What did you say to me?" He said, "Did you pick up that Russian submarine?" He said, "Come off, mate." And they went to the captain and said, "Tell the captain what you just said. He said, "Did you pick up that Russian submarine?" He said, "Yes, we did. But we didn't do anything about it." My instructor said, "Yes, we did. We taped it." Anyway, when we got back to Pearl Harbour, the tape was running through the computers. Obviously it threw up who

28:30 the submarine was, who the captain was, how long she'd been at sea, all that type of information that the Americans are very good at doing. All because I was in the right place at the right time.

How did they get that information?

All that information has been slowly fed into the computers. The Americans are very good at taping. I suppose we as the Australian navy were adding to all that information. It's no secret today that it was happening.

29:01 The books are coming out now, so I know I can talk about it. Also while I was there, Onslow was involved in a major exercise where we had to go between a couple of islands, and we had the American fleet and whoever else was involved chasing us. And an American coast guard cutter, who was

29:30 not in the exercise, unfortunately coming the opposite way, heard us and decided to get involved and fired off a practise torpedo, and that torpedo actually hit us in the A-frame, on the propeller and did a lot of damage to the shaft and propeller and I think a lot of us had to change our underwear at that particular time. Luckily it didn't detonate

30:00 because it was only practise. It was one of those of those torpedoes where the propeller would start winding down the clock and once it actually ran a particular distance, the propeller would fire the air inside and the whole thing would descend or come to the surface. I'm not sure which type of torpedo they were using.

30:32 Unfortunately it slammed into us, doing all this damage. It took us a while to convince the American Navy to move out of the way so we could actually do an emergency surface. They moved away and we did that, and then we had the American divers go over and check it out and we had to go into Pearl Harbour. We sunk the bows down, lifted the stern, or duck's tail,

31:00 and put the divers in and they had to fix up the damage to the propeller and fix up damage to the shaft. I'm not exactly sure what they did with that. But the Onslow limped home. I think once we got back to Sydney. I went on leave so I'm not sure, I think they changed the shaft. So yeah, we got attacked by the Americans.

What happened on the boat at that moment?

31:30 On the boat? I think we were worried. As I said, I know quite a lot of us wanted to change our pants. There was a huge thunk that went right through the boat, and wondering what had happened, and especially for the people down there, I know one of our sailors, he was quite traumatised by it. Because he was actually sitting right above it, when it slammed in there. I wasn't there, but this was my sea daddy, he was

32:00 working aft at this time, instead of for'ard. He, to put it bluntly, shit himself and was running on the spot. It was a really bad time. But I know the other guys down the back really got quite a fright out of it. I know we up the front got a bad scare out of it. It was compounded by the fact that ship's bub could hear what was going on. I think we must have sent out

32:31 some type of message, especially by underwater telephone. The ships came in and started crowding the area, instead of moving away to let us do what we could do. Because obviously we could surface but they didn't allow us to do it. Anyway, thanks to the Americans we got to spend extra time in Honolulu, which was nice. And our torpedo-cum-supply officer was figuring out he could pay us more money

33:00 so we could stay there. I think he found every lurk he could in the books for us to stay there.

How long was it you had to spend there?

I think it was nearly three weeks, which was a lot longer than what we intended to stay there. I think we were supposed to go in and out a couple of times and that was it. Some of our exercises were daily runnings and some of it was supposed to be a couple of days out. Anyway, we got to spend all this time and then go home.

One point that comes up through that. There is all this listening going on

33:30 **in the ocean. How important was it to be quiet in a submarine?**

Very important, especially in exercises. Especially when we dived, more so because most times we transited on the surface from A to B. But then in the exercises if we had to be underwater, we were underwater, and that's when our quiet period, when we physically learned to walk quietly. Metal decks and hob-nailed boots, you'd still be able to walk there without making a sound,

34:02 which was very important. And you learned to handle tools differently, so you didn't drop them on decks. The chefs would have to learn to cook without making noise. Yeah, it was just a way of life. You become quiet, and that was instilled from day one.

How did you communicate in those quiet periods?

In the quiet periods, obviously there was whispering, if you had to be, if it was watch quiet.

34:31 Like there was a time that our CO, Ian McDougall, decided to get even with the navy, this was in 1973. We were supposed to have one of the ships down to cater us in Melbourne, because we had no galley [kitchen] and no chances to get ashore in Melbourne. We were down there on Anzac Day, '73, and on the way back he got permission.

35:01 I saw him come back on board, I think I was still steward at that point, he had a grin from ear to ear. He went by normal telephone and called up the chief of the navy at the time and got permission to do a "sub sunk" exercise. And we were all supposed to meet this ship on the way down, we got around to the Victorian border, and he found out there was a sandy bottom, we bottomed out,

35:30 and we stayed there while the ship went south. All of a sudden they started reporting that they'd missed us. So major "sub miss" had gone into operation, and it was really good because he achieved something. He actually managed to get stalwart from alongside at Garden Island. There were quite a few ships out to sea. Usually, most times when these exercises

36:00 happen, everyone knows they're happening and they're already geared up for this, but this time no-one knew it was coming, because it was so secret . Of course, this man who did all this ended up being Chief of Navy himself, so yeah.

Were you his steward?

I was his steward at the time, still, because the other steward hadn't come back

What insight did you get to the way the captain worked in that role?

36:33 I think that he was always pushing the envelope, I had that feeling. We had a couple of things in common. We were both Tasmanians, I suppose the second one was, we were both submariners. But he was certainly a go-getter. He wanted to be there, out there. He was a fair man. He had a great sense of humour.

37:00 He used to play some dirty tricks on us, in one way or another.

On his own crew? What sort of tricks would he play?

I remember one. I think we were in transit somewhere, and we had a trivia night as such, and he used

to write the questions. One of the questions was “What’s a bearded oyster?” Of course when it came back to be the answers,

37:30 he got on the tannoy [public address system] and said, “I am totally disgusted in submariners. He said, “Not one mess answered the question of what a bearded oyster was.” Obviously, it’s navy slang for a vagina. So yeah, he was disgusted with his submariners. That’s some of the things he did to us. As I said, he was a fair man.

38:03 At one stage we had ‘Captain’s SM Inspection’, which was very important. Because you had to get the submarine completely clean, and we would be out there in dress uniform. And I know this time was summer, it must have been before we went down to Tasmania. I had actually been cleaning, which was my part of the ship at the time, so I was

38:33 painting, cleaning. I had to go home to pick up my uniform. By this time I was living in Kings Cross, and to pick up my uniform and to go back on board that following morning. I slept in and woke up at nine o’ clock, and of course divisions were actually at eight o’ clock. So I missed divisions. I had actually missed the start of rounds of the submarine.

39:02 I had rung up to tell them what had happened to me. And the cox’n said, “I have to do divisions and stand in your part of the ship.” He was very disappointed about all this, that he had to do it, and explained why. And then I finally got on board, and he said, “I don’t know what we’re going to do about you.” So after a while, he said

39:30 “I know it’s not your job, but can you stand on watch this evening?” I said, “Okay.” So I realised I was in a lot of trouble. And the following day I had to confront the commanding officer. And he said, “One stoppage of pay, one stoppage of leave. One day of each.” And then he said, “The cox’n tells me that you had to keep a duty last night which is not

40:00 your part of the ship.” He said, “As far I’m concerned, you’ve done your leave, so one stoppage of pay.” Now I look back at that and think that was probably one of the fairest things going, seeing as I really crapped in my nest, big-time. Because I really thought I was going to get a week or more in punishment, and probably a bigger stoppage of pay. But no, he was very fair, and I took my punishment. He was good like that.

Tape 9

01:00 **Where were you living at this time?**

Well, with submarines, we were allowed to start living ashore, and I thought with my allowance I could certainly live ashore. I moved up into Potts Point itself, across from the old Rex Hotel. Had a lovely apartment on the second floor, that overlooked the park. In fact, I still appreciate the apartment itself.

01:30 I was living there, and I was getting into the bohemian type lifestyle. I started to meet gay people, I started to enjoy their company. I thought they were funny, witty, a lot of them were. People then were artistic, and we’ve certainly lost some of these people through HIV/AIDS [Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Auto Immune Deficiency Syndrome] now. So this was all happening in the early ‘70s,

02:00 I was living there. And of course, when the submariners came out, I had such a large apartment, that I could afford. It cost me thirty dollars a fortnight for this place which was my allowance from the navy for being a submariner. Yeah, they used to come up and party. They got to know some of my friends, too. All the submariners got to know who I was.

02:30 I’d started to realise that it wasn’t working with women at all, about this time. And also I think I was easier with men, around men. I enjoyed their company. I think that was unfortunately a spin-off from submarines. I think more so than from being in ships. Because on submarines, you’re living together as such. Almost like husband and wife, I suppose because that’s the way it was happening.

03:04 I don’t know when I had my first sexual experience. I don’t think I can put my finger of that particular area, of how it happened. It could have been at a party, it may have been at my home. I don’t know. Then I started to realise that this wasn’t too bad. Then I got involved, within the navy itself, I started to meeting a lot of gay sailors,

03:30 who used to go to the bar at the Rex Hotel. I suppose the fact that we had something in common, we were Service as well as being gay. We were exploring that part of our lives, early ‘20s at this point. By then,

04:00 I’d had a couple of parties at home, invited different people, I’d been to different parties. Then the navy decided, this was in 1973, the government decided they were going to pull out from Vietnam. And we had a change of government later anyway. So with that government, they were going to cut back forces, and they were going to find ways of cutting back those forces. So the navy started, basically a witch-hunt. Some of my contemporaries later laughed that it was a “bitch hunt.”

04:33 They started looking for us. The first that I got to hear about this was when a navy officer said he had been hauled before the naval police. He said, “They’re looking for you.” But they got the wrong surname. But they all knew it was me anyway, so they didn’t enlighten them. Then other people said, “They’re asking questions about you. They want to know about these parties that you had.” And the people that I had been around with,

05:00 and whether they’d been involved. This went on for a while, so I was aware that the naval police were looking for me. Then one day I noticed there was a car at the front of the apartments. It was always the same car, always the same people. Then I realised that they were actually watching for me to see what was going on. So obviously someone told them where I lived. I still don’t think they knew

05:30 who I was, because this went on for a fair while. Then later, I found out that a sailor, who got picked up, he was a contemporary on the side of the group I was involved with, and he blabbed. He told them everything, names, dates, addresses. He did everything to protect his career. He burnt

06:00 the whole lot of us. And that really hurt, that hurt all of us. Because a lot of us had thought the navy was our career. We had a lot to give to the navy and our country. I think what we did in our private life had nothing to do with the navy. It certainly wasn’t happening on ship. It was happening in homes, apartments, but not on board. But that didn’t matter. Oh, there was another person.

06:30 There was this person by the name of John, I found out later he got picked up. He was also in our group, he got picked up and taken back to Garden Island by the navy police, and they found later that he was actually impersonating a sailor, when he was a civilian. And for his, so he wouldn’t be charged for doing this, because it was still an offence to impersonate service personnel, he became their stooge as well, so yeah.

07:01 Then one day I got called off the submarine, and got told to go to the master of arms officer at Platypus, and that I had to go into an interview with naval dockyard police. Well, I had a fair idea of what was coming, because of what my friends had been saying, that this was going to happen. So I got there, and it was over two days, with a break of a day in between, I was interviewed.

07:30 Now the dirty thing that they did to me, I was not informed of my rights. And I wasn’t informed that I was allowed to have a navy officer lawyer there. And I partly incriminated myself, in this. Anyway, a couple of days later after all this had happened, I think it might have been about

08:00 week, all of a sudden I’m called into Platypus again to be told that my discharge papers had been drawn up. That was pretty horrible, because I didn’t expect that to come. I thought what had been said, I was fairly innocent, because what I had done had not been that great.

08:30 Anyway, it was signed by Rod Fayle, he was the newly made captain then. He was nearly made captain of the Onslow. He didn’t know me from a bar of soap. My commanding officer then, who was then, that was Lieutenant Commander Ian McDougall was furious that all this had happened, that Rod Fayle had actually signed the paper because he didn’t know me,

09:00 and all he was doing was trying to cover his back, because he was the youngest commanding officer in the navy at that time. So he didn’t want that. The commander certainly didn’t know me, he just signed me off, and the next moment I found myself out on my ear. And when you go to a pub and you don’t have a job and you don’t have an income, and you’ve still got next week’s rent to pay,

09:30 you really start to panic. And for me that was probably one of the most traumatic eras, points of my life. I actually sat on a window ledge, contemplating suicide. It took me a few days. I was in a very dark area, for a while. Then I realised that if I hurt myself, that I don’t accomplish what I want to achieve and end being in a hospital bed for the rest of my life, you’re an idiot. There is more to life than that.

10:03 So I moved on. My submarine mates, all my crew mates, they couldn’t believe what had happened, because I didn’t tell them the reasons why. Seeing the dockyard police. They just assumed, and I led the assumption on, that I was going down to be interviewed for a job as dockyard policeman. Unfortunately I had had my career thrown away. As I said, quite a few people had

10:30 had their careers thrown away, just because these two people tried to protect their own career. And that sailor, he’s still working for defence to this day, and he still brown-noses [acts obsequiously] up to anyone who’s important, and he thinks he’s so funny that he doesn’t realise how close he is to having a major two hand knock across the face. He thinks he’s funny.

11:03 The fact that he ruined my career. The other person, I’ve never seen him, I assumed that he passed on from HIV, or he just left Sydney as a few people do.

In respect to all this, did the navy try and bargain with you for more names, or different names than what they had?

Oh yes, certainly. I was aware it was going to come.

11:31 I was put in a bad position, but I knew the people who had already gone ahead, had all already lost their jobs, so I just happened to mention them. If I knew then what I know now, I think I would have dobbed that young man in, would have made him lose his career, but I didn’t know that then. That only came later. So I certainly didn’t. I probably did incriminate myself, but I

12:00 certainly didn't incriminate anyone else, because I knew they were in a position to check all this out. I think they realised that most of the people that I was in contact with anyway, I was not sexually involved with them, I was just with them. That was it. It was social situations. And that hurts, that really does hurt, that the navy could do that to me. But then in the long run, they certainly did me a service

12:30 because I was still having problems with my homosexuality, at that point, as well, and that didn't help. So '74, I decided to join Qantas. Then I found that it employed gays and it wasn't frowned upon, or anything else. It's not exactly open slather [completely open] or anything else, not the complete limp-wristed gay, either, but I knew that

13:00 I had found myself, and from that point on I started to accept that, yes, okay, I am gay, and probably had been all my life. I couldn't accept it because of my religious upbringing, and the fact that I thought I'd save myself for my marriage, which unfortunately never did happen.

13:38 **Your captain, Ian McDonald, did you ever speak to him in years later about it?**

Yes, I've spoken to Ian McDonald quite a lot. I found out through a friend, he and my commanding officer, they actually went and I think deleted files and things. I didn't have

14:00 dishonourable discharge. I faired fairly well, I don't know how the others did. But I certainly got out of that. That woke me up, when I found out that. I had had a couple of drinks by this time, and the person who told me, well I respected, and had a lot of respect for him what the two of them had done. I had a lot of respect for those two people, and I still have respect for Ian McDougall.

14:30 I see him from time to time.

Just in this whole area of homosexuality and sex on board boats, or submarines, was that thing going on at all?

Not with me, and not that I'm aware of. I think I joked about sex, there was obviously the occasional touching. I can remember the sailors would walk past each other and grope testicles and say

15:01 "Oh, can I carry your bag?" That was just in jest. Whether there was a heavy sexual overtone on that? I don't think so. I don't know if there was sex amongst anyone. It's quite interesting. After I left the navy, many years later, I was quite surprised to find out that I wasn't the only gay person on board. There were others. I was only the unfortunate one that got chucked out.

15:31 And it wasn't just my submarine, it was other submarines as well. What they got up to, I don't know. I can't answer for them. But I know on the Onslow, during my time, I certainly didn't play around with anyone and they certainly didn't play around with me.

Just the general feeling amongst sailors on board, what's the general feeling in respect to homosexuals?

I think they handled it okay,

16:00 because some of those sailors were up there with the boogie boys in Singapore. Male to male contact? That didn't seem to worry them. I think submariners were broader minded. When you talked about faeces at the dinner table, you've got to be pretty broad minded. But see, that's probably the only thing that happened to you for the day, but you actually did get to go to the toilet. That's one of the weird things about submarines, you get constipated,

16:30 especially during the first week at sea, but when you managed to get past that challenge, yes, you've got to crow about it. But it is actually a medical problem for submariners.

I guess what I'm driving at, men will be men especially in groups together, and want to put up, sometimes, a façade that none of this is happening or going on, and it is abhorrent to them, yet are quite open to the subject?

17:04 I don't think I ever saw that. I think the submariners, and they still know, the people from my era, they all know who I am, they all interact with me, they all know who Murray is, they all interact with him, they know he's my partner, there's no problem with that. I think there are submariners who are extremely broad minded and they accept that. And I think as long as you don't offend their sensibilities, everything is okay.

17:32 Or that's the way that I perceive it anyway, from my experience.

Why do you think there is a connection between the issue of homosexuality and jokes with the navy?

18:01 I think it goes back for centuries. There has been various references to homosexuality, like rum bum. Sir Noel Coward actually wrote songs about it, and he was rather partial to a sailor anyway. It's been around forever.

18:30 I know there are sea shanties about homosexuality, and that sort of thing. But it's been there. You can't

disguise the fact that it's been there. You can't cover it up. Men will go with other men. And references towards stewarding, maybe they talked about cooks as well, I don't know. But stewarding was seen as being effeminate, because you were doing a women's type of job of looking after men, feeding them,

19:01 cleaning away the tables, and washing up after them, making their beds for them. So that was seen as effeminate, so I think that's where that idea of stewards were probably gay. But you see that was just part of the black humour of each of the various branches rubbishing the other branches. And if you could get someone's goat up by saying, "Oh yeah, you're a poof," or whatever, if he rails to it, you've got him. And you could always get a stoker one way or another,

19:30 and of course they were always having a go at the seamen branch. It's just one of those things that will continue to go on forever. The new navy is not allowing that sort of stuff.

Of being discharged, you speak with great passion and disappointment. What actually led you to getting back involved in respect to being honorary secretary of the National Submarine?

20:01 It was quite a few years later. I divorced myself from the navy. It was that "Up You!" attitude. Then one day, one of the other gay submariners, by this time I knew he was gay, he said, "Why don't you come to a meeting?" So we went to a meeting and I listened in, and I met up with friends, I knew exactly where I was and where I stood and I was walking back into open arms. And I thought this was okay.

20:32 And we founded a NSW branch in the early '90s. Even though the Submarine Association has been around since 1935. But we finally founded a NSW branch. And Peter, my friend – gay friend – did a couple of tricks at being secretary and all of a sudden he just didn't turn up. And I was told, "You've got to do it." I was co-opted to become secretary, against my will,

21:00 and later I was co-opted into becoming the national secretary. The NSW branch actually ran the whole of the kit and caboodle, up until we started forming branches in other states. And I think it's been ten years I've been national secretary, prior to that I was

21:30 state secretary for a couple of years. So that's how I got involved and I still have that wonderful interaction with my former shipmates. The Royal Navy were funny, but only some of them. I think some of their attitude was let sleeping dogs lie [leave it alone], and they're doing a good job anyway. Because they said that in the newsletter as well.

You spoke of

22:00 **when you initially joined up, you didn't have sexual feelings at all when you were at sea because of bromide?**

Well, I think so.

In the water. In respect of that time, how did men cope with urges when they were away for weeks or months at a time?

Well, obviously masturbation would be the major way of

22:30 curing yourself. Whether it was done in your bunk or done in the heads [toilets]. I assume that self gratification would have been the only release. Unless there was something else going on that I wasn't aware of.

23:00 **As you look back over your career, was the highlights for you?**

As far as my service? I think joining submarines. That was the best. I got to meet friends and companions for the rest of my life. I know they are the type of people who will be at my funeral, if they're still alive.

23:30 Whereas I think in ships, people came and went. The submarine squadron was very small. Even the other submarines, you mixed together in the messes, so you weren't just on one submarine, you were in the squadron and that was good. And I still get that camaraderie as a squadron and not just as a ship. That to me is great. I suppose. Going up top on Anzac, going up top on Stuart,

24:00 well, it gave me a couple of medals. I suppose that could be a high point, instead of having a bare chest at Anzac Day, I've got three medals. I can thank that part of my service, but no, submarines were certainly the best. And the badge I wear which is Dolphin, I'm certainly very proud of that.

You've spoken of your discharge, but besides that, what's the low point of your career?

24:33 It certainly was the discharge. I don't really think there any real low lights that I can think of. I was pretty happy-go-lucky. I saw lots. I tried to make it my thing to go out and learn at sea, and I certainly did that. I can use that, I can thank for the navy for that. It showed me a life. I did something

25:00 I never wanted to do, I actually went to Vietnam, even though I didn't want to go to Vietnam. I did something my parents never wanted me to do, I went to Melbourne. But I loved everything else that happened. I saw Australia, I saw Asia, I saw it in a different way. Even when I started flying with Qantas, I saw the world again in a different way. Yes, I think my navy training, my submarine training,

also stood me in good stead for Qantas life as well.

25:34 **In respect to your discharge. You said earlier that your father was so proud of you, but he never said it to you, but he got you to wear your uniform. What was his response when he heard about the discharge?**

I never told him. I never told my parents at all. It's quite interesting. I phoned home. I didn't have a phone then, so I used the pay box. I had quite a few twenty cent coins.

26:00 I said, "Mum, I've left the navy. They've discharged me." And my mother said, "Yes I know. I read it on the news." I said, "What?" I was quite amazed at this. And I said, "Read what?" She said, "That the government was paring back the forces and that the navy was one of the first to go." She said, "I figured that's how you left the navy, because they're cutting back." So, that freaked me, because I wasn't prepared to tell the family, and I still haven't spoken to my family,

26:30 about my homosexuality and the exact nature of why I left. So if anyone ever gets to see this, it's going to be a bit of an eye opener. I hope I'm dead.

So do your family know that you are gay?

Well, I've never told them. But having lived with Murray now for twenty seven years, if they haven't put two and two together.

27:03 Yeah, I'm pretty sure they know. I just don't have the certificate.

What was one of the things that pulled you through your depression and suicidal thoughts?

Well, I don't know what pulled me through. I think I thought that I could be worse off. That was the – I kept thinking that what I was going to do

27:31 was jump out the window of a two storey building into the path of a taxi. And I kept thinking, "What if the taxi misses, or hits me, and I survive. I will be worse off then." But no – suicide was not good for me, at all. I was meant to be here for a reason, and that took me through, and put me through the other end.

28:00 I'm here for a reason. There were a couple of accidents, including in submarines where I should have been dead. I think that was part of the thinking, too, about these accidents. There was the car accident that I mentioned. There was this particular accident on Onslow, where I should have had this huge electric shock pass through my body, eight eighty volts of electricity, I should have died, but a voice said '"Stop." I think that was all part of the thinking when I tried to put myself through the suicide period.

28:31 Then I decided that yes, I am here for a reason and yes, still here, obviously to look after submariners.

Just in respect to the accident that happened on board? What actually happened with the eight eighty volts?

Well, a stupid member of the crew didn't make the proper connection. We came up to periscope to start 'snorting', which meant that we were putting some charge into batteries. What had happened was.

29:00 because this connection was made, it shorted at the fuse, and to get past this fuse, you actually had to turn side-on. It was quite a large fuse, in its own box, and you only had so much space to get past it. And I got up to it, and I was just about to turn when this voice said, "Stop." And that's when this electric arc shot out shot out, blown the door off and shot back in again. If I hadn't of stopped, I would have taken it full in the chest. Of course, the whole submarine blacked out.

29:30 I stayed in my position because I knew exactly what had happened. One of the chiefs came racing down, because he was worried about his gyro-top thing. And I was able to yell out, down there, what had happened. I was very quick thinking and I heard the tanks being blown, so that meant I had to run the other system, load the pressure lowers, so when I heard the tanks finishing, I turned those on and took us up to full buoyancy.

30:01 Now I did that. I just did that off my own bat, because I knew that's what I had to do, or that was part of the training. You just do it as part of second nature. So I survived that, I think I had to change my pants on that one as well.

And was there another occasion where you came close to death as well on the submarine?

No, no. Only the

30:30 accident that didn't affect us that much, the one I talked about in Honolulu.

You mentioned at the very beginning, there was a story 'children to the front'. Do you remember that one?

Since I've started to work with the

31:00 Submarine Association and Welfare, they found that one of them, they found that he had been sent to Vietnam and he was only seventeen. A couple of others they found out were only seventeen when they went to the front. They were ordinary seamen on ships. And so they were actually children, and if the

government or the public got to hear about this. Some of these people actually had their documents to say they were on that ship, it makes it very difficult for the DVA claims to prove that they were there.

31:31 My sea daddy, Ray, I was doing some work for him because he lost all his documents, his discharge papers, in Cyclone Tracy, and he was trying to prove to the government that he was in submarines, and they had no documentation. Luckily I had all his documentation when he joined, so I was able to write a letter to say he was in submarines, and on these particular periods. And

32:01 while I was doing this for him, I started doing my calculation of it, and I said, "You weren't even eighteen when you went to England to do your submarine training." He said, "Yes, I got into a lot of shit for that, too." He said, "There was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing between Australia House and Canberra and also the British Admiralty," because they didn't send people to sea before their eighteenth birthday, this was in submarines. Anyway, the Australian Government said

32:30 "We've paid to have him over there, training." So he actually went to sea before his eighteenth birthday, that made it very interesting. And so I used that information to find out that he was one of the youngest, and then there was another guy over there at the same time, who was the second youngest submariner to ever be trained up for submarines. I liked putting these lists together. And he was my sea daddy, and he was two years younger.

33:08 **Your final thoughts and comments. What would you like to say to future generations about the navy, about the military, in that respect?**

I joined the navy when it was really starting to change. We were moving away from

33:30 that old on-the-gun line period. I think Vietnam was starting to change us. We were changing from uniform to wearing civilians ashore, so we were changing our image. So I joined the navy at a time of major change. Some of the change that's still going on is I think a bit obsessive, but that's the image they want. Getting back to all those things

34:00 about duty of care, most people coming into the navy now are more computer literate, and also they have a tendency not to drink. So the idea of being heavy drinkers and all that is disappearing. I think the roles like going out and singing songs, and not learning our traditions anymore, that's sad. That's

34:30 possibly good, too, I don't know. But then again, they weren't really our traditions in the first place. We borrowed them from the Royal Navy, so in a way we were are making ourselves our own navy. I don't know how they use this information, whoever uses it in the future, they might find it interesting about homosexuality, because that's all changed now, too. Because they allow openly homosexual people into the services,

35:01 whether they call what I call 'the Nancies', running around with the limp wrist and all the rest of it, I don't know, I haven't seen one yet. Then again, I've seen some of the girls, and I'm really worried about them, too. I would have called them, once upon a time, diesel dykes. Some of them look very much male. Moving slightly away from that, a soldier just recently walked up to another soldier and he was a sergeant and he said to the soldier,

35:30 "Since when is it customary to wear ear-rings while in uniform?" The soldier turned around and in a fairly deep voice said, "I've got an F in front of my number. And also, thanks for the compliment." It was a female soldier. He said he felt so small, because of it. He said, "The fact that I actually paid her a compliment." So the military are changing.

36:00 I certainly didn't start the ball rolling on homosexuality, but it was there, it's always been there. There have been times when HMAS Swan got herself into trouble a few times with sex and those things. The first time that it happened, she was called 'The Fluffy Duck.' There was a time, only more recently, where there was stuff about sex. It's quite funny. It always seems to have happened on the

36:30 larger ships, it seems like throughout history. But the submarines. I don't know whether they kept it quiet, or whether we were just good boys, I don't know. I can't answer that particular question, of why things were different. I was there somewhere to start with, but I certainly didn't help my own cause.

Do you have any final comments for the Archives?

37:00 My comments are good on you, it's good to see that these types of oral histories are being put down. I just hope that I benefit someone's project, in the future. So that's about all that I can add to that. Use it wisely, use it good.

Thanks so much for your time.

Thank you.