Australians at War Film Archive

Ronald Rollison - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:42 **We'll start with the, the five minute condensed version of your life, the main bullet points.**

Well, my name is Ronald Alexander Andrew Rollison, quite a mouthful but it entails the succession of several of my relatives.

01:00 I was born on the 27th of March 1926 in Adelaide, and we lived in Adelaide for some years, in Tusmore Avenue, Tusmore, a comfortable little home. There was my father and mother. My father was a barrister, my mother was a simply wonderful woman, and we employed a few servants, housemaid, cook, and we

01:30 also had a baby's helper, what's the word I'm after, a child minder, no, a nurse, and her name was Jacko, and she was an exceptional person and she looked after me, mostly in my younger life. I know, knew more of her than anybody else. Tusmore Avenue, Tusmore was our first address, and I don't remember a great deal about the house, I was very little, except one thing.

02:00 At the back of the house, there was a very big lawn, a big grass lawn, might have been a tennis court, might have been a bowling green, polo, not polo, the thing that you knock through hoops, one of those.

Croquet.

Croquet, possibly, there was a big expanse very, very close to it on the right hand side, looking backwards. There was a large galvanised water tank, and it was huge, and it was rusty. I was the second child of the

02:30 family, there'd been quite a few attempts to have children, I was about their 7th I think, and I was the last, so it was just a two children family. Anyway, I was out on this lawn, that I mentioned to you, on a Sunday morning, and I was in the bassinette, and for no, well obvious reasons, the tank was rusty, it suddenly burst, and it burst thousands and I mean

03:00 thousands of gallons of water, straight onto this great slate. And the wave that came from the outburst of water tipped out the bassinette and I went into the water, and I certainly would have drowned. Jacko, the ever vigilant, heard the, heard the noise, raced outside and plucked me out of the water, and gave me a shaking, shook me upside down and so forth, and I cried. But anyway, life might have stopped for me right there,

03:30 but it didn't. But similarly that was the sort of start-off with water that I've had all my life, in watery objects, with watery objects, particularly boats and ships nearly all my life. Dad was a barrister as I said, and we lived comfortable at Tusmore Avenue, Tusmore. Dad was, was a very competent man, he was Chairman of the

04:00 firm Rollison and Rollison in Rundle Street and he had the, oh the good fortune, to be highly successful in the field of, shall we say, difficult divorce cases, which involved Ratha Penfold Highland, and Dad won the case for her, which got him into the headlines and ensured a future for him. Certainly, as far as the law and the divorce

04:30 were concerned, and other things too, he was a very competent and bright man. So that was one thing that happened fairly early in my life. And other good things happened, some more good people joined the chambers, because of Dad's success in things, funny how things like that are a magnet, and one of the people who joined the chambers was Roma Mitchell, Miss Roma Mitchell, she was about 15 or 16 or 17 at this stage,

05:00 she came along. She used to wipe the ink off my fingers, because I was often playing with the typewriter, I was a pest. So the chambers grew from strength to strength and things were looking good, Dad took on more partners. The, one of the more senior members of the chambers became, left and became the Justice of the Supreme Court of South Australia, so you know, it was really on the up. Dad decided to move from Tusmore Avenue, Tusmore, he bought a magnificent home in Grove Street, Unley

Park.

05:30 It was on three and a half acres of land. In two acres, on one side was a house, it was just roses, and now, at this stage of things, there was three, three homes on Mum's rose garden, let alone the rest of it. It was a massive house with all beautiful things, lovely study, ballroom, beautiful, what did they used to call living room, not a lounge room, lounge room

06:00 and things like that. It was two storeys, it was gorgeous. And the garage held seven cars, and it was a pit, the garage, and a place for the mechanic and the chauffeur to live. And then it went down at the back, down to a little creek at the bottom of the name of this property, which the name of the creek just escapes me. But we had two bridges over the creek and it was simply gorgeous, and life was fine. And Dad was very, doing very, very well.

06:30 I always think that when the lights are flashing and the flags are streaming and everything is marvellous, beware, because there's something lurking around the corner that's going to change your whole life. This just did happen. Dad was a very keen sportsman, he played a lot of cricket, I've got some pictures of him playing cricket somewhere. And he, the war came,

07:00 he claimed we were all one. And Dad went to join up and was knocked back. So he went to, again to another doctor and again he was rejected. And the reason he was rejected was because he had a heart murmur, and he, they told him, "Look we're never going to let you in service, we just can't do it, we can't do anything to help you. If I let you through, someone else is going to pick you up." So was pretty rejected,

07:30 and dejected about this and he received a few white feathers through sealed envelopes and things like that, and that upset him naturally. Time went on, I, and the war raged on, it didn't seem to make much difference to my life really. But, Dad, Dad was sort of, went to high places, and

08:00 all those things were good. So we lived on there, and I went, when I was a little bit bigger, to the, to school at kindergarten first of all, I can't remember the name of kindergarten, but that one there.

St Peter?

St Peter's College.

Yes.

Yes, well that's where I went

08:30 to as a, as a start off, and I was very, very happy there. I was only tiny but I loved it, people were so kind to me, everybody was. And things were sort of looking pretty good, and Dad's activities were good, he was feeling well and so forth. Suddenly he started not to look well, and he was a big man, big, strong person,

09:00 and he just looked sallow and sick, and he was, and he got a carbuncle on his neck, a big carbuncle on his neck, and he just didn't pick up, there were no antibiotics in those days. I mean, today you fix it in ten minutes, and you're going to be right as rain, in those days there were no things like that at all. So the doctor did the usual things that doctors did in those days, said, "Well you're not well, you're run down, you're working too hard, you need to take a bit of a

09:30 sea voyage and get some fresh air into your lungs and good food and stop worrying about things." So off Dad went on this sea voyage that was going to cure him, which was to go to, from Adelaide up the islands and back to the South Sea Islands and back again. When he got back, he'd been away for quite a long while, he looked so sick, he was so sick that he couldn't raise his arm to wave to us, you know. Anyway, Dad went straight from the boat to hospital

10:00 and, cutting a long story short, he developed septicaemia and biemia, and he had a massive sequestrum removed from his femur, a piece of bone which had just been taken out, eaten out by the staphylococcus and to excise, and he was just riddled with abscesses, and of course he died. Mum had never expected this to happen and the whole family was, whole family,

10:30 the staff, everything just …. Then the funeral and these people come, and it was all too much for Mum, just too much for her. And she had what comes into the back of society set up, there was a sort of a nervous breakdown, she just couldn't cope with this, and I can understand that. So she went to talk to,

11:00 see the doctor, and it's, it's hard to believe this, but the doctor said, "look my dear, you really must get away from the house and the whole environment, get out, go, go on a trip somewhere, your sister's, your daughter's 16 now, she could go with you." So it was arranged and she got on this trip to do a similar type trip to the one Dad did. But what the doctor didn't know, Mum got seasick on the wharf, you know, she, she was hopeless, and of the course the thing was a total disaster.

11:30 And she got as far as Sydney and the doctor said, "I wouldn't be responsible for taking you any further, you'll have to get off the ship here." So she was put off in Sydney, and my sister was a smart young kid, she really was, she was very intelligent, and she wandered around the place and found there was a nice area of Sydney, she found Elizabeth Bay, and she found a beautiful home for rent in Billyard Avenue, Elizabeth Bay, called Beauregard, I think it was, it was a magnificent home, so she rented this.

12:00 I was at school still in Adelaide, and everybody was looking after me in right royal fashion, I was spoilt rotten. Anyway, Lyn found this home and she, through the doctor on the ship and through other contacts that she made, she got some medical opinions to come in and look after Mum. And very slowly, with Jacko and one of the other people coming up to help from the household, and all these things, Mum very, very,

12:30 very slowly sort of rose above what was inevitable if she'd gone the way she was going. So Tom, I was still at school, I learnt to play Aussie Rules, I liked that, I was very little, couldn't get the ball. Anyway Mum got a lot better and she came back to Adelaide, and she decided to make a few decisions, and possibly the worst one she ever made was to leave Adelaide.

13:00 Whether she did, all her friends, she'd grown up there, she was Adelaide establishment, and they, they, we were really Mallons, you've heard of Mallons maybe, you're from Adelaide, and Claringvales, and a lot of people Mum knew from Adelaide, and to move to somewhere like Sydney where she didn't know very many people didn't seem right to me. Anyway, that happened,

13:30 Mum decided to sell her house in Adelaide, and you wouldn't, you wouldn't recognise it now. It's in Grove Street, Unley Park, and it's called Briarhowme, and it's long, negates the rest of it, which is all divided up, but it was a magnificent home. So off I went to Kings as a boarder, as a boarder, a young boarder, in the junior school. A young boarder in the junior school doesn't get a very good time, you know. You get,

14:00 you're at a great disadvantage, particularly if you haven't got anybody in the whole place. So I had a relatively tough time for a while.

Ronald, I might just, sorry, I might just interrupt you there. You've got so much that's already happened to you by this point already, let's go back and fill in some of those details and then we'll come back and …. Can I? Of your time in Adelaide, apart from the water tank exploding …

Yes.

What's your earliest memory?

14:30 My earliest memory sticks to me, is a couple of old T-model Fords. Dad had some very illustrious friends who were keen on shooting, sniping duck and things like that. And he, they used to buy a couple of these old Fords between them and go off on these expeditions. I always wanted to go with them,

15:00 they would have had a bit of trouble looking after me, that's why no-one ever took me, but that's one of the things I remember.

Where did they used to go and do that?

Oh, way out in some plains in Adelaide, some lakes and things like that. The other, a few things going back along the pathway a little bit, that I remember. Having left Tusmore and gone to live at Unley Park, I had two, I met two delightful people who were about my age, two

15:30 Tolley brothers, and they lived, I, luckily, they lived on the other side of the street in Tusmore Avenue, and we became great friends. And they were a bit older than I was, but they were good blokes and they, I certainly remember having lots of fun with them. And they, their father was quite a character and their grandfather was even a greater one. Their grandfather

16:00 lived in the distillery virtually, and he'd be taken to the distillery in the morning in the buggy. And by the time it was due to leave in the afternoon, it was usually around three or four o'clock, the footman would assist him to the carriage and get him into it, put his bowler hat on his head, and park the reins in his hands, and then tap the horse gently on the thigh and say,

16:30 "Away you go James," and the horse would go. He had, he was absolutely out, and you could see him coming, bolt upright, eyes wide, straight ahead, blind drunk, and he wouldn't see you. And the Tolley boys sort of took the, took a bit of a cap from him, I didn't see a lot of them in later life, I met them in London a few times, they were two lovely blokes and we had a lot of fun together.

So the horse

17:00 **knew the way home?**

The horse knew the way home, it wasn't very far from the brewery to his house, not a long journey. But other, other little things, about that era, oh, yes there were a few little things like that, I don't think I should go down in life. Like, like I can remember,

17:30 as far as, I was always surrounded with an aura of kindness and love. It's just, I was so lucky, and I suppose there aren't too many people who can say that. When I got to Kings, I got a bit of a hard time, I really didn't, as a Junior in the Junior School, which was the old Government House in those days,

18:00 you had a pretty tough knocking about.

Rollo, what were the couple of things you were having a chuckle at then to yourself about, about Adelaide?

Oh, well I, it will embarrass you if I say too much, but it had something to do with young girls. We'll leave it at that.

Trust me, you couldn't embarrass me.

Oh well, the girl that lives behind, next door to us, she

18:30 kept chickens.

Was she the first girl you kissed?

Well, kissed, yes once, and she was very tall, and that was quite a shock to me, I wasn't used to this sort of thing. My sister raced around the place with a huge bathrobe from head to toe. And

19:00 girls were different sort of things, weren't they.

So what was your interaction with that girl?

Oh just childlike play, nothing that could rate as adult sex. But it was a start. Anyway, I never saw her after we left Tusmore, and I don't care,

19:30 she was a nice little kid, with her chickens.

What did you, when you were living at Tusmore Avenue, what did all the neighbourhood kids get up to for entertainment?

Well I didn't mix with them very much, I was very small. You know, the girl I'm talking about now, I'm around about two, two and a half, it was just before we moved.

And how old was she?

Oh she was about two, two or three. But, no, I really didn't

20:00 have a lot, I wasn't being stand-offish or anything, I was just, they didn't happen that way with us, we didn't, we didn't mix a lot, my sister didn't either with the people next door at all, I don't recall anything of that nature. I, you know, when we were at the other, the bigger home, you know, I met a lot more people and a lot more people came into the house and so forth, not necessarily girls,

20:30 some decent blokes amongst them.

Do you remember much about actually moving to Tusmore Avenue? Sorry, from Tusmore Avenue?

From Tusmore Avenue, very little, very little. I just remember all this kerfuffle and removalist man was coming, and things being packed up onto carts, you see there weren't cars so much in those days, most things went by horse and dray in Adelaide. It was a big thing in my life, to suddenly go into

21:00 this magnificent home. You opened the front door and you sort of looked along this superbly tiled entrance hall, the dining room on the left hand side of the, was bigger than most people's home, you know, it was just magnificent. Further down was the drawing room and then there was Dad's study, then there was a ballroom and then there was a parquet floor area leading to a green house,

21:30 it was, the green house would be 40 or 50 yards from the front door, it was right at the back there, and it was magnificent, it was, oh and inside the front door, there were gorgeous stairs that went up to the bedrooms up there, it was a magnificent house. And then the parts behind it where Jacko and her family lived, my nurse, and cook, and the girl, other girl, they lived up there, and they had their own

22:00 apartment. It was a separate, it was, by today's standards, really marvellous, own fireplace, beautiful place. And then, of course, then, when the chap that owned it before had a permanent driver, chauffeur, mechanic that lived in quarters near the – I don't know whether he ever had seven cars, but it could take seven cars, and its own pit, seeking something.

22:30 It wouldn't exist any more. Space. Space gets cut down and gets mangled up into small bits that become progressively more expensive.

What sort of woman was your Mum?

Mum was a very placid person. She, she had two sisters, my Auntie Evelyn and my Auntie Muriel. They were born in a, into an

23:00 air of immense affluence. My grandfather, I have a copy of his obituary somewhere, it's worth reading, it states amongst other things, I'll find it for you, read a couple of lines, firstly that he had a magnificent home in Adelaide. Do you know Adelaide much?

23:30 **Only a little.**

Well over on the, there's an area, there's an Andrew Wooldridge Avenue, and on one of those Avenues is an old and Trust home, which is kept by the National Trust, that is his home. When I was a young boy, that's where he and Grandmother lived, and my mother used to take me over there sometimes. It was, I suppose, oh I don't know, 50 or 60 acres of land, it was huge.

24:00 And it was all under grapes and had its own winery. The drive up to the house was about, over half a mile long, and it was just so gorgeous, and so, so well laid out. Mum lived in this place in an era that was gone, in an era that just doesn't exist any more. I'll just tell you one story which is perfectly true.

24:30 Grandfather was a, wheeled and dealed, wheeled and dealed is the wrong word, he bought and sold large properties, and some properties that he loved very much, like our Arcoon, he kept for many, many, many, many, many years and he still owned it when he died. He bought something like 20,000 square miles up near Barrow Creek at one stage, it's all one bit, and he was, it mentions in the obituary he was the largest single landholder in the

25:00 whole of Australia, so he was a very wealthy man. Just this one little story about him. One happy day that the, garage came up to the front door and the servants were made to come up and help him and take the things inside, and some came from the back to help too, and they all carried these sacks that were in the front of the carriage, and he directed them to put them in the living room,

25:30 which was a magnificent room. And he summoned the three daughters to come down, Auntie Muriel, Auntie Vi and Auntie, my mother. Rollison was there. And he said, "I've got something I want you to see," and he picked one of these sacks up and he turned it up and it was sovereigns, gold sovereigns. And there was something like 20,000 gold sovereigns

26:00 in this mountain of gold, and the kids played in it. You could imagine little tiny kids and a mountain of golden coins. Yes I can remember a few things from then. I remember dear old, dear old mate, Mum's mate, she was, she was all bottom and she was all heart, she was so gorgeous, she was a lovely person.

26:30 And I don't, I, they lived a bit away from us, and Ray and Dirk Tolley and I used to cycle over there and see Grandma, I think Grandfather died the year I was born which was tragic for Mum. He was a man of some substance.

What was his name?

Oh dear, isn't this –

27:00 Wooldridge, Wooldridge.

And the winery they had, was that a commercial winery?

No, it was a private one. No, that was just for the house. I've got a picture of it somewhere but I can't find it. If you remind me, I'll get Jeannie, she knows where it is,

27:30 and I'll see it. But it is a big wide piece of paper with, and it has, as it was when it was auctioned in 1926. It's too big for Grandmother, she put it up for auction in 1926. Now another Rollison in Adelaide tells me that there is not one of those blocks that she sold that are not two, some are three houses on them. And the, she only allowed it to be done if the

28:00 two avenues that divided the property, one was called Andrew and other was Wooldridge, and so it's Andrew Avenue and Wooldridge Avenue. Such was the splendour. Those sort of days aren't around much except for Kerry Packer.

What else, what else do you remember about your mum?

Mum.

What did you call her?

Darl, I always called her Darl,

28:30 ever since I can remember calling her anything, I always called her darl, short for darling. She was so gracious, she was sort of a, she came from a, compared to anything around today, it was just a different world. She was so kind and so courteous and so keen on helping people, and she was forever working for various charities and doing things for people who were less

29:00 fortunate than she was. She was just so sweet, kindness itself, she looked after the servants, they were really like friends rather than servants. Always did everything that was expected of them, and there was never any tension. She was a very placid sort of a person. I barely remember Grandmother, because she died not so very long after we moved over from Tusmore

29:30 Avenue to Unley Park. Of course Grandfather died before that and he was, he was an exceptional man too. He owned a lot of territory around a place in South Australia called Guala Ranges or something like that, he owned most of them. And he had another property on the other side of South Australia called Aracoon. He was a man of immense energy,

30:00 he was just everywhere. And he was, like he's still got, it's just a story, it's not going to help me. But he

had, they had this Aracoon, which is an Aboriginal word for place of many waters, and he decided that they should sink some bores. So they started sinking bores, and in those days they sunk the bores with a thick pick and shovel. And if you didn't have a pick and shovel,

30:30 it was a crowbar and a shovel, and a bucket to wind it up with, and it was pretty primitive. He went out there one afternoon and he said he didn't like the look of it. And he was in a good suit. And he said, "I don't think it's substantially shored up enough." So he said, "I'm not going to change, I haven't got anything to wear, I'll be back in the morning, have everything ready to go down." That night,

31:00 20 foot of it caved in, he wouldn't have stood a chance, wouldn't have stood a hope, good thing it was that he waited. There's a thing called a wheel of fortune, it spins right sometimes. Anyway, I'm rambling on, not getting anywhere.

No, no, this is all great stuff. Tell me more about Jacko?

Jacko was, her name was Strange,

31:30 Mrs Strange, she was married to Mr Strange, of course, and he wasn't strange, he was a lovely chap. They had two sons, and they lived, they were a bit younger than I was, but they lived in the house with them. And Jacko was sort of the mediator of all troubles, I might describe her as. She was one of those people that the course of true love never ran smoothly as far as Jacko was concerned, it

32:00 didn't exist, it did. She was just a kind, caring, lovable person. She was adequately paid by the family of course, and there was no, everything was totally secure, anything she wanted she could have as far as Mum was concerned. She had that art of being there when, she was always there when she was needed, like me in the bassinette, I certainly would have drowned. I mean that thing had thousands of litre,

32:30 gallons of water, that tank that burst, and it was only yards from me, and it just let go, you know, whooshka. She was so placid, and Mum, you know, thought very highly of her, so even my sister liked it, so that was something. The others, I didn't have a great deal to do with, the housemaid and the cook, we actually had the

33:00 same ones for years, I didn't have much to do with them.

How did she get the name Jacko?

I honestly don't know, she had it when I first remember her. I don't know where the name Jacko came from, her name was Strange, her surname was Strange, I don't even know what her real name was, I never thought of her as anything else but Jacko. It was one of those things. I did love her though, she was a wonderful person. She stayed with the family so long, that when things eventually

33:30 had a massive change and we moved to this beautiful place, I told you, in Elizabeth Bay that I told you, in Billyard Avenue, she came over from Adelaide and she stayed there for a long, long time with Mum. And one of the other servants came too, I've forgotten. And of course there was heaps of room, this place was just magnificent, it was just – .

34:00 do you know Elizabeth Bay at all? Or do you know Billyard Avenue? It goes down and it goes past where the Boomerang mouth organs is? Well up the street, up the hill a little bit, there's a big house and it's terraced and it goes down, you go through the gate and you go down beautiful tiled stairs, and you come to a little garden that's there, that's the sort of entrance to main, or the dining room,

34:30 lounge room and everything like that. And then it's about two storeys down, as it goes down, it's terraced down and it eventually gets down to the bottom which is a lawn as big as a tennis court. That goes out to a wharf, and enclosed in the side of the wharf is your own private swimming pool and changing room there. And it's just, it was just magnificent. And in later life we used to use that, we used to swim

35:00 in the pool a lot, and Lyn acquired a very wonderful bloke who I was very fond of, she subsequently married him, a man called Borzman, Gus Borzman, who was a doctor. And he was very keen on, he was a very wealthy sort of a bloke, and he used to do a lot, he was a wonderful man to me, he just – . See I really never had a father, he, Gus was just everything to me,

35:30 he loved fishing and I loved fishing, I always have and I still do. And he used to do exotic things, like all of a sudden he'd say, "What about we go for a ride in a boat?" And I said, I always called him Doc, I said, "Doc it's night time, you can't go out at night time," and he said, "Of course you can go in the night time." He said, "I'll get a boat from Messengers." So he gets on the telephone and he rings up Messengers, you may have heard of them in Sydney, Messengers is an old boating firm

36:00 in Rushcutter's Bay. And in those days they used to have those boats that are runabouts – you probably don't know what I'm talking about.

Oh, I'll just ….

I'm only going to move to here.

OK. OK, we're on.

Will I bring it up into the picture?

Yes, just, if you just bring it up.

This is a

36:30 very ancient toy that my brother-in-law at the time bought for me. It's a Hornby Speed Boat. In here.

Sorry, I'll just stop. I just need you to hold it up a bit higher there, that's it, that's the shot. And hang on, we'll do this again. We'll start again.

Will I start again?

Just a little bit higher

37:00 **there Ron. That's it, that's it, good. OK, we'll start again.**

OK, this is a Hornby speedboat, which is a toy that's made by the Hornby company which, 60 years ago, were very prominent in making things like this. And this is one of their, one of their models. This one's a, sort of runabout, it's a luxury, it's one luxuriant sort of a boat,

37:30 with separate accommodation at the back which would normally have cushions and things on it, and a similar one at the front where the captain or skipper steers it, and really it's superbly made, everything about it is just beautiful as you can see. It needs a coat of paint and a bit of TLC [tender loving care]. If I live long enough, I'll get round to doing that, but I keep looking at it, and it seems to be a daunting task.

So that's the sort of boat

38:00 **that Doc used to …**

Doc used to hire. And he used to bring this boat, send for the boat from Messengers, which is just in Rushcutter's Bay which is only a stone's throw from us. And this bloke would come around to the wharf, bring it alongside to the wharf, and my sister and my mother and I and Gus, we'd get into it and we'd go for a run up the Harbour or he'd take it over to Luna Park. And he'd get the driver, the driver of the boat, to take the boat alongside Luna Park, and

38:30 we'd all get out at Luna Park, and he'd say, "Come back in half an hour and meet me here, I'll be waiting on the wharf." We'd go in, Gus would put me on the Big Dipper or something like that, it absolutely terrified me, but I screamed like all, like everybody else did. Loved it. So you know, we, that was the sort of boat that was around, they still do exist in Sydney, I have seen them. But they're usually, they're gorgeous, they're cedar, they're polished, they're absolutely lovely.

39:00 One day I'd like this one to be like that.

I'll take that out of the way for you. So as a child Ron, before you moved to Sydney, you spent a lot of time with Jacko?

Quite a lot of time, yes. I spent a lot of time in the kitchen because there's always someone to talk to. I spent a lot of time in the garden, we had two gardeners, the senior gardener, Roberts, and another one. And Roberts was a wonderful man, he was so, he was such an interesting man, he had so many things to tell me and teach me and show me.

39:30 I spent a lot of time with Roberts, he had a pretty big garden to look after.

The house at Unley Park, you said before it had a name?

Briarhowme, B-R-I-A-R-H-O-W-M-E, which is 'place of roses', Briarhowme, and I think the name is still on the steel gate, which is 16 feet high, Briarhowme, Briar on one side and Howme on the other with a big latch, I think it's still there.

And you mentioned before that

40:00 **this house had a ballroom.**

Yes.

Do you remember your parents entertaining there?

Not much, no, no they didn't entertain much. I remember my sister threw a, arranging a party with some of her friends who I thought were a pack of snobs. And I didn't get asked 'cause I was too little, couldn't dance either. But it is quite a large room with seating accommodation in an alcove

40:30 which looked over the garden, over a rockery as a matter of fact, on one side of the house. It was a fancy room, it was a beautiful room, it was practically never used while we were there.

Stop there.

Tape 2

00:30 **Next tape's ready to go.**

Yes, OK.

Tell me then, as a, as a child, what did you do for entertainment?

Well I, I was, well, how, how old a child am I?

How ever old you'd like to be?

As old as Methuselah. No, no, not Methuselah, I don't want to be that old. I think I,

01:00 my happiest times in my childhood was really my childhood, it's really a, in the latter echelons of growing up, sort of playing in teams and that sort of thing, I think I got more pleasure from that than anything else.

What about when you were at Briarhowme, what sort of things did you do to entertain yourself?

I went to kindergarten, so that took up part of the day, and then

01:30 I'd either go and see what cook was doing in the kitchen, or go out and find Roberts and see what he was up to, or sit and catch up with one of the people around the place and see what's going on. I, it was a beautiful garden, it was all full of lovely flowers and fruits and things, you'd pick your own grapes, one of a dozen different varieties. It was a beautiful, just sort of living.

02:00 Take the whole bunch. It sounds like an aimless life of bliss, but I was very lonely in a sort of a way, I wished I'd had a brother, not a sister, but not something you could do anything about.

Were there other children that you got to play with?

Mostly the Tolleys and the Clowingbolls, they lived across the way, they used to come over a bit.

02:30 **And what sort of things would you get up to together?**

Oh, basically mischief. Chasing the next door cat or something like that. No, just we weren't really particularly naughty, we weren't particularly good either. They were a bit older than I was, I really never had anybody around my age for a long time, next door to me or living beside me, I could

03:00 equate with. I sort of grew up in the adult world really, and you know, I was a kid for a long time, because I was too young, and it was very hard and tough going. I, it was a long hard battle and finally, sort of, you know, in the latter stages of things, I sort of did all the things I wanted to do. I had lots of

03:30 other interests at that time, photography was one of them. They had a photographic society at King's [College]. They had a beautiful place where they did a lot of woodwork and I used to make a lot of things myself, little bits and pieces.

Where had you gone to school in Adelaide?

At …

That was at St. Peter's?

St. Peter's, St. Peter's. Yeah. I wasn't there, St. Peter's was only for a

04:00 pretty short time. It was really only the last term in '36, or something like, it's up on the board there, that I was there, because we moved to Sydney you see and then I went to King's, so I wasn't at St. Peter's very long. So really the only school I ever had in Adelaide was the Tulickloon, Kindergarten there when we lived at Bram [Briarhowme]. St. Peter's in first year and then I was extracted from there and I went to Sydney and to, as a boarder at King's in the

04:30 first term in 1937.

I know that your father passed away when you were fairly young but what do you remember about him?

Well, he was a very dominating sort of a person. He was a big man, strong, keen on sport, self-opinionated. I think that he,

05:00 it's a pretty nasty thing to say but I don't think he, there was a big gap between my sister and myself. Mum had had seven miscarriages and there was a big gap and then there was seven years that I wasn't around and in those seven years before me, and my sister had captured her father

05:30 totally and she had every right to. She was intelligent, she was very beautiful and she was interested in all the things. She was quite a good scholar. She was a sharp girl and, you know, when I suddenly

appeared on the map there was this huge, it is a big gap at this stage of your life and so I think Dad thought much more of her than he did of me.

06:00 Dad was very keen on other things that I wasn't much good at, he, because I wasn't big enough and I hadn't had the experience. He was very keen on horses and horse racing. There's some pictures of him on the wall there in places of fame, one right behind you. You recognise anyone in that picture?

No.

I ought to be able to recognise it here. I'll look at it later. Anyway, he was, he had his own course and he used to go for

06:30 rides and things like that. I never, I was never big enough to do that sort of thing with him and he died before I was big enough to do anything much with him, which is a tragedy, so we really didn't have a lot of time together. But he, and then was, actually, you know, because she was everything because there was a nine years gap. That makes a big difference.

Was that tough on you?

No, not really.

07:00 No, I won't say, I was disappointed and as I reflect on it, looking back over the years, over the years I would have liked a different relationship with my father than the one that I had. I was very small and he was a very big man and I just don't think he

07:30 cared much for me and he's got every right to feel like that.

Did you go and spend time ever at his chambers?

Yes, yes I did. I used to go in there, Rollison and Rollison, and I used to, I was a blasted nuisance really. I used to play with the typewriter. I'd get ink all over my fingers and, I mentioned, the girls they used to go and get some

08:00 metho and rub it off and so forth. But in the chambers, because I'd told you that Dad had sort of had these big wins with Ratha Penfold Highland and others, people were attracted to the chambers. It's the big wheel you know. It's, and of all the people that turned up, there was Roma Mitchell. He, you mightn't know who Roma Mitchell is, but she is

08:30 a female of incredible ability and extremely sharp, as far as the law was concerned. She came there as an articled clerk and she used to rub the ink of my fingers. She remembers me well and I haven't seen very much of her over the years, and I had another Rollison up here from Adelaide and he said to me, we were chatting away in the boozery and having a glass of something and he said to me, "Look, I've got a message from Roma Mitchell for you,"

09:00 and I said, "Oh, yeah, how is she?" Well, he said, "She's absolutely marvellous. Everybody thinks the world of her. She's doing the best job that has been done as Governor General and everyone likes her." So, I did, I rang her up, I rang up Government House in Adelaide and O'Keary answered the phone and I said, "Oh, wanted to speak to Dame Roma Mitchell". He said, "I'm sorry, Dame Roma

09:30 is at dinner with guests. I'll take your name and if you give me your telephone number she'll probably ring you back." And as sure as God made little devils, at quarter past nine the phone went 'brr, brr' and, "It's Roma Mitchell here." "Oh," I said, "Oh, how lovely of you to call back." She said, "Of course I call back. Why don't you come down to Adelaide and stay with me?" I said, "I can't." She said, "Just call me Roma. I'm known as Roma to you." I

10:00 said, "I can't, Roma. I'm very busy here. I run a very busy practice and it's not easy for me to just get away and I very rarely come to Adelaide." I said, "If I ever had come to Adelaide over the past ten years I would have come and seen you." But, so she got chatting away and filling me in, what was going on, and of course she said, "What happened to you anyway?" I said, "Nothing happened to me." She said, "What about the law?"

10:30 and I said, "I wasn't really attracted to the law very much. Dad didn't have any great inclination to try and push me into it and I didn't push it either but I do remember that, oh I did like some parts of it." She said, "What did you like?" I said, "I loved 'Rumpole of the Bailey'." And she said, "Your father reminds me of 'Rumpole of the Bailey'." She said, "Your father was the epitome of 'Rumpole of the Bailey'

11:00 and I'll tell you a little story". So the story goes like this. She said, "I've got a, we were, you know, in the court, we got there a little bit late and I had, with all the books under my quivering knees, sitting next to you father and the prosecution was in process and the prosecution was going on and on and your father leant over to me and tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'My dear, take good note of this

11:30 because this is an example of how never to conduct a cross examination.'" She said, "It stuck with me all my life." I said, "Well Dad had insane things that were important." Yeah, so she said, "I can't understand you're not following your father's footsteps." And I said, "Well, Roma, you know, horses for courses, and I suppose I was led in to medicine because of my brother-in-law who I just adored. I had no

father really." "Oh," she said, "you must come to Adelaide and stay with

12:00 us." And I said, "If we ever come to Adelaide, Jenny and I and the children will come and stay with you." She said, "That I just insist on. That will be lovely." Well, then she got very sick and then in 18 months she was dead. So I never did see her again. I rang her up and she was ill. She was a wonderful person.

What was the case that you mentioned that really put your father's firm on the map?

12:30 The, Ratha Penfold Highland wanted to divorce her husband and, you know, it was sort of a, I suppose they were big-time society but they were certainly very wealthy and it created quite a stir in the Adelaide press and Dad won the case with that.

Why was there such a stir about it?

Because divorce was rare in those days, particularly in that bracket. It was

13:00 rare and that, you know, she was a big name in the social press.

Was that Penfolds as in the wine?

Yeah, Penfold Highland yes. Yes, so that did go down good, so. Funny how something like that just happens. It's like being a good surgeon, you use something exceptionally well and everyone thinks you're the greatest thing since sliced bread and then you get elevated or you're being an anaesthetist's star. It's a different level.

13:30 **When your dad got ill, what was that like?**

Dreadful. He was so sick. He was just so ill that he, it wasn't like that at all. When he came back on that ship he barely had the strength to raise his arm off the rail to wave to us. He went straight from the ship to the hospital. He never came out. He was so ill all the time I don't think he

14:00 recognised most of us. They did everything they could do in those days, they even gave him a direct blood transfusion which was about unheard of. But –

What's that?

Oh, what they do is, now of course you have the blood transfusion and they group and cross-match it. That's very important so you don't get the wrong blood. There's A, B and O, they're the main groups. And you've got to be sure that the bloke you had, you see O is the universal recipient. You can give O to anybody.

14:30 If you give mismatched blood to somebody, they have a transfusion reaction with this, can be fateful. All the red cells, instead of getting together and carrying oxygen, get annoyed with each other and because they don't get on they're a different brand and they haemolyse. That means they burst and all you've got is the haemoglobin and no red cell to carry the oxygen, to make it as simple as possible, is what can happen.

So what's a direct blood transfusion?

Well, if you're the

15:00 patient, you're lying here and the person who's the donor is up here and you put a needle in to the vein of the patient who's going to be a recipient and a needle in the one, and you run a thing so that there's no air in it and then you connect it up to them and you run by, not by pump or anything but just by gravity. It was pretty primitive and we had rubber of course in those days.

15:30 I can do it, if you had to do it you'd do with plastic rubber, plastic tubing these days but it's not practised very much.

So the person that was being the donor would that have been a relative or ...?

Possibly, if we had a relative around. They've got more chance of not having a reaction if it's a relative than somebody off the street, yes this is sensible. But you know, going back to the bad old days, they didn't use to group

16:00 blood. Blood was just that red stuff that takes oxygen around and grouping blood started really, well it was a bit before I went and became a, started medicine. It's been a long way up.

What was it that you actually said was, what actually happened to your father? He had a carbuncle?

He had a carbuncle on his neck.

Which is what?

Which is a boil but it's a big boil. It's

16:30 worse than an ordinary boil. It's got a bigger head, it's deeper and the infection around it is much more

gross. It's a grandfather boil, very nasty, carbuncles. And they usually are multiple instead of just having one head like a boil has. A carbuncle has multiple heads.

And so when the doctor recommended that he go and take the cruise to relax and get healthy again, was that a fairly sort of

17:00 **normal prescription to get better?**

It was in those days because if you could afford it, you know, a change of climate and a change of modus operandi was bound to do you a bit of good. You usually came back with pink cheeks and a little bit of sunburn. Dad didn't come back like that, he came back with white cheeks with grey outlook, sick, toxic. So, he, but it was, it was a

17:30 standard cure for getting people back on their feet again.

Did you mother go with him?

No. No, that would have been even worse because she gets seasick on a wharf.

That must have been fairly tough for her while he was away.

Oh, God it was tough for her. When he came back it was absolutely terrible for her. He's in hospital and he finally came home and he went back into hospital again. That was,

18:00 people coming and going and going and coming and Mum just went more and more down hill. She just withered away really. She was very beautiful, Mum. I might have a picture of her. She was, here's a picture, a picture of Mum and Dad at Government House in Adelaide. They were walking behind the chief

18:30 judge, the Chief Justice of South Australia, and he'd, for some extraordinary reason, said something funny because he was a very funny fellow, gentleman, and they were laughing at the joke that he'd made or maybe they were laughing because they thought they ought to laugh. But it's a good picture.

It's lovely. Do you remember how long he was ill for?

How long he was ill for? A very short time. I suppose two months.

19:00 He looks pretty well in that picture.

It must have been a fairly confusing period for you, with your father being ill and your mother ...

Oh, yes, yeah. I didn't know kind of where to go. I was in the way wherever I was so I spent most of my time with Jacko and her boys and the gardener and people like that, and of course I was going to school too.

Do you know if anyone got to say goodbye to your father or when he died was it fairly sudden?

Oh, I suppose he wouldn't

19:30 know when they were there. He was, you, in the latter stages he was not in communicado.

Did you get to go and say goodbye?

No. No, wasn't even suggested to me, possibly wisely. I think, you know, there are things these days that are better undone sometimes. I look back over my own life in medicine and I

20:00 think what some people have been asked to do is really beyond their capabilities at the time and the situation that they're in. No, I think sometimes it's better to remember people as they were, not what they are now.

Was there a big funeral service when your father died?

Oh, yes. I didn't go to the funeral but there was. He was very well known in Unley.

20:30 Yes, it's um, I, you look back on your own life and you think why, where, how, what for, make it better but it would have been much better if we'd never left Adelaide and never come to Sydney, I hadn't gone to King's, Dad had lived and I'd gone to play for Australian Rules and I think life would have been a lovely, homely thing but it didn't work out that way.

21:00 **What do you recall about your mum being sent on a trip?**

Well, poor darling, she was just sick you know. She, I missed her because I was very fond of Mum and we always got on well so I was a bit, but I had Jacko and cook and all the other people there and they looked after me, spoilt me.

So you still lived in the house?

Yeah, we still lived in the big

21:30 home. I've got a lot of pictures of it somewhere but I won't drag them out for you. It's just magnificent.

And then your mother went on the cruise, got terribly seasick?

Yes, and she got put off the ship in Sydney and my sister found Beauregard in Elizabeth Bay and eventually we moved everything, lock stock and barrel, from Unley Park to Adelaide, from Adelaide to

22:00 Sydney and we moved in, we didn't stay, we stayed with Aunt Evry for quite a few years and then Mum moved to Rose Bay and lived there for quite a long time, then she got a flat in Darling Point, lived in a flat in Darling Point later on, Marathon Road, Darling Point.

So that area around there, around Elizabeth Bay and Darling Point obviously now is a, lots of famous people live there, was that a very exclusive area back then?

It was. Yeah, it was.

22:30 **Do you remember any of the personalities that lived around there?**

Yeah. There was the bloke that owned the nightclub where, oh dear, Prince's Nightclub, he used to live, because his wife, he used to quite frequently walk past our, Mum's lovely flat on the ground floor. I can't think of his name at the moment but he was a nightclub owner. And then down the bottom of the street there was

23:00 Sir Claude Plowman, who was a yachtsman of great repute, and on the other side of him is this guy called, Justice of the Supreme Court at one stage, funny old bloke. We were short of petrol and he had an electric car, he used to drive this electric car because he couldn't get petrol. Smith, Smythes? No, I just can't remember. But there were a lot of people around there that Mum knew. Mrs

23:30 Coles, Lady Coles later. A lot of people lived around there Mum knew and they had, saw each other quite frequently. And so that was good for her, very good for her really. I think the great shame was that she ever left Adelaide. Yeah, so it was a,

24:00 Adelaide was where we really belonged, I think, and well, these things do happen. Life's full of changes.

That was a huge upheaval for you.

Yes it was, it was a great upheaval for me but psychologically I don't think I've survived it terribly well, yeah.

So

24:30 **when you moved to Sydney, did you go and live with the family at all, or you went straight to King's College?**

No, I went to Sydney. I was a couple of weeks at Cranbrook, was only there for two weeks for the last term in 1930 whatever it was, '32. I fell over and broke my arm, so when I went back to school, Gus, my brother-in-law to be, suggested I go to King's as a boarder to junior house and that's, I went to, one of the pictures. Life's on the wall,

25:00 the various phases of development. So, that's about it. I've been lucky, you know, really I've been so wonderfully, well, um, organised, to be able to lead the life I sort of lead, still, but I'm falling off now a bit, of course. I've got

25:30 heaps of troubles.

When you went to King's, you said earlier that it was a terribly lonely time there.

Oh, yeah it was.

When you started as a boarder was there any kind of initiation or bullying from the other kids?

God, yes. It was brutal. You know, I was very little. Me and Billy Burroughs, he's in the picture too, we were the two smallest kids in the school and, you know, we were just punching bags. He,

26:00 we really got knocked about badly, unnecessarily because we weren't particularly good at anything like sport and we were too young to defend ourselves. They used to have things like stacks on mil moron stool, you know, like they'd throw you on the ground, one on top of the other and then they'd all jump on top of you and you'd think you were going to be suffocated. They'd put you in an owly, you two in an owly, there's two of you. There's no end. There's just a steel gate,

26:30 it's, you know, with a bit of aluminium on it so you can't see through it. They'd charge you, charge up this alley and bang in to you and knock you about. Oh, God yeah, we had a lot of that. It's called bullying. I' m not in favour of it.

You must have been glad to have had Billy?

Yeah, well Billy wasn't much help because he was worse off than I was. Dear Billy 'Rose' [Burroughs]

who I just think the world of. He's dead now,

27:00 he's, he and I were great pals all our lives.

How did you cope with that bullying?

Well, you couldn't go and report it to the house masters or something, you know. To dob these scumbags in, and they really were dreadful people and they, some of them developed up into adulthood and were just in a different manner when they matured into adulthood, but we didn't get

27:30 much, well you wouldn't go and, you wouldn't peep, as they used to say, on anybody. But we had a rotten time of it. When we got bigger it was better.

Did you have any ways of retaliating?

Oh, no. I wasn't a very good fighter. I wasn't a very good boxer. Because I got bigger and got stronger, I think I got a lot more wily and people were a bit fearful.

28:00 But that took a lot of years and no, you can sort of remember it, in, I can remember all the good things and there was a lot of good in being at boarding school for me, without a dad, and under the circumstances.

Do you think the teachers were aware of what was going on?

Yes. They

28:30 rarely intervened.

Why is that do you think?

I can't, I can't put a reason to it. I don't think there is a valid reason for it. I think it's wrong. When I was a prefect and I saw some big kid belting in to a little kid, I would go and wallop him but I had a different attitude because I'd had it all

29:00 myself. I didn't believe in bullying. I didn't believe in seeing kids being knocked about just because this moron can't, was up themselves, got no-one to back them up.

What other sorts of bullying went on there?

Oh, yeah quite a lot. There's in all boarding schools, no-one talks about it much but it's real. It's there. Even for the day boys.

29:30 Can happen in the best of educative societies. It's bit horrible isn't it? Oh, well. There's always the sort of um, all through life it's a bit the same though isn't it? You know, there's the people who are going to try to make themselves on top and they're going to get there somehow and how they get there doesn't really matter.

30:00 That goes all the way down to murder or the equivalent if that person's in a situation financially where he's desperately …

There's been a lot of things that have come to light in recent years from boarding schools, even things like boys being sexually inappropriate with each other, did you ever see any of that go on with any of the boys around you?

Oh, yes. Yeah. Oh, I think there's always, there's,

30:30 you're really treading in pretty treacherous ground here. There's a bit of, there's a bit of all Mike mixed with a lot of people and some boys are more effeminate than others and some are the reverse. I really don't know enough about the aspect of what goes on now

31:00 but there are a lot of young people, male, female, who are not really, all hormones the way you would expect them to be and I don't think there's much you can do about it. It's their bad luck really and somebody might take advantage of it. How much this sort of thing goes on these days I just do not know.

31:30 Bit out of that score.

How was that handled back then?

Well you try to avoid the people who were pressuring you, try to avoid them, it was the only way, or you could try and go to your master but that was a waste of time. No use going a master and talking about it, they wouldn't listen. Yes, it was a matter of survival really. What I'm saying is a bit hard but it's true.

32:00 Same thing happened in the navy, you know. You've got a whole lot of fellows crammed together in a destroyer or something, same sort of things transpire, locked away from female contact for God knows how long. All sorts of things go on. But you don't have to be a part of it if you don't want to. I mean it was perfectly bloody obvious

32:30 in the end. There might be a lot of things wrong with you, that's not one of them.

Can you, obviously King's College itself as a, the actual physical surrounds have changed a lot now, can you describe the college for us?

I think it's a, now, today?

No, when you were there.

Oh, well when I was there, well when I was there it was a school for the well-to-do for a start.

33:00 Secondly, it had a very big complement of people from the country who couldn't get satisfactory levels of education in the areas where they lived, was far from schools, was far from tutoring and this sort of thing, and it was also a school for the affluent too, it wasn't cheap sending your kids there.

Do you know how much it would have cost when you were there?

When I left, oh hell no.

33:30 I can't, I couldn't give you any figures about that, but in comparison to the high, to the public schools, the high schools, big difference. Nothing did it, nothing done. I think when I first went to King's it was around 360 pounds a year for a boy in junior house, that's for three terms. There are books and all that,

34:00 tutorials, other things are stacked on top of that. So you had no change out of a four and a quarter anyway, hundred, I would think, in 1937. God knows what it is now. I mean I haven't got any of the, they sent me these books, you know the place is, it's mostly a huge quantity of people from overseas are there because this is where a lot of money is.

Were there any overseas students when you were there?

34:30 Not many. They were unusual.

Where would they have been from?

Oh, China, New Guinea, Philippines, those sort of places. But not like it is now. You find, if I could find it, the book, you know the top five hundred …

Oh, that's okay, we can find it at some point.

You know the top ones there these days are the overseas kids.

What was the actual boarding house like when you were there?

Oh,

35:00 pretty big. There were, I was in junior house which was the old Government House. The floors were all, in the dormitories were all scrubbed, you know, with a white board. You'd never go in there with shoes on, not allowed. Everything was scrupulously clean and was beautifully kept and maintained. We had a matron who was a dear old soul and

35:30 she used to look after us very well and she was a kind woman. There's a picture of her, a picture there. She was good to us. It wasn't a very big school then, you see, it was only a small school. Now it's thousands.

How many students would it have been when you were there?

Oh, 13 or 14 hundred I think there would have been, but it's, you know, big, it's now, big time now and it's very, very different. But I think possibly the

36:00 thing that I most enjoyed half the time at school was a) playing sport, I loved sport, and b) I met some, three people that have been my friends all my life and now we're all falling off the log, that's wrong isn't it? So, those two things are, I think are pretty important. They loved sport, enjoyed that, it was great. I was not a brilliant score, academically.

36:30 I just got enough, you know, four Bs and a lower to get through, going to university, which was lucky. I had to work damn hard when I got there to stay in. When I came out of the navy and went in to university there were 810, I think, were in first year, biggest year that the university had ever seen. And out of that 810, the original 810, 96 passed the finals six years later, all the

37:00 rest fell out.

Do you know why that was, that it was such a big intake?

Yeah, because they all had all these ex-servicemen coming in, war was just over. That's why it was big. They had to take them all but what they did is just raise the pass level so, you know, the pass was no longer just a pass, a pass was a distinction, more than a credit, more than a pass. It was a distinction. You had to have a very high level.

So what sport did you play at King's?

37:30 Oh, well probably rowing and football.

And where were the rowing sheds?

On the Nepean River. On the Nepean and also we had sheds down at a place called, on the Parramatta River called, oh dear, it's escaped me, I've forgotten. But we had, and still have, sheds on the Parramatta River, so the school

38:00 rows there. But the big races were on the Nepean. It's a little bay, not a particularly attractive bay but we had a good boat shed there. I loved rowing. Rowing, I thought, was a wonderful sport. Have you ever done any rowing? No?

Were you in 8s or 4s or …?

I started off in 8s and finished in 8s, yeah, 8s. 8s I was in. And it's a,

38:30 very much a togetherness thing because you kind of, you know, you've got to be, because it doesn't work out if you're not all together. It's harmony. Up here and …

So these days the rowing coaches are in a speed boat alongside the boat, what happened back then?

They were still there. Still think they've got coaches go alongside the boat because they can see whether each, they can get a better view

39:00 of what's going on in the boat, being a little behind the boat and seeing the faces and the bodies and the activities of the oarsman.

But when you were there?

They had, most of them, they didn't have many because they were short of petrol, see it was war time and it was very hard to get petrol for power boats then. Petrol was rationed. You've never had to live through petrol rationing, but it's awful. Anyway.

39:30 But I started by saying I don't remember much about kindergartens, although I remember going to them and Mum coming to pick me up in beautiful coloured dresses that she used to wear and we used to walk home together. That was via home and then, you know, the boarding school and all the rest of it, I remember that and university and, well, university was the final pinnacle of the whole business

40:00 and I don't consider that I'm particularly brilliant but I really wanted to, really wanted to graduate in medicine. I, not because my father was a barrister and my sister followed in his footsteps as some people thought. I didn't want, I had no time for law and I still haven't, I think they're a pack of scum, but I had a brother-in-law who's a doctor and I thought the world of him. He

40:30 really was my father and I'm glad I did what I did. I'm glad I achieved what I did too because it wasn't too easy to do and I've had a wonderful, life, I really have. I've travelled extensively, I've worked in many hospitals, all over the place. I could give you a list of them, that'll keep you quiet for a while.

Tape 3

00:30 **Do you remember hearing about the war starting?**

In Sydney? Yeah. Yes, we can remember vividly. Mum had a, Mum was living in a place, in a guest house, well it was really Rushcutter's Bay. Well, it wasn't Rushcutter's, but overlooking, Rose Bay Gardens was the name for the place. I was home from school

01:00 and it was a weekend and we had a, Mum had a little radio in the room that she lived in and rented and it suited her. She hadn't the housework to do and, you know, was looked after and everything. Anyway, the things had been rumbling on towards war and suddenly Mum said, "Now you must listen to this." And it

01:30 was, can't remember it. First of all it was [Neville] Chamberlain [British Prime Minister] and he was sort of pushing the war, 'no war in our time' [his conciliatory 'peace in our time' speech, 1938] business, but when Winston Churchill came into the picture it was a different thing and he, I think it was he who announced in straight talk that as

02:00 from, 'Due to the behaviour of the German nation and as from this time, Greenwich Mean Time, we were now at war with Germany.' I've forgotten what else he said, some sort of encouraging things like, 'Every man must do his duty,' type of thing. And it was a disturbing speech, and in fact there are some parts of it I wish I could remember because they were very much

02:30 typical Churchillian announcement, and that's the first time I knew about war. I've forgotten how old I was. I couldn't, must have been in my late teens.

What sort of impact do you think that might have had on you?

03:00 Well, it meant that you, for those who were old enough to realise that things were going to be changing, a lot of people were going to be called up, a lot of people would volunteer, and in the case of Australia I think we can say more of the volunteer side than the calling up because such was the camaraderie of the Australian population, which was a very united one at that time, but it was part and parcel of the way you lived, that's what you did. So, I think the response of Churchill's call to arms was,

03:30 had an immense response on, I don't, I wasn't there, I was at boarding school but I was told, you know, in places where they had facilities for taking service names and things, like in city, in the central part of the city near the post office in Sydney, you know, the polling booths, not the polling booths, the booths, were just inundated with

04:00 people trying to sign up and long, long queues occurred just in no time and they'd go there all day and they'd queue all day. It was an immense response. So, I don't think anybody was, thought that there was any course left to take.

Did you get an impression of your mother's opinion of war breaking out?

04:30 Oh, yes. Well Mum had lost Dad and I was the only son and naturally Mum looked at me. She must have thought, well, you know, this was 1939, 'Yes, he's too young. He'll never go all that distance.' I think she settled to that philosophy which probably made it a lot

05:00 easier for her, and I've never asked her about it. Well, as time went by, you know, and various things happened, and things got steadily worse in some ways, and I got older, and eventually as time rolled on and the war started to take its toll, the time came in when I was seriously

05:30 thinking of joining up and a whole lot of us at school were thinking the same way. We, some of us had ideas about the army, some the navy, some the air force and the thing that's happened to me, I've always been keen on boats, I've loved boats all my life and the navy appealed to me. I,

06:00 and then, I had a lovely bloke, I won't get too deep into family but he was a navy bloke and Meen thought the world of him and tragically he was killed. Anyway the navy was my pick and I spoke to a few pals at school and we sort of, we had a bit of influence,

06:30 there was a man called Commander Jones and he was in charge of recruiting, and his daughter, Audrey, was well known to a lot of us and, um, he had a bit of a, he ended up getting his GPS [Greater Public Schools] boys into, I'm not trying to be snobbish but this is the way it was, and he was very fond of King's blokes and any bloke who put down King's, well, he going to have, so I,

07:00 a lot of us joined before we left school. We had actually signed up with the navy before we finished at King's and in actual fact, I think I signed up around the 19th of December and on the 6th of January I was in Jervis Bay, the, not Jervis Bay, the naval depot down in Victoria, the Albatross or whatever it's called, I've forgotten now. But I, it was pretty swift. It's all on, but this judge said, 'Two tickets,' you know, when I went

07:30 down. You know, virtually I was just over the fence and a group of us in some of these pictures here did exactly the same thing. It was, and my memory's nowhere as good as it used to be which is a damned pest but you can't help that, oh, they're not all in that picture, but a lot of them, like Dick Punter and

08:00 Sandy and so forth. They're in that thing I wrote anyway. Their names are there. So we all joined up together and went to Flinders and we fitted in well because we were pretty well disciplined anyway, you know, it was no problem to us taking orders from people.

Can you give us that story that you told us at morning tea about going to the naval depot on meeting the petty

08:30 **officer?**

Yes, that was, well I was at Flinders Naval Depot and a group of us went down to have a look in the gym because our sergeant, that's the person in charge of us, not a master but sergeant and overall disciplinarian of the school itself. He had been a PTI [Physical Training Instructor], and a very good one. He'd been invalided out of the navy for asthma and he'd taken the job at

09:00 King's and he'd been there for many years and a group of us, Dick Fathow and Austin and who else was there? Johnny Paradise, Geoff Abeman, we all went down to the gym to go and find a, find this picture of Andrews. So we go into the gym and we don't really know our way around and we see on the wall, on the far side there, whole lots of pictures, so we make fire for these and there's no-one in the gym really except a couple of chaps practising on bars or something.

09:30 Anyway, we had a look at the pictures and we were there looking all over the place and suddenly this authoritative voice comes up behind us and he yells, you know, typical navy, "What the bloody hell are you doing here? Loitering, loitering, loitering that's what you're doing," they love that word 'loitering' and I said, "Well, I don't, we were," and someone said, "Well, we're not loitering. We're looking for the picture of Sergeant Andrews. He was a PTI who trained

10:00 here and he was in charge of physical training instruction and lots of other things with the school we'd

come from in Sydney." "Oh! Oh, you're Andrews' boys. Oh, Andrews' boys are you? Oh, good. How's Andrews?" "Oh, pretty well, considering." "Good, good, good." So, a couple of other people who were standing off from this conversation who were PTIs too, he said, "Look after these lads. Look after these

10:30 lads," turned around and walked away. And they did too. They were, you know, they were most helpful. Took us for a bit of a trip around the gym, showed us where all the bits and pieces, how to climb, and they had rope climbing, you didn't just go up 10 foot, they went up, you could see them, it was 20 foot high. Making us, you know, doing this, making you learn to climb heights, get over the top and come back the other side.

Were there any sorts of cadets at school?

Yes. They were military cadets and when the

11:00 war came we had another type who were RAF and they, I just can't think what they were called at the moment but they had a, oh no it just won't come to me at the moment. But a lot of the fellows who were air force inclined forced and joined this contingent and they wore, and they used to wear a special sort of air force-like

11:30 uniform when they were on parade, and a lot of people did join the air force.

Did you have any interest in the college cadets?

No, not much. I was a sergeant in the cadet corps. but I was, as I've always had, had a passion for the sea all my life. I've started off in canoes and gone a long way from that.

So the cadets you were involved in were the army cadets?

Army, yes and I was a sergeant in the corps.

What sort of training did you do in that?

It was

12:00 strictly military. You know, I was in charge of a platoon, which is about 28 something, 30 men, 28 boys and we, we started off with .303s but they took them all away from us because they went to military and then we ended up with .310s but were not easy to carry and so that was our, our uniform was strictly military. You couldn't, if you have a look at our pictures you can

12:30 see how military it is because there's a picture up there with me in it, Sergeant Rollison of the cadet corps. and the actual uniform is really a Crimea-styled uniform and we wore that through seven days a week, winter and summer, irrespective of heat. It was very hot in Parramatta sometimes. It was a military orientated school and all your buttons had to be done up, that was the thing, if a sergeant saw you with your button undone you'd

13:00 get a pack drill and I can assure you it was no fun getting a pack drill on a Friday afternoon because you can be a very wet, sweaty fellow by the time you're finished on the Friday afternoon.

Can you tell us about the .310s?

310s?

The rifles you got after the .303s?

The .310, yes it's a funny little thing. I think it was around about the Boer War time. It's, he had a, action was, lever and you sent a bullet down

13:30 through a groove and pulled it shut. We didn't do much, excuse me, firing with them. The firing we did on the range was all 303s but they were our drill live because there were more of those around and, you know, it was still quite an adequate rifle, shouldering arms and presenting arms and standing at ease and standing at attention, all of military-type manoeuvres you do with rifles.

14:00 You couldn't bayonet on them, or I didn't. I don't know, there might have been facilities for a bayonet but I never saw one.

Did you ever go bush?

With the cadets? Yes, yes we used to go bush. Mostly with intention of elevating oneself. I went to an army instillation. I was just a,

14:30 virtually nothing, one stripe or something. So, I finished that with three stripes. I went to this thing, I didn't make officer material. I had a minor contretemps with somebody who was out there and I sort of blotted my copy book in a bit, pathetic little manner which cost me, in fact, considerably, becoming a lieutenant, I became a sergeant with

15:00 yeah. It was just a petty issue. Bit of, over something quite ridiculous. We were wandering around one night and there was a game of two-up going on so we wandered over and all these blokes drinking out of beer, with their bottles cut off, you know, the hot, hot wire put on the bottle, takes off, you've got a

huge beer receptacle, grind it down with sandpaper, you can drink out of it. So it was pretty rough and was

15:30 we were out of bounds, that's it. We shouldn't have been there. And this damn fellow caught me and a couple of others. We weren't drinking. We were just watching the two-up, we weren't playing and he gave us a dressing down and pulled us in to order and told us to get back to our quarters and never be seen there again. That cost me a commission, he putting in the complaint about me, me being there in P6 out of bounds and that was that. But

16:00 the, the actual mediation of Gs and everything, was the standard thing, you know, pretty physical kind of training, running, you know, carrying big packs and this sort of stuff. It was just pretty routine. It wasn't any trouble to me. I was very fit then.

Had you ever wondered that if perhaps you had have become a lieutenant you may have chosen the army over the navy?

No, I wouldn't have. No, no. I was navy bound. I loved sailing. I had a little VJ during

16:30 the war and used to keep it in Double Bay, just when I lived in Darling Point, I'd walk down the stairs, it was in Double Bay and I had another friend Sandy Clease and he and I used to sail all over the place and he'd have a special wartime permit to sail on the harbour. We were allowed to.

How did you get that?

Oh, had to make an application to the War Office. You just, it was a little piece of thing you put in between celluloid and sealed and carried with you so you could produce it

17:00 and say you were licensed to travel on the harbour on this boat.

Were they hard to get or was it just a formality?

No, no it was a formality. It was, it was a regulation of using a vessel on Sydney Harbour waters for pleasure or whatever and everybody, even going out fishing, was required to carry such an identification tag really. It was a lovely little boat. You ever heard of VJs? Little twelve

17:30 foot. They had two, wharfies junior and wharfies senior. They were out in Vaucluse, a company, they still make them, good little boats.

Are they a skiff?

They're a skiff but they're unsinkable. You can right them by standing on the rudder and holding a forestay, not the forestay, how is, going up the mast.

Did you race them?

Yes, oh very keen on racing. They had good curry in Vaucluse. They were very, very popular.

18:00 They're still around but they are much more popular boats now, fibreglass has come in and they're all the gizmos and whizbos and whiz bang stuff that you've got these days. It's just a different ball game.

A few of the chaps have told us that prior to war breaking out in Europe their teachers, some of the teachers, like social study classes and things, actually talk about Hitler and warn them of the menace that was starting to develop in Europe. Can you remember anything like that at school?

There, the occasional

18:30 master used to mention the war and I can't recall anything. There was a funny old man called Doc Wade who was a cleric but he was also a master of chemistry and it isn't quite in relation to what you're asking me but it makes me think of something that someone said in the wartime. He suddenly came up, he took

19:00 this, he used to take our chemistry classes, he said, "Now boys, I've got something to tell you this morning. I want you to take good note of it." So we all pricked up our ears. He was a prist too, not a priest, a cleric of some description, wore a dog collar and he, Church of England type. He said, "Now I'm going to tell you something important. There's something you've got to learn something about. It's new, very new. I've only just seen something of it myself and it's

19:30 stuff called plastic." He said, "We've never had it before," and he said, "but this is material which is going to take over the world," and of course he was right. You know, of course he was right, and if we'd only taken an earful of what he'd said we all could possibly have finished up much better off. No, but talking about the actual things that were happening in the war, no, it was not discussed by the teachers very often, even calamities. They, they're,

20:00 see we hadn't ready access to radios and stuff. There was no, nothing, no visual things like television, hadn't been heard of. Most of us were surviving with a very inferior little crystal set, you know, where you adjust the wire on the piece of cadmium or whatever the bright metal is and you got a little aerial and you got earphones and you listen in to a radio station

20:30 when you can tune in to it. Very, very catch as catch can kind of thing. No, there were no radios. It's not like the plethora of stuff that's around today. I mean the whole world has changed so much.

What about when war did break out. Did the masters talk about it at all?

Yes, they did. They didn't talk about it in any great depth, particularly to the junior classes. Maybe I wasn't senior and quite senior

21:00 enough but the class I was in, well it wasn't two years more I was in before I joined up, I suppose, or a year and a half. No, they point out or suggest anything or all they were interested in getting you started, getting us the best pass we could for getting a good leaving certificate. I think they concentrated on that more than the aspect of the, the future in the services. I think they also knew that a very huge, large

21:30 numbers of us joined up. It was, I've got my jolly book somewhere handy on this joining up. I mean it was just vast because the, the young blokes just signed on and that was the end of it. See this is one, I had a dear friend who was a master and he,

22:00 I got pretty pally with this bloke. I've forgotten his name now, isn't it awful. He's not at King's any more and he instituted for this, PGM, that's the bloke. He was the master of King's and he got to work and had this thing put together which is a, he advertised, not advertised it.

22:30 He wrote to all the members who had been in the service, you know, the percentages of the school who were eligible, it was almost 95 percent joined up. And he asked us to write some little bit about the, our own experiences in the war and somewhere or other I put mine in, it's in here somewhere. It doesn't matter very much. Yes, there was a bit of this sort of thing but this is in 6th form and, you know, he had this

23:00 printed and it was issued out at a meeting we had together which many of us went to and, everything seems to be in the wrong place. So, anyway, so we had masters who actually were actively thinking about this and at the end it was all that they said, how many of us had joined up, which was

23:30 enormous considering the size of the school, and many of us had written little bits, stories about what had happened to us during the war and they were scaled down a bit or given a bit of a help along and printed.

What about Gus's reaction when war broke out?

Gus? Well, dear Gus was dead when war broke out. Gus and my sister got married

24:00 and he, he was a doctor before they were married and they went off to Lord Howe Island. They needed a doctor on Lord Howe Island very, very badly and he went over there and this suited us wonderfully well because Mum and I could get on the Naringa and take a trip over to Lord Howe Island at Christmas time and of course the fishing over there was just magnificent, Gus used to

24:30 organise things for me. He stayed on at Lord Howe Island, he didn't join up. He wasn't a particularly well man anyway but, be that as it may, he didn't join up and he was very necessary on the island because there was no aeroplanes. There was nothing. You couldn't anything. You needed somebody there and he thought, well, a great need to look after the island people.

25:00 But Gus got an acute dose of appendicitis and you see the Naringa used to come round, used to go to Lord Howe Island, she'd be there two or three days, then she'd go and she'd go on to Norfolk Island and she'd be at Norfolk for three days so it would be five to seven days from the time she left Lord Howe to when she went back. Gus wasn't well when she left and when she got back to Lord Howe he was, he

25:30 was critically ill, almost comatose, and they got him on board the boat and she sailed early, got him back, but he died shortly after he arrived in Sydney, and he had a ruptured appendix and died from peritonitis and this in our family was an overwhelming tragedy for me, my

26:00 sister, really it was dreadful and Mum, of course, and me, because I thought the world of him. He was my father really.

Can you talk a little bit about that? The father figure that he'd become for you?

Well, Dad never had much time for me. I was too small to be much use to, to be much fun when he was alive. He was much more, my sister was a lot older and more intelligent. I was

26:30 not, you know, I couldn't play cricket like he could and do things like that and I had to, would have had to have done many years of growing up to be, to get him to father this one but with Gus, when he met me, it was the time when Mum was so very ill in Billyard Avenue, Elizabeth Bay. He, he was such a help to our family and to Mum

27:00 and then, of course, they fell in love with each other and it was very, very real and I don't think there was any untoward reason for him taking a liking to me because he did just like me and that was it and he loved fishing and he knew I did and he taught me everything that no-one had ever taught me before

27:30 and silly little things that crop up now. I just think that Gus was the most wonderful, wonderful person and he, he was meticulous because in those days you didn't just pull hooks on lines, you had to, they didn't have webs you could thread through and tie a knot of some good and hold with the force. Gut was the thing, there was no nylon. You had to put the hook on the thing and snoot it and pull it through and pull it tight and slide it up on the

28:00 flank, well Gus taught me how to do all those things. One day I was fishing in the lagoon in Lord Howe Island near the, where the guest house is, Williams's place, and I was fishing for garfish and I heard this big swirl in the water and I thought, 'Oh my God, there's a big kingfish, so I got the biggest line Gus had, which was a number 8 chilly blossom, all gut of course, there was no

28:30 nylon then. I got the biggest hook out and I went for three huge half inches on it and pulling the sides up, I said, "We've got the biggest gale I had," and then threw it over and it only hit the water, 'whack', this great big fish took it of course, I had no anchor on it and it's tugging me with this kingfish. Finally, I settled it down and finally the real struggle, releasing the bow, I got it over the side and into the boat and rows in and the word got to Gus that I caught a,

29:00 this very sick patient he was looking after, the word got to him that I caught this big kingfish near William's guest house. Now over he came and he said, "Oh, what a beautiful fish." I picked it up. I've got a picture of it somewhere, it's nearly as big as I am, you know. I've got a great big smile on my face. And he said, "What's this?" And he picked up the hook and, you see, I'd been in such a hurry that I'd threaded the hook through the loop and put three half inches in it, pulled it as tight as I possibly could and I whacked the thing through the

29:30 carpy and belted it. He said, "This is disgraceful". So, you learn lessons all your life. Yes, I loved Gus.

Did he influence your decision to go into medicine?

Not really, no. No, no, and I think he probably, his, he was such a totally delightful

30:00 person. He was charming, Gus. He was a very, very good doctor and I really hadn't thought very much about what I was going to do at that stage. Possibly along the lines afterwards, Gus had this ruptured appendix and died and many years went by before I got, and went to university or anything, my sister had married again and she married a

30:30 British officer who was another doctor and lovely, lovely bloke too, Paul Etherington. He wasn't the, he was a doctor in the RAN [Royal Australian Navy] and doctors in the RAN are obviously, well you know, really superior, but he wasn't quite like that because he was Irish, he was a bit more modified, but he was a lovely guy but he wouldn't be the fellow to get his hands dirty with a garfish trying to catch a mackerel.

So Gus's death must

31:00 **have had a terrible impact on you?**

Big impact on me. I couldn't believe, come to terms with it for a long time. I took a long, long while to get over that. But I'd had, I'd been lucky to have the association with me because my father had died so long ago. It was a very big gap.

Would his death have had a bigger impact on you, say, than your father's?

Gus's death probably had a bigger impact on me. I didn't

31:30 understand much about Dad's death, I was too young. I was four or something like that, five maybe. I really didn't understand it. I didn't understand all these people coming and going and everybody crying and, I knew Dad had died but I'd never seen him because he had to be taken to hospital, he was so sick, and I was too young to understand the implications of death really.

32:00 But, except the effect that it had on my mother particularly, and that upset me more than the fact that Dad had died. Sounds funny way of putting it, doesn't it? But it's true.

You said earlier you didn't go to your dad's funeral. Do you know why that was?

No, I didn't. Mum didn't want me to go to the funeral and I'm glad she didn't. I didn't want to go. I never said I wouldn't go or

32:30 anything but Mum was sensible in so much as she thought it wasn't a good idea for me to go. I don't think she was well enough to go herself. She was, had sort of what's termed in those days was a sort of nervous breakdown and it was just too much for her. No, I didn't go to his funeral.

And when Gus died, did your mother and

33:00 **sister appreciate the impact that it had on you?**

Yes, they did. We were all virtually in mourning. Oh, I don't think we used the word 'in mourning', we weren't draped in black and weeping. I mean a feeling of immense loss, something that, a spot that can't be filled, and I think that lasted for a very long while with Mum and my sister and myself,

33:30 and other tragic things happened but I don't want to talk about that.

And did that effect your school life?

For a while it did. I was never academically brilliant. I was no Nobel prize winner but I only achieved what I've achieved in school and later on at university and later post-university and

34:00 in other, in my own fields that I've chosen, as purely be applying myself totally and giving my all to it, because I'm not bright. I'm not one of these sort of whiz kid type fellow. I worked dreadfully hard to get through medicine. I used to work with various friends of mine. We used to have little meetings, some of them are in those pictures still, and we used to set

34:30 exams for each other. We used to work horrendous hours swotting because it was so hard. There were 810 of us sat for first year medicine and six years later 96 of us passed the finals. So, the other seven hundred and whatever it is, they all failed. They all either failed and left and got out of medicine or they were repeating years if they could get a second year repeat. If they didn't get a second repeat

35:00 and failed again they were out. Because you see the bolus of medicine was like this at the entrance end and it had the facilities to look after that end, that's all. Because they hadn't got the training facilities to look after people, they could look after a fairly big second year but third year was struggling, fourth year, where they were doing anatomy and dissecting and this sort of thing, and at the end of third year, you know, they just hadn't got the materials to provide to do the service that was

35:30 necessary to graduate a doctor in those days. So, you know, it was hard lesson. I had a lovely little win a while ago. I went to my fiftieth reunion and there were very few women in our year, which was good, and I said, I was listening to this charlatan, he was in our year. He was addressing the gathered

36:00 people who'd been, fifty years since we graduated it was. Helen Oxsquad from Sydney and she said, "I have studied with great interest the increase in the feminine content of the year." No-one's saying very much and she said, "And now I'm delighted to tell you". And with great pride she pushed her chest out and said, "There are now," she didn't have much of a chest to push out

36:30 anyhow – I'm being very nasty – she said, "And now I'm delighted to tell you nearly fifty per cent of the year are women and graduates of this university." And I stood up and I said, "And God help us," and sat down. And there was a deathly bloody hush all through. I don't know if people were very religious or not, I'd taken the Lord's name in vain, I meant what I said and she hated me for it.

37:00 I had too much to do with women doctors. There were some damn good women doctors. I've known some, I would say excellent doctors. But the majority of women doctors are purely in it for the money or the kudos that it gives them. Talking about anaesthetists, they think they're going to get an easy life as an anaesthetist but as an anaesthetist you don't get an easy life. I ought to know because

37:30 I've been doing it for over fifty years and I, what's that, a marker? So, anyway the score about them is that I'm not terribly adept to sort of getting along with them.

Righto, well we'll get back to that later. If we can just back up a bit, back to the war. Were you still at King's when you heard about Pearl

38:00 **Harbour?**

Was I at King's when I heard about Pearl Harbour? God, was I? I can't remember. I honestly don't remember. I've got a very bad memory.

That's all right. Can you recall hearing about …?

Oh, yeah, of course I can. Yeah, hearing about it, yeah.

Do you know how …?

But we were something, we were going. See, I actually. I've got it all

38:30 written down somewhere. Where I was and where I went.

Oh, that's not …

And you know the, from the time I joined up I wasn't very long in training and I've just forgotten what thing but it's not my list, on my certificate, that tells everything. You know that, this is my bench post if I can just put my hands on it. I showed it to you a little while ago.

Oh, that's your naval …

Naval thing.

39:00 '45 was my sort of prime year in the navy. I joined the ship in '45 at the very beginning, January. I left the

39:30 ship at the very end of '45. I left the navy too in '45. But in that time, oh my godfather, I did some travel. We started off, well you don't want to hear about this at the moment I suppose but I'll talk to you about

it later, but I'll just try and do it on sequence as it happened, but I've been trying to do it with the atlas and the vast areas that we've covered, we just, destroyers

40:00 always on the move. See, one thing that we were extraordinarily good at because we did so much of it was transferring things, personnel from one ship to another, and if you've got a thing like an aircraft carrier and you're trying to shoot the line up to it, it's quite difficult and, well you have to. This is the guts of it. Will I tell you this now or …?

40:30 **Well, we'll probably get to that later.**

Tape 4

00:32 **Can you remember, when you heard about Pearl Harbour, what impact that had on you?**

Well, I was lucky. It was one of the luckiest streaks that happened to me, that when I joined the ship I was given the job of dispatch boat crew and I had a bloke who I admired enormously who was the coxswain of the boats, Steve Luckson, he's

01:00 still just alive, and a nice guy, who's name escapes me, who was the stern hand and I was the bowman and we did a huge amount of progressing and moving around on the ground and seeing more than anybody else on board because we were always on the move going someplace, taking dispatches to the officers in the field and all these sorts of things. And it so happened, just to tell you one little quick story, that we travelled

01:30 and Lake Dear around Tokyo Bay, we'll just stick to that for a moment, and it so happened we were at anchor right next to Yokosuka which is the place where they were manufacturing the midget submarines, like the ones they sent in to Sydney Harbour and I'd actually had a little tiny experience of those because we were all courses that lead to our house in the strongest part of Baker House at the King's School, Parramatta after the explosion went off

02:00 when they fired that torpedo and hit the ferry, because they missed the Chicago, all those years ago with the midget subs [submarines]. So the midget subs interested me enormously and also it gave me an opportunity of seeing what Tokyo was like and I can tell you that it was like the biblical story. You could look for miles. I had, when I used to give these lectures to these people for PB day for the schools, I had some wonderful slides, none of which I've got now because the cyclone

02:30 took the roof off and ruined them all, but you just looked for miles and there was nothing but rubble. There was practically nothing standing, you know. They had shelled and shelled these great big ships just fairly close, in shelling Japan and particularly Tokyo, Yokohama. Christ almighty, it was just rubble, absolute rubble and the little Jap subs, you know, they were pretty knocked about too. There was an awful lot to see and I, having this

03:00 piece of luck to be able to get ashore as often as I did and to see so much more of Japan than the majority of the people did.

Can you tell me Rollo, a bit more about the midget subs in Sydney Harbour, what you remember of that?

Well, we were in boarding school in Parramatta and it was night time. There was this very audible big bang suddenly and the master suddenly turned up in the

03:30 four dormitories of the building that I was in and hustled us out and told us to bring our blankets and raced us downstairs into a big corridor which is a long corridor, which was on the ground floor and probably the strongest part of the house. So, all the kids were taken out of dormitories there and brought down and put in this alley-way with our blankets wrapped around. And this big bang had been very audible in Parramatta

04:00 and of course we didn't know what had happened, but the Midget subs had got into the harbour, that one of them had actually got as far up, nearly, as Garden Island and looking at Garden Island through a periscope in terror and horror of the fact that you're going to run out of oxygen or power pretty soon. He thought, probably, 'I must shoot, I must fire, I must do my duty,' and he did, and he shot at Garden Island. Or he might have shot at the Chicago, might have released the torpedo at the Chicago, I

04:30 vouch for that. If he did, he only missed it by about twenty feet, the bow. They worked the angles out and hit the ferry, Cutterfall, which had about a hundred and twenty ratings who all went to heaven or wherever they were designed to go and noise alerted us all that way inland. So we spent the whole night in there, in this dormitory, and in the morning we were released and of course it was in the papers, what had happened, and there was great

05:00 hubbub going on in the harbour because there were several subs they hadn't located and they knew they were in there somewhere. One of them was detonated in the, they had a big net across the bay, the harbour, and there were two open places, one on the east and one on the western side of the net, it

approximately comes from. And you could pull the net on things, big machines, and open one side and let the ship through. And it is thought that one of those subs got in under a ship

05:30 and, in fact, two of them. We will never know because the third one got tangled in the mesh on the other side and was finally blown up there by a local volunteer coastguard boat with a small charge of gelignite, made a big hole in the net as well as the sub. So, we just heard the big bang and the big bang, we discovered what it was all

06:00 about later. There were other bangs. There was one night where a few shells lobbed in Rose Bay, only two or three but they made a hell of noise. We could hear them at Parramatta and the same thing happened. We got raced into the best shelter available, and those were the only times that we were really ruffled by, because there was no aerial bombing and that was the worst we saw.

06:30 **Did these occasions create fear or excitement among the lads?**

I think it was probably more excitement than fear. It was too far away to be really worried. We had a reasonable amount of, you know, it was a long way away. It was fifteen miles from Sydney to Parramatta.

Did you ever get to go and see any of the damage?

Yes. Yes, I had been to, I've never examined the damage in Rose Bay. I don't know where the shell fell. But I have

07:00 been to Canberra a few times and taken great interest in these Midget subs which were the same as the ones I saw being built in Yokohama. And of course they were pretty brave blokes you've got to get in, there's only a one-way passage.

Another thing I just wanted to talk to you about was the feeling in Australia at that time. Was it still very much for the motherland, the attachment to England?

Oh, I think it was totally.

07:30 I don't, I think Australia was very bound in its attachment to the United Kingdom as you might call it now. But to England, there'll always be an England, it still rings true to me, and never will be another one. I do think that the massive migration of lots of people has been a very good thing for Australia

08:00 because it's brought in other people to a good lifestyle, which many have benefited from, not only themselves but benefited the Australians too. I think it's a bilateral switch. It's a, you know, the country's far too big to be in peers with this and now it's getting too big for the arable ground that we have available to make a utilisation of. I think that if,

08:30 you see, costs are getting astronomical and everything's taken the same way as the big cities of Europe. But we've still got a lot of land. It's not actually, it's very liveable in, and then they get the good times and bad times and this is one of our big problems in Australia, you can have bad times too. A lot of my relatives have been country people. Two of my

09:00 uncles that own huge properties and massive places, they've had their bad times. One of my uncles, Uncle John Connochie owned a place called Nappamary. He founded it. He went out there himself on a horse, one saddle, one rifle and revolver and he rode all the way up past the, up the South Australian border, past the border to

09:30 Queensland and up in to this area, easy way to find. It's where the Daintree [Rainforest] is, up there. So, he took this, this is his own holding and, God knows what, three thousand acres or something, I don't know, it's massive. And he developed this all on his own. That's, he had a lot of trouble from the Abos for a while but they eventually, he was very kind to them. He didn't treat them unkindly and finally they came

10:00 around to his way and were very much on his side. He got a lot of help from them. He made stockmen out of them. They helped him build fences. He was a massive man, an incredible man, Uncle John, really was.

So this feeling that you had for the United Kingdom, Australia being a daughter of the mother country sort of thing, was that very much instilled in you at a very young age?

Yeah it was. Mum was born in England

10:30 and she came out on a sailing ship and Mum was very, very much tied with England and Grandmother, and my grandmother. And she, I suppose that had an influence on me, yes. I loved going to England. I didn't do it for many, many years,

11:00 it was post-war when I went there. But no, I think there was, there still is to me a very real bond with the British.

Did that continue, that sort of instillation of that at King's?

Yes. It did. Yeah, I didn't like, well I didn't have to sort of put up with it, you know there was all having a go at the Poms and this sort of

11:30 stuff, but I didn't have any truck with that. I wasn't going to fight over it.

What about, was there any sort of political alliance at King's?

No, not really. Most of them were pretty, well I suppose if you want to make it utterly transparent, pretty blue-blooded back ground, just edit that.

12:00 Blue blooded background.

And what sort of other religious upbringing had you had?

Well, the Church of England was very strong at the King's School, Parramatta. My father was a Catholic but he didn't sort of follow the Catholic idiom very much. The

12:30 interesting thing, he, this is a little aside. His father married one of the McLauchlans. Married one of the McLauchlans and they were Catholics and, you know, this could have been a great blue and she was up the McLauchlans one way or another but he didn't care for this one bit.

13:00 But then it boiled over to nothing at all. But Dad I don't think ever practised the Catholic religion although his father was sort of that way inclined because of the, he was a Catholic and the McLachlan girl of course was anything but that. There was, you know how funny, stupid, silly family things like this go on, and I ran in to McLachlan here one day, young what's his name? Brian McLachlan

13:30 isn't it? He's the politician who was a fairly erudite lad, he can't be because of the Blackhawk disaster. Remember that Blackhawk disaster? We just met in the car park of the general hospital where he had been to see some of the messes that got out of the aircraft, pretty nasty. And we just sort of chatted away and kept it very, very superficial but I could feel deep down under all this that he was aligned in some way with the

14:00 Gatwick side of them, and thinking I didn't really want to become involved in it at all so I didn't have much to do with him. Anyway.

So did Mum and Dad go to church?

No, Mum used to go to, I think, we used to go to the Anglicised church. I went to the Anglicised churches all my life, boarding school, King's and St. Peter's, Anglican.

So, probably most of your religious instruction would

14:30 **come from King's?**

Came from King's, yes, but I didn't really conform. I didn't want to be confirmed. Can't quite really think why I didn't want to be but anyhow, it was something that happened. And the chaplain, who I liked very much, was quite concerned about the fact that I didn't want to take confirmation but I said, "I think I get along all right without it,"

15:00 and I have.

So, before you decided to go into the navy, what were you thinking about your future?

Well, I, the war was still on and I didn't think about a future at that stage. All I wanted to do was join up. This might sound as though, if I can talk about, paraphrase, patriot. I'm not that.

15:30 Alright, I'm saying what I believe I felt. We all, that mob of people, you know, and these blokes around here, we all had the same idea. We wanted to leave school and join up. A few of them felt obliged, in fact we were told that they could not join up, and you know the, sometimes the effects of this was fairly disastrous and sometimes the effect was tragic to some of my friends who were not allowed to join up.

16:00 But the majority of us wanted to and that's what we did.

Do you remember what the reasons behind that were?

Well, I suppose we got, felt that it was the patriotic thing to do, it was the right thing to do, it was to help the country stay in our own hands, all those sort of simple things that schoolboys do think. There wasn't too much politics in it.

For yourself, was that patriotism for Australia or for the mother country?

I didn't,

16:30 didn't know much about the mother country then, so it was for Australia. I only much, much later in my life went to England and spent a lot of time in England doing post-graduate degrees and working in various British hospitals and things. And then, I must admit, my feelings for the stamina and the Brits and what they'd been through, because I was there pretty jolly early you know, just post-war and Britain, oh God love them, the place was a shambles. Rotterdam, of course we

17:00 came to Rotterdam and we crossed to Shrewsbury. In Rotterdam, you know the destruction and that

wonderful memorial they've got, this man holding his arms out and the whole of his chest and abdomen is gone symbolising the heart of the city has been removed. Oh, it was impressive. I, you know, I've got a pretty soft

17:30 spot for the Brits and all those poor buggers who went through that, pardon the French.

Can you remember hearing about Darwin being bombed?

Yes. I have been, I've been to Darwin. There was a Midget sub, not a Midget sub, a proper submarine. It was severely injured and couldn't surface, couldn't dive. So it was a sitting duck for anybody who, aircraft, Japanese aircraft bomb men who could see them,

18:00 sink it with ease. So, we'd been naughty boys on HMAS Norman, we'd been very naughty boys. We'd been playing football on Rara Island, which we'd been ordered to do and I do mean we'd been ordered to do. A British, we had a captain, he was a bit of a difficult man, and there was an Australian called Red who ran aground on Manus Island and

18:30 they called us on the radio and called our captain and asked, 'Could we field a football team against them?' And the captain, being the sort of bloke he was, said, "Yes, we'll play you on your own ground," which I think is a bit nasty, but anyway, the ground was bulldozed coal, four forty gallon drums, and anyway, we played on this thing. We had blood running down our

19:00 legs and, oh Jeez, it was just a shocker, and then a fight started between the British and the Australians because the boats, Liberty boats, were coming in from the ships to the island pontoon. And the island pontoon had a great big long, long portion and at the end of it a great big area for the boats to come alongside, but those people wanted to get on to the pontoon were wanting to get into the fight and those who were out there wanted to get out of the fight and so they were jumping in the water and swimming to the Liberty boats and getting in that way, absolute

19:30 shocker. And there were some other atrocities that we committed. Oh, yes, it was the night that the, it was VE night, Victory in Europe. We were all given an extra bottle of beer and that created a bit of havoc because they got a bit of an extra, extra mark on me. I didn't drink at all. I used to give my beer ration away. I didn't drink any alcohol at all and

20:00 it so happened that the smart Alecs had a few drinks and, because it was VE, that's Victory in Europe, night, the captains of all the ships in Nannus Rask who were granted dinner by the admiral of the, of this battleship which was in there, or it might have been a big aircraft carrier, but whatever it was, it was big, I can't remember. And these guys got down to work and they got hold of a shell, cartridge shell was about that high,

20:30 and then the shell makes it stand about that high altogether. So, somehow they managed to get these things out of the magazines and get them up into the guns, into the gun on the upper deck and they put a star shell in. You know what a star shell is?

You can explain it actually for people that don't know.

Well, a star shell is a shell that's used to light up an area. It's not explosive, it's got the same charge and goes just the

21:00 same distance and it is a shell, looks just like a shell, but when it gets to a set height, it explodes and disintegrates and a parachute comes out and the parachute's quite big. It's about three or four feet across and it's got – what's that? – magnesium on it, hung on the bottom, that lights up and gives a brilliant light because the magnesium shines into the white of the parachute and it gives you a great big area of light. Well, these fellows

21:30 get this damn star shell and they pull this, they do this manually. They can't get to the proper – and there's an unbelievable explosion in the hull and quiet, dark, you know. And up goes this shell and all of a sudden, 'ping', you know, it opens up and this star shell drifts down over this huge bloody battleship. Our poor captain was sitting there having a celebratory dinner and to think he was probably just quietly taken aside.

22:00 But then the net result of it, there was this damaged sub in Manus and the following morning at five o'clock we were ordered to put to sea and escort this submarine back to Darwin, all the way back to Darwin. So we had to go back to Darwin. We got to Darwin, God it was a mess, there were ships upturned in the harbour, the walls were shot to pieces. There was hardly one thing standing and it was an absolute, absolute disaster. Anybody who ran from their

22:30 post in Darwin had every right to do it. You know those Zeros [fighters] came in at dawn and they just crippled that post completely. They wanted to hit them with .303 as well as they can get, just wasting their bullets.

What can you remember hearing about it as a kid?

Oh, people said that they got some fool of a politician to go up and investigate the case, the assumption that there had been cowardice

23:00 exhibited by some members of the Imperial Force, of Australian Imperial Forces in Darwin during the

raid of the Japanese on this particular day. And it was just a matter of the poor buggers running to get behind a tree, there was no point in trying to shoot at these things with a .303, Zeroes, they just annihilated the place. That was the only thing I heard and I thought it was completely wrong and I think it was a public disgrace that it was

23:30 ever pomegrated. I do, that's my feeling about it.

What sort of effect did Darwin being attack-, the Midget subs in the harbour, the Cantabile, what sort of effect did they have on you?

They were a great worry. We didn't think it would do much, that it would happen again. We had, one effect, it made the people on those nets on the harbour very much more alert.

But you mentioned earlier that the war in Europe, it was so

24:00 **far away you didn't really …**

It was. Yeah, it was so far away.

So it must have really brought it home to you.

It did. It was a real shock because it was right in your backyard, or very close to it, fifteen miles away from it. It was, it was, see we were so isolated here. You think about things that do tweak your memory, you're so far removed from them in, yet they're very real, very real.

24:30 Something else I was going to tell you that tweaked my mind, I wanted to tell you. Probably it's not the right moment to say so but I told you we did a tremendous amount of travelling. We were always travelling somewhere for a specific purpose, and one time, I can't quite remember what month it was, but it was, there was a flying fortress

25:00 and we were at sea somewhere. I think we were on the way to, hang on, we might have been going to Tokyo, I've forgotten. But anyway, we were going somewhere and way up in the air, miles and miles up there was this huge big, big fuselage and I saw this, I had good eyesight then. And I said to a few of my mates, I said, "Look at that

25:30 plane up there. What do you reckon are all those little dots around them?" They said, "The dots are fighters that are accompanying it." I said, "There must be something about to happen up there." Sure was. There was something going to happen all right. That was the bomb, the atomic bomb, that went, they dropped on Japan and then they jumped another one on Hiroshima and they both came from Tinian Island, which is way down the bottom here near Guam, and they went right past us and dropped the atomic bombs

26:00 on their targets and they surely did some damage. They really did. That settled all very quickly.

It must be an incredible thing, in hindsight, to think that you saw the Enola Gay flying over.

Oh, I think it's a, I just think I've been so lucky to have had the experiences that I have had and to be in the places that I have been at times

26:30 when there are things that are a bit, not too good. If you do join up, you join up with a sort of, you don't feel, 'Oh, well I don't want to die,' or it's a good idea not to feel that way anyway. But it's not a paramount thing in your head, you know, even in the worst of time and in the most foul weather or in the most ghastly situations with broken parts of the boat, steering and troubles with anchors that couldn't be brought up and this sort of thing. We were in

27:00 really bad situations, you know, you think it's going to put your all in to it to make sure you survive, not worry about dying. But I saw that things went past us, right over, nearly over the top, because it was on the starboard side going north and very shortly after that Japan caved in.

So, you'd made the decision to go into the navy, did you need your mother's permission?

Yes.

How did you go about that?

She never quibbled.

27:30 She signed that paper, here. She said, "Darling, if you really want to join the navy, I'm totally in agreement with you". That's her signature. She had to sign that. Mary Gladys Rollison.

But she mustn't have been too happy about it.

Oh, no, poor darling, she wasn't. Dad had died, you know, and all the other

28:00 troubles that had happened, wasn't a very happy life for her but it was just sort of, I tried very, very hard to keep in constant touch with her, with mail, that's all we had, no radio communication, couldn't ever speak to her. But she looked forward to my letters which came tolerably regularly with the mail, so that was

28:30 good, and then she was usually pleased to see me come home again.

Did it surprise you that she signed that?

No. She was that sort of a person. And she wouldn't have stopped me going.

What would you have done if she had have said no?

I would have tried to talk her out of it. I think I probably would have been successful, might have taken a bit of time but I would have tried. I loved her very

29:00 much. I wouldn't have hurt her for the world. If it really came down to a total showdown I probably would have said, "Well," you know, "I just can't agree with you but if you're that set upon me not going, well we'll just give it a couple more months and see if we can think about it again then." But there was no need for any of that and I

29:30 admire her for that.

So how did going in, how did all that transpire?

Well, I got called up. I signed on in December and in January I was called down the naval depot and started down in Franklin for training. We all went down to Franklin and we were doing the, all sorts of things happened down there that were

30:00 worth mentioning. The first one was that you got all these injections. You got cholera and small pox and typhus and typhoid, a few other things that are nasty and they were all in the same arm, always the left arm and your left arm was so sore. Came up with a balloon with great bunches of bloof gland under here.

30:30 Some of the instructors who were a little less humoured than normal people were in a really strong position when you were in this state because they know how sore the arm is and they, they've got a swagger stick and just gone, "Swing your arm, laddy." You said, "Oh, you bastard,"

31:00 because it used to hurt like, you were really struggling to get up in to your hammock at night. You've got to grab the sides of the hammock and go, if you were athletic you could do it easy but when you had this arm up, Christ, couldn't get into the hammock. And the other thing about it, of course, it made some of us sick and I was one of the unfortunate ones to whom this happened and I wasn't feeling well. I was feeling woozy, you know,

31:30 feeling nauseated and, we were in a gunnery class. I can remember it as if I'm standing here, sitting here. We were in the gunnery class and this officer came in, everybody stood up, rigid attention. I stood up and I fell in a heap on the floor, 'bang', unconscious. And so the officer looked down on me as if he was looking at a piece of offal and said, "What do you have people here like this for?"

32:00 an officer remark or something of that nature. So, I finally regained consciousness and the gunner who was giving us classes was a decent bloke and he had a fair good idea what was wrong and he said, "Listen, just get up and get up on all fours," and he said, "Take your cap and get yourself over to the hospital, get yourself over to the hospital." The hospital was a mile away

32:30 over playing fields, and to get across to the hospital you were going into a howling south-easterly gale. It was blowing like blazes and pouring with rain. So, off I went on my own, no-one went with me, across these playing fields, and I kept on falling over and vomiting and picking myself up and I was so weak and I just got there. I really thought I was not going to make it.

33:00 I was virtually crawling at the end of it. I got to the hospital and they grabbed me at the doors of the hospital and dragged me in and threw me in the bed and put a drip up on me and resuscitated me with some fluids, gave me some anti-vomiting tablets and stuff. I didn't want to stay in hospital. It was the last thing in the world that I wanted to do because if you say in there for more than four days you lose your class, you lose all your friends and you've got to start up another class that's just starting,

33:30 and I thought, 'Oh gee. I can't do this.' I made every effort to make them feel, believe me that I was well enough to go out, which I really wasn't but I wasn't going to tell them that. So, that was a bit of an experience.

When you first joined up, were there any mates from King's with you?

Yeah. Yes, they were quite a few actually in the class.

How many would you say?

I'd have to, oh where is the class?

34:00 We were also a very good class athletically too. We won the Rhodes Trophy, which is a running, jumping, climbing, swimming, rowing competition and we were the first, tanging you am I? Sorry. That's John Paradise,

34:30 his father was Commander Paradise who was in the RN [Royal Navy], RAN [Royal Australian Navy] before the war and the dear man, have you ever heard the great cliff disaster? Ever heard of it? The

great cliff disaster? Well, there was a terrible disaster in the ‘30s, late ‘30s before the war, where a great cliff ran into a ferry, a Manly ferry, in Sydney

35:00 Harbour heads. It hit it very hard and it started to sink very, very, very fast. And Commander Paradise, that’s his father, Johnny Paradise’s father, was on board and because he was a naval man he stayed on board putting people into life jackets, and he left it just that little bit too late, something tangled him and took him to the bottom, that was tragic. So, John came down

35:30 to join the navy and told, he was a good friend of mine, personal friend of mine, Johnny, and he talked to me about it, he said, “You know, I really feel for Dad. I ought to go to OTS [Officer Training School].” I said, “It’s not a matter you feel you ought to go to OTS,” I said, “you must go to OTS for your father’s sake.” I said, “It’s a shame, we’re going to miss each other. We’re going to miss, but we’ll get back together again some time,” So, that was him, and Jim Sand was another, two. That’s

36:00 no, that’s me, that’s four. Big Fatta he’s still alive, good mate of mine. Five. Fred Collins is six, he’s dead. Fipps, seven. Seven of the class I think, King’s.

So, it’s a class of twenty?

Oh, fourteen I guess. I

36:30 didn’t ever count it.

So there were a fair few blokes there that you knew straight away.

Yeah.

That make things easier?

That I was in the same class as all my friends? Oh, it was nice. It’s a silly word, ‘nice’, isn’t it? It doesn’t really mean much. But you know what I mean? It was, it was camaraderie I suppose. We all left school at the same time you

37:00 see.

Do you think that any of the experience you had at boarding school actually helped with your navy life?

Yes. Discipline. Discipline was the greatest help of the lot. Sergeant Andrews, because he had, he was a stickler for discipline. He was the PTI I told you about. Yes, I forget, that was worthy of consideration because you must have discipline. In fact half the problems with life today is the fact that there is no discipline,

37:30 people are too lax. That’s my feeling and I’m sticking to it.

So what did the initial first days, besides getting numerous shots, what did they entail?

Oh, numerous shots, and that occupied a bit of the time because that many people fainted and they had to pick them up. You know, people would fight their way out of a bomb and fall in a heap with a needle. It’s called a vagus vagal effect. I won’t expand too much on

38:00 that, but what it means is not that the thing hurts so much, it’s more psychologically a problem. There’s a thing called the vagus nerve which can be excited in a lot of ways, electrically and so forth, but the vagus nerve slows the pulse and what happens sometimes, when someone sees something going into them like that, they faint, or the sight of blood makes them faint sometimes. It’s a vagus

38:30 vagal reflects, the vagus is the nerve, the vagal is the syncope. The syncope is the going to sleep [fainting]. Your circulation temporarily slows down, it doesn’t stop, it’s inadequate because you’re standing vertically, and as soon as you get the person who’s had this happen and they fall on the ground, the thing to do is straighten them up, make sure they’ve got a good airway and hold their legs up. Now holding their legs up puts a big injection of blood into their circulation again so that the

39:00 vagus, which has caused all those vessels to dilate and are giving them smaller space so the output of the heart is less, are filled again because the blood’s run out of the legs. It’s simple. Could happen, it happens often in operating rooms. It’s a psychological thing, you know. People who have never scrubbed up before, they scrub up meticulously and put their gloves on just like the surgeon and the sister told them and they stand at the side of the table with a little bit of sweat running down the middle of their back and the surgeon goes, makes

39:30 the incision, and they go ‘bong’. It’s happened. I’ve seen it happen many times.

But obviously you being sick, that would have been a different thing altogether was it? The fact that you were vomiting?

Where are we?

This is, you said that you were sick from getting some shots and you were sent across the fields?

Yeah, but I was, I was vomiting because of the shots that had been

40:00 given to me and I was non compos. I fainted because I'd lost so much fluid, I was dehydrated, considerably with the vomiting and diarrhoea, you know, and it was pretty, and really I was way down in fluid structure. In other words, my body fluid volume was unable to keep me cerebrally profused in the standing

40:30 position. If they'd laid me down I probably would have woken up in a few minutes but they said, "No, get yourself over to the hospital," blowing a howling, freezing southerly, two kilometres, cold, and those football fields, just one after another. I got to that hospital, I thought I'd found happiness.

We'll stop there.

Tape 5

00:32 **Tell us about, when you actually got to Flinders Naval Base, how different was that for you from anything else you'd experience?**

The language was worse. The ways of, the way that people talked to each other was something that I wasn't, wouldn't say I was accustomed to but it wasn't normal. Sailors are generally speaking

01:00 just AVs or ODs [ordinary deckhands], they're all very much the same. They're pretty crude, and I don't think that I come from a sheltered background but I did find this was a bit, to have to punctuate every word with other words is superfluous to me.

What were the other words they were punctuating with?

01:30 **You won't shock me, I promise.**

No, no I was, as you say, the F-this and the F-ing. This is the way they speak because they think it's smart and I couldn't, I had a little bit of difficulty equating with this because I didn't think it was necessary. Seems strange, I suppose, now it's come about saying a thing like that all those years later but I came from a fairly sheltered background and

02:00 I wasn't really ready for the rough and tumble of life. When I first joined the ship we came up from the naval base having passed our exams and we were now ordinary seaman, ODs, the lowest in the pack. There were five of us and we came up the gangway together on the HMAS Norman which is in Woolloomooloo and because we were so cumbersome

02:30 and stupid we kicked over everything around the place and tried to salute the court deck as we knew we should with a hammock on one side and a kit back on the other and dropped the kit bag and saluted. Oh, shambles. And then we knew we had to find the gunner's mate. We had been told, "Get on board the Norman and find the gunner's mate." So, we didn't know where to find the gunner's mate. So, we've got

03:00 so much gear and there's a hole in the side of the ship which is known as a door in the vernacular of the navy, or a locked door, and this would open and a lot of the things would go 'clonk, clonk, clonk' when you're on the outside you can't get in and so forth. So we go through into this corridor and it's

03:30 pitch black. We've come out of the brilliant sunlight on Woolloomooloo harbour. The ship's alongside the harbour. We've never seen it before. We stumble into, we fall over various things and we feel very insecure and all the way along this pitch black corridor there's a light coming out through a hatch doorway, you know, a hatchway,

04:00 but it's open and there's lights coming out. And we've fallen over the place because there's not another light on. And all of a sudden, pardon this, but this rough voice comes out from the hole in the wall, "Where the F-ing H do you think you're going?" and we just sort of froze. We said, "We're the new recruits, sir." We didn't even know who he was talking to.

04:30 We didn't know who we were taking to. He said, "Get this you this, get yourselves in here." And we're loaded down with kit, you know, tiny, so we squeeze into this tiny little room which is the plotting table where the gunner's mate has complete and total dominance because he, he controls A gun, B gun and C gun. Two, three twin turrets from there and that's the plotting table for shooting and it's very important and he's

05:00 a very important man. And he's going to allocate us where we're going to work. We get put into watches which is four on, five on and eight off normally. Or action stations which is eight on and is continuous. There's not very much dissimilation between the two. They're the watches. Four on and four off but sometimes you get four on, eight off and

05:30 so, right. So we get this, told this is the watch system that we're going to work in, and then we get given certain things that we are specifically going to do, and it depends on what state that the ship is in.

If you're cruising you're likely to be four on and eight off. If you're in dangerous areas, you're likely to be

06:00 four on and four off and if you're at action stations, you're eight on and eight off continuously. So, we were then told where we were going on the ship and I was given a, it started off that I was given the starboard lookout, which I was looking for the picture of because I thought it was me. There was

06:30 four hours, eight. Four hours we were on and we were divided up amongst the, there were eight of us and we'd scan the horizons continuously on the port and the starboard side. In other words, just, we were lookouts. So that was the ordinary running of the ship. Now there were only two runs of the ship, you know, you can see or you're not. Action stations, I got B magazine.

07:00 B magazine, you go down to first deck. You open it up, big hatchway, you pull it down, you shut it down. You get to second deck and you open that one up and you pull it down, then you go down to the third deck and you open that one up. Right, shut it up. So, there's no way out of B magazine. If you were in B magazine you've got no chance of survival at all. So, we go down to B, we're

07:30 told where we were going and then we were allocated where we were going to sleep on the ship, in the various areas for able seamen, ordinary seamen as we were ordinary seamen. And that's where, the area you were allotted and, "You can hang your hammock wherever you're able to, or wherever you'd like to." So, those were the instructions given to us, "Any questions?" There were no questions

08:00 so we said, "Thank you sir," and saluted. They looked at us as though we'd come from another planet.

How much older than you would he have been?

Oh, he would have been in his fifties. I was in my twenties. There'd be a fair age gap. He was a good man, he was hard, that's all, but he was a good man and he was,

08:30 taught a lot of things and things changed as we became more used to things and people took more stock of what we could do and couldn't do and what we were good at and what we weren't good at, but, for example, when things were really going badly, like we were in a typhoon that I'll talk to you about if we have the chance. Then I was given the job of bridge telephones, I don't suppose for any other reason than that I could speak fairly precisely and that I could be heard

09:00 and that I knew where all these voice pipes went to. I knew exactly the receiving area within because I'd sussed them out. So, I could do the job of bridge telephones in a bad situation. I wasn't scouting around, very little need to have fellows and we were not using action stations anyway. So, that was the start of it.

Just stop you for one second.

09:30 **Well, just backtrack and talk a bit more about your training. When you got there and you were hearing that kind of language coming from the other fellows, did you find that you had to adopt to that language to fit in?**

No, I didn't really. I occasionally said something if I hit my finger with the hammer but, you know, it was not my normal sort of vocabulary. I'm not trying to be up-market, I'm just telling you the truth. It wasn't,

10:00 I hadn't associated with people from this calibre.

What were they, what were you actually learning during your training?

You learned, well you really, you were learning firstly about the ship. You learned as much as you could, every single part of the ship and what it was there for and what it was doing and how you got there and what the troubles were and so forth, and you did need

10:30 to geographically be orientated and you did actually get that from being shown around the ship on a tour, a Cook's tour. Cook's tour? Well, Cook's tours is a naval slang for showing around. There's the famous firm in London called Cook's and they've been around forever and they've done probably more tours than anybody else, well only for tourists out there. But Cook's tour was a naval piece of slang for showing you around the ship

11:00 and, you know, you really got to know your way around pretty well. You found out where you slept. You found out where you kind of, where the galley was, where the showers were, where the toilets were and all these sorts of things. It wasn't too difficult to do. There were practically no places where you were forbidden to go to except the officers' quarters which was sacrosanct and you weren't welcome down in the

11:30 aft part of the superdore because they considered themselves above the majority of people on board and liked to have it all to themselves. But no, there were no real restrictions. Trouble was there wasn't really enough room. You know, really it was very cramped and the decks, particularly when it was hot in the tropics, people, some of the fellows had, pick spots up on the deck and they used to sleep on deck when they were off watch and

12:00 people knew where to find them and wake them or they'd get the buzz and wake them up so they don't miss their watch which was a crime, which was an indictable offence. So, but down in the mess sticks,

when you were swinging your hammock, it's pretty crowded and when it's very, very rough and it's the only way you can sleep because you can't sleep on the deck and you can't sleep on the covers because you'd be thrown off and when you're going fast through rough waters, if you're off watch, your only chance of sleep is a hammock. And the

12:30 thing is that the deck is so crowded, the hammock swings on a hook, you know how they're slung? Well, there's a hook at one end on a steel bar and there was an opposite and, just say, we're just talking about this one hammock here, not all the others that are around there. That hook goes through the ring in your, at the end of your hammock and from that ring about sixteen to twenty strings come out and they latch on to the eyelets that are sewn into the

13:00 hammock. So, you've got all these strings that come out from that, from the hook where it's holding the O-ring, and they spread out around the side. And the same with the other end, they're interchangeable ends.

And what are the hammocks made of?

The hammocks are made of canvas. They're tightly sewn, every canvas. The canvas is overlapped at the ends and overlapped at the sides and it has a slight bow in it, so much as a bit of a, it's not a

13:30 straight line, it's pretty hard to make it go absolutely straight. You've got to pull it awfully hard and you'd be very uncomfortable because the sides were pulled together so tight you were almost, it was like getting in to an envelope. You made it more comfortable by having a small piece of timber, about that long, it's got two Vs cut out of each end, put one V in that side and one V in that side and so it means it gives you room to put your pillow in and have your head down nice and snug. But really, when it's really rough

14:00 and when things are really horrendous as some of the times we had in sea size, I'd far sooner sleep in a hammock than a bunk, no matter how luxurious it is because you're not aware of the motion of the ship. Once you shut your eyes and go to sleep you're just swinging. You're not being thrown from one side to one side, to the other. It's gorgeous from that point of view and that's why it's such a good idea,

14:30 and in rough weather even the fellows that slept on deck would give away their up on deck places to come down below and, you know, old sea dogs as we'd call them, old hands, they always used a hammock in rough weather. It's the best way to sleep. But we were always hot down there, there wasn't any sort of fresh air much, you couldn't open the portholes because the water came in and it was pretty, not, wasn't claustrophobic but it was warm and

15:00 damp.

When you were saying in your initial training they were teaching you about the various parts of the ship, did you know at that stage what sort of ship you would go to?

Yeah, I hadn't the faintest idea. I could have gone to a battleship. We might have gone to where they, we didn't know where we were going. We were just drafted where they needed us. We were fortunate because we all knew each other and we all went to the same ship.

And so in training, the ship that they're using to show you where everything is,

15:30 **what ship was that?**

Well, there wasn't one. But you, in Flinders Naval Depot you slept in a hammock which was a great, for the first couple of weeks, a great disadvantage and you'd never think why. But when you get down there, one of the first things that happens to you is you get about five needles in the arm and it's always in the left arm and the left arm swells up and so do all the lymph glands under

16:00 your, too and it's awfully hard to swing your arm because it hurts and it's harder still to put your arm up in the air and swing yourself up into a hammock because it really hurts and if you've got some rather unpleasant, I could just say the word unpleasant, it's always the left arm. And you'd get. "Swing your arm up, laddy, swing your arm up, I said," and you'd go,

16:30 "Oh, gee," you know, the bloody pain would come up and he'd go down there and he'd sign you in there. The hammocks were great and I used them a lot. I'll give you one more hammock story. One night I was asleep on the boat and we were alongside Woolloomooloo before we went away and the blokes used to go ashore and they didn't get drunk, they got absolutely mad drunk or crying drunk, I don't know which was the worst. Mad drunk was probably the worst.

17:00 But they got, you know, just boozed to the eyeballs, and one night I was sleeping quietly in my little hammock and this huge man, he was a massive fellow, he was in the same mess as I was, he was a nice bloke most of the time, came down and he was boozed to the eyeballs and he had, had an argument with a policeman about his degree of sobriety and had

17:30 threatened to put him into jail for the night and but fortunately he was thrown into the back of the Black Maria and pulled in to the dock and said, "Now get out while you can or we'll take you to the clink up." So, he tottered up to the ship and when he got there he was in a foul humour, and he came down the stairs and he was all of fifteen stone, it was all muscle, and he came down the stairs and he wasn't very far from where all the plates were kept. And he picked up a full pile of, you know, twenty four

18:00 plates, a whole pile, he picked the whole pile. And he picked one after another and he just pelted it across the other side onto the steel of the compartment in which we were in. No-one was going to get out to try and stop him, he'd kill you. He'd probably just break the plate and go. So, we just, I just stayed in my little hammock and pretended I was asleep and

18:30 watched him go through the roof, smashing twenty four plates against the compartment and then being sick.

What's the difference between mad drunk and crying drunk?

Oh, I think it's a matter of mood. A mad drunk is usually an aggressive, in an aggressive mood and really looking for trouble and a crying drunk is usually fairly pitiful because something's really upset them

19:00 and then the emotions flow away and tears. I think that explains it. I think neither are very good.

Can I ask you, this might sound like a bit of a silly question, but when you were at Woolloomooloo was Harry's Café De Wheels there?

Yes. Yes Harry's was always there. Yeah, yeah Harry's was there, then when I got out of the navy I used to often drop in to Harry's Café de Wheels on the way, driving home from

19:30 late poker games at the university club. Harry's Café de Wheels was always there.

Tell me of what you remember of Harry's from back then?

Oh, I can remember a few bits. He was always very pleasant. There was a delightful fellow who I knew who had a Bentley amongst other things. He was not short of a quid and he used to play in the same game up the university club,

20:00 I just can't think of his name, but he was a delightful fellow and he called in with his Roller and parked it right next to the café and got out and Harry obviously knew him, recognised him and said, "Hello." He said, "Have you got a hamburger?" He wanted a hamburger, and he fixed up a hamburger for him and he had a

20:30 habit of putting a monocle in his eye, always on his eye. He looked over at what he was cooking and said, "You're not allowed to give that to me to eat, are you?" And Harry looked up and said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Well, here's a pound, have a bet for me," he said. He got back into his Rolls and drove off. So, I can't think of his

21:00 name. I knew him for years. Yes, that was one funny thing that happened at Harry's Café de Wheels. I saw plenty of fights there, plenty of drunken sailors there. It was sort of an institution, Harry's Café de Wheels.

I've never spoken to anyone that actually knew Harry. What was he …?

He was a diminutive little chap. Very sprightly and man about, you know, on the ball. He was quite a good cook, provided a good service for the sailors coming back to their

21:30 ship or whoever else happened to be loitering. I love that word 'loitering', naval word, loiter.

And these days Harry's Café de Wheels is still an institution and everyone, you know, after a big night out, pulls in there, but were there people around there then?

Yes, yes people were around there, always round dock yards there are. But a lot of people used to call in there who you'd never think you would see, getting out of,

22:00 you know, Bentleys and things, and they would call in there and they were known to him. He had a very, very wide clientele, you might say, did Harry. I don't know how he could possibly still be going because I'm thinking about fifty, sixty years ago. I think the original Harry would be long since gone but the, the idea of that, having that little way stop there was great. Because if you're going up to

22:30 King's Cross you could go the stairs or go up, walk around up the road, straight into King's Cross, I've forgotten the names of those, or if you're going to the dock towards the ships or off the ships, alongside Garden Island or in the early days before the bridge was put there, yeah, they, that was a good way to go.

I've led you way off track there. We were talking about your training. So, they've taught you the different parts of the ship.

Taught us all the different parts of the ship. And they were so kindly, in so much as, you know, they

23:00 realised that you didn't know what the hell you were up to. They were most helpful, I always found. Didn't try and make you excuses. It was a very, I suppose a small ship anyway, like the one I was on was a real goodly, close-knit society. We were, I think, fond of each other then, not the peculiar but just as in so

23:30 much as we looked after each other, and we also had all sorts of little strange things to say between some of us, like my oldest, well one of my oldest and certainly one of my dearest friends who is in that picture, he's now blind, he and I had an agreement that if we did strike major trouble and the ship was going down, we'd try and meet at the starboard gully float no matter

24:00 what so we could get on that together if it was still there. Silly little things that are sentimental, you think about back then, shouldn't be sentimental, but it's a nice trait. No, the, most of them were pretty helpful. They

24:30 looked after each other, you know. If things were bad they'd look after you. They wouldn't let you fall into trouble.

On that learning curve there must have been, obviously, you know, mistakes that were part of that learning curve. Are there things that you look back on now that were mistakes that you made that now you chuckle at?

I think the few mistakes I made that were

25:00 real at the time, one was that when you went to the heads, they had something, the heads at the end, you know, just ordinary toilets, open, no doors, no, just there. There was a toilet there. Anyway, the one at the end had some markings on it which I never really understood and I used to use it and I used it quite frequently because it was always vacant and

25:30 that's, you know, and one bloke came up to me. He said, "That's for the fellows who have got bloody VD, pox. Christ! What have you done to yourself?" So, you know. That was another thought. There's hope yet. Another time I did something stupid too. I was very, very immature and I didn't know much about

26:00 galleys and things like that and where things were in galleys, and there was a big tea urn, a big urn, about this big, and it's got the drain on the top, you put a couple of squirts of tea in the top and you go take it to the galley and you get the hot water tap, turn it on. So, and it's called working the tea. So, it was, most of my mess said when I first got there, they said, "Here, here's the tea. Go work the tea." And I thought, "Jeez, alright." So, I realised that it meant going up the galley. When I got up to the

26:30 galley there was no-one there. I had the galley all to myself so, "Oh, gosh, I've got to put something in this." And there was a spout sticking out so I thought, "Well this will be it." So, got it and I turned it on and I didn't really take much notice and filled it right up to the top and turned it on and took it back, back to the mess, and they're all sitting there with their cups all ready and powdered milk because there was no milk and they got, and I said, "Well, there it is," to Charlie or whatever his name,

27:00 and he put it into his cup and he said, "Oh, Christ!" And I said, "What's wrong?" and he said, "You'll never believe this." And he passed it to the next bloke and the bloke started sniffing and he said a couple of words which I won't repeat, "That wasn't very intelligent." And what I'd done was fill the teapot with dieseline because that was the dieseline spout for the stove and I'd filled the whole tea can with dieseline. Jeez, I took a long time to live that

27:30 down. That stuck to that damn rotten kettle too, you know, tea kettle, and it wouldn't go away. I was always taking it up and pouring hot water through it and trying to get the smell out of it. Yes, I made a mistake and the, it wasn't impossible to do that. When you're just lowly in the ranks you don't get much to do apart from pretty menial tasks, like painting or mostly chipping, chipping

28:00 hammers. You know what a chipping hammer is? It's a chip that rusts off the deck. You chip, chip, chipping. You chip until you're back to bright metal and then you put a little bit of red lettered and then you put boiled oil on it and when those two have dried you paint over the top so it's painting, red letting, boil oiling, chipping, painting, red letting, boil oiling and that's how you, you keep the rust at bay and there's always rust on ship because there's always steel and there are always people who are dropping things on them

28:30 and knock the paint off and of course, where the paint comes off you get a, a rust spot, so that's a continuous process that's usually assigned for people of my intelligence as far as the ship was concerned. So, I did a lot of chipping and painting and red letting and boil oiling and, boil oiling and painting. They were the sort of simple jobs you got given. You weren't, at that stage, given your maturities they waited until,

29:00 take you long and teach you how to splice a sixteen span strand wire, wire or something like that. You didn't come to it until much later. They eventually taught you how to splice ordinary rope and things and that's handy, been handy all my life, used to it all my life, tying knots and things too.

You mentioned the term, wetting the tea. Were there other naval terms that took some getting used to?

Wetting the tea stopped me.

29:30 Oh, things that I didn't know what they were talking about to start off. "Where's your scran?" You know, "Where's your scran?" Food, it was a common word for food, scran. "Where's your scran?" If you came in late you'd say, "Where's your scran?" What else can I think of? Off the top of my head I can't think of anything else. There'd be obvious examples of it. No, I can't

30:00 just off my head think of things intelligent.

How did you find the food and the sort of sleeping conditions in training?

I reckoned they were adequate. The ventilation was a bit bad but then you had all the hatches shut at times and they weren't only shut but they had covers over them too because when we were travelling, and particularly at night

30:30 when we were, and we did a lot of travelling. You know, we, well I'll turn the thing all the way, the other around and I'll say we detonated a lot of mines. We saw a hell of a lot of floating mines in the Pacific and they'd come undone from their buoys and they just floated to the surface and what we used to do is blow them up, detonate them, and

31:00 the easiest way of detonating is shoot them. So, usually the crack shots of .303s would be out, come out, and two or three shots and they'd have their, and the bloody thing, a hundred feet up in the air and just vapour and water. Made you realise, you know, the chances of one hitting you were forty foot under the water line up, fire taking the whole boat at six knots, just about everybody in the ship would be dead. They were

31:30 quite frequently sighted and they'd usually broken loose from somewhere where they'd been sown by, usually, I would say, the enemy, but not always. Maybe they were the ones that we'd put down somewhere and then forgotten about and they drifted off and they were pretty potent. Used to, I had to knock those little spikes that, you've seen them, you know what I'm talking about, the spikes sticking out. Yes, we did a lot of those, we blew a lot of them up and the captain

32:00 used to take a pride in being abusive to all the guys who were shooting at these mines because they'd given them the first few shots. He was a pretty good shot himself, irritating. But that was all over. Anyway, we used to detonate the jolly things. Having detonated them it's a good thing though because you really learnt something. You see what it can do when it's on top of the water, and under the water, twenty foot under the

32:30 water, it's much, much worse because the water's compressible. When one of those things goes off, because one of the little things is set off, you really know where it goes up. I'll break into your time for a minute, I just want to tell you a story. One of my greatest friends, who's now dead, in the navy was a bloke who was, he was famous for his detonating mines

33:00 and booby traps and things like that. His name was Dougall and he was called Diver Dooley, he lived in Townsville. I met him here when he first came up here. He had a restaurant over on the island called Diver Dooley's Restaurant, and Jimmy and I used to sail a yacht over there and take the dog over because he didn't mind if we brought the little dog under the table as long as it didn't bark. And he was a man of extraordinary ability. I wish I could find, I just, I won't waste your time looking for it now but I'll just

33:30 ask Jeanie if she can put her hands on the file because …. Well, I was just talking about divers and it was my good luck to meet a

34:00 man here in North Townsville whose name was Dooley. He was known as Diver Dooley and he was a diver of great, enormous experience, so much so that he was, he was sought after even after the war when he was on leave to go back to Alexandria where there were a lot of sunken things that didn't, were likely to go bang and on top of that they took him off, while he was on leave, to Hiroshima because there were a lot of, on the bottom,

34:30 things that were likely to go bang, and this bloke would be given this bag of specific tools that he used to do these, defuse these mines of all descriptions of which he had a vast knowledge and he would be, there would be a boat with a bloke with a oxygen, air pump feeding off just a helmet and a diving suit and I think nothing flash and his

35:00 gear. And the bloke would go a mile away and be pumping air to him all the time but he was on his own down there, he was absolutely on his own, there was no-one there. There was no-one to help him at all. And how many mines he defused, I'll never know, he was always in demand, and he got very sick. He finished up in Rose Bay Caravan Park and that's where I met him. Well, I met him at a restaurant and he got sick and went to the caravan park, and I liked the bloke so much

35:30 I really couldn't help but sort of have anything but the highest regard for him as a person. He got a hernia and then they opened the hernia up and when they got the fluid out from the hernia sac they found it was a malignant cell. So, in other words, he had a malignancy in his abdomen and a malignancy in his stomach and the malignancy of the stomach was so bad

36:00 it was virtually inoperable. So, he lived in the caravan park down here and I used to call in and see him very, very often because I was so fond of him and his wife and his courage and everything about the man. But he is, without a shadow of a doubt, there's the picture of the bloke. He's in another picture over there. That's Diver Dooley, him meeting his old friend from down south. They're both dead now. He's had more decorations than anyone I've ever seen and I used to march with him on Anzac [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] Day

36:30 here in Townsville. That gives you some idea. Have a little flick through the file. I think there's some coloured photographs of him, and he started, he was permanent navy. He wasn't wavy navy, he was permanent member of the navy fraternity. Let's flick it over and see if you can find some coloured ones. I hope there are some there.

37:00 He just wasted away to nothing in the end, just fell off him and he was just a skeleton. No coloured ones? You can see from that picture the number of decorations he has and

37:30 Cosgrove, when he was about to announce the, whatever it was to the most decorated person here, there was, he said, "I'm not absolutely certain I'm right, giving it to this gentlemen, because I think there's somebody else who's got more decorations to his credit than anybody else in the world and that is Diver Dooley," and he's, well I went to his funeral and did all those things and I

38:00 thought the world of the man.

Can I just ask you about a term you used a second ago, the wavy navy?

The wavy navy. It refers mostly, it's the first two officers' braiding on their tunics. The straight rings are full time RN. The wavy navy are part-time RN which is part of wartime, they had officers who were not

38:30 naval college trained but had, through various means, got officerial recognition, and usually you very rarely saw a wavy navy more than two rings, a lieutenant. You rarely see a wavy navy captain of three, four rings. Understand that?

And can I ask you, either from your own experience or from what Diver Dooley has told you, how do you

39:00 **defuse a mine underwater?**

They all, a lot of them are different. This is why it's so hazardous because they're made by different nations and they're made with different detonators. A detonator is the thing that sets the mine off and you've got to know how to get the detonator out of the mine without having it go bang, which he has done on so many occasions.

39:30 It's just innumerable. But he is the man that I just had the most, I thought the world of him. Sorry, I can't find the picture that I wanted to show you. But even then, you can see he's fading away and he just slowly went downhill and the carcinoma got hold of him and he got secondaries in his lung and he was a veteran smoker and it didn't help and he

40:00 smoked until he died and you can do what you want to until you die or you wind up dead.

What about, a lot of army blokes that we've spoken to have said they took up smoking when they joined the army. Did you find that when you joined the navy?

Yeah, they did because it was so cheap. You know it really was, cigarettes and things were so cheap. Comparatively. See, I didn't smoke and I didn't drink and not

40:30 because I'm a wowser or got any sort of thing about it but, you know, I didn't want to smoke because, at my school anyway, if you smoked you were expelled. There was no 'to be or not to be', 'Don't do it again,' smack you on the back of your hand and say, 'No, don't do that again.' If you were caught smoking in a public place by a master or, well, particularly a master of the school who knew you, you

41:00 would almost certainly be expelled. It was the way of life. That's got a bit of merit to it. And the other thing of course, that in the services cigarettes were so much cheaper anyway, you know, cigarettes, I know when I first joined the navy, were threepence a packet. Lucky Strike, Pall Mall, whatever you could, all the American cigarettes were two and six a carton. So, it was cheap. So

41:30 that was another big factor I think in the smoking thing, cost, but then, most of the GPS schools in Sydney would maintain that smoking is unacceptable and in most of the GPS schools, particularly King's, are not tolerated.

Tape 6

00:31 **When you were at Flinders, a lot of the blokes, particularly King's blokes, got offered to go to OTS, is that right?**

Not a lot of them. The, very few in fact. Of my group there were two. One was the son of a curate. He was the Reverend Abraham, his son, Jeff Abraham, wanted to go to OTS, I'm not too certain why,

01:00 and the only other one that went, as I've already mentioned to you, was John Paradise, and I thought he should go to OTS because of his father's history and the brave things that he'd done in saving the lives of so many people on that ferry disaster, and John was obviously material too. I could tell you funny stories about John but I can't, I can't, better not for publication. But he had a lovely time. He got, became a skipper of a motor

01:30 torpedo boat. He got pretty bored by it, I think he survived this. So, anyway he was a pretty tough sort of, he's up in the north coast and he's a very gentlemanly sort of a character, John Paradise, and he's not really used to the rough and tumble. Lived in a massive mansion up in Bellevue Hill, you know, and life's always been pretty quiet and kind to him. Anyway, one of his crew members go ashore in –

02:00 what's the rough town? – way up, Cooktown. Cooktown, yeah. And this bloke susses out the local house of ill repute and he's had a couple of jars too many and the Madame of the establishment tells him that he's not welcome so he takes great umbrage about this. So, he goes down and has a couple more

02:30 pints and decides how he can get back at her. So he gets the bright idea, so he races down to the boat, gets this about a gallon can and fills it up with petrol and up he goes to the establishment and, sorry I'm telling you this story, it's a bit rough, up he goes to the establishment you see and of course he spills the petrol because he's so drunk and you know how easy it is to smell petrol.

03:00 So, out then comes Madam in her nightdress and spies him with the petrol tank which he's about to seed around the brothel and she says, "We are the BFs, not burnt." I thought that was, a touch of the eye for him. He took off and ran away. So, so much for Cooktown. But then Johnny Paradise too, he told me this story.

03:30 He told me that the man came up to his room, came up for disciplinary action, so he had to stop his leave for six months or something for his precocious behaviour.

Did you have any considerations going into OTS?

Me? No, no. No I really had no desire to go out there. No, we were altogether

04:00 very much, and I wanted to sort of, you know, I hoped it would and it did, to a degree, stay that way. We got drafted to ships and it was a great thing. But I fully applaud those that did. The other thing I felt too, and this I also felt very strongly, that I don't, we were fairly late getting into the war, and it wasn't going to go on forever and I felt that if, by God, there was a war, we were going to win anyhow

04:30 and after that was the major factor. But the war had been going for quite a while when I joined up and I had intended to join up just as soon as I was able to, which I did, thanks to Commander Jones.

When you joined, what sort of time period had you signed on for?

I think it was two years or for the duration, whichever would be the sooner.

05:00 In other words, if it was more than two years, you stayed until the war was over. I probably didn't have phrased that too well.

What about discipline at training, what was that like? Must have come as a bit of a shock to people, did it?

To a lot of people it did, yeah. I think it was very hard on people that never had anything like this. See, we were in, it is difficult if you've always lived a pretty sort of laissez-faire life and you don't, no-one's ever told

05:30 you to do anything except your father's kicked you in the pants a couple of times for something absolutely atrocious, but there are a lot of schools around the place where there is no discipline and they would feel it quite savagely, I think. Because the normal things that would have been troubles were not troubles to them, because drinking at school was forbidden and smoking was equally, and they had both those things at their doorstep so there was no trouble.

And you mention briefly how you had

06:00 **hammocks at Flinders. What was the accommodation generally like?**

At Flinders, good. Very clean, very well set up, shower rooms and facilities there. No, the accommodation was good. It was pretty open air, you know, it was no great attempts to make a cooler or warmer environment, depending on what time of the year it was. There were blankets or no blankets.

And when you first went on

06:30 **to the Norman did you have to swing the lead?**

No.

Where did you swing the lead?

Funny things you ask me. Well, the first time I ever swung the lead was at Flinders Naval Depot, because while you were at Flinders you were taught how to swing the lead. Now swinging the lead, Captain Cook made this statement when he got as far as Cooktown and he'd been all the way up through the Barrier Reef, he made the statement

07:00 that, 'Never,' in his log, 'Never had a man, never had a man manned the,' I've forgotten what it was, chain box, I think they call it, because it was out from the ship and it chained on to the bottom and

chained around the sides and chained to the top, ‘Never had a man stood in chains for so long in the history of navigation,’ as he knew, and he was absolutely right because when they got into the Barrier Reef , way down the

07:30 bottom end of it – Now what’s the name of that first island that we come to with the lighthouse on it? Right way down near the bottom. Oh, can’t think of it. Anyway, all the way from there, virtually up to, as far as Cooktown, you’ve got very, very good reasons for wanting, if you haven’t got a chart, you’ve got very good reasons for wanting to swing the lead. Because you must be aware that these shelves come up very quickly, and they do and they did to

08:00 Cook. I mean, just before Cook ran aground on, what’s known as Endeavour Reef now, he went over Pickerschool Reef, which is the shallow reef, and he felt it, or the whole, everyone on the ship felt it, felt the ship just touch the bottom. Just, the tide was just high enough to get them over, the speed they were going and fortunately Pickerschool Reef is a reef that comes out of the water when the tide’s out and it’s got no big coral on it. It’s just a sandy reef but it’s big. So, when he ploughed on

08:30 in and hit what became Endeavour Reef, you know, then men in the chains, as he said, probably for the longest period ever in the history of navigation. Now, one other thing I’ll say about swinging the lead. It was looked upon as an occupation which was not going to require very much effort. Swinging the lead’s an old naval expression for getting a jolt which is not as hard as many of the other jolts on, say, a sailing ship.

09:00 I totally refute this. I think that’s just a pack of lies because swinging the lead is very, very strenuous. The lead is a piece of lead about that high. It weighs sixteen pounds and at the bottom of it there’s a piece of tallow and the tallow is there so that if you, when you do hit the bottom and if the line goes slack and you take up and take the reading on the bit of bunting, or whatever is indicating what is the

09:30 depth in fathoms or metres or whatever you’re using, the little piece, when it touches the bottom, if there’s coral or clay or rock or sand, you pull it up and you pull it up so that you get it coming up straight away. So that the ship’s not going faster than it, neither are you going far from the ship. You want that ready because that’s the, you want to get that, touch the bottom and you leave it in until it’s

10:00 vertical and then you pull it out because you’ve marked that spot and you take in the line from that spot and you measure it accurately. And then you pick the lead up and you look at the bottom and see if there’s, what’s the bottom made, so you might call out, “Five fathoms, five sandy bottom.” And every time that’s done that’s recorded in the log and it’s done continuously.

10:30 Now that lead, this is the bit that really matters, that lead weight’s sixteen pounds and I can tell you, pulling that lead up twenty five times, let alone a hundred times, in the watch is very hard work, particularly if you’re pulling it up in deep water. It’s a, you’ve got to put it, you’ve got to throw it, you’ve got to be sufficiently skilled to throw it out so that it’s going to meet the bottom like the one you’ve just measured. And you’ve got to get all that gash out of the line. You know what I mean by gash line? The over line. Get all that

11:00 gash out of the line so that when you look at that, the tag that’s in the water, and it’s a piece of leather with two, three holes in it, you take a marker and then you have to pull the line up again because you’ve done it, you can’t do it twice, and you measure the line between that and where you’ve struck the bottom and record. It’s hard work.

So, does the line itself have markings on it?

No, no. I’m talking about the old

11:30 time marker ones. Nowadays most people who’ve got a lead line tie knots on it. It’s nylon. It’s relatively strong. I’ve often used lead on the yacht, many, many, many times, with a big sinker on the end of it like a two pounds nava-sinker through the eye. I’m not interested in what the bottom is so I don’t carve the end out and put a bit of tar in it, but I am interested in the getting through to what the depth is and when that,

12:00 when you touch the bottom you’ve got a bit of a gash line. That’s where you measure it from, from where you get that, and you’ll notice what marker is in the water and with their leads, of course, they had, they were marked in fathoms, so that’s six feet. So, there was a marker at each six foot of line that you let

12:30 out. If you went twenty fathoms of water you had a hundred and three foot line.

So would you physically feel the lead hit the bottom?

Yes, you can, because you feel the line go limp and you’re always thrown out ahead of, a little bit depending on the speed of the boat. You pass the boats going a bit further ahead, you throw it, so it’ll come down quicker and find the bottom sooner.

And the piece of leather with three holes in it? Does that move up and down the line does it?

No, no it doesn’t. No it’s fixed. The markers on the line are fixed at a

13:00 length, every fathom in the old days, it was a marker and they were significantly marked by things that

were readily available on sailing ships, like a piece of red bunting or a piece of brown tallow or something that's a relatively discernable colour or so forth.

So it would get to the point where you would know that the red piece of rag is about fathoms so you can pretty much

13:30 **call it out straight away.**

If you've got the slack out of the line, yes. The trouble is, if the ship's moving a bit fast, it's harder, because you get past that vertical line, it's quicker. If you're moving slowly, you can take it up gently and you can make certain you've got all the slack out of the line and you can get a more accurate reading.

So, I guess learning to do that at Flinders, were you on a moving vessel when you learnt how to do that?

Oh, no, no. On a platform.

So it would have been fairly easy.

A platform with a petty officer.

14:00 Yes, that was pretty easy, but I've done it a lot in times when I've been in need of getting out of places. Well, let's take somewhere local, Cattle Creek. You've heard of Cattle Creek? Just up the road here? Well, I used to go fishing there quite a lot and sometimes I had to hide to take the yacht in there and we used to use the red line then and Johnny, my fishing pal, he was very, very good. He used to stand up the bow

14:30 and call the depths every few minutes. There was shallows in that Cattle Creek area.

When you joined too, the Royal Australian Navy was very much still fresh out of the Royal Navy ethos?

Oh, I think that the Royal Navy ethos was more rigid on troops, that were rigid in the field to discipline and behavioural pattern than the

15:00 RAN and then again the RANVR [Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve] was less again. I was RANVR when I joined the navy. I put myself down as RAN and that's what they put in the book but it's really volunteer reserve. I volunteered and I was a reserve and I was going to get out at the end of the war.

So you mentioned some of the menial tasks they had you do aboard the Norman, what

15:30 **was your actual job on that ship?**

Well, it was depending on what mode of action we were. If we were in action stations, as I told you, I was in B magazine. If we were in cruising mode, I was usually on the bridge on look out. But as time went by they changed my activities from, they put me on bridge telephone

16:00 in action stations because I seemed to be able to communicate with people and get the messages back quicker and at that stage of my life I was taken out of B magazine. I never said anything about it. I never even commented. In fact I don't think I've ever mentioned it before but I'll tell you that I was glad to get out of the joint. It's a terrible place down there. You go through all those and then shut them up and you get into the

16:30 third last chamber and as soon as you take the thing out, the place just reeks of paint and cordite, it stinks, and that was the first time I was ever sea sick. I went down, I just joined the ship and we went down to Jervis Bay for exercises on gunnery. It was fairy rough and we'd been thrown about a bit and there was a bloke called Leading Seaman Delaney. He was in charge

17:00 of B magazine and he didn't like me, just on sight because he knew that I came from King's, and so we go into this hell hole and we commence firing and of course the noise down there was horrendous and the shells are about that high. You've seen one of them haven't you? Now that's just the shell case and then the projectile goes on top of that so you put the shell in and then you put the projectile on and it's fairly, you've got to be pretty

17:30 strong to be doing it because you're being thrown all over the place and the smell of paint and cordite is just, it's very, very whiffy. So, I'd been down there for quite a while, passing these damn shells up for this gunnery practise, and I start to feel a bit crook, and Delaney was watching me like a cat watches a mouse and I kept on passing these shells up and doing the right thing.

18:00 Then all of a sudden I thought, "Oh, I am going to be sick." And he didn't even try, he just kicked, kicked the bucket and virtually said, "There's the bucket, laddy." Anyway, as soon as I was sick, he said, "Get back passing those shells up." I felt, yeah, anyway. But you know, somebody's got to do it. I didn't really mind being put down there except it was such a terrible place to ever get out of. There was no getting out from there.

People hearing that would say

18:30 **'Paint, how could you smell paint?'**

Paint. It's red lead, red lead. It's full of castor oil, linseed I mean, linseed oil. You see the place is shut all the time. It's shut by this hermetically sealed hatch. It never has air in there. It has no air in there. There are no air vents there. It's not ventilated,

19:00 possibly because of the possibility of fire or whatever, but it's not ventilated and it stinks of paint.

What about claustrophobia?

Oh, it didn't worry me that much, no. Small, there was room for my confrere, my pal who was down there with me, and leading Seaman Delaney took up more room.

Did you ever see blokes that did suffer from that? Because I guess a lot of guys wouldn't have known until they got onto a ship.

19:30 Suffered from?

Claustrophobia or seasickness?

A lot of people were seasick. Claustrophobia wasn't so much because there weren't many places on the ship like this, apart from the engine room and I didn't have much to do with the engine room. You've got plenty of places in the engine room which are fairly claustrophobic but, you know, it wasn't, not too bad. It's just another experience.

There must have been some real benefits of being up on the bridge?

I loved

20:00 it. Firstly you were free and the air was there, secondly you got a wonderful view, and – how are you going for time? See, the things that really bring back extraordinary memories for me, I had times when I was on the bridge, because there was a time when, if I can just put my hand on what I want to

20:30 find, this is part of it, I'll just get this out here. I really want to find a piece of document, paper, that tells me exactly what, when and what happened. Oh, I'm sorry, I'm walking around. Well, if I can tell you. We were down – can I bring this over here? That all right?

21:00 Just want to get this map. There were times when we, towards the end of the war, when we were down here, and I can't see terribly well but there's a little place called Guam, see that? Now, we were in Guam and we'd just come from Manas

21:30 which is over here somewhere.

I might get you to sit back down and I'll put this on your lap if you like. I'll hold it for you.

Okay, now that's better. See now, there's, here, there's Manas. Yeah, we'd been down here in Manas

22:00 and we'd had a pretty [UNCLEAR] time down there. We had a lot of trouble with the propeller, it was not behaving too well, it was a bit knocked about and really required re-bushing. One of the rudders wasn't working too well and it had to be re-boosted in dry dock. There was a dry dock in Manas. We went into this dry dock and we were having a bit of trouble with the anchor winches and we also tried to get them repaired

22:30 there but there wasn't time, and they ordered us to get out of the dry dock and go over here to Guam. There we are, there's Guam up there. Now we got in to a hell of a blow in Guam and all ships were ordered to sea, it was a

23:00 force eight, force nine gale coming through and we were really in a pretty precarious position but we were due to go to Tokyo, which is here. Now I'd reckoned that, you know, one way or another we would, we'd come back down from Tokyo only recently and gone into dry dock in Manus, and when we came down, we saw a

23:30 B-52 flying very high over us, going in this direction with dozens of little flathe planes around it, and we reckoned that was the atomic bomb on the way to Hiroshima and we were pretty right. So, we buzzed out of Manas and get up to this place here and we were told to go from Guam and then, all of a sudden, this shocking gale hit us. It was force nine, force ten. I've got the

24:00 damn papers about it somewhere but I should have had them here ready. Anyway, to sea we went and we really had a horrendous time, you know, it was rough. Oh, my God it was rough, and we, somehow or other, I didn't like the skipper but he was competent man, he was a nasty piece of work but he was competent and, you know, he really was having a

24:30 hard time. He'd not been able to get all his anchors chained up and he had one anchor half hanging out of the top and the seas got, not big, they were huge. They were so big that the hull of the destroyer was going on the outsides of it and when you got to the top you were still along the flat and then you'd go a bit further and you'd start then to tip over and the thing would go down, the destroyer tip and the

waves were so big that she'd start to surf down, you couldn't control the speed,

25:00 surf down the front of the wave, and when the bow hit the water the whole fo'c's'le vanished, and because one anchor was half hanging out and water came up through the house pipes like a column of Vesuvius, you know, out of both sides, and thousands of tons of water was streaming back over A gun and over B gun company, getting back almost to the bridge and then it would just shake, the whole ship would shake. So we

25:30 went on out into this damn gale for days and we had a merciless time out there, we really did, and that was one of the last sort of big blows I was in and it was still blowing when we got up as far as Japan and, you know, so anyway, when we got up here this damn thing had eased a lot and we had a lot of

26:00 mail and stuff on board. It's the usual same story that we always had to go out and deliver all this stuff. But then this bomb was thrown over us and sort of caused the coup de grâce and VP [Victory in the Pacific] Day came shortly after that. So, we were in Tokyo for quite a time and I was very lucky because I was in this dispatch boat I think I told you about. The boat that goes

26:30 around taking the officers around the place. But at that time it was commissioned to take all sorts of things and things around the place, and I think I told you about that, the running about I did in it and of course when I got up there, too. Did I tell you about the hospital ship? Well, there was a hospital ship called The Tichalanka, and it was a Dutch hospital ship and it was anchored, we were anchored very close to the big King George V, the battleship, big battleship.

27:00 And this Tichalanka was not very far away from us, and I used to be called upon to go over with messages to various people on board this hospital ship and really I was relatively immature at the time. I suppose it was worse to me than it would have been now. But I've just never forgotten that I, you know, I got up the ladder and I looked in and I was right in the ward where

27:30 there were these pathetic, tragic, beaten, sore covered, bruised and battered, skeletons of men. That's what they were really like, there were just skeletons of men in there. The staff were trying to do things for them and, you know, half the nurses were crying most of the time. Oh, Christ, it was bloody awful. And that was a group of POWs [Prisoners of War] who had just been in the war from inland Japan, and

28:00 I've never forgotten those. I will never forget it either. I never liked the Japanese and I've seen a fair bit of some of their atrocities ashore which didn't make me want to like them any more. But I've, ever since then, and I've done a lot of travelling around the world to various, mostly to conferences and

28:30 things that I used to attend to when I was more active and I made a point with Jeanie, I said, "I'll never sit at a table with a Japanese." And I never speak to one at any meeting wherever I go, I loath them. And I'll die one day and it doesn't matter but I just, those people in that hospital ship just turned me forever. It was a dreadful, dreadful sight.

29:00 So, all that happened right at the end of the war really.

Did that have an immediate effect on you, seeing those fellows?

Oh, well I wouldn't let it do that. No, you know, it wasn't immediate.

Did you go back and talk about it to the other fellows on the ship that wouldn't have seen that?

No, no. I didn't. I talked to the, only bloke I mentioned it to was Swede Luxton who was the bloke I had a lot of,

29:30 a lot of confidence in, and he understood what I was talking about, he was a good bloke. But I never forgot it and I heard much, I heard a lot of other things that happened around the traps,

30:00 you know, the commandants of various camps had been captured and there was a, they had reconstructed a railway into part of Tokyo pretty quickly and they were bringing people from all over the place, including these people who ran the camps in special trains. And they brought one train in. We were a dozen or so of them on board,

30:30 and it so happened that on another station they were off-loading POWs who were coming from camp, and they broke the ranks of their Helpus guards, and they just stormed across the railway track and they mutilated these people on the track, just tore them apart with stones and anything they could lay their hands on. And the troops who were in charge of them were virtually powerless to do

31:00 anything, you know, pretty nasty stuff. I hate the bloody Japanese.

But the horrible things that you saw there with the prisoners of war and that, how did you feel in retrospect with what you saw when you went to Hiroshima and saw the destruction?

Well, I thought that destruction's one thing, bombing and shelling. I thought it was awful. I was pretty horrified with what, you know, these areas looked like,

31:30 particularly Tokyo and Hiroshima. But of course they'd been razed to the ground. But this was a different story, five, ten miles away in the huge battleship and projecting a shell. This is not stringing up

somebody by their ankles or whatever else you want to string them up by and leave them upside down for days until they die and giving them frightful things to do, burying them, half burying them under the ground with various frightful insects,

32:00 treating them with absolute abhorrence and feeding them and beating them whenever. Oh, no. No, they don't equate. You know, war is one thing but their behaviour's, I mean you've only got to read a bit about the railways and things like that to get the gist of how they behaved with people. They're no different now. Anyway, I don't want to finish on a note like that but I just

32:30 said that I had, you know, I've been, all this stuff and, you know, I was, I really was amazed with this hospital ship business because I just didn't know how bad these people were. And when I came back to Australia from here, there were a couple of people who lived very handy to me who'd been in POW camps. One of the blokes called Alf Perry, who had lived in the same

33:00 flat building with his mother and my mother lived in Darling Point, and I went around to see him and he was pretty broken, he really was, and I didn't take too kindly to that sort of stuff. Killing people is one thing but, no, not what they did.

Before you saw those prisoners of war on the ship, the hospital ship,

33:30 **had you heard anything about Japanese atrocities?**

Yes, I had heard. Yes, I had. The buzz was about. Other people had seen other things and other places. See, the railway and all that stuff was coming to an end and there was the fall of Singapore which was pretty nasty. So, I had heard about it, yes. But seeing is

34:00 believing. So, I guess, you know, maybe some people it wouldn't be quite so dreadful. To me it was dreadful. I just, you know, I couldn't hack that. I couldn't hack it then. I suppose I couldn't hack it now I guess. I just, I loath the Japanese and I've got an inbuilt hate for them. I hope I'm not treading on your

34:30 toes. I guess that, you know, the way it's happened to me.

How did you feel about the Japanese before seeing that?

Didn't know much about them really. I'd never seen the results of what, you know, what had happened to the people who didn't return. I had had very little to do with the Japanese, to be quite honest, prior to the war. Practically nothing, you know. I don't remember

35:00 Japanese students here in Australia, in my lifetime anyway. I suppose I'm a bit over emotional about it. But it was so, so dreadful to me and obviously everybody else felt the same way, I wasn't alone.

35:30 **Going back to being an ordinary seaman, even an able seaman here on B gun, what do you know about what is going on, on the ship, where you're going?**

You don't. You don't know where you're going. You really don't know, haven't the faintest idea where you're going unless you can get hold of somebody who's got something to do with the plotting chart. You just, you're just a,

36:00 you're blind really. You haven't got the faintest idea of where you're being taken to. They're not too keen on handing this out. Now why this is so, I don't know, because there were no ways in those days of transmitting messages from one ship to another or one place to a land base and I really felt that it was ridiculous to have a map of the Pacific Ocean there, on starboard side, sitting in a glass case, and there was never a dot on it, because

36:30 we never had much idea, never told us where we were. And it's not unreasonable, because we just moved around so much. We just did these horrendous mileages. I don't know what sort of mileage the HMAS McFarlane had done but it was massive.

So going up on the bridge must have been an eye opener in that regard?

Yeah. Oh, I liked it up there. And I liked

37:00 what I was doing and they seemed to think I did a good job of it so they got me there permanently. I don't know who was there before me but you were sort of more, you certainly had a wonderful view of everything because you were the highest as you could be on the boat without going up the mast. No, it was good. It was good. I liked it.

And how did you go hearing about being up there? Was it just ears flapping?

37:30 No, no they just seconded me there for some reason, I don't quite know why.

But the gathering of information, all of a sudden you're hearing where you're going, what you're doing.

But I didn't actually hear from there. They don't give this over the loud speakers or over the voice pipes. The voice pipes go primarily to the engine room. They go to the azdeck department which is the department which is, the

38:00 azdeck, it's where they do the pinging from, you know, the deck sounding, all that stuff, you go down to there, and finding out depths and that sort of stuff directly, and numerals, they've got the little things in front of them that tells you exactly how deep the water is and all this sort of jazz, exactly where you are. There are other places that I communicated to. I could, communicated with the

38:30 A gun or B gun or C gun if they weren't firing and the – where else could I communicate with? – well, the engine room was mainly the shaft of the conversation.

But obviously just being on the bridge, you would hear things that you wouldn't hear if you were chipping and red letting.

Oh, yeah, much more of the, yeah, much more sort of putting you in the business sort of thing. It's not much fun in

39:00 chipping, red letting and boil oiling twenty four weeks at a time.

Did you ever get to take the wheel?

No, never. No, the boatsman steers the ship most of the time, the boatsman and the boatman's mate. Sometimes one of the officers takes over the steering. But the average metlow never gets around to steering the ship, no. No, they don't do that. But when they get to the rough stuff they usually select the helmsman who's the very best of the lot because, you

39:30 see, when you go up these great waves like this, you get to the top and the bow starts to fall over and it's a fairly steep curve and the boat starts to get on that down slide and you are virtually on a slippery slope because the boat is surfing. It's not steaming down because you've only just got the props going over. They're only giving you enough motion to get over the top. And three or four foot of the water at the top is coming off in strings anyway, it's just blowing away because it's blowing a hundred and, knots or something like that on the top of this.

40:00 Down you go and you surf down this. You're actually, like, catching a wave and this is why you hit the bottom of the blasted thing with such tremendous impact that it buries the bow so deeply into the water of the bottom of the next wave.

Did you, during that typhoon, did you ever hear the screws come out, lift out the water? Because I've been told that makes a terrible sound.

Yes, yes, yes. It does make a nasty sound. But they have, usually they control it. They don't go

40:30 bzzz, you know, they've got the control and the hand as well as the wheel and they just, when they know that the pillar's going to come out, they slow it down a little bit so it doesn't spin, because you don't want it to spin.

Tape 7

00:32 **Let's talk some more about that big cyclone you were in. You were just telling us that story off camera about it.**

That's right. Yes, well we were. It was a horrendous thing. We'd really left to go to Tokyo from Okinawa and it was, we walked into this enormous cyclone which came from nowhere

01:00 and the waves came to such weight that the whole length of the destroyer was on the down booth. When we got to the bottom end of it, the bottom of the curve, the whole bow vanished and thousands and thousands of tons of water poured over the bows. The prop spun round because it was out of the water and after that we started to go up to the next one. What was happening, that the waves were so huge that the boat was not

01:30 just running but surfing down the waves and gathering momentum and consequently burying itself deeper in the waves. This particular cyclone turned up in, it was written up by a master mariner who's name is Don Halloree and it was published in the yachting magazine about the cyclone off Okinawa and a hospital ship. An

02:00 American hospital ship called the USS Repose measured the barometric pressure of eight hundred and fifty six millibars which was recorded in 1945 off Okinawa, as I said. The barometric pressure had been observed before at the rate of more than thirty millibars per bar and this is pretty exceptional. Now I was in this particular blow and I can say that it was blowing all right. I was

02:30 on bridge telephones and it was just a matter of hanging on, ride the roller coaster. But this pressure that they quoted of 856 millibars cannot be accepted because it's not from a weather station so it's just a reading from the hospital ship. We didn't see any other ships in the time we were out there and I think we had three or four days in this blow and didn't see sight nor sign of

03:00 another ship at all. So, there were other people out there and no doubt they were having just about as bad a time as we were with, it's the biggest seas that I've ever been in, and having a whole lot of destroyers surfing down the front of a wave that's going to break is quite a frightening experience. Now what else was I going to say?

Was there another ship near you on that night that went down or …?

No. No, no. No, we saw no other ships

03:30 during the time we were out there. We had radio communication, I understand, with other ships. There was another ship though, an American ship and it was a frigate, which is a bit smaller than a destroyer. And they, apparently, were in this cyclone when we were and they got to the top of one of these massive waves, lost way and just flipped straight over and they went straight to the bottom and nobody was saved

04:00 and it was just never talked about very much but it did happen. They lost way at the top of the wave and got side on and they got side on to the top and the wave came over and they just flipped over. So it was some experience and we went on up to Japan eventually when it slowed down and that was getting just about to the end of the war.

Was there ever at a time, either, you know, at a time like that in a typhoon or when you were in somewhere like B

04:30 **magazine, where you actually thought you might not get out?**

No, I can't honestly say I did. I never thought about not being able to get out, and even in B magazine, and that was probably worse than anywhere else because there was no out. But no, no I never got in a panic about anything, never felt that way at all.

Did you ever see any of the other fellows on the ship that might have been thinking

05:00 **that?**

I think I've seen a few pretty shaken. I'm not trying to say I'm a hero, I'm not. But I really, I think in these situations you put your trust in the skipper who, as you know, has got extremely competent background and experience, and they're the ones that are going to save you possibly. There's not much else you can do yourselves

05:30 except hope it's not going to happen. Yes.

How did you, the blokes around you that you said you'd seen get shaken a few times, what sort of experiences were they having?

Well, usually they weren't, fellows got called in sometimes on the upper deck when it was very rough and a wave came over and washed them along and really knocked them about and they took great chunks of skin off themselves,

06:00 sometimes they'd break a limb or do something like that. It's quite traumatic and, you know, things that you hardly ever dream could happen, it happened. There was another ship down on the Western Australian coast. An Australian destroyer, just can't remember its name, but they had some terrible seas off Fremantle way, and this massive wave

06:30 came over the bow and took twelve men out of the bridge and they never saw any one of them ever again, clean out of the bridge, and there's a brass memorial down there, end of Western Australia, to the names of the twelve people who lost their lives in that tragedy. They were actually plucked from out of the bridge itself, as high up as that so you can imagine how deep the boat must have been in the

07:00 water. And the extraordinary thing is, it came up again and went on to get in to port. So, strange things do happen.

When you're on deck like that in rough weather, are there any kind of safety lines?

Yes, they do. They put up big ropes to hang on. They usually rig them so that they're close to the boat's structure, not to the rails because the rails you've got no hope. It's near the

07:30 cabinary activities along the deck that they rig ropes to. They're usually fairly large, about an inch and a half say, so you can really get your hands right round them. And you hang on like that for grim death if you're going on deck. But the really, unless there's a great need to go down through that way, you can probably get down inside the ship to wherever you want to go if you really make the big effort. There's no great need to go on deck if you haven't got to.

But those lines, they're just to hang on to aren't

08:00 **they? You're not clipped on to them like you are these days.**

No. No, they don't, didn't have those facilities. The little flick clip that they've got on yachts these days, they hadn't invented them then. No, there was no little slide along thing that you can slip merrily along and be stopped. No, no it was your hands and your hands only. It was, these smart things hadn't been

fixed up too early. But the sea's an unforgiving place at times. You think how beautiful it is and how wonderful it

08:30 is and the fun to be had and the things that are to be enjoyed, but it's a pretty stern mistress if it wants to create havoc and let slip the Gods of war. It really does do this and it's a no stopping situation. But, I must admit I've been, I've always loved the sea. I've always had, since I was a little kid, some sort of a canoe or a sailing boat or something or

09:00 other virtually all my life. Later on in life, bigger yachts and not big, big, big yachts but yachts that are capable of sailing around the world, and one of the yachts I owned has already sailed around the world and they came back and rang me up and told me how well it had gone. It was one of our yachts, long time back.

You know the telephone and the voice pipe lines? What sort of information or orders are you giving out on those?

09:30 Usually from the officer of the watch who wants something from, most times, the engine room because the engine room's telegraph sometimes isn't working as well is it ought to be. They want to be specific about how many revs they want the props to do. And you can shout that down the voice pipe and they usually get that fairly clearly and call it back to you up the voice pipe and you can hear in spite of the wind and

10:00 everything as long as you keep your ear to it. So, it's a communications too when communications break down like electrical ones, voice pipes don't break down and places like azdeck and the radar, you can communicate with them too via voice pipe, when things are shot about and you can't get other communication to them. So, although they're old, they still have a place.

So the voice pipeline is literally …

It's a funnel. It's like speaking into a funnel. It's just a shape, face

10:30 shape, you put your face to it and talk really loudly and very distinctly.

And is that the same thing as the bridge telephone? Or is that something …?

No, the bridge telephone is a real telephone. There are two bridge telephones. There's one to the engine room and one to the captain's cabin and that's about the lot. And nearly all of it's voice pipes, it was when I was in the navy, it's probably different now though. I would think nowadays they wouldn't have voice pipes. They'd have so many electronic devices that are infinitely more reliable

11:00 and certainly discernible than the voice pipe one because the voice pipe was a bit difficult to understand sometimes.

And is there a particular way of delivering those instructions or order?

Speaking clearly and loudly and slowly, that's about all. But it does work, I know. Yes, the whole bridge telephone,

11:30 but I thought it was the best possible they ever had, the bridge telephones, because I was up there on the bridge. I could see everything that was going on. I was really a part of the activity there, you know, and the situation where I wasn't making any great decisions, I was just doing what I was told. But there was always things to be taken in up there on the bridge, it was good, because you think the person that's steering the ship, really, most of the time, can't see where he's going. In

12:00 today's modern ships, the person who steers the ship is in a bullet proof, bomb proof compartment and he hasn't the faintest idea what's going on outside, most modern ships that I've been on. If you, of the lovely bridge with the beautiful brass polish activities with the sweat of the brow and the four 'matlows' looking over them, but today's world's, to me it's an electronic world. Not the same.

What was

12:30 **that term that you just used? A matlow?**

Matlow, yes.

What's that?

A matlow is an ordinary seaman. It's a slang word for the bottom of the ladder. Matlow, it's a British word actually. They talk about matlows.

Do you know where that word comes from?

British navy, somewhere. It comes from the days when they were sailing ropes and no voice pipe.

Can you

13:00 **give me an insight of what actually happens in B magazine – you said there were how many people down there?**

Three. The magazine, there are, there's a magazine to each gun. A gun has a separate magazine to B gun which has a separate magazine to C gun which has a separate magazine. So they're the units, boom, boom, boom. Now in those units the components are the same, virtually. There are

13:30 cartridges which are fairly high and they have brass and they've got a cap on them, on the, at the bottom end where the impression of the firing pin goes, and they stand about, oh, two foot six, and at the top of them is a cover, if you pull that cover off which is not hard to get off, you're just looking at long strings of cordite like spaghetti, it's straight, like straight, thin spaghetti. But normally you leave the cover on the top.

14:00 So, you put that into the conveyor and it goes and takes the shell up, or actually you put the shell in first, put the shell into the conveyor, that's the projectile which you're going to fire, and send it up to B gunner, and then you put the cartridge in and send it up to B gunner. Now the shell you put in is pre-determined by the person who's in charge of the gun. There are lots of different sorts of shells. There are, I don't know, terribly many. In the old days

14:30 there were armour piercing shells, they were shells that were made so that they were likely to go in through the side or a part of the ship and explode inside or ones that bang or got activated by just hitting something and went up, that's two different sorts and there were other sorts of shells for specific purposes like parachute shells. Now a parachute shell is to promote a light in the

15:00 darkness outside because the ship was blacked out, and if you fired the gun and this parachute shell was set at a certain height, maybe a thousand feet, and at a thousand feet this shell would open and a piece of magnesium – magnesium? –yeah, would fall out of it and light, magnesium does that I think, magnesium burns and it burns with a lot of smoke and a powerful white light which is

15:30 reflected down by the parachute, and it takes quite a long time to come down, depending on how high the trajectory of each lever of the gun is set, but it can stay alive for quite a long while and light up something in the far distance and light all the sea around in a great big wide parameter of a circle. That's called a star shell and they used quite a lot at night when they wanted to find something, find a buoy or find a boat or something like that, because they're very useful for those sorts of

16:00 things. So, but the majority of shells that are used, in my day anyway, were armour piercing shells and occasionally star shells. I didn't see anything else used. I don't know what else there was then. There probably are these days, all kinds of things that disintegrate into little tiny pieces like small shot and shot gun, I don't know. I really couldn't say other than that about what's modern in the armour world.

16:30 **What sort of work was the Norman mainly engaged in?**

Well, we did an enormous amount of distributing things to other ships, for example people were extraordinarily good at following the lines across and getting the ropes set up and setting up a bosun's chair. The crew on the end would be fixed to the place that the

17:00 person was to be taken or brought from and the other end was free, going through a big block, depending on the weight of it, some were between eight and sixteen men on the loose end. They were there to stop if a, ships rolled together and a person goes, if it's a person in a bosun's chair, then they tighten the rope up so that they don't go in the water and vice versa, they don't want to throw them up in the air either. But they're strapped in so they won't get lost and we never dropped anyone

17:30 in the water. We did thousands of these things as we did even more thousands of transporting equipment, medical equipment and other mechanical equipment from one ship to another, where something had broken down. We did a heck of a lot of transporting those sorts of things across from one ship to another, and the other thing was mail. We seemed to have the good fortune to pick up American mail wherever we went, particularly when we were going north to Tokyo,

18:00 and we used to take, there was maybe three or four hundred bags of mail, and then had to deliver them separately to the ships to which they were addressed. We got very, very good at doing this. We were very, very good at it and we could do it to all sorts of ships, for example a destroyer to an aircraft carrier is a fair drop. I mean an aircraft carrier to a destroyer is a fair drop. You've got to, the rope's got to go up a long way, so the little fine line you fire

18:30 is a fairly robust thing and, you pray, a fairly heavy rope and then a very heavy rope to the top of the carrier of the aircraft and you've got a pretty downhill run. So, you've got a bit of pulling to do to get the people across that strip of water and then you want their confidence, you know. Praying that they're not going to drop into the water and we didn't drop anybody or anything or any mail or anything. We

19:00 were very good at it.

What is that line fired from?

It's fired from a .303, usually a .303 with a stainless steel, pointed, a stainless steel thing a bit like a Marlin spike really and the, it's a special instrument and you put a cartridge, without shot in it of course, just the charge in to activate it.

19:30 It'll only fire a fairly light line within the fire of three or four hundred yards, so you point it well above the target you're aiming for and you tell everybody to clear the decks because you don't want people

with their heads back looking for it, and of course there have been cases when people have been standing there and gone through their mouth and into the back of the brain which is not recommended. So, wherever you, they clear the decks and they can see it coming and people spread out if they've got any sense because the boats are rolling all over the

20:00 place and they're all going in the same direction too, which makes it difficult, up and down as well. So, as soon as they get hold of that line, we're in business because you put that lighter line over then drag a heavier one over or even heavier one than that for a third line, which is a good option if we've got to bring over something that's very, very heavy, and you put more men on to hold the loose end. The carrier to which you were delivering secures their end into our boat. It's going

20:30 through a big block on the sides of the bolt hit.

And are those blocks permanently there?

No, no they're not permanent fixtures, take them, take the bolt, the nut and bolt and the swivel, because it's usually swivelled, but no, they're not permanent fixtures. They're taken up and down as they're required.

And whose job is it to fire the line?

The bosun usually fires the line. Communication is a big problem

21:00 because the wind and the noise makes it almost impossible to communicate by voice. Loud speakers and those things get carried away too and it's useless. So most of the signalling, in the days that I was involved in this, is done by signallers who use their hands, you know, and the chaps up there could understand what they were saying. It was all done manually way. They used their arms or flags but mostly their arms because they were so good at it, they could move their fingers and they knew what they were talking about.

21:30 You asked me how else did we do it? Well, you can't call, you can't really rely on radio communications in these situations. It's really better to sort of, you know, signal by hands, something that you can visually see. And even at night they can do it, it's no trouble, it's fluorescent things, sticks held up that they can read very fast.

And that signalling, is that

22:00 **from ship to ship?**

Ship to ship, yes. Yeah, usually the bow of the ship that's got the fixture and the stern of the ship that you're delivering the gear to. Or sometimes when you, using it to take people across, you steam so that you're abreast of each other, which is better for the person who's in the bosun's chair. You know, a bosun's here, as much as you can side by side, not one out here and one over

22:30 here, so it's a straight, a right angle across.

And generally who would the people be that would be going to and fro?

Who were the people?

Who were the people that were going from ship to ship?

Well, I suppose doctors would be the most common, and sometimes senior members of either the electronic or engineering side or the engine room activities of various descriptions, when they needed some special

23:00 assistance, usually specialists in some degree, were the only ones that would go across on the wire because they were required to do a specific thing in a specific spot, on the job. But it's a great, and of course you transfer the fuel too, I forgot to mention that. You know we were frequently taking fuel from larger ships because we used to be running around so much. We were very frequently fuelled at sea.

And

23:30 **how is that done?**

Same deal. You fire a light line over, you put a heavier line over and then you dragged from the aircraft carrier or the, if it's a really big ship like the Hood or something, then you'd take it through a huge big hawser that comes back to almost over the stern, the fuel line. You drag that back to HMAS Norman and plug it into the fuel pipe. When everything's set and ready, they let fly and just pump the

24:00 fuel, well it's easy too, it's coming from high to low across to the, we fuelled a lot at sea from various ships, big ships. There weren't a lot of oil carriers about. There weren't enough to really go around. Where they were, they usually put static and they were filled up by other oil carriers who'd come up and give them a full load.

And so that ...

Actually it wasn't oil so much, it was diesel. It was like a diesely

24:30 substance.

That fuel that's coming across, is that being pumped or is it generally just gravity?

Oh, no. There is a drop from the aircraft carrier to a destroyer, but most times, to speed it up, it's pumped. It keeps the hose from kinking and the helmsmen on both ships have to be very adroit too because you've really got to keep on the same course. You don't want to be doing this sort of thing and pulling the hose out or pulling the hose in,

25:00 You want to keep it at a nice even curve, one that cuts through the water without too much trouble, not necessarily at right angles to the ship but when you're transferring fuel you see a fair bit of wake in the hose. It's quite likely it'll hang down fairly close to the water.

And are they Australian ships that you're refuelling from?

Well, there weren't many very big Australian ships around where we were at the time. Most of the Australian ships were corvettes, frigates

25:30 and destroyers, I didn't see any of the really big Australian cruising ships in the time I was in the navy out there at all. They were off in other parts of the world at that time, maybe later in the piece they would have come aground. I didn't see any. Hobart or Sydney was, Hobart, Canberra, no, I can't remember seeing them ever at sea, or not where we were.

So the ships that you were refuelling from, would they be British

26:00 **or American or …?**

British or American, yes. They didn't seem to take too much notice how much you took either. It was on a sort of a lend lease equipment type thing, you know, like a lot of things we had during the war. The figures were written down and we kept figures of what we took and how much from whom so we could, we were accountable for what we'd taken but it must have been fairly expensive and we used to use a lot, we were on the run all the while,

26:30 very rarely, rarely in anchor.

Do you know then, so the larger ships, would they be carrying extra fuel for that purpose or was it just some kind of …?

They always top up to the full area when you're in a big place because they know for certain that smaller ships like frigates, corvettes and certainly destroyers are going to need their help. Ships bigger than the destroyers, like cruisers and

27:00 so forth very rarely fuel at sea. They've usually got sufficient to take them the distances that they want to go and they can go along directly to a barge or a station where there is oil available. But the little ones are the ones that can't carry enough to do what I used to do but, dear oh dear, we did some mileage. I was looking for a bit of paper I was going to read to you from but I can't find the damn thing. But the number of miles that we travelled

27:30 were just enormous.

Did the Norman do any escort work?

You mean escorting other ships? We did just a short little bit of it. We escorted a damaged submarine from Manus. It was damaged and it couldn't dive and because it couldn't dive it was, you know, pretty vulnerable. We escorted it from Manus to Darwin,

28:00 that was one escort job we did. We did another one too, someone else somewhere, I can't recall it at the moment, but that was one of the ones that was highly successful. Who else did we escort? We were just sort of around to see that they weren't shot at really, but they wouldn't have had a chance. Gosh, Darwin was a mess too. Dear Darwin

28:30 had been bombed when we were there and it was awful to, find it hard to find somewhere to tie up to, hardly any wharf left. The tide was about twenty to thirty feet from down to up, huge tides there, and on top of that, of course, they'd just had the bombings there and their ships, there were so many upturned ships in the harbour, it was pretty hazardous from every point of view. But anyway, we got the sub there safely so that was, that was a good thing.

29:00 What else did we escort? I can't think of anything else that we did escort that was damaged or having major troubles.

What about patrol work?

Well, patrol was not very much a part of our activity. You're sort of looking around seeing that everything's quiet, checking out, no we didn't do much patrol work as such.

29:30 We were usually transporting things a lot but not actually patrolling in the sense that we were seeing how things were going. But we, it was a good ship, really it was a lovely ship. It was always immaculate, always looked so good. When we came back to Sydney at last, all the way from Tokyo, we did a little bit

of escorting because

30:00 we escorted a hospital ship called the Tichalanka, which was bringing prisoners of war from the prison of war camps in Japan back to Sydney.

You touched on that earlier and you said, you were talking about the effect that it had on you going aboard and seeing the POWs, did you speak with any of them?

Yes. Oh, yes they were all, a lot of them were British, English, Australian. Yes, I did speak with them.

What sort of

30:30 **conversations?**

Oh, I just sort of said, "How good it is to see you getting some nourishment in to you," or some careless, stupid sort of phrase that you say to somebody who's got a ribcage like a washboard and who's tummy's sticking out like a football, having had some jelly and ice cream and they're crying. It's, they were, they were sort of really broken men at this stage. They just got out of the camps and they'd never had any

31:00 kindness, you know. They, oh they were just wonderful people, I think. The ones I saw, I just hope every single one of them I saw got better and got back in to their own world and their own society and eventually forgot about all the miseries and tragedies that had been forced upon them by such a callous nation.

31:30 **Did they speak to you about their treatment by the Japs?**

No, I wasn't really in a position to sort of get deep into conversation with these people. I was with the dispatch. I frequently went on board carrying messages about the, from other ships or from our own to the hospital ship. They were primarily being looked after by the medical people on board,

32:00 the doctors on board and a fairly large contingent of nursing staff, who were just wonderful, who were really trying to deal with multiple wounds, external and internal, it's not an easy job. It was an awful thing to see, to me it was, and I realised, I hadn't realised how bad these POW camps were. I'd read about it, you know, I

32:30 didn't go to the fall of Singapore. It happened before we got there. Oh, dear it's not pretty.

When you came back that day, back to the Norman, and you said there was the one bloke you had confidence in to speak to about it, what did you say to him?

Yeah, I just told him how terrible it was, you know, I just spelt it out

33:00 and said, you know, oh I was pretty, I was pretty churned up and bitter. I said, I virtually said that, 'As far as I'm concerned the Japanese are, I had no compunction about whatever I did to them, after what I'd seen.' It didn't come my way, I was just upset, but I didn't have much to do with the Japanese and I never have since and I never

33:30 will again.

On a slightly different topic, Rollo, can I ask you, when you were talking about the mines earlier and they were obviously a lot that had been laid by the enemy, obviously the allies were laying mines as well, how did you know where they were?

Who's whose? Well, the allies that were laying mines had the patterns and they were distinctly laid out and the ships' commanders had lists of which way and how many and how long these patterns were

34:00 and how many mines were there. But you didn't have lists about the enemy people's that were there. So, after the war when there was some traffic between places like, well even between – what's it? – Demarland and Tokyo, we used to run down there between somewhere and Tokyo. Okinawa? No, it's further. It was a place where there was a huge

34:30 loss of life for the Japanese and they defended it to the last man. Just forgotten the name of it now. But there were a lot of mines, seals laid between there and let's say Tokyo. Well, the Japanese knew where they'd put the mines and we got the plots, the charts of where they were. So, they had to be cleared, and you've heard

35:00 of mine sweepers? Well, they had to be swept along these channels and/or accounted for this area between A and B which might have been C and Z or whatever you like to nominate but it was an area where they, they usually lay them in a straight line and these all had to be cleared and there were quite a few of them around Tokyo and Yokohama and so forth and they all had to be cleared before it was safe to use the

35:30 areas and this was done with the, I don't think there were any that I ever heard of, accidents with mines in those harbours, because they were cleared before they made certain they were mined, made certain they were mine free.

When you did hear of another Australian ship going down, even if it was nowhere near you,

was there any kind of tradition or memorial observed?

36:00 No, not at the time. No, no. If we could help we could help but the time, you know, things, they were far away and another part of the ocean, we can do nothing. No, we could do nought. The tradition about lowering lifeboats and this sort of thing was all very well in actual theory but it doesn't really go too well in practice,

36:30 not in wartime anyway. Some ship is bombed and shot and some people take to the lifeboats, they're going to get strafed in the lifeboats, they're not going to get picked up, not these days.

Did you ever think about that?

Not much. No. I didn't, really didn't ever think very heavily about having to take to the water at any stage. It never really entered my mind

37:00 that we could go under. I, you don't want to think about things like that so, I didn't anyway. Never thought, except that, you know, I thought one thing and I said to you earlier in our discussions, that I had, and still do have, a very dear and old friend and both he and I, Dick Plover and I, were on the same ship and we played everything in school together, we

37:30 played football together, we were great pals. We said that if we were going to go down in Norman because something awful had happened, we'd both try and meet at the starboard county flag. So if we were going to go over the side we'd be together and that was the only ever thing, arrangement, that I made with anybody, because he was a particular friend and still is. We were just very fond of each other and

38:00 we felt that way. Gave us a feeling of hope that at least we'd be together if the boat was, that was what it boils down to.

Can you explain the term you've used a couple of times, the buzz?

Yeah, the thing with the buzz is that it's a name of, a word, I suppose it's American, but what it is, it's been corrupted. A buzz is usually a thing that goes bzzz, a telephone or something

38:30 and you answer it and you say hello. But in the navy the word 'the buzz' is used in a different vernacular altogether. It's a message. It's, 'Somebody has said that we are going to – ,' and it's the buzz. It's person to person communication about something that's about to happen and it's often, 'The buzz is, we're going to Okinawa,' or something.

And is that

39:00 **a definitive thing that is happening or could it also be a rumour?**

Could be a rumour. A buzz is often a rumour, yeah, more likely to be a rumour than the truth I would think. It's seen as colloquial in the usage. The buzz. The buzz is.

So in terms of, I'm trying to think how to pose this question properly, but, like army guys that we speak to, like they would

39:30 **say that although of a morning they would have parade and they'd get the day's orders. Is there an equivalent in the navy?**

No, there's, they, the bosun's pipe is the thing that controls you in the navy to a large extent but, you know, when you're at a sea and watch keeping and so forth you're often asleep when other people are on deck. If you're not at action stations and you're cruising then you don't really get things being blown to get you,

40:00 get up, your pals wake you if you're on watch and away you go. But it's not actually serenaded by the bosun's whistle. The bosun's whistle is used normally by the bosun who signal-, or various signals. The most common one is 'coming aboard' or acknowledging the fact that a higher ranking officer is about to step on to the deck and they go, it's a way of holding your finger over the little hole,

40:30 that's called a bosun's pipe. It's a little metal pipe shaped, you've probably seen the shape, and that's the thing that they pipe people aboard or pipe them off the ship or, that's about all, putting corpses into the water, we use them. That's the only time I think it's used. But it's a bosun's, it was very shrill, piercing noise. You ever hear it?

41:00 Oh, probably not around much these days with so much, electronic things that goes buzz, click and bang and tell you what to do exactly. You don't have to rely on the old Bosun. Maybe not.

Tape 8

00:34 September, total distance steamed since commissioning in the 15th September, '41 was ten million six hundred and sixty six thousand, seven hundred and seventy seven. An average speed of seventeen

knots. That's just huge isn't it? And this is towards the end of the

01:00 war. The scientist was probably Duncan Cole. He was the brightest skipper we ever had. He was great fun. Here. Yeah, that's him, Duncan Cole. They were built, this ship was commissioned in the Clyde, in England, built in England and, yeah, she was everywhere really, she was in

01:30 Murmansk, the Mediterranean, from one end of the Mediterranean to the other. We were one of the end cloves, race was sunk and then she did the whole Pacific War.

Can you talk about the pride you had in the Norman?

I think we did have a sort of, every reason to have pride in the Norman. She was a very sturdy, lovely well kept, well

02:00 cared for, loved – silly word to say, bit too – ship, you know. It was a good ship. Good people on it and everybody was pretty proud of what work they'd done and I think if you can say that much after a long while it's a big plus. It's a, I do think people have pride in the ships and, you know, not on,

02:30 in yachts and the sort of thing that's your own personal property, naturally you do have pride in it, but this rolls on to ships with a naval dedication, and pride in the ship is a wonderful sort of spur to increase your involvement in trying to make everything that's happening around the place go properly, and I

03:00 think this is a great, a big sail in the wind to have, this pride. I mean, some of the great big battleships of the world like the Hood and things like this, you know, to sail on HMS Hood was just, to mention that you'd had a sail on the damn thing was enough, it stood out. Some of the huge big carriers so, the massive big aircraft

03:30 carrier, Shang, what was it called? I've forgotten now. But they were huge and they had a wonderful reputation and people did sort of write scandalous little pieces of prose about pride.

And does that,

04:00 **do you know some that you can tell us?**

No, I can't tell you. They were a bit rude. Well, forgive me if I, I'm not trying to be a, a typical thing came to my mind. This bloke had been at sea for a hell of a long while and, say it was on HMAS Norman, it probably was, and he took his girlfriend on board, to show her various things. And he, and one of the

04:30 things that he had was a brass vent that ventilated the deck and below when you opened up, and it was brass and of course, being brass, it had to be polished, and he's showing whoever these factors of the ship and the various things in there and he had this little poem, he said, "This is my own, this piece of brass." And she said, "You can shove it."

05:00 And I thought that was hardly pride but these things do occur sometimes. Yes, pride in achievement, I think, is always worthy of a mention. There's a word, 'tiddly', you've probably heard of the word tiddly. Tiddly means a well found ship. There aren't rope ends that aren't back spliced and there

05:30 aren't wires that have been spliced and aren't covered by something to stop you catching your fingers on them. Tiddly ship, everything's, what the word means, is perfection. And you strive for that perfection and to the big ships it's true. And you know they, for example the big ships that used to have, like Hood, had this huge half deck and it was all timber and

06:00 they cleaned that every day with holey stone. You know what holey stone is? Well, holey stone is like a brick only it's about half the size and not quite as high off the ground. It's got a hole in the middle and that's why, of course, it has the name holey stone, but it has a different sort of aspect to it too because as well as being used by pride it's a very abrasive stone and it's been used for

06:30 generations or so in the days of sailing ships, and in the case of HMAS Hood the half deck was all timber, and the way it was kept absolutely spotless was holey stone, and in the hole you put a broom handle, just a handle itself goes in the hole so you've got to keep a certain angle on it to stone the deck down and make it look beautiful. Takes hours and hours to do and

07:00 eventually it looks absolutely spotless and so it keeps the matlows occupied for a long time. But then came the stiletto heel and that caused great trouble, when the stiletto heel came and the ladies danced on the half deck they were most unpopular because their stiletto-type heels dug into the deck and so it was decreed by the navy that no ladies should wear long heeled

07:30 shoes on board their ships, which created a bit of havoc. So they'd rather get rid of their females, so. Oh, funny, crazy things do happen. Holey stones, holey stones, you can still buy holey stone, some fellows use it on their timber to keep them white. See, it's only salt water and, and arm work, works alright.

Some fellows have told us that

08:00 **it was actually bad luck to have a woman aboard the ship?**

Oh, couldn't believe that. I can't go along with that one. Not on principle but on practise. I think, you know, Jeanie and I have done a, bloody tens of thousands of miles we've sailed. I don't think she's ever been bad luck. I think they're old wives' tales like this that float around from time to time but you really can't

08:30 hold them up.

You mention tiddly, the ship being tiddly.

Yeah, tiddly means tidy and a little bit flash.

Also, well I've heard of tiddly suits.

Yeah, tiddly suits. They're the ones that aren't made by 'pussas'. You know what's pussas? Well, pussas is the slang word for the British naval uniforms, and the word stands for 'Please Use Strictly Serviced Articles'.

09:00 RS. Yes. Pussas. And they've got pussas rum. They've even got a pussas rum they drink in the British navy, but pussas is an old word for strictly adhering to the regulations, you know, you don't have, in the front of your tunic as an AB [Able Seaman] is usually a round thing like that but with a pussas one it's square and you don't have bell bottomed trousers. They're

09:30 slightly open at the bottom of the, not bell bottomed. You don't have tight belts and narrow waists. All those are strictly non-pussas articles and of course you've always got a tally on your cap which signifies which ship you come from, ever seen one of those? Yeah. Yes, so they, there are lots of little bits and pieces around the place that are from the old world or names from the old

10:00 world but they don't really hold much water these days because they've been replaced mostly by electronics, has been the way of things.

Did you have a tiddly suit?

I had one made once, yeah. I had never much of a chance to use it, I was never here. So, it's not much, not the places that I was at, the Caroline Islands and other places, put a tiddly suit on to impress the girls on the shore.

10:30 **And another word that's very similar to that I've heard, I might be slightly wrong, tiddly-oggies?**

Tiddly-oggies, I can't get through to that one.

You haven't heard that one before?

No.

It's something the bakers used to cook.

Tiddly-oggies. No, I don't know that.

What about Kye?

Kye. Yeah, kye's a chocolatey drink. It's very thick, very thick and nourishing. The Brits use it a fair bit in cold

11:00 weather. It's got a bit, I think it's also got a little bit of fat in it, I'm not absolutely certain of that. But it's not unpleasant to drink and on a cold night it's good, it warms you up does kye. Yeah, I've heard of it. I don't think I've ever drunk it but I've heard of it.

When you were at your station, did you ever get food brought to you?

No. No. Well, maybe we were never sort of at action stations or anything for long

11:30 enough to necessitate it but provisions would be available for relief if they were protracted. But action stations probably, no.

And what were the different stations that you'd go to on the ship?

You mean in time or …?

When you were up on the bridge and you had to call down the different stations to the ship.

I would call them direct through the voice pipe. But I'd pick a particular voice pipe I was using

12:00 because I knew it was going there to the radar or to azdeck or to …

But were there four different stations that the ship could be in? Like you have action stations obviously.

Oh, oh I see what you mean. Well, there's, you're at rest, you're at anchor or you're cruising, which is ninety per cent of the time really, even when you're going from one place to another long distance, it's

looked upon as

12:30 cruising and in either of those situations you could be at action stations too. I mean you could be at action stations at anchor if all of a sudden someone catches you and comes out of the clouds. Before you get the anchor up you're at action stations. All the bells have gone ting a ling a ling a ling and there's, there are other stations too, like preparing for

13:00 cyclones and this sort of thing. In other words, 'batten down the hatches' is another term for the same sort of thing. In other words, you make everything that is moveable and is stowable, stow it if possible. If not, make certain that if it's moveable, it's well latched down and can't shift. That's, you know, if, it's really

13:30 the business of preparing to go to sea in any event because you never know what you're going to finish up in.

When you were on B gun did you ever fire a shot in anger?

Did we? No, I was in B magazine so I wasn't on B gun, but I was in B magazine and I don't think we ever fired a shot in anger, no, not that I can recall.

Can you tell us anything about the bombardment of Okinawa?

14:00 Only that it was being done from a very great distance and the big ships that were doing it were mostly big American and big English battleships like the Good for example, the USS Ulysses or something, I think there was another battleship they had. And they were shelling Japan from an immense distance away and they had actually distributed thousands and thousands of tons of soil, of shells,

14:30 into Japan and, of course, what they did, they were just able to drive them back. They just cut the place to ribbons. When we actually got, well I actually got ashore there as I told you. I didn't get around very much because there was nowhere to go. It was all rubble as far as the eye could, because there were no roads, there was nothing. Jeeps and four wheel, you know, tractors and things like that could get around but the average person, you were,

15:00 they were starting to clear things in small areas, like around the American Embassy, such as it was, there wasn't much of it left, just a flag on a pole. But they were determined to pull the flag out, no matter what, on the embassy, have the Australians come and help them.

Out of interest, did they hit their own embassy?

Oh, it was just a mockery. It was

15:30 something where the embassy might have been, I'm not too certain but it was the kid sort of thing, being able to plant something American on American soil, on Japanese soil, that we were, that's what they were really after. We went and helped them out. Our ship went ashore to help them, to help them hoist the flag. I remember reading about it in one of my books recently, hoist the flag for, an American flag on the

16:00 American, oh, couldn't have been Consulate or where it was, something like that.

What was your opinion of the Americans?

Oh, I think they, they're likeable people and tend to be a bit on the loud side but

16:30 I think, like most servicemen, they're competent, probably a bit more advanced than we are. Not quite so, such a stick in the mud attitude too, you know, I think they are more apt to sort of try new things and experiment, more so than has been the case. I'm talking in a very broad sense now, than has been the case with us. But

17:00 most of these Yankee blokes, we had, the only reason those people dislike the Yanks is they're so much better off, they're better paid, you know, they're better fed. We had another reason, of course, as far as, you know, places like Sydney and London, there were a lot of Americans around there. They were 'overpaid, oversexed and over here', we used to, you know, the general description, which was a bit brutal probably.

17:30 **And your memories of Tokyo Bay ...?**

Oh, huge, a huge bay. It's just massive. It's a sea of its own. Very big. I went in to it finally where the, where they're making the Midget subs, Yokohama Naval Base was, which was up in the eastern corner

18:00 of Tokyo Bay, and I didn't actually get about very much further east of that but it's a massive big area, and what the Americans and the British were able to do was bomb it without worrying too much about kamikazes, oh there were a few, but better still,

18:30 they could shell it from such an enormous distance because it was such a big bay and they had relatively decent water and it's a damn sight easier to shoot with calm water than it is when the ship's rolling, and even those big ships can roll if the seas get ugly. So they had an absolute open slather at everything, within several hundred miles would be the trajectory of some of their bigger, heavier

armament. I wouldn't know what it was in inches, what they are.

19:00 But they're huge, their bows are like this. You imagine, everything's electronically operated because it's too heavy to manually do anything with the stuff, but they certainly pulled some sports in the exposed areas of Japan.

What sorts of numbers of ships did you see in Tokyo Bay?

Oh, I suppose at the height of it, I

19:30 couldn't put a figure on it but I could say I could see ships as far as I could see, they were all at anchor. I'll show you a picture somewhere.

No, it's all right.

No, if I could just find it. It's quite a good example, that little book that …

It's no good for this because no-one will be able to see it.

You can't use it on the screen?

No.

Oh, what a shame. What a pity. But still it gives you a bit of an idea.

I know the photo you're talking about. I've seen it.

Yeah, you've seen it,

20:00 yeah. Oh, that's a shame. No, I couldn't even hazard a guess at how many ships there would have been in there, I honestly don't know, but I could tell you one thing about it. There was a, it was like one big movement. They were all either going somewhere or coming back from somewhere. There was an enormous amount of movement about the place.

I mean, when I've seen that photo myself, it's almost amazing that no ships collided with each other.

Yeah, yeah, well the, looking back over it all, I've

20:30 got nothing but praise for the people that I've been lucky enough to sail with and their ability to manoeuvre a destroyer, which is not quite as difficult as a battleship perhaps but in very, very awkward situations, you know, with things not working, and still keep everything, keep it all together. They have been top blokes in my book, top blokes.

Well, speaking about that, I mean, you talked earlier about pride of the

21:00 **ship. That must extend furthermore to pride of the ships company?**

Yes, well I think the officers do, too, have such a thing. I think that the ship's company is a very important aspect of the whole shinonakay because it's the camaraderie that I think is a big part, and assistance in keeping people together, and I think also the fact that

21:30 it's much easier to keep people together when you're doing something active, when something's happening, when there's something that's really important that's got to be done, like you've got to blow the bloody hell out of this thing fifty miles away or wherever it is. You know, there's, determination is a part of it, that's what, people must have some drive,

22:00 incentive to make it all go together. I think that's a very important part of the thing. This can be created by the men themselves or better still with the co-operation and assistance and collaboration of the officers that are in charge of them.

Is there one officer on board that particularly has that job over other officers?

Well, not so much an officer as far as the lower deck's concerned. The chief man is the bosun. He's the, he really is in charge of the

22:30 lower deck, and it's a bit hard to say nowadays where the lower deck starts and the upper deck stops, but there is a, there is a difference in pay and condition, but sometimes you wonder.

Back at the start when you first went aboard the ship, did you ever feel alone?

23:00 No, I didn't. No, I was lucky there. I was lucky because three or four of the fellows that came on board I knew very well and we, you know, we saw a lot of each other although we weren't on the same watches necessarily or doing the same things. We were able to keep in pretty good collaboration with each other and you make friends with other people too. Most of them were decent blokes, they really were. There were a few rummies in the bag

23:30 but I think ninety eight per cent of them would be good fellows and they'd do, the other thing about it, when the chips were down, there's nothing they wouldn't do to help you.

I mean, you've told us how busy you were on the Norman, were there any, ever any times when there was a bit of down time, where blokes could have fun, and were things organised?

Yes, there was. I told you about the game of football at

24:00 Manus. Well, that was fun in a funny sort of way. Things, other things that used to happen, they used to play water polo over the side of the ship. They used to string up two goals, put the verticals down and they'd have two Orlican guns. You know what an Oerlikon gun looks like? Well, it's a bit bigger than a 303, with a magazine on it, a pretty powerful sort of a thing, and the fellows used to

24:30 play water polo, usually one ship playing another and they were good swimmers most of them, too. But they were in the open water and the Orlicans were there to sort of give the sharks a bit of trouble if they decided to turn up. But I always thought it might be too late, you know, if the sharks got the legs is not the time to shoot the shark in half, you may as well do the other. But no, I'm being facetious. No, they manned the Orlican guns as a sort of security thing

25:00 and, but they weren't meshed, only the lines down to where the goals were on a horizontal piece of timber.

Psychological security for the guys swimming in the water?

Yes, that's right. Well, they seemed to do it a lot and some of them were damn good swimmers too. Oh, some of them were superb. One bloke, a friend of mine, he was called Rick Morton, God, he was a good swimmer. We were in that, I told you at one stage we had to

25:30 go up on to the floating dock and we were in this floating dock in Manus and Rick Morton goes to the very top of the dock which is out of the water, and it's got to be seventy to eighty foot, about that high. He just walked out on to the protrusion with his foot over the waves and there was a two and a half metre fall. Oh, jeez, it was beautiful to see. Oh, Gosh he was a good swimmer, Rick Morton.

26:00 He came up here once, as we flew away he suddenly turned up from nowhere. He was on the Norman too. He's in that athletic picture, dark skinned fellow. Yes, I look at all the places that we've been to. I have been looking at, around and at these places and I honestly, we've been to so many

26:30 places that I don't remember. You know there's a ridiculous letter that I've got about a new ribbon, if you'd been to this group of islands, which I have every right to sort of wear if I wanted to, but I can't even remember being there in, yet it's down in the Norman's log that we visited these fifteen odd islands not very north of Milne Bay,

27:00 you know, but outside. I just can't remember ever going there but apparently somebody got the idea that the people ought to be able to wear these, islands stayed, probably know the name if I could put my hands on it but I can't remember.

Because when you left Sydney, when you first became ship's company on the Norman, you went to Milne Bay didn't you? Did you go to

27:30 **Milne Bay? That was one of your first …**

Not quite immediately. We went first of all out of Sydney as we looked south, went down to Jervis Bay. We had a couple of days of gunnery exercises down there and then we came straight back to Sydney and we went alongside the dock at Woolloomooloo and we took on stores which took about five days, with fuel and everything, ammunition and bits and pieces

28:00 that needed to be fixed and so forth and we steamed straight out of Sydney and the first stop was Milne Bay, yeah, and it's a forbidding looking place too, Milne Bay. I always thought, I stood on the side of the ship and I looked down at this place and I thought, 'Thank Christ I'm not getting off here.' The growth of the jungle came down over the water and it really gave you the creeps to look at it, and as far as sort of getting up the

28:30 hill and up into the highlands from where we were, you'd have to be a mountain goat or some sort of a goat. I don't know if I can find the bloody picture. I saw it here the other day. I tried to get myself better prepared for your arrival but I keep on finding things and thinking of things that I should have had ready at the time.

29:00 Here's a nice picture of the ship at sea. We're just coming out of Sydney Harbour. I think that's HMAS Napier, that one. That's an American battleship in …

29:30 Oh, now when we were down at Flinders Naval Depot, about every six months or so, when there was a new draft in, they had a competition which was a multi-factional competition of various athletic feats like, for example, climbing up a rope of, say, ten metres long without using your

30:00 legs and then coming down again and holding a bat in your teeth where you pass to another fellow who ran, say, three miles and he passed it to another bloke who went through an obstacle course, who passed it to another bloke who took it to an oval and there one man sprinted a hundred yards and another man for

30:30 forty and then a different, change over, and then it came to another run down to the river where the baton was passed to a bloke in the boat and he had, and his cruiser, using a whaler, which is a four oar boat, had to row across the river down in to the training depot to Flinders. And he passed it to another bloke who was a bit of a marathon runner who passed it in the end to a bloke who was about a hundred

31:00 yards from the finish and the winning crew of all this was us. There was quite a lot of people involved in it. Can you find me? is the sixty four dollar question. That's a good, you're absolutely right. That's Dick Fanner there. This is this great mate of mine who, we

31:30 were at school together, that's Rick Morton, the bloke I told you who was a two and a half off the deck of the dock and that's the Rhodes who was the commanding officer. That's a bloke called Piper who was his lieutenant. Who else do we know there? That's Pullen, that's out of the same place as Johnny Paradise, he doesn't look real happy but he was, I don't know who the others were. But we won the

32:00 Rogers Trophy or Lost Trophy or some trophy that they hold every time they get new classes in. It's an athletic competitive thing, primarily with multi-disciplinary things.

I've just got a few more questions for you, Roy. Sea Daddies, the blokes that we ask about Sea Daddies they differ from ship to ship as to the way

32:30 **they're looked at.**

Yeah, they are really. It's, it really revolves, it's how much you believe about what people say about people. It can be absolutely meaningless, a relatively meaningless expression, Sea Daddy is somebody who is maybe a bit older than you and looks after you and guides you a bit to being obscene,

33:00 and it's frequently used on ships, those Sea Daddies. But it's an old expression, being somebody who looks after somebody is what really it's all about but the connotation varies with the user. You with me?

Yeah, that's what I was going to ask. I mean, you know, it's unfortunate that, you know, one

33:30 **Sea Daddy can be just a bloke that looks after you, and have your interests at heart.**

Likes you, helps you. It's an unfortunate expression because it has other, it's been misused basically. It's not a expression you very often hear to be quite honest.

Did you have a bloke that looked after you when you came aboard, just to teach you the ropes?

Not really. I asked lots of

34:00 questions. But certainly in no other manner, yeah that's the way I was.

Were there blokes on The Norman that were like that?

Oh, yes there were. There were blokes. Most people knew who they were.

Were there any other traditions or superstitions?

Well, I talked about crossing the Equator as being a traditional thing.

34:30 I've just forgotten now whether we went through it. I don't think we went through it when I was on the Norman. I think, you know, nearly all of us had crossed the Equator at some stage of our lives. It would have been a fairly pointless exercise but I would think on a new ship these days and being, take a commission, maybe if you've got a lot of young people on board, never been to sea and they cross the Equator, they have a tradition for the fight or something like

35:00 ducking or something of this description. Nothing really sort of dangerous or painful but it's a, it was always practised in the sailing ships. They used to go overboard with it, I think, sometimes.

Well, you know, just in the last couple of years the navy's copped a bit of flak for some of the pranks that have gone a bit overboard. Did you see anything like that when you were in it?

No, I didn't. I really didn't.

35:30 I didn't honestly know of, even.

Now with drinking, had you decided that you weren't going to drink for any reason or …?

Yeah. I had because Mum had asked me not to have a drink and, I might sound like a, well I can't think of a

36:00 word for it at the moment, but I'm not. I said to Mum, "Well, look darling, if you don't want me to drink while I'm on the ship or any other time, that's fair enough, and I won't." And she said, "You're too young to be drinking and I don't want you ever to have a drink until you're twenty one, and I hope you'll be back here before you're twenty one and we can have a drink together." Things didn't quite work out that way but I didn't have a drink before I was twenty one

36:30 and then, you know, I didn't like alcohol much. I used to give them a bottle of beer that I got, we were given a bottle of beer a week and I used to give mine away. The blokes said, "You're a ding dong. What

are you giving it away for?" You know, "There were plenty of blokes will pay you for it". And I said, "I don't want the money," you know, so you know, I was a bit of a shock to them in one way or another. A) you're not drinking and b) not

37:00 wanting to sell the bottle and d), c) you're giving it to somebody else.

Because in the services, all services from what I've gathered, there's a pretty big drinking culture.

Oh, it's huge.

What sort of pressures were put on you to drink?

There's none. There's no, really, for the majority of those people on board, the average matlow has got no grace holes and got no pressures on him. He's not expected to do anything because he's got no bloody brains anyway,

37:30 the average one. You know, join the navy to see the sea. That's about what you saw.

Did people form wrongful impressions of you because you didn't drink?

I think they might have. I don't know whether they felt wrongful impressions about me because I didn't drink but I just said I didn't like it. There was nothing wrong. I didn't get complicated, spout out because

38:00 I, Mum had asked me not to have a drink until I was twenty one, that's my private affair. I was happy to leave it that way. It was no bloody business of anyone else's on the ship and I sort of, that's the way I was. I don't think there was anything really sinister about it. I don't think, I can't think really why Mum wanted it. I think she was more worried about me getting, you know, I was pretty, I was

38:30 pretty lacking in, I hadn't mixed with a lot of people, put it that way.

So what did you think when you learnt of the behaviour of sailors that went ashore, say, when you were on your, went to Jervis Bay the first time?

It, they were perfectly all right when we went to Jervis Bay the first time for gunnery exercises. There were

39:00 no troubles there. The only one, I got a bit of a shock, was when they, when this bloke came home drunk that night and started hitting the place with the bloody bottle. That shook me up a bit, I'd never seen anything like that in my life before and he was not the sort of fellow to be intimidated and everybody just sort of tucked down as if they didn't know he was here. Strange isn't it? But you wouldn't go, just as likely

39:30 to break a plate and cut your throat with it. He was mad drunk and there's nothing, they're very, very dangerous people.

Also this morning you spoke about bullying at King's, and a few blokes have said there were bullies on other ships.

Yeah. They're all the same. I think, just as in, impossible to, not to cross somewhere along the way. It's usually

40:00 people of lesser intelligence and trying to make themselves secure or whatever but you know, you can't do much about that. It's part of living, you survive it.

It must be magnified a lot, the fact that you're on a ship though.

Yeah, it's hard to get away from it. Yeah, it could be a real problem if you let it, but don't let it. I sort of, we were pretty innocent you know,

40:30 us mob. We came from a sort of, our little group coming from King's were very much on the wrong side of the street as far as the majority of the crew were concerned. You know, we were just crew. We were just OBs, ODs. Ordinary deckhands who had been there for six months and there we were, we were just Able Seamen, didn't mean much more, must have been on, four weeks and four and

41:00 four and six was to five and four pence a day every pay.

Tape 9

00:31 **Rollo, in earlier tapes we were briefly talking about the Bosun's whistle. What was the signal to go to action stations?**

Look, I couldn't imitate it. It's something like, something like that.

And that was on the bosun's whistle as well?

No, but you do it with your finger over the base. You know what the boson's whistle looks like?

I think so.

It's got a hole in the top of it and it's shaped like

01:00 a little, thing to put in your mouth, it's round and you vary the pitch of the tone with your thumb or forefinger over the hole and it's used by the bosun and he uses various calls like, well in the old days they'd be piping the men ashore, piping the men on board, piping an officer on board, aweigh the anchor, I mean all of the old

01:30 fashioned things in sailing there was a pipe for, because it was such a shrill noise and it carried in gales and things like that. See, now they've got loud speakers and God knows what but it was different then. It was very old, the bosun's whistle. I've got one somewhere. I couldn't say I could play it, not to the things I'd want to make it recognisable anyway.

Can you tell us about your work as the

02:00 **bowhand on the cutter?**

Well, yes. I'd say that the first acquisition would be, to be very sure on your feet. The cutter was a twin cutting machine – I think Jeanie's getting the phone. Yeah, so there was

02:30 a bow which had no rail around it at all, no rail, nothing, just that little, put a rope around if you could, if you had to, and then you had the cabin where the coxswain sat and I sat. Then there was the motor and then there was another up there and the aft cabin for the officers or whoever was on board or being transported or whatever we were taking would be. So, it meant

03:00 that if you came along the side of the ship's side, I can find the ship's side here somewhere.

Oh, that's okay.

The thing was that you were totally unprotected like this cutting here. There was nothing to hang on to from there up ahead, absolutely nothing. Now from the ship, which is up here, a line would come down

03:30 and it would come down in a curve like that and go out at the back, it would be much longer than the boat itself, and the thing was that the boat was edged in so the bowman could get a hold of the line and get in the boat hook, bringing the boat hook upwards so the line was lying in the hook of the hook and then the stern could be manoeuvred in so that the aft fellow could put his boat hook under the boat hook after the

04:00 stern, and between the two of us we could manoeuvre the boat so that somebody could get off about here on to the stairs and go up the top. But most of the actual manoeuvring was done by the bosun who was either taking the boat forwards or backwards and adjusting the motor, depending on the current flowing past the boat that you were hooked on to. So you were, it was really a balancing act one way or another, particularly

04:30 if it was rough, because you were alongside a big boat in a little boat, you were really doing a lot of going up and down and this was the whole thing. But I was a lot younger and fitter then and I never really ever lost the line at all, I never lost the bow. And we were usually on the least side of the wing to the ship's ladder or wherever the people were going to go up and down. You know, a big ship would have a ladder that you'd bring this little

05:00 stage on to it, the officer or whoever he was and he stepped in to the aft cabin and then you did a little both hilt where you put the thing down, upwards and then downwards again and was held in its little clip on the bow. It was about, I suppose it was about as long as this room's wide. It wasn't extendable, just had a hook on the end of it and a round

05:30 piece above the hook so that you could push the ship away without it scratching it.

And so what sort of jobs was the cutter used for?

What was the …?

The cutter, was that primarily to go ashore?

Well, it was used for all officers who wanted to go ashore, be brought back or all officers who wished to make visits to other boats and sometimes to go and pick things up from other boats, special requirements that were ordered from another ship, and we'd

06:00 just go over and they'd run down the gang plank and give it to the aft. Aft, he'd bring it back to the, it's not easy on a moving ship, and yes, yes just general runabout. What good thing, the good thing about it is that you saw so much more of everything. See I was, I went in and out along the shore of Tokyo many, many, many times. Most people's, might have got there once or twice

06:30 and of course I went to, I did visit other boats. I had all sorts of reasons for using them, being pleased as I was. One was the one I've already told you about, that I had the opportunity to see what had happened

to some of our POWs. I'd had other unpleasant things to do too. A great friend of mine, he was on the boat

07:00 with some very unpleasant characters on the boat, a very bad group of men and it was a, they were carrying some bullion and he was in charge of the key of this safe and somehow at night someone got hold of that key, got into the safe, stole a huge amount of

07:30 gold bars and they weren't gold bars, not like the ones you think of one, but I'm talking about, they were sizeable, they were worth a lot of money, and, of course, what they tried to do was to define whose watch this place had been broken into, on whose watch, and just purely by skulduggery, a great friend of mine

08:00 suddenly was charged with not being on duty at the time this bullion was stolen and the evidence was that he went ashore the day the bullion was stolen and it was suggested, you see they all had jackets, it was raining or something, they all had jackets, it was suggested the officer had known his jacket seemed

08:30 heavier than he thought it ought to have been. It was absolutely circumstantial garbage. They were just looking for a, someone to hang their hat, and this bloke was a strictly honest sort of a fellow, he'd never do anything like that. But then there was the other side of it, there was another very nasty side of it. The ship was called the Bungaree and it was a ship full of bastards, pardon the French but that's what they were. They were a bad lot, the crew, many of

09:00 them a very, very bad lot and they were quite capable of doing anything and I would not be surprised if they had not gone to see Dick Scott and said to him, "Listen, be a good idea if you're not outside the lockup between, say, three in the morning and three minutes to four." So somehow they might have got hold of the key if this were true and

09:30 they had burgled it because he walked away between two thirty and twenty to four in the morning and he was responsible for the fact that it was stolen. But he hadn't received it. So, but he knew that these fellows were so bad that he was frightened, he was scared stiff of them, if he didn't do what they told him to do they'd drop him over the side, and he'd, certainly would have drowned

10:00 because they would have dropped him over the side of the sea. So, maybe he did it. I don't believe he ever did. I knew his father, he was an extremely wealthy man who lived at the end of Point Piper, he just couldn't believe this and I couldn't believe it either. So when I heard about it, we were in Sydney Harbour and so was the Bungaree and I was on the dispatch boat, fortunately Steve Luxton was still the coxswain. So, I told Steve just a little

10:30 bit of the story and I said, "Listen, I must go and see this bloke. I just want to speak to him for five minutes. I know where he is," this was a mine layer he was on, and he said, "Okay, well I'll just do a few circles round and you come up and wave as quick as you can and don't be too long." So, got myself off the boat, ran up the gangway, ran down the stairway, which I found out where it was, to the mine deck. Now mine decks are pretty soulless places really. All the mines are

11:00 stacked where they are run on rollers and they're dropped over the back, you know, in sequence. Well, there weren't mines on board. On the far corner of this deck there was a cage, nail and timber, oh, it would be half as big as this room, and in this cage was Dick Scott with a big padlock on the door. They'd made up this thing, they'd just bolted it to the

11:30 upper and lower decks and put a padlock and hinge on it and he was virtually in this cage. I said, "Dick, what have you done?" And he said, "Well, I didn't, I didn't lent the keys to anybody. I didn't make myself unavailable at a certain time. I had absolutely nothing to do with this. They're trying to hang me because they reckon my jacket was heavy when I went ashore," he said, "with the amount of gold that's been stolen. It was ridiculous.

12:00 They're inferring that I've taken thousands and thousands of pounds worth. Never done it. I've never been involved with them. I don't know how they got the key or why the hell I'm here but I've been put in." Anyway, oh there was a kangaroo court and he comes up for judgement and they give him some parsimonious sentence of six, oh three months I think it was,

12:30 at Holsworthy which is a detention camp outside Sydney. His father, as I said, was a well to do person and he, oh we used to go out and visit him every week or so, the two of us, just talk to him. He was just broken up by this and he got out and eventually they said, "Well, all right, we don't think you were responsible for stealing the gold. We think we got the culprit." But the stain had fallen on him and oh, you know, he just,

13:00 it was tragic, he got stuck into the booze and his Dad couldn't help him. Nobody could. I couldn't. And he just sort of went downhill so his father said, "Listen, I'll put you into business. You've got a good head with figures and a pretty sharp sort of a fellow." And he was. So, his father bought him a seat on the stock exchange. How much that'll cost?! He was hopeless.

13:30 He, at eleven o clock in the morning he was in the Australia Hotel drinking martinis or something. It was just absolutely hopeless. I met him at the races, same thing.

Did an occurrence like that in any way change your opinion of the navy?

No, because I think this sort of thing could happen anywhere. This has just happened to a friend of mine, it makes it worse. So he went downhill and downhill and finally I used to drive him

14:00 home and of course he'd go to sleep while I'm driving him home, then he wouldn't remember where he lived and so, he honestly didn't know where he lived. And so he became hospitalised and had all the usual treatment for alcoholism but he died, never worked again, and I wish I could have done more somehow. I don't know what I did that was wrong. I thought I did everything I thought I could do for him but obviously I didn't do enough.

14:30 He virtually drank himself to death. It was no use me sitting there with him in the bar, three o clock in the morning at some bloody hotel in town, drinking water so I could drive home so I could go to sleep, and I wouldn't know where to take him. Oh, it was tragic. So, that's an example of, you know, what collusion, lies and bad people can really do. And he was really a lovely fellow,

15:00 lovely fellow, Dick Scott. So, that's one of the bad sides of it. And they never found out who pinched this gold. The Bungaree was known generally in the navy as a bad ship to be on. There were a lot of fellows who were very questionable on board and this bullion lying idle would be too much for them. They'd get at it somehow or other. I don't think it was Dick Scott though.

15:30 I just don't think.

Did you ever see anything questionable on your ship?

No, not really. No, oh I think that some of the groups were a bit queer but that didn't ever involve me.

What place does sexuality have on a ship?

Oh, dear. It's a good

16:00 question, a difficult question. I suppose you might say it depends how long you're at sea. How long's a piece of string? Yeah, well I'm sure it does occur. I mean, these sorts of things have been around for a long time but you don't have to be a party and you sort of

16:30 have your own moral standards and stick to them. That's about all I can say to answer your question, it's an inadequate answer but that's what it boils down to.

Well, not, that addresses, that sort of addresses the homosexuality issue. But what about things like masturbation?

Oh, well I'm certain stuff goes on, yes. Yeah,

17:00 I think it possibly happens. I've got no evidence to prove it but are you really referring by somebody else or to yourself, or what? Do you mean …?

I just mean blokes themselves, I don't mean with other men.

Oh, you don't mean with other men. Yes, well I'm sure this happens. Yeah.

17:30 The next question is, is there something wrong with this? Well, it's been around a long while. There are various theories about whether the benefits of this, particularly in middle age, but I don't think …

I was just asking about it in terms of a privacy, where can you do that on a ship where there's not someone right next to you?

No, pretty, pretty

18:00 difficult. Pretty difficult. But it can be, you know, it's possible. I suppose it's possible, yeah.

Now I have to ask you, is it true that sailors have a girl in every port?

Well, I think it's probably pretty near, you know, the professionals are. It's pretty common. It's been around because sailing's been around for a long while. It's got be true. And particularly in the old days with sailing ships, I suppose it was even more so,

18:30 but then the same girls might have other fellows in the same, different ships and so …

But did you see evidence of that at all?

No. I can't say I know much about it, no. No, I think that the possibilities are more likely than unlikely.

Now tell us about, when peace was declared. What happened?

19:00 Peace. Where were we? Oh godfather, where were we when peace was declared? Well, the first part was the, oh no I'm confused for a moment but there were two peaces. There's peace in Europe or the

19:30 end of the, you know, German collapse. So, that was sort of peace one and I've already told you about that because we got into a lot of trouble that night because we had a few extra beers and fired the star shell and we were severely punished by being sent to Darwin to (UNCLEAR). So that was one peace

over.

20:00 And the second peace was when the Japanese declared that they would throw their hand in. Yeah, we didn't know whether it was peace at all because we were travelling up and down between Guam and Tokyo Bay and Manus and Okinawa and oh, you know, we were just on the run the whole time. I don't think there was any special

20:30 ceremony even held for VP night as it was called, VP Day. I've forgotten, there was a lot of hoo ha on the sheets of that paper I showed you. I mean all the pictures on the big battleships and signing the things and who signed what and how they signed it with a shaking hand or whether they had their hats on or off, oh it goes on in all the details of whether they cleaned their fingernails. But as far as we personally were concerned,

21:00 I, we might have been given an extra bottle of beer or something. I can't even remember. That's just about all that would have happened.

Some of the army guys have spoken about, you know, once the Japanese surrendered they were given instructions about surrendering Japanese. Were you given any instructions, what to do if you saw planes or …?

Yeah. Yeah, I think the instructions were very straight. The, what happened was

21:30 the, the peace had been declared. It had been made, the, this was affirmed by the Japanese Government. The signing was going on. I can't get the story absolutely right because it's not far off the beam anyway. But [Fleet] Admiral Nimitz, I think it was, who issued the fact that peace

22:00 had been declared and he also issued the order that it be spliced, the main brace, near the American ships because they were dry. And it came to me through some channel or other that on one of the big ships they were just trying to get the flags out for, peace has been declared and

22:30 the, whatever the code really was to splice the main brace. We say that, very rarely used. Negative American Navy is even more complex, and suddenly a kamikaze came out of the sky and decimated some relatively small American man at war. And I think the Admiral Leffal, modified his acquiescence

23:00 to peace. He said, "If there're any kamikazes about or trying to molest any ship, they should be shot down in a friendly manner." I though that was rather clever, that's in that little black book that I showed you. And so therefore it's fairly authentic because there were. They made out, the police wouldn't mean anything to them. The fact one guy signed something on the boat, says he can't fight any longer,

23:30 some of these guys, they were primed up to weeks before this and made gods and demi-gods and your kamikaze was all going to be action, action, firing the plane into the back end of some aircraft carrier's funnel was not the thing. It was psyching yourself up to the fact that you were going to kill yourself, and it takes a bit of doing because there's no way out of it. If you, if you point an aeroplane at the deck of a

24:00 vessel, you're going to die. So, there's a fair bit about this build up that they had in Japan and they had plenty of people waiting in the queue to go, pilots, and they were worshipped before and all sorts of ceremonies went on beforehand. But I like the bit, "In a friendly manner." That was a touch of class. Are you with

24:30 me?

Once peace was declared, what duties was the Norman given then?

Oh, heck. We didn't get much to do at all really. We, I think we were told to escort the hospital ship, Tichulanka, part of the way to Sydney, just in case some bloody little malignant Japanese savages were walking around, because they had no hesitation in torpedoing a hospital ship,

25:00 they'd already done it off the Queensland coast once. So we escorted the hospital ship but I honestly, I can't tell you how far we escorted her. Something went wrong in the plan, someone took over from us and we went somewhere else, I've forgotten where we went to but we took over another job, somewhere halfway way down towards Milne Bay, somewhere out there in the deep blue ocean,

25:30 because we had a rotten sort of a fellow who took over as skipper of the boat. The, Bunker Cole was a lovely bloke. He'd been there forever and we got another, most unpleasant man who was, who became skipper of the Norman then, and when he heard about the peace being declared and all these sorts of things and he got the

26:00 posting of being made skipper of HMAS Norman, he set himself up with a brand new jeep and a couple of cases of whisky from an American ship and two forty four gallons of petrol which he had secured on the stern and how he got away with this I don't know. I just can't believe that he got away with it. But he took that down, gee, all the way down to Sydney

26:30 and off-loaded it on a Sydney wharf, and the petrol, and just walked away with it. Amazing, amazed me. But I didn't like the guy.

So where did you come home to?

Came home to Sydney. But what happened was we had a, a sad happening really in the long run. We'd, when we came back,

27:00 in spite of the skipper, we still loved the ship and it was immaculate, you know, there was no rust on it. There was no stains or rust, there was no un-spliced lines or things, everything was tiddly. You know what tiddly means. It's perfect. And we were very proud of the ship and we got this rotten bloody skipper and

27:30 we knew in our heart of hearts that we were going to lose the ship as soon as we got to Sydney because it had been decided that the N class be replaced by some newer destroyers which were Q class which were manned by kippers [?] rather than the British. So we came to Farm Cove – isn't it? – that one. We came and we anchored up along the dock, alongside

28:00 this thing called Queenborough, which was a little destroyer, about the same size. We anchored, oh I keep on saying anchored, tied up alongside this bloody Queenborough and we had to take all our gear, which is all our, our full kit bag with our clothes and everything else and our hammock which are the only two things we had, a hammock and a clothes bag, and we trekked across one gangway and with

28:30 due ceremony they trooped across another gangway onto our beautiful spotless, rustless, perfect boat. And this place was like a brothel on a half price night. It was filthy, you know, it was absolutely filthy. Had these things up, if you, they had the 'No Smoking' or something, you'd pull the sign away and a hundred cockroaches run from under it and all the rest. The whole boat was dirty, the plates, the cutlery,

29:00 everything, it was just repulsive. And they walked on to our beautiful clean boat and we were heartbroken, you know. We brought that boat back in, in pristine condition and we walked on to this awful barge and that was the swap. We were very, very disappointed. Everybody sort of dropped their bundle. I got transferred to another

29:30 boat that was laid up over near Taronga Park. There were quite a few destroyers over there and I was just sort of standby really, didn't have to do much. And then I somehow lucklessly got transferred from there to a ship called the Platypus which strangely enough had been upside down in the harbour at Darwin and I'd been there with the submarine some years before and I'd resurrected this bloody Platypus and put it the right way up and fixed its hull

30:00 and it was an awful barge like this thing and I'd just got off the Queenborough, the British one. So, I was very, very disappointed. I got transferred over on to this other ship and worse still, I was given the job of telephonist and I was sort of the switchboard operator for a whole lot of ships who were paying off, paying off men finishing their service and there's

30:30 ceremonies that happen when you pay off. Like when we paid off on the Norman, you get a foot for every, oh a year of service or something or mile travelled or something and paying called pennant, a paying off called pennant. Have you ever heard of it? Well, it's a naval tradition that when you leave a ship and you go somewhere, another country or someone else takes over, you have this pennant. It starts at the mast here and you get so much for

31:00 your time that the ship's been in operation or the mileages. I've forgotten just what the criteria, but our pennant was that we'd done so much from the top of the mast right down to the Baxter in one sheet of tiny state cloth, very, very meticulously sewn on. And we walked away from all this and we were heartbroken. I didn't like going to Platypus much because it was a dreadful, blasted boat it was.

31:30 The skipper Boladec Palmer, he was an unpleasant miserable fellow, and the bosun, he never went ashore because he was frightened to go ashore because the pub was so close and if anyone saw him they'd beat him up. It wasn't a happy ship and I spent quite a lot of time there waiting to be free. My friend, my dear friend Fat went to Finschhafen, lucky bugger. He used to, like, from

32:00 Finschhafen to me, what a lovely time, he was driving the commanding officer's car, Chevrolet, around Finch haven. He did a lot of driving around Finschhafen, but anyway, it's better than what I had. So, the paying off side of it, I'd seen and not record, it was to me one terrible series of let downs. I don't like to finish the story like that so I don't want to really talk about it.

When you got back to Sydney though, was there a big welcome home for you?

32:30 Oh, for me yes, yes, yes, yes.

I mean when the ship came in though, was there a public …?

No. No, because we never tied up, is that you darl?

I think it's the dog downstairs.

No, well I can't remember us ever tying up anywhere apart from coming in to Farm Cove and tying up alongside this awful barge. No, I don't remember really, I can't remember coming in to Sydney Harbour and there being any

33:00 ceremony, except I know the paying off pennant was put aboard, the officers all got off the ship as

quickly as they possibly could and so did the sailors and they were all drafted to various places. They were all given drafts just like you get on your ship, on the sheet but I've just got a thing on mine, 'transferred from the Norman to the Queenborough', to the other awful barge I went to.

So by

33:30 **the time you got to the Platypus, the war was over.**

Yeah, all finished.

Were you itching to get out?

Yes. I really wanted to get out. I wanted to go to university. I didn't want to do law. I used to do with Gus, Lyn's husband who's now dead of course

34:00 and so I just wanted to get out and start first year medicine, which I did as soon as I possibly could.

So how long were you on the Platypus for?

Oh, see if I've put the thing up.

34:30 I've been looking at it today. What have I done with it? You know, that big brown piece of paper which has got when I joined the navy and all the ships that I've …

Oh, it's over here.

Oh, good. It should be on there,

35:00 on the front page of it. Here we are.

Just get you to sit down again Rollo, so we can see you on the camera.

Yes, all right. Well, it's all recorded here for posterity, better for worse, for richer or poorer. I arrived an able seaman on the 19th December, 1945.

35:30 Hang on, now don't be too certain, sorry, just seeing if this fits. I must have spent a fair bit of time here. The Norman came back on the 15th June 1945, this seem right? And we paid off on, we went on to the Queenborough. We were alongside

36:00 her until the 28th October and I was moved to the Queenborough on the 29th September and on the 2nd of December I was transferred to the Platypus, or the 19th of December I was transferred to the Platypus and then on the 19th March 1946 I was transferred to HMAS Ruchcutter and after that I was discharged from HMAS Rushcutter. You

36:30 want to? Might as well keep the whole record. That last, actually if you photograph the whole section you've got it all in one hit because that's the whole life story.

So what do you remember about, do you remember the day you got the news that your discharge was through?

Yes, it had come a bit late for me to do anything that year. It was sort of, well a fair step along. I'd hoped I'd get out of there a bit earlier than that but I didn't. So

37:00 I've just forgotten what I did. I had something to do.

Was there a ceremony about being discharged?

No. No. It was very, very – a great non-event. You walked down and you saw the officer and he said, "Oh, you've come to sign off," and I said, "Yes." He said, "All right, sign here able seaman." So I signed on the piece of thing and he recorded it on my log

37:30 here, the signing off, and de-mobilised on the 21st of October, 1946. So it took a long while. It's a lot of wasted time really because I really did nothing all that time. There was no point in keeping me on the door but that was all down in black and white and that's what happened so I didn't start at the university until the following year, 1947. I started medicine.

So, what

38:00 **was the welcome home for you then?**

Welcome home was Mum and my friends and the – Christ, the name of it – oh Jesus, it's a pub in Double Bay. You know Double Bay?

The pub, did you say?

In Double Bay?

The Golden Sheaf?

The Golden Sheaf. Yes, I spent a lot of my deferred pay there with Dick Scott, he got

38:30 drunk, I told you, the bloke who had all the trouble, drank himself to death in the end. So, also there was another nice little pub down in that other part of Double Bay where it's very chic these days. Oh, The Oak? The Royal Oak? Yeah, I've had a fair bit of time in there too. So, I really didn't do very much for a few months. I was very, very

39:00 keen in getting into university and I was trying to make myself a bit more actively erudite and I realised that the pace was going to be a very fast one because once I got, if I did get into university, the chances of actually graduating in medicine then was very remote because they're around about eight hundred and sixty of us started in first year. I think

39:30 ninety six of us passed the finals.

Did Sydney seem to have changed much while you were away?

Well, not really. I sort of, I just mixed with this bloke to a large extent, with the same set of people that I'd met before I went away. And my Mum lived in Darling Point and, you know, everything was good

40:00 and I was just looking forward to getting to university. Because I didn't consider that I was a Nobel Prize winner, I did realise very fully that the effort to graduate in MVBS was going to be no easy thing. There was a huge number of people sitting in the year and it wasn't, and

40:30 I was very determined that I was going to do it although I don't think I'm particularly intelligent, I don't think I'm any Einstein at all in fact, but I worked awfully hard for those years to stay in the immediate post-war at Sydney University, was very, very hard going. A pass was more a distinction then that it would have been once.

Was that at Sydney University?

At Sydney University, yeah.

Tape 10

00:33 **So you caught up with some of your mates from King's when you got home?**

Yes, I did. Yes. I, we got scattered around a bit, you know, lots of things had happened. A lot of my friends had been too young to go to war at the time that I did and they mostly were still in the country. But I did a bit of a round and did a bit of

01:00 travelling around, catching up with people and after all this time and when the, there was a lot of iffy, bitty and mucking about trying to get myself into a place in medicine in the next year and quite a few of us realised that, you know, the going was not going to be easy. So, I had, you know, Mum was at

01:30 home and I lived up at Darling Point and lived a sort of semi-wild life but not too bad and caught up with all the people I hadn't seen for a long while. I found out one thing, that their thirsts had not changed. Mine possibly had improved. Oh, well that's how life goes.

Had you ever thought, when you got back, that you

02:00 **might have liked to have done OTS, gone to OTS?**

No. I, at no stage did I ever regret not going to OTS. I didn't want, it's just I didn't need to. I had had, you know, I've already explained to you my life at school was pretty rigid.

02:30 I didn't want to, I really didn't want to be an officer. I joined the navy, you know, because I wanted to and because my friends were joining the navy and that was the real reason for it. And there was, one of my dear friends who's also now dead is Billy Burroughs, he joined the army, there's a whole contingent went down to the

03:00 conceivable establishment and we've kept in touch with each other all these years, those of us who are still alive.

Did you get what you wanted out of the navy?

I learnt a lot I didn't know about people, about dealing with people. I learnt a lot about the sea and this huge, this whole wonderful panorama and

03:30 its shortcomings, and the same with people. I'd learnt a lot in the navy. I don't in any way regret spending those years in the navy, I think they did me the world of good. They gave me a chance to do a bit of growing up fast and I don't think that there's anything wrong with that. I came from a different world so

04:00 I'm not being snobbish but basically that's the fact.

In what way did the time you spent in the navy help with your studies?

Well, really, I don't think my time in the navy, actually as far as the navy's concerned, helped me much with my studies. There were chaps who were actively studying on the ship when the war was over, who started taking up what they were going to do but,

04:30 you know, I really didn't know what medicine entailed. I knew what I wanted to achieve but there were methods of acquiring first year degrees, was, would have been great if I'd started reading 'Gray's Anatomy' or something like that, but I didn't know what was required, and I used to stake my heart on getting through the exams and

05:00 in order to do that, I don't put myself in any sort of high-falutin position as an Einstein or any other noble thinker, but it was hard work because the competition was so steep. When you've got eight hundred and twenty eight, thirty people starting first year and ninety six pass the finals, there's a fair whack over the years, sure there were people repeating but there were an awful

05:30 lot dropped out.

How good did that feel to …?

Well, it was a wonderful feeling when it actually happened. I had the joys of sharing it with other blokes who'd been equally dedicated and we were just sort of a little club together, you know, wrote each other questions, gave each other tests over and over and over, day after day, week after week, year after year,

06:00 and finally we were lucky and that was the biggest achievement of my life. The other good thing about it, and I must say this is just so true…. But repat [repatriation] were very, very good to me and they were good to all my friends who had been, who had followed the same pathway. They were really, they were very, very good. They gave you a, sort of an allowance that you

06:30 didn't have to pay back. It wasn't much but it was a help, paid for your books, paid your fees, all these things. Oh, that was a big help. It wouldn't really have made any difference. I still would have gone to university had I not had it because Mum would have seen to it. But it was lovely to be able to sort of be doing it off my own back in a sort of backward kind of way if you understand. I look upon it anyway as a forward step and I did work very hard.

07:00 I don't think it's easy to sort of switch over from the lower deck to the classroom. But I'm very happy it sort of worked out so well.

So what happened when you graduate from medical …?

Well, what happened, I did a lot of things. I did a huge number of things after I graduated.

07:30 Firstly I went to South Sydney Hospital. South Sydney Hospital is in Zetland in an industrial suburb, very busy little hospital, and the staff were, some very, very good honoraries. You know honoraries, they used to be an assistant, and there was a bloke called Charles Sar, Tony Mather Sar and Ron Rutherford and they were three of the five honorary anaesthetists

08:00 on the staff there. And they, I got interested in anaesthesia, not for any other reason than I liked these three blokes so much and how they did things and how they looked after people and how they really cared for people was the thing that attracted me to them, that they weren't just doing a job, that they were looking after people who they really cared about and that impressed me.

08:30 So I used to spend a lot of my time, well practically all my spare time, in the theatres when those three were there. And as I took a fairly active interest in the set up, so they reciprocated by encouraging me and

09:00 in fact I got to the stage where frequently at night, after hours, the cases would come in and one of them would be on call and I would ring them up and say, "Listen, I've got this patient here who," let's make it as simple as possible, "he's got acute appendicitis. And I think it's pretty, a case of this really being operated on by so and so, you know, is really doing anyway. Would you like me to do the case for you?" And they'd say,

09:30 "Certainly, if you've got any problems I'm at home, just ring me." So, I did a huge quantity of anaesthetics long, long, long before I went to England to study for the diploma of anaesthesia which was the first step. So, time went by and I finished that year with the blessings of those three anaesthetists who I kept in touch with and I

10:00 wish I'd seen more of after I came back, but I was away for such a long while. And so I had a really good grounding by three blokes who I had the utmost confidence in, teaching hospitals as well, they were tops. So, when I went to sit for the DA [Diploma in Anaesthesia] in England it wasn't quite so difficult for me, particularly from a practical point of view, because I had done

10:30 a lot with them and a hell of a lot on my own too. So, I got a job at a terrible hospital called St. Nicholas' Hospital, Plumstead. Then another equally dreadful hospital down the, I've forgotten the name of it. And then I went to the Edgware General Hospital which was run by an idiot and I didn't enjoy myself very much there. And from there I went to

11:00 Norwich General Hospital which I really loved. Yes, Norwich General Hospital. You know this part of the world at all? No, I won't go on about it but there's a lot of areas around Norwich that are gorgeous. They say, the insurance ad says it's a fine city, Norwich. It is too. And everything around it's lovely too. There are a whole stack of satellite hospitals all around and they had a burns and plastic hospital for example, they had a hospital where they did thoracic surgery, only just worked

11:30 TB [tuberculosis] in those days. There wasn't much cancer. They had a paediatric hospital called Jenny Lind which was superb. They had the most wonderful people there, people who were really exceptionally good. Brilliant surgeons, not just good, brilliant. And I lapped all this up because I'd never seen very much specialised stuff. Orthopaedic surgeons, stuff like obstetrics and gynaecology. The two senior obstetricians in there were excellent.

12:00 So, I really walked into a wonderful set up which I enjoyed enormously. I also decided to do the diploma of anaesthetics there in England. The fellowship had just become available and I just thought I'd do the DA first but it was pretty hard to get past the thing, it wasn't a given by any means, but anyway, I passed the DA, which was

12:30 good, while I was at the Norg-, in Norwich. And, I don't know, I sort of, I've lost, I had a piece of paper here the other day.

13:00 I was telling Jeanie, I thought it was out here. When I was in the Norwich area, I went to go to Jenny Lind and another one out of – do I look it up again? – and I enjoyed it immensely and then I decided to go to America. I had a top job lined up at the Rochester

13:30 Hospital in New York, and then of course Leonard Thomas in charge of it, and he said, "Look, I want you to come. That's who, I do. I just want you to come out here." So, I was keen to go. And various things intervened and in the end I didn't go to America. I went and worked in Africa, had a new hospital they, was being built in the jungle

14:00 called University College Hospital Ibadan. Ibadan was about ninety miles from Lagos and it was a beautiful new teaching hospital of five hundred beds and I went there as the Senior Registrar of Anaesthetics of this teaching hospital and it really was quite a, it was a job of absolute fascination because people weren't just sick there, they were doubly sick. I mean the majority of them malaria, the majority of them had

14:30 hookworm, the majority of them had INTERKHAN disease but rarely got anything else wrong with them at all. So, you're constantly dealing with people who were really ill and a lot to do with, there was an outbreak of poliomyelitis while I was there and it only occurred, I never saw an African with polio, never. But the Europeans there were very prone to it and we worked out this system with the Radcliffe at Oxford.

15:00 I don't know if you've ever heard of Oxford and the Radcliffe Hospital but it's a very famous hospital in Oxford and we worked out a thing that we were called to go, and only the Europeans were getting this and we'd sometimes have to go up to a thousand miles away by aeroplane, and they were very doubtful landing strips, to pick up these people who were critically ill. So I used to take a surgeon with me, not that I wanted any,

15:30 I wanted somebody to do a tracheostomy because I couldn't anaesthetise the patient and do a tracheostomy at the same time. So, I used to take all of my own equipment and my own ventilator and suction which we invented, a suction apparatus that worked with a foot on a car pump. Brilliant. Worked so well. And we made a lot of things work and we'd swing them back from wherever they were, Woopi Woopi, Berry Berry,

16:00 to Ibadan, keep them there for ten days alive on a ventilator, very primitive, very primitive. Then we had a liaison with the Radcliffe at Oxford and we used to fly them in the Badmin back down to Lagos then Lagos, Kana, Tripoli, Heathcote and then they'd be taken up to the Radcliffe at Oxford and they'd be looked after there. So I kept on doing this and I did an awful lot of these

16:30 transfers and it was very rewarding and very heartbreaking, most of it. But all of a sudden I took a house governor's daughter, a house governor's daughter is the house governor, that's the chief executive officer, senior, not, brigadier as a matter of fact, this army chap called Boding and his beautiful daughter came out to Nigeria

17:00 and, of all bloody things, she got polio. So, I got her to look after too. I had to keep her, for the records, for ten days and I'd do that and the Brigadier Broding and I were quite friendly and he said, "Look, Rollo, please come back to London, you know, she just wants you to come with us." I couldn't refuse that, so I did, I went back to London with this beautiful girl of eighteen paralysed for life

17:30 and I stayed around that hotel a couple of extra days to make sure she was settled and then I thought I'd have to go back so I told him I'd have to go back and that. The very day that I left, my visa for America came through, been posted on from Ibadan to the hotel and they hadn't followed me up. So, I went down to London. I bought a new car, drove across the continent and I drove through Spain up to Portugal and finally to Oporto,

18:00 put the car on at Oporto and went back to Lagos. When I got to Lagos I got this great pile of mail and in

the middle of it was my visa card which had gone through and expired because I hadn't taken it home, meant I had to reapply again. I couldn't believe it. I said, "There's something wrong with this bloody world." So I, oh that's something interesting, the funny things I've published, articles I've published. I was looking for hospitals I've worked

18:30 at which I've got a list of somewhere. But anyway, you know, that's the way the cookie crumbles, so I went back to Ibadan and then I thought, "Well, if I'm not going to go and work in Rochester, I'm going to have to go and work somewhere British. I can't stay here in Africa forever." So, I went back to London and got myself on to the course for the new exam that

19:00 they had which was a Fellow of the Faculty of Anaesthetists of the Royal College of Surgeons which was the highest degree you can have, and still is. And it's hard to get. So, I swotted, I was lucky, I got in to Nuffield College of Surgical Sciences in Lincolns Inn Fields and I was able to take a room there so I could study and I had the benefits of the warden of the college, was a fellow called Jack Glass. He was an Australian, brilliant anatomist, and he helped me enormously because

19:30 it was a long while since I'd been doing any study and this was a hard exam to get, I did the very best I could. I failed the primary the first time, which disappointed me terribly, but there were six hundred sitting for the bloody thing and there were less than fifty passes, you know, imagine that. So I had another go at it after a while and

20:00 studied harder and finally I got the primary the second time and then I came up for the final. Well of course I'd done an awful lot of anaesthetics. I'd say more than most of the bloody people asking me the questions and in much worse circumstances. So, I passed the final and I didn't know what the hell to do then. Mum wanted me to come

20:30 back to Australia so I said, "Well, I will." So, I came back to Australia and I went to work at Prince Henry Hospital, you've probably never heard of it but it's a hospital, was a hospital out near La Perouse and then it was a very good hospital. It was a teaching hospital and part of the Prince of Wales circuit and I got a job there and we got involved in looking after the end of the polio epidemic which was still in Sydney at the time,

21:00 this was '62, and I helped Bob Hegus, he was in charge of the respiratory unit there, then we got a cardiac surgeon added to the thing so we started off doing cardiac surgery. We started off working on dogs which I loathed. And finally we got good enough to tackle the homo sap [sapiens] and the thing just grew and grew and we got better and better and we started doing

21:30 all sorts of little complex things like shutting off the circulation for getting on to an hour and cooling the patient right down to some immense new temperatures, taking off berry aneurysms from the back of the brain and then re-walling them up and getting their heart to start again because they had no heart beat because they were too cold. And the whole thing would be taking, over twenty four hours we'd be there

22:00 and it was so wonderful when they woke up.

Did you, in you wildest dreams, when you were scrubbing the deck on the Norman think you'd be doing things like that?

No. Got a picture of myself there which I found the other day, sitting in front of a heart, lung machine, It had big, it was taken by a newspaper and it's got, 'Surgeon gambles with eight minutes with life.' I thought, 'God.

22:30 They've got the wrong stick. I was running the machine. I was in charge with what was happening, not the bloody surgeon.' Anyway I enjoyed life there. I kept on, then I went into private practise in Sydney for twenty years, worked very hard at that, and finally it nearly killed me. I just

23:00 had too much on my plate, was understaffed. Oh, Christ. Probably doesn't mean anything to you but I was on the staff of Prince Henry and Prince Of Wales hospitals, the Royal at Paddington, at Parramatta, Liverpool, Fairfield, Bankstown and one other, Auburn. I was on call every night of the week. I was driving all over Sydney, I was driving

23:30 about thirty six thousand miles a year in the metropolitan area and I was just slowly killing myself so I thought, "Well, I'll stop this." Anyway, that's enough of the story. It just goes on and on and I'm here now.

How did you end up in Townsville?

Purely by chance. The, Wollongong were having a lot of trouble

24:00 and a bloke called Frank Day went down there to sort them out and the trouble was that there were five British anaesthetists who'd lobbed in Wollongong who were going to run everything, they wanted everything. They wanted all the work. They wanted all the private work and they wanted all the private work and they didn't want to do anything else. So that day I called Frank Day who was a decent, well qualified, competent anaesthetist who was sent down there by a friend of mine called Professor Ross Hollands who's a friend of mine,

24:30 and he lasted about two weeks down there and they ran him out of town. So, Ross said, "Well, you don't know what the hell you're going to do with yourself. Why don't you go to Wollongong and take them on?" So I said, "Oh, bugger it. Why not?" So, I became Director of Anaesthesia in intensive care at Wollongong and I went down and I took these bloody British bastards, I can't say that. Anyway, they were just trying to line their own purse and not do a

25:00 proper service for the general hospital, for the public hospital, anything. Just they were just there for money. So, we had a few little barnies and I said, "We can change all this. We're going to have a meeting every week," and I said, "John, someone's going to give a paper," and I said, "You, Hudson, you can do it, give the first paper." I said, "It'll be the same every week. We'll have a meeting and we'll talk about things and we will run this department

25:30 and you will work here and you will do public work here or you don't stay on the staff of this hospital. Now you go and talk about it amongst yourselves. Make up your mind because you'll either, you'll do what I'm telling you or I'll run you out of town." So, they went and had a little chat about it and they came back and they said that they were going to work at the general hospital. So I spent a few years straightening all that out. We finally got it running pretty well. A

26:00 big, busy place, Wollongong, you know, Jesus there's nothing but trauma and tragedy. It's really, and it's grown so much. So, we bought a house at Coleburrow. We had a lovely house in Sydney and Andy was going to, he went to boarding school and he was hating it. Penny was supposed to go to boarding school the next year and then she didn't want to go, so

26:30 things were pretty crook and we were sitting reading the paper on a Sunday and there was an ad there, they wanted an anaesthetist at Townsville. I'd never even been here. So, they wanted, with a right to private practise. Jeez, what a pack of bloody lies that was. Withmore wouldn't give you the time of day, he had a pocket full of watches. Anyway, I came up here not

27:00 expecting anything much in the private practise, just to work at the public hospital. That went well, got on pretty well with everybody up here. I didn't really involve myself much in the private side of it at all. So I liked it here. We bought a boat, that's one of them, and we loved the lifestyle up here so we stayed. Kids went to school here and

27:30 that's where I've been for the past twenty four, twenty five years.

After the war did you march in Anzac Days?

Not until I came up here. I tried to, it was too hard, I was too busy. I hadn't the time, you know, all those years went by and I never marched, isn't that sad? I kept in touch with Stanwick Andrew who's the secretary

28:00 of the Nor N Class Association, it still exists in Sydney and there's one up here too, bloke called Morris, Morris something, runs it, I keep in touch with him. No, I never had time. I just worked too hard for too long. So I, but looking back and the Townsville scene I sum up by saying, "Yes, we have had a good time here." It's got a,

28:30 there is nowhere you can go that there aren't youth problems and certainly there are plenty here now, particularly now because the people aren't doing what they should be doing. They're not looking after people any more. All they want is money and more of it and they're making fortunes, these people up here, absolute fortunes, far more money than I've ever seen in my life. I'm talking about the anaesthetist, let alone the bloody surgeon. But anyway,

29:00 doesn't really matter. But I've enjoyed Townsville.

What are your thoughts on Anzac Day?

Well, for years I've marched with Bishop Lewis, and I've always done that until he went away from here recently and he's gone down to Adelaide, not because I've got any religious convictions, I'm not religious at all, but I like the guy, he happens to be, we met at the yacht club where I was commodore and he was, he came to take the Blessing of the Fleet thing. We got friendly then and we

29:30 found out we both came from Adelaide and we found out that we were both, his father had been born very close to where my great uncle owned a huge property called Natanary near the Big Tree that my great uncle pioneered. It's still in existence Natanary, tank retain it now, the relatives, they won't even let us past the gate.

30:00 Lot of things wrong. But anyway, Townsville I have enjoyed and I've had ups and downs here too but I've sort of passed the stage where I'll put up with anybody if I have to.

What do you think about on Anzac Day?

I march usually but I'm not well enough any longer. I've always marched and I think that the Anzac

30:30 Day here is magnificent. I showed you a picture. I didn't find that picture, Morgan, did I?

So in what ways do you think the war and your service in the navy has affected the rest of your

life?

War and my way of life and the navy has affected the rest of my life. Well,

31:00 I really think that I've made my own judgement on a lot of things that were in the navy and I think I've acquitted myself admirably as far as that service life was concerned. I don't think that that's a main problem to

31:30 me, not any more. What was that question you're after?

Just how, you know, when you look at your, the service you've given as far as being in medicine, did anything from, that you learnt in the navy or learnt during the war, did anything from there wash over into that career?

Oh, not really. I suppose I

32:00 didn't cut myself off the from the sea, always loved that. But I'm still associated with the navy. I still observe Veterans' Day but I just haven't been very well lately and I can't walk very far for a start. I've sort of, I've had some pretty massive cardiac surgery and I was lucky to survive it and I'm not no way near as sort of

32:30 physically fit as I used to be so I don't really do very much. I can sort of, just got to live with it, and I do miss medicine immensely. I wish I could get back into doing something there but the services are not available to me.

Were you still working when the Black Hawks crashed up here? On

33:00 **High Range?**

Yes, I was. Yeah.

What can you tell us about what you saw about that?

I didn't see very much. I went down to the hospital to see what was going on and I ran into my relative McLachlan who was minister of something or other then. He's a cousin of mine and I, he came up here because of political face. I was pretty horrified by what happened

33:30 but I wasn't actively involved in any of it so I can't really adequately speak on it but I suppose I've been led to believe that the medical management of those severely injured was as good as you could possibly expect and I think it's fairly true because General Hospital had a very, very good intensive care and surgical thoracic and otherwise staff and they were quite capable of looking after these things.

What was the best thing about your navy service?

34:00 The best thing? Well, it certainly wasn't discipline because I had that before I went there and didn't need it. Oh, I suppose you get those romantic notions about what you enjoyed or didn't enjoy but I loved the sea,

34:30 you know, I've been happy on it for a long, long while, and long before I joined the navy, with my little VJ. I, oh I don't know, not an easy question to sort of put into a tight box and say lock it up.

Do you have anything to say to young Australians that may see this, read this in ten years time? Anything to

35:00 **say to young Australians?**

To say to Australians in ten years time? I would say this, what I think is one of the biggest tragedies that's happening in Australia is the failure to appreciate love and attention to the people that live here and the ghastly things that are constantly occurring

35:30 are not necessary in this society. I think they're inadequately dealt with. I think people need to somehow reach for a different set of behavioural values. I'm putting this in a very broad sense. I say people must reach for a set of more adequate values in life which seem to be just slipping by

36:00 and there seems to be so much emphasis on things that are less important than being a human being and looking after your fellow man. I don't know how you can change it, it's pretty hard to. You know, from my point of view, if I could, I'd like to go back, give them anaesthetic and

36:30 I can't do that, you can't change what's happened to you.

Do you think that the values that all the veterans of World War 11 fought for, do you think it was worth it?

Oh, my God, yes. Oh, my God yes. I mean that was one thing we had to win. Can you imagine this place under Japanese domination? Can you honestly conceive what it would be like? I can't. I can't stand the

37:00 Japanese.

How does it make you feel now then, when you see those same values disintegrating?

It upsets me, but, and I'm not in a position really to sort of change it. What I think should be done is not necessarily a full answer to it all. I think the whole thing's all screwed up,

37:30 screwed up in so many ways and so many problems and so, moneys and troubles and difficulties and tragedies. It's just a whole mismatch of what we would really like to have. I think there's still a lot of good people, I really do believe this is true. Jesus, there's, we've got too big maybe and maybe there's too many of us

38:00 for the land. Money's a big factor. There seems to be a hell of a lot of it around for some and practically bloody nothing for a lot of others. I can't give you a good answer to that because I don't know what to do. I know what I'd like to do if I had something to do with an ethical world, have a few changes made here particularly in relation to charges and

38:30 services and abilities, and that wouldn't be too readily accepted, but I haven't got any of those powers now and I'm too old.

And your final thing you'd like to say to the Archive?

The Archive, well I'd like to say I do appreciate you coming. I've enjoyed today talking to you and I hope I haven't spiked any kegs that shouldn't have been opened

39:00 but I think we've had a pretty good day and we've had a lot of things to talk about and we've got a lot in common, and that's for both of you I feel that. So, it's been a good thing all round and I hope it'll be useful for you. But changing the world overnight isn't really a part of my activities at the moment, as much as I'd like to help you I think I might be a bit too radical, if you

39:30 see what I mean.

Rightio, thank you very much.