Australians at War Film Archive

Arthur Le Page (Arch, Lucy) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 **If you could tell us your introductions?**

My name is Arthur Edward Le Page. I was born on the 19th February 1923 in Moorabbin to William Alexander and Elizabeth Le Page. They were from the First World War where they met. She was Welsh and he was Australian, in France they met and they were married in Cardiff, my mother's hometown.

01:00 She came back in a bride's ship in 1919 and Dad came back with his unit and I was born on the 19th February 1923, my brother was born in 1921. We moved around from East St Kilda to Highett: my father bought a house. I was actually born in Moorabbin, which is the next suburb to Highett, in the hospital. We stayed there for many years we moved away in the '30s

01:30 and came down to the city because although we had to, like every other family, struggle through the Depression we ate lots of rabbits and we used to be very friendly with the Chinese market gardeners who used some of our land behind our place to grow their vegetables and they used our night soil to fertilise their vegetables, which I didn't know until year afterwards.

02:00 We ate well on the vegetables and the rabbits and the fish we used to get, I was a very keen fisherman and so was Dad, we used to go down and fish off the piers at Half Moon Bay and Sandringham and those days you could always get a decent feed of flathead and things. Of course in those Depression days… those most of the guys were doing that. My father had a job during the Depression years and John and I although we were still very young had to go and work in the soup kitchens.

02:30 My father worked in the soup kitchens as a volunteer mostly through the RSL [Returned and Services League] down the bottom end of Flinders Street what we call Banana Alley, just the end of the Flinders Street station at the foot of Elizabeth Street, a bit further down, between Queen Street I suppose, it was Banana Alley. We'd dish out the bread to these poor devils that didn't have a feed. As a family we survived fairly well in the Depression. Yes we wore patched clothes

03:00 and patched shoes and things, but at the end of the Depression in the early '30s my father sent my brother and I, after a state school to a public school. We enjoyed a very good education at the public school until 1938 my brother left and I left in 1940. My brother went into the university and did medicine and

03:30 I left in 1940 and discussion at school in those times when the war was on of course centred around the war a great deal. Every school boy of 17 and 18 was talking nothing but the war, every day there were more old school boys of our school killed and injured and you sort of kept a running record because you knew most of these guys

04:00 by name, like the older boys at school you knew them fairly well and you knew them by name and you followed their records up through the desert and through the Battle of Britain and the Battle of Malta and the North Atlantic and the Murmansk convoys and it was all, at lunch time, it was all war talk for we boys. We used to argue to which service we would join. Of course the war ended, the war began at least in September

04:30 1939 and I left school in 1940, the end of 1940 and my father, I wasn't then 18, didn't turn 18 until the February of '41 and my father wouldn't let me join up. He said I was too young. My brother went, he was still in the university of course and they kaleidoscoped the medical course down to virtually cut term holidays

05:00 so they could squeeze the doctors through faster. He graduated in 1944, I think it was. He went straight in virtually after he did his hospitals he went into the navy as a doctor. I went to work when I left school. I worked as a clerk at BHP [Broken Hill Propriety Ltd then] as an office boy, they called you a commercial apprentice and they paid you 75 cents a week

05:30 for a 48 hour week. You had to have your leaving, your matriculation, you had to be doing accountancy and you had to be doing shorthand and typing etcetera. All these requirements were pretty onerous

however. It was a great place to work and we were very happy there. One day on the way home my father said to me “Why don’t you join up?” just as an aside in the journey home

06:00 and of course I couldn’t get the forms out of my pocket quick enough… which I carried every day. He signed them and I went the next day to Older Fleet Building in the October of 1941, the Older Fleet building in Collins Street and put my forms in and the guy asked me a whole heap of questions and one of which did I have any previous miliary experience. Well I said, “Yes I had

06:30 a second lieutenant’s commission in the army.” Which I got because I was a lieutenant in the cadets at school and I did a course, two courses actually, and there it is on the table the commission in the army which is unusual because when the petty officer said, “Did I have any experience?” And I said, “Yes.” He said, “I didn’t hear you.” And he asked the question about four times and then I woke up to what he was talking about. So

07:00 then I said, “No.” And I went into the navy. I did my training in the navy down at Flinders Naval Base like everybody else and I did all the stupid things that all young people do. The way it worked you went in on this particular day and you took your cut lunch and you were put on the train and you got off the train, the train used to go right into Flinders naval depot, you’d get off in a siding area and you

07:30 were sort of with your cases put down you were formed up into squads and our squad was such and such a number and we were taken up to a mess hall and we were allocated space, then we went down to stores and we got our hammock and our uniforms and things. Of course this petty officer was signed off to us.

That’s fantastic detail, but just for the introduction could you shorten the stories, which we’ll get onto a bit later.

08:00 Ok. Well one of the silly things I did, of course this has a sequel later on, the petty officer who was in charge of us I thought he was a bully but he was a very good officer as it turned out. The first thing he said was “Who went to a public school?” and of course stupid me steps

08:30 forward, being an honest little lad. I therefore scrubbed every toilet at Flinders, I walked every mile around Flinders, picked up every piece of paper in Flinders, I did every piece of extra duty in Flinders. I could have murdered this fellow. However time went on and I finished that course I was about to go to sea on the [HMAS] Canberra, I was told I was a CW-1[confidential warrant] rate

09:00 and I didn’t know what that meant, it actually meant confidential warrant rate and the petty officer again, not the same bloke, but the police officer that regulated your movements in and out of the depot said that I was ‘pig material’. Well that meant I was officer material. I went through and I did an officers course at Flinders naval base, that lasted three months, four months I don’t remember now.

09:30 I thought it was my ability that got me a commission but not so. I found years afterwards that a directive had come from naval board that they had to have a surplus of naval officers, young naval officers with sea- going experience preferably small boats and I’d had a lot of that before the war because I used to do a lot of sailing, to man the landing craft on the way to

10:00 Japan. They expected that the casualties would be very high. They therefore would need extra officers. Therefore I got a commission, nothing to do with my ability or anything else. I was going to be one of the casualties. Anyway I got my commission and I was made a midshipman because I was too young to be an officer, wear stripes that is, midshipman you wore colour patches on your lapels. I wore red colour patches which are quite strange because nobody had ever

10:30 seen them before. They have degrees in the navy, the permanent fellows wore white, the sea-going guys, the guys that were merchant seamen wore light blue and we as reservists wore red.

That detail is a bit too much for the introduction. Could you just outline to us just briefly your war service details?

11:00 Right oh I’ll tell you now. We set off to Balmoral in Sydney the naval depot and the restrictions on midshipman are terribly onerous I can tell you however. You’re allowed one night a week until nine o’clock provided you have your parent’s written permission. I was told by the fellow looking after me the junior officer that if you wore a Burberry,

11:30 that’s a navy blue overcoat without any badges of rank nobody would ever know who you were. I was one of the few naval officers walking around Sydney in Burberry on a hot summer’s night. The girls were always very suspicious of sailors in a Burberry on a hot summer’s night. Anyway my duty from there was in various small ships. I went into minesweepers, sweeping, we swept the channel into Sydney Heads. On a relief

12:00 basis I was minesweepers yeoman that means I was responsible for putting out the sweeps and we put the moored mined sweeps which were the big torpedos, then we put out the double L’s which just sweep magnetic mines. I did that for a month while the bloke was on leave. I came back into the depot and I went to [HMAS] Warramunga it was just being handed over from the dockyard over to the navy. I did sea trials in the Warramunga for about four to five days

12:30 being a brand new chum never having been to sea in a destroyer before. I can remember the wise old

head of the midshipmen's table sat me at the end of the table and of course they started to do hard over high speed turns. Well high speed turns were thirty odd knots, close to forty knots. When you do a hard over turn the ship leans badly, and of course these smart fellows knew

13:00 and I collected all the afternoon tea, the milk, the sugar, the tea, the scones, the butter, the jam the whole bloody lot I got. So you learn those things in the navy, it's like opening your mouth about being a public school boy.

What were the other ships you were on?

I left Warramunga. I went then up to a place called Port Stevens in New South Wales which was highly secret and I joined a ship called [HMAS] Westralia which was moored up there.

13:30 It was home base to the trading establishment for combined operations. The Port Stephens area was all cordoned off and guarded very closely because it belonged to combined operations and an outfit called JOOTS, Joint Operations Overseas Training School, where all the Z special raids and things were raised from there and [raids on]

14:00 Singapore was raised from there. We were signed off to Westralia, but training only. We used to paddle around in these folding canoes. They were six manned things made of canvas and plywood, they were towed for the most part by luxury launches that were taken over by the navy and we got towed around and we did landings on beaches and rocks and things. This was a brand new service, nobody

14:30 knew much about it, so you taught yourselves quite a lot. Then they brought some craft up to us called ALCs, which were British assault landing craft which were entirely unsuitable for Australian conditions. Heavy as lead, I don't know what tonnage they were but they would probably be 25 tons, 30 tons. Very much underpowered because the secret of landing craft I'll tell you about later.

15:00 These things were hopelessly underpowered and we used to lose a lot of them because as you were coming into the beach, you dropped an anchor off the back end and had reel of what we called coir rope which was made out of coconut fibre, not very strong and this thing would hit the beach and the troops would get out and do their thing and we'd back off and try and recover our anchor.

15:30 Well to get the old girl off the beach because it was sometimes a bit hard but we, especially if the surface had been bouncing you up as the boat lightened. We'd pull off with these kedge anchor things and we lost a lot of boats in the surf, they were entirely unsuitable for Pacific coast. Then we started to get American landing craft, the original LCPs, Landing Craft

16:00 Personnel. They turned out to be useless for landing craft as such, although as a landing craft they were very practical. They were designed for the swamps of southern America, for the

16:30 bootleggers used to be wanting boat to go through the narrow shallow swamps that could go over narrow shallow banks. The secret of these was they had immense power, they had 220, 250 horsepower. Those had petrol in them, petrol engines.

It's probably a bit too much detail for now. If you can keep to a summary for now Arthur, the detail that you are giving is absolutely brilliant that's exactly what we want, but just for the introduction all I want is a short summary.

I did my training at Port Stephens. We moved from that ship Westralia

17:00 into the depot. We did our sum training there, we graduated from that depot to another place up in Queensland called Toorbul Point, which was a division of the Brisbane depot. Toorbul Point was built, whoever sited it I don't know, but it was built on a mangrove swamp and every time the tide came in, particularly on king tides, you

17:30 used to get water up through your tanks. At night it was crawling alive with soldier crabs. We did our jungle training from here and our landing we got more of those American landing craft I was telling you about, but they changed types. They were much more practical. We used to go out with the Americans on night exercises. We lost a few boats and we lost a few blokes unfortunately, because whenever

18:00 they went over the side with their kits on they didn't come up too readily, didn't float of course. We used to land these landing craft in all sort of conditions and probably that was one of the major factors of the landing all the way up to Japan, that the Americans had these landing craft that were so powerful you could turn them around inside the tide line, the breaker line between the breakers and the beach, in very shallow water.

18:30 They were immensely powerful, they all had 250 horsepower engines. But we graduated to diesels then. They changed the design of the boat down a bit. We lost boats mostly through we were smart-arseing a bit because you had to learn to come in through a 10 and 12 foot swell, like you see on the surf beach, in one of these craft.

19:00 When you first do it you come at the face of the wave, which is entirely the wrong thing to do because that just bowls you, rolls you over, head over kettle and not too comfortable when you've got a landing craft on top of you in the water.

Before we go on any operational things, can you tell us briefly where your career was at 1945?

1945, you want me to skip everything.

It's just too much detail. We'll come back to it though.

19:30 Right oh. We went from Toorbul Point to the [SS] Manoora and we stayed on the Manoora for about nine months and down here at Port Phillip Bay we took the 1st Marine Division from Guadalcanal, they'd just come out of Guadalcanal and we exercise down here on the peninsula at Mount Martha and around to Safety Beach. We used to land in varying

20:00 types of boats on the rocks and scale the cliffs in the middle of the night in May, June and I can tell you it was freezing cold, wet and cold. Then we came in and landed on Safety Beach. In those days Safety Beach, the back of it was the drain pit for Dromana and you'd have to go up over the beach through the swamps and you'd smell like a polecat and came back on board the Manoora and there were not hot showers of course for 1200 men, not enough fresh water. So anyway…

20:30 **What was your rank at this stage?**

I was still a midshipman. Then we were sent away from Port Phillip Bay and we went up to Cairns and we did some training with the 24th Battalion that came out of the tablelands and we took them up to Milne Bay and that was, I think, September 1942. It was pretty rough in Milne Bay in those days. Nobody knew it was going on. So we landed

21:00 in Milne Bay. I've never seen rain like it. I was told it rained 10 inches that night and I could well believe it. I had my first experience of naval organization. It wasn't good. We then exercised further in the Manoora with battalions along the coast, we went into Port Moresby and places like that. It was a very, very rough and rugged place those days. The Japanese cruisers used to

21:30 pop over to the Solomons and give you a bit of curry of a night. Then we came out of the Manoora and were allocated into [SS] Kanimbla. I think that was about 1942, '43, I can't be exactly you forget dates. However. We called into Port Stephens and Manoora dropped us in Port Stephens, dropped all our luggage and we were supposed to take these ALC craft that I told you about before

22:00 that we trained in Port Stephens and take them the 125 miles down the coast to Sydney. They were never designed for such a journey, however we did it and we got there. We joined Kanimbla and we went from Sydney to Moreton Bay, we exercised again and worked the ship up as they call it still with these ALC things and we lost a lot more of them. Eventually we were equipped with the American landing craft and we

22:30 went off on operations. We started on operations, the first one we did was Hollandia, we did secondary operations on the way up, did Finschhafen as a secondary operations we weren't in the main landing force there, we were in the secondary operations. It didn't have the fire power obviously because by that time the first onslaught was ashore and gaining

23:00 ground and we just brought in reinforcements and things.

Just briefly what were the other places you partook in landings?

Morotai, Toem up in Dutch New Guinea as it was in those days, Morotai over the in the Dutch East Indies and then we moved out there and we did a couple of secondary landings. Then the next big one we did was I think

23:30 it was Leyte Gulf, which was the very big one.

The invasion of the Philippines?

Yes, that's the biggest invasion force that was ever mounted that was gathered in Los Negros in the Admiralty Islands and I think there was something like 600 ships took off that morning. It was a pretty dicey operation because at the far end we went into a place called Leyte Gulf which was rather like Port Phillip Bay, very restricted entrance.

24:00 You could imagine we was deep in Japanese territory, very heavily defended by the Japanese because they realised they were losing the war. The air force had through a number of small strikes, had captured the odd island just to get air bases. We didn't want the whole island. If you look at the map of New Guinea we only had a town here and a town there and a town here. All they were, were air bases.

24:30 Morotai, all they took was a peninsula. Cape Kumusi in Buna all we took was a air base. At Hollandia we only took air bases and big lakes, because Catalina flying boats wanted a base, so we took Yap and Ulithi and those places they were only, you didn't take them, you just went there. The American Seabees [US military construction unit] had put down an

25:00 air strip in, they'd have fighters on it within 12 hours. It sounds remarkable but they put in 16 foot Caterpillar diesels [bulldozers], they'd scrape them out and have the landing mats straight behind and they anchor the tanker offshore and pump the petrol in and fly the fighters within 12 hours. If they're big enough they have two-engine bombers out in perhaps 24 hours. As the war moved forward that strip was abandoned. The whole place was abandoned.

25:30 **I can't stay on operations unfortunately at this stage. If you could very briefly tell us what you did after the war?**

After the war? You skipped the rest.

It's just the introduction that's why I'm interrupting.

There was a lot of war after Lake Taman, let me tell you that. After the war I came out in May of 1946.

26:00 I was lieutenant then and I was a bit of a big wig by then because I had a few medals and the story I told you about the petty officer in the first instance who made me wash all the toilets, to make sure a public school boy knew which way was up, turned out to be my petty officer of the foc's'le [forecastle, where the crew sleep and live] division, I was boss of the foc's'le division of the ship, they

26:30 split it up into bits and they have divisions so the men are contained and they work that part of the ship. My old petty officer went off on a draft somewhere and I got this new one, so help me Bob, it was the bloke I had when I first joined the navy. He turned out to be a first class fellow, first class petty officer and I can only say, the stuff the navy is built on. Delighted to have him. I got out in '46, some sad

27:00 moments when I left, in fact I cried when I saw the Old Tart [SS Kanimbla], anchored in Sydney, and I'm going to say this, you may not want the detail, we came into Sydney Harbour and they gave us number 1 buoy, that is the pride of the fleet. It's unusual that a ship of our calibre would get number 1 buoy, usually reserved for the number 1 crew, with the admirals and things.

27:30 The old tartar was faded, we had rust streaks, she looked tired. When we were on our way ashore that night we looked back across it and we saw the old girl we'd spent three and a half years in her, we travelled a long way, something in the order of 200,000 nautical miles and I must say I cried a little, to say goodbye to the old girl.

28:00 However, I came ashore and it's a terrible cultural shock both ways, when you go into the navy and you come from an ordinary regular home and you meet all these new guys for the first time and the language is different from what you've ever heard in your life before. The way of living is different, however you get used to it or you don't survive. The same way when you came out of the navy, you're so used to 'action stations,' the discipline of,

28:30 "Do that," "Do this." You come out of the navy, I couldn't sit down, I just couldn't, I got up and kept walking around. Then I must say I practiced being an alcoholic. There wasn't anything to do all day, we hadn't got ourselves back in the frame of mind to go back to work. Some of the blokes had gone off to the university. I didn't. I wandered around for a while,

29:00 palled up with some blokes and we used to drink a lot. Drinking was hard in those days because it was terribly limited. The pubs didn't open until 12 o'clock and they only had an hour for luncheon. However we used to organise a bottle of whisky or something and we'd get stuck into it. Whisky you blokes have never heard of, Old Court, Smiths', Corio we called it COR-10 which was a petrol.

29:30 We'd drink this stuff. We just couldn't settle down. I got malaria one day and collapsed on the footpath, I can remember two old ladies saying, "Look at that drunken naval officer." I suppose I was bit boozed but I wasn't drunk, and I had malaria. You probably haven't seen a guy with malaria, you might have. It's not a pretty sight. You sweat, it just pours out of you, however the girls from Catnars rescued me.

30:00 Jim Catnar, you may remember, was one of the guys from the Great Escape from the stalag [prison camp] in Germany. The girls in his shop came and took me in and got me an ambulance, took me out to Heidelberg. I couldn't settle down for months. I went on practicing to be an alcoholic and I suddenly, one night drank too much and woke up next morning in a hell of a state and I realised I was making a terrible mess of this. By that time, September. I went and got a job.

30:30 I was second dickie on a truck, which is, on a furniture truck, pre-war truck because you couldn't buy trucks. I was a handyman, a lifting man, a jockey they called it on the truck. Of course the guys that hadn't been to the war had

31:00 an opportunity to take it out on guys who had been to the war, especially these labouring jobs because they had been punished during the war because they weren't in uniform and they took it out on the guys when you got back. I had a particularly nasty bloke in my outfit, no names, no pack drill [when a military violation occurs and no-one names names, the whole unit is punished]. I was going to flatten him one day, in fact

31:30 I was pretty fit in those days I was a beach master and I had to be fit. I stuck this guy up against the wall, fortunately the fellows came and dragged me off just as the manager came through the door, he said, "What's going on?" "Nothing, sir." Everybody said nothing. This guy to his credit dusted himself off and he went along and resigned. He didn't dob me in. So that was my experience. It took me a long time, as it took

32:00 every one of us who'd been to the war. Any guys who wear returned soldiers badges particularly in the Australian forces who in fact never went to the war, never saw a shot fired, they march on Anzac Day but I don't think probably, I'd be surprised if 10 per cent of the guys who march on Anzac Day have ever been to the war. Yes they all wear service medals. Yes they've

32:30 all been to A-B-C, but in the Pacific theatre of war the Australians weren't terribly active. Yes they were in the beginning at the back of Kokoda, yes they were up to Finschhafen, yes they did something in Buna, but then the years went on and they didn't do anything. There'd been a lot of political trouble between MacArthur and Blamey and

33:00 the Australians weren't popular.

What were going to do now is go back to your pre-war years. So the introduction is now complete. I want you to keep talking. I'm not going to press the anti-detail button anymore. You can talk in as much detail as you like.

So where did we get to? I don't know where your rule me off in the detail.

33:30 **What we're going to do now is go back to pre-war years, before World War II and tell us about your schooling and your family. What was life like then?**

Life before the war was, I was privileged, I suppose because my family were, my father worked very hard and he did very well. In fact

34:00 he was an orphan, his father had died when he was terribly young and his mother had died when he was also young, but old enough to work. They were in Geelong and he came up from Geelong and he lived in Melbourne and strangely enough he lived in the same street Pat, my now wife, lived in until I met her.

34:30 He had to struggle as a boy and he went to work for sixpence a week, which was the money those days and he walked from Coburg to Richmond every day. He did very well there, he did his accountancy, he did very well in that particular company. He went to Laity Laity [Ltd] and very early in the piece in 1914 he went away he was 22 I think then, he was born in 1892 so what does that make him

35:00 yeah 22 when he went away. He went away with the 5th Division and he was stationed at Egypt, never got to Gallipoli. Went from Egypt up to Marseilles from Marseilles up into France. He was 5th Div trainer it was called, subsequently met my mother.

35:30 My mother was in France with what they called Queen Mary Army Auxiliary, like AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service] I suppose, she was in the supply depot in Calais and he used to come up from the 5th Divvy [Division]. They were on the Somme at the time: they obviously went various places. When he met Mum the Zeppelins used to come across at night and drop bombs out of the window by hand, little 100 pounders.

36:00 One night there was an air raid on, now I'm not sure of the detail of this and nobody will ever know because my father said he was in the slit trench and Mum jumped on him. Mum said she was in the slit trench and my father jumped on her. Now what's true I don't know but they met, they subsequently got married in Cardiff. As I told you she then came out on a bride ship in 1919, Dad had to come back with his unit in February of 1919 and they both established

36:30 themselves here. Dad bought a house in Highett, which he let out and he rented a place in Orrong Road just near the corner of Dandenong and Orrong Roads, a little single-fronted place. We lived about that district, I went to Strathfield College and then I moved over to East Malvern to Central Park Road,

37:00 I went to Tooronga Park State School and we moved from there back to Highett and I went to the Highett school for a while, Moorabbin State School for a while. Then we moved back to the city and we lived in Darling Road in East Malvern and I went to Lloyd Street State School in 1929 and this was the height of the Depression years. Things were pretty tough. We used to survive, Mum was a very good

37:30 housekeeper and doer and Dad used to, he was a very industrious man and he did very well and he made a few bob. We always had lunches and my clothes were patched like everybody else's were and we had to change when we came home into our really old clothes, those sort of things. To get our pocket money we had to mow the lawns, do the garden, sweep the paths and in later years wash the car.

38:00 One of the companies that my father was in the group that my father worked for sold motor cars and they gave him a motor car back in about 1928 or 29, an old Rover, well you'd have to see that car to believe it, however. We had that for a years, there was nowhere to go, you didn't go many places, I mean it wasn't like you do today, jump in a car and go from here to Mildura after tea sort of thing.

38:30 Sunday afternoon you did a bit of a Sunday afternoon drive, which was the go back in those days. That was only a few miles. You'd have a cup of tea from the thermos somewhere on the side of the road. You'd go from where we lived to Dandenong, tell me if I'm getting out of track, that went on I left Lloyd Street State School at the end of 1932 and I went to a public school and

39:00 I met a bloke at public school. I met a bloke on the holidays just before we went to that school down at the Sorrento Hotel. He is still my best friend. I was best man at his wedding and he was best man at my wedding and I had lunch with him last week, he brought his sister here.

Can you tell us what the Depression was like for you?

The Depression

39:30 was, I told you, my father worked as a volunteer in the soup kitchens in Banana Alley, you'd go along the country roads and you'd see what we called "swagmen" [itinerant workers] humping their bluey [swag, knapsack] as it were, going from house-to-house trying to get a job.

These are Sussos as well?

Oh no the Sussos were different. The Sussos were men who didn't have work and to get the dole they had to go and work on roads. Como Park was built by the sustenance workers,

40:00 and the Great Ocean Road was built by them in those Depression years and they were called sustenance workers.

Tape 2

00:33 **For this tape tell us about growing up, Empire, the Depression anything pre-war. Go for as much detail as you want?**

The Depression years as I say were tough years, they were guys walking around the country who honestly couldn't get a feed.

01:00 And I mean couldn't get a meal. They'd come to your house, we lived in Highett a lot of the time which was semi-country in those days, they'd want to clean up the wood heap, because you had a wood heap in those days, they'd split wood for you and cut down trees, cut the lawn, do all sorts of job, do anything just for a meal. My mother was a soft touch and she used to always give these poor devils a meal. They were the days of the ice chest where a man used to come and deliver

01:30 you a block of ice and the rabbitto would come around with his little two wheeler cart, like a chariot, he'd have rabbits on a bar slung in pairs across and they'd be, I think the were about sixpence a pair, quite fresh. The butter man would come, then where we lived Chinese vegetables carts would be about, we didn't want them because, I told you, the Chinese behind us took

02:00 over some of the land that went with the house we had that was useless to us, but they farmed it, they were market gardeners because it was a big market garden district. They used to take our night soil, I don't know whether you know what night soil [household excrement, before sewage] is but I won't go into it, most people know what it is. Well you didn't have sewage you had a pan and they'd come and collect it once a week, the council, but in our case the Chinese fellows used to come up perhaps

02:30 twice a week and take it and they'd use it as fertiliser on their vegetables. I didn't know that at the time, apparently it's very good for vegetables. We used to have beautiful vegetables I didn't know.

You actually had a toilet and they collected the pan?

Oh yes, you didn't have a toilet inside, all your toilets were down in the yard and you didn't have such a thing in those days, I don't know when they brought septic tanks in, but we didn't have one. I can't remember when we first had sewage.

03:00 It was certainly a long time ago. I can remember pans up to the time I was perhaps nine or 10, somewhere about that mark, somewhere about then. The worst thing about it was the people who couldn't get work. Some dreadful things happened you know, fellows would just lose their reason, they had to separate from their families because they couldn't support them. Dreadful things

03:30 were happening, families were disintegrating. People were starving, kids were hungry, at school when you went there I'd have a lunch and the kid next to me wouldn't have a lunch it was nothing for the kid next to me to have no shoes. On a cold day and have no sweater. I'd tell Mum this and she'd find a sweater that was perhaps a bit older and I'd take and give it to the kid. You didn't do it openly, you put on the seat and pushed it over to him. He'd

04:00 look down and no, he didn't thank you but you didn't need thanks. So that was the way everybody got through the Depression. I suppose, I think a lot of people helped a lot of people in those days. In about, I don't know what year it was, I think it was about 1932, it had already started in Sydney and was starting in Melbourne called the Smith Family. A group of businessmen realised that Christmas time was terrible

04:30 for families, so in Sydney they formed this group of blokes, The Smith Family, who gathered together and through their own efforts and through collecting their own money and through begging from the wholesalers they got food and stuff. Anyway the Smith Family was born in Melbourne and my father used to work there as a volunteer. So every Christmas he made my brother and I, by this time we're getting on a bit,

05:00 we're perhaps I'm at the exultant age of nine and my brother the exultant age of 11, and we used to have to go with him and work. The place was in Collingwood, their headquarters, still there, and they'd give you a bunch of forms and names and families on and you'd go around the various counters and they'd give you, [INTERRUPTION]

05:30 he was one of the early blokes in the Smith Family in Melbourne and he made John and I appreciate the benefits we had. I mean we did have meals, we did have clothes, we did have shoes, we did have sweaters, we weren't cold, we really didn't go without in my family, I must say. We weren't rich, Mum used to darn our sweaters and all our socks were darned,

06:00 our pants were patched. We survived. Yeah we ate rabbits until we looked like them, we ate fish until we looked like it. We got our vegetables from the Chinese gentleman, so we managed in that way. Dad used to go up to town in the train from the Highett Station and on the weekends sometimes we'd go out in the car, we might go down as far as Carrum to the beach.

06:30 Those days Carrum was the end of the earth if you know what I mean, it wasn't suburban like it is now, there were acres, all that land at the back was empty, it was empty for a very good reason, that every time it rained it flooded. It was feet deep in water, everybody used to go down there and sightsee. There were huge floods in Melbourne in those days, there wasn't the money for the

07:00 public services to have drainage there wasn't money to do the roads, there wasn't money for people to have food, there wasn't the work for people to do because councils couldn't pay for it. People were losing their houses because they couldn't pay their rates, equally the council woke up they couldn't sell the houses when they repossessed them. They'd only go into the liquidations, better to keep the people in and get 10 bob a week then leave them vacant because the vandals would get at them.

07:30 The Depression was a terrible time. We used the word "depression" today as being down in the dumps, well I can tell you that the Depression was a real down in the dumps time. To go to the footy in those days we used to be regular attenders at the footy with my father, we followed Collingwood in those days, regretfully. We'd go to Collingwood there weren't stands,

08:00 we'd have to stand up in the outer their were no football stands and if there were, we couldn't afford to go in them. We'd stand up in the outer and the lavatory was a 44 gallon drum and a piece of spouting. You'd wee into the spouting and it ran into a 44 gallon drum, because by quarter time the drum was over the top, by three quarter time you're walking through two inches of mud.

Is this at the MCG?

No, no the MCG was a little better than that.

08:30 The Collingwood ground for example. Most of those football grounds, Victoria Park that wasn't built up in those days, there was acres of space around it. There were very few cars to park. They were tough days and they were tough footballers, believe me. Collingwood was the Collier brothers and the Coventry brothers, very

09:00 tough gentlemen. The Carlton fellows, Soapy Valance and Don Chittier these guys were tough in a way that is different to what it is today. The regulation on the football field wasn't anything like it is today. They had one umpire and of course by and large he didn't always report everything he saw, for whatever reason. He didn't always report it.

09:30 Consequently, fellows got away with blue murder. The way the poor devils were paid, I think they used to get about a quid a game or two quid a game. Their top footballers would three quid. If they did very well on the day… the rich boys who support their club would go into the locker room and sling perhaps twenty quid amongst them. So they'd take the hat around and they might have a hundred to go for the whole team

10:00 for the day, all the strappers and studders and trainers would all get a bob or two out of it. They might make five quid a game if they had a good day and they were there when the money was distributed, because if they weren't there they were flat out being knocked out, spitting their teeth out, which often happened. They didn't have mouthguards, there was no such thing in those days. They were tough times. We went to a public school and we were terribly lucky.

Was it a better game in those days?

10:30 Well it wasn't nearly as fast. It was, I'm not going to say it was a cleaner game, but the bullying was much more open. It's not this behind the pack, if somebody behind the pack dropped somebody, I tell you they'd drop him within, the other bloke would be on the ground before five blokes on him and he'd be dropped. Before you know it there'd be six blokes flat out. When they laid down enough fellows they'd knock off.

11:00 No it wasn't as spectacular in those days, they didn't jump as high, they didn't put their bodies quite so much on the line as they do these days, but they did it in a different way. You see the footballs weren't as good, their boots weren't as good, they didn't have the equipment. Three quarter time they'd have a bottle of beer and a pie at three quarter time

11:30 in the middle of the ground. At half time they'd have a couple bottles of beer and a couple of pies, so it was a different game. It hadn't got to the hundred thousand dollar, the multi-million dollar game it is now where money is the sport now, not the sport. That's a great regret to guys like me because I grew up with sport. Cricket was a game I loved most of all. I used to be a very regular attender at the cricket.

12:00 My brother and I were lucky enough to get into the membership of the MCG [Melbourne Cricket

Ground] as junior members in 1933 or ’34 I’m not sure what it was. We got two ladies tickets. We could go to the football at will. We followed, that’s when I changed from Collingwood to Melbourne, well for obvious reasons, Melbourne was the home ground. Melbourne became my

12:30 sporting club, as you might say. I didn’t play any sport there, until later on I was invited to go and play cricket in 1940. We turned out there to play cricket in what was supposed to be the district cricket, a Melbourne game. There were a lot of us at the nets, I wasn’t a bad cricketer at school, I wasn’t hugely good, I would never have amounted to anything really, but I played in the Firsts a couple of times.

13:00 I went touring New South Wales with the school and those sort of things, but I wasn’t a hugely good cricketer. That year they dropped all the suburban cricket they had. A fellow called Ross Gregory was killed in the air force and he was a, I think he was a test cricketer, it was a huge shock to Melbourne. There’s an oval name after him,

13:30 just up near Fitzroy Street in Albert Park [actually Middle Park]. It was a different world those days. There wasn’t the trams, I mean, there wasn’t the people about, our place was very small. I can’t give you numbers for the population of Melbourne.

Can you tell us about what the MCG was like before the war? And test matches you saw there?

I was in the Kippax, Bradman era

14:00 and I saw a lot of the bodyline with Bill Boson and Larwood and those guys and Aimes and you could go on with the names forever and a day. To me they were huge fellows, they were gods, god wasn’t as big and powerful as they were. To watch the Larwood era and the bodyline was to me as a cricketer.

14:30 I suppose because I’d been a public school boy I had a slanted version on sportsmanship, not slanted it was I thought the right version, I still think the right version to a lesser degree perhaps than I did then. I was bigoted and biased. I think today all sports has become a money game. Those days we played five-day tests and one was played out. We played five

15:00 tests in a series. Indeed, we didn’t have one-day cricket. One-day cricket here started a bit by accident. Kerry Packer decided to promote cricket on a one-day basis with world elevens because the guys were getting paid no money, they were getting perhaps five pound a day or something to be there all day in the hot sun and slave out.

15:30 They had to work like the footballers. They all had jobs, they had to, to support their families because times were that tough. They did anything they were told to do because times were tough and a quid was a huge amount of money. Fellows used to want a penny for a cup of tea, now they want two dollars. They don’t buy tea anyway.

16:00 The cricket in those days was more a sportsman’s game, not that was always very good. Jardine would never come out the same gate as the professionals. Never. Jardine, I can remember came onto the MCG one day and his Harlequin Cricket Club cap, which was a multi-coloured circles around a cap, and that saw the beginning of regulation

16:30 caps for the teams. He would never come out the same gate as the professionals, and poor old Larwood had been a coal miner, he could bowl a ball on threepence, he really could. Jardine perfected this method of playing cricket because they couldn’t get Bradman out. There were other blokes, Ponsford and Woodville, huge cricketers.,

17:00 batting down the line Harvey these guys. Great cricketers, our era in 1948, I’m getting ahead of myself a bit there, but we were the cricket force of the world because you had those guys in your team, the Keith Millers, the Tocaks and you could go back to the Ray Linville’s and even before the war we had a bloke called Laurie Nash who was a policeman, used to play football

17:30 for South Melbourne and Laurie was a pretty wild bloke. You couldn’t be a wild bloke and be a test cricketer in those days, it was too much of a gentleman’s sport. Laurie Nash they played and he was a policeman by profession, and they used to put so many policemen on him to keep him off the booze, keep him on the straight and narrow as it were. He did some, he was a, I won’t say he was a chucker but boy he

18:00 used to make that cricket ball move. That was the pre-war era. The Melbourne Cricket Ground was nothing like you see it today. There were gaps in it, there were standing room in those days, I can remember where the Great Southern stand is today, there were sections where you stood, in front of where the scoreboard is there was a standing room area. They’ve just taken down those beautiful old Ponsford stands.

18:30 To the north end of the smokers didn’t come until the late ‘30s mid ‘30s, there was the Miller Stand. Now that was like that beautiful old Ponsford stand, the same style of thing to the north of that. Well that was taken out. In 1956 the Olympic Games saw that ground just transform. Going back

19:00 pre-war there were standing room areas in the MCG. To say they never got crowds is not right. I was there one day and there was 99,000 there, but they’re sitting on the ground between the boundary line and the fence. Of course the players come hurtling around and they run into the crowd and people got hurt and damaged. There was no such thing as suing people in those day, that didn’t work,

19:30 that just wasn't there. It was an interesting afternoon, fellows used to drink a lot of beer, boy, a lot of beer. The toilet facilities were originally, in the "outer" as we called it in those days, they were pretty rude, crude and unattractive. They developed over the years. I told you what they were like at some of those suburban grounds, like Collingwood and Fitzroy

20:00 and St Kilda. They all developed and they got a few bob in once the game got established and it came on. The big difference was the guys had to work those days in the Depression days as well as play footy. I mean if a bloke beat their ears off they didn't say anything about it because they'd get dropped from the team and that was probably two or three or five quid they'd do for the week. That was probably more than they were earning. When I first went out to work in

20:30 1940 my wage was 75 cents a week, but equally my tram fare where I lived in East St. Kilda to the city was I think twopence. If I got off two stops beforehand, I save a penny so I used to get off at Hotham Street where the section changed, and I'd walk from Hotham Street up to home which was nearly to Albert Road. That

21:00 was a twopence fare and the other one was threepence, so I'd pocket the penny. All those sort of things. You could go to the pictures for seven pence, I think were the pictures. You'd get what you now pay two or three dollars in an ice-cream you'd get for well the ordinary threepenny ice-cream it was called in my time. In fact when we were kids we used to get a penny ice-cream. It was a little titchy one with a little titchy cone about that round and

21:30 about that high on it. Usually we used to buy one for the dog when we got a bit more affluent.

Were they selling stuff at the MCG?

Oh yes. You could buy hot dogs and pies. They didn't have chips and all that junk, but they didn't have stalls like you have them today. We had a canvas stall where the bloke would bring along a suitcase and he'd bring along, he'd have to watch it like a bloody hawk. I can tell you the blokes were very good thieves in those days, they had to be to survive.

22:00 Shoplifting was a huge problem, huge problem. They were spectacular days those pre-war days.

Can you talk a bit more about the shoplifting ?

Well the shoplifting, you just imagine the temptation of kids that didn't have sweets and things, they'd go into Coles and the stuff for the first time was laid out in the open, up to then it had always been behind glass counters and things.

22:30 And there it was a challenge for the young kids to go in and see all these lollies laid out. Kids are kids they were then and they always will be. Yes they went in and pinched the lollies, and I might have even joined them on an occasion or two. No names, no pack drill, it was a big problem, people had to, there was a lot of burglaries went on

23:00 because people were desperate, desperate for money and desperate for food. You could buy anything you wanted to in the pubs. Things were for sale in the pubs, you could by at pretty cheap rates. They developed a thing called stealing to order, now I don't when that actually started, but a bloke would sell, oh I don't know, tea,

23:30 you could order a pound off him or two pound of tea or something and you'd come in on the next day and he'd give you the pound of tea. It was all done, so much openly in the bars, but pretty openly. You could buy most things. These days you can still buy a lot of things in bars, but it's much more covert, you have to go down the street and look in the back of a truck to see if that's the thing you want. Then you come back and pay for it and then you go and offload it off

24:00 the truck that's probably got no number plates. That's the way it goes today type thing. It was a problem those days because as you understand when people want and are desperately short of food and things they resort to stealing to survive. The swagmen that went around the country used to knock off a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK here and there, used to knock off a lamb, used to knock off

24:30 a sheep and of course the trouble is they couldn't carry it that far. So they had to be virtually a team of them. When they got it they'd cut it up, split it and they'd all went in different directions. Maybe one out of the five would get caught, but the odds were worth it. They got a feed. When you are terribly hungry that's you know, they'd go into private property and they'd catch fish in a private dam or something or they'd knock off a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK or a

25:00 duck, because they were desperately hungry the poor people. In general terms it didn't always happen, but the farmers used to kick their backsides and send them on their way. They'd give them a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK to keep them going, or let them keep the lamb they pinched and say, "Well next time you're round this way come in and we'll find a decent feed for you." So the next time the bloke was

25:30 around. And great friendships developed because these weren't just all unemployable people, they were honest-to-god decent people, Laity First World War veterans who couldn't get a job, officers from the First World War, men who'd won decent decorations at the First World War couldn't get a job. They'd do

anything to get work. Imagine your wife and family hungry, cold, you can't light the fire because you

26:00 can't afford the wood, you'd pinch the bloody wood, of course you would. You watch your kids go hungry you'd pinch the food. That's what I meant by shoplifting and petty stealing and those sorts of things. They were terrible times. My schooling wasn't like everybody's. I had a great interest in some things, I was interested in the cadet corps at school and I became a cadet lieutenant, as I told you before

26:30 and gave up my term holidays to go to army camps when the war started and be trained in various things. I became a fairly expert machine gunner. I understood machine guns extremely well.

What did you enjoy about cadets?

The discipline. I'm a great believer in discipline. Fair discipline. I'm a equally a great disbeliever in unfair

27:00 discipline. I enjoyed the cadets because it was something new and something different. Yes the war in my later days in 1939 when the war started in September, but the war was brewing in the '37s, '38s, '39s when I was in the cadets as a junior. I grew up as a private lance corporeal until at last I got a chance to be an officer, a cadet lieutenant. I got a chance then to do these

27:30 courses. I did them and there's a commission there in the army as a cadet, lieutenant which means you're a second lieutenant, that's a pretty low rank in the army, you're like a terribly junior, junior, junior officer, but however. That's what I liked about it, I liked the discipline, the ceremony of it and I do still enjoy the ceremony of it. I try to

28:00 march on Anzac Day although these days I'm down to a Jeep and or a wheelchair. I have to have an oxygen tank with me and those sort of things. I survive, I get there. We have a tree at the Shrine [of Remembrance] which is dedicated to our ship and the other landing ships, the Manoora and Westralia and ourselves and an armed merchant cruiser. You see each of our

28:30 three ships was an armed merchant cruiser before, at the early part of the war. Manoora indeed drew the first blood of the Second World War for Australia. She was off Port Phillip heads in the very early days when a ship called the, oh the name doesn't matter, I'll think of it in a minute, was an Italian ship and it was called out, called

29:00 back all the Italian ships were ordered home. She made a bolt for it and the Manoora was there with her six- inch guns, she had a about seven six-inch guns and the Italian didn't stop so she put one across her bows. That pulled her up pretty short. So, she was an armed merchant cruiser. In those pre-war days ships were built there plans were submitted to the Admiralty

29:30 and Admiralty selected certain ships that in the event of a war they could take over as armed merchant cruisers. As they were being built the gun mounts were built into them. They were never obvious because they were undetected and they were built in. So that when the war looked like starting these ships were immediately alerted and dragged back in and all their guns were already organised for them. Our Kanimbla happened to be on a

30:00 cruise about three weeks before the war was declared, it had happened that my now sister-in-law was on that on the cruise with her family up in Cairns.

What year were they starting to do this readiness for war?

My ship was laid down in 1934 all the way between the wars.

So it wasn't specifically for World War II?

30:30 In readiness that was. Some ships were not accepted. [SS] Duntroon was never accepted, Westralia, Kanimbla, Manoora were all accepted, [TSS] Jervis Bay was accepted and they did a huge job during the war. Holes were filled with 44 gallon drums which were all welded together as a mass, so the ship had a lot of positive buoyancy. They carried, our old girl, carried nine six-inch guns which is a fairly powerful

31:00 armament, a couple of 12 pounders that's three-inch guns and a couple quick firing Vickers guns and those sort of things.

When this was happening in 1934, was Australia a very militaristic society then?

Not militaristic no, it wasn't militaristic, that's the wrong word. You see the First World War had only been over… in 1934, by about

31:30 16 years and guys were still conscious of it. The Germans perfected this idea of what they called "Q ships." Like the ship that sank the [HMAS] Sydney, the, oh I can't think of the name of it [it was HSK Kormoran], I forget all these names, my memory is going. She was a raider disguised and she had her guns under

32:00 cover, under wraps, you couldn't see them and she sailed under false colours. She actually it was said she was a ship called the [SS] Batavier [II], of course her silhouette looked very much like the Batavier [II] Warships all carried silhouettes practically of every merchant ship in the world during the war, they don't so much now. You've probably seen a book called 'Jane's Fighting Ships', well every fighting ship

in the world was in those books.

32:30 The silhouettes and the pictures of them and all those things and they tried to keep them up to date. Yes there was a consciousness during the war a lot of objection to it because the country didn't want to pay for armed forces during the Depression years. Indeed Britain was allowed to sell half its fleet. The Baldwin's, Stanley Baldwin the prime minister of England let the thing run down to a terrible levels, that's

33:00 why England nearly got caught so dreadfully short. To this day if you go to San Diego in America, for example, you'll see lines and lines of carriers and lines and lines of destroyers and cruisers all tied up in mothballs, so that they could go to sea. Now in that era they moved from diesel engine ships to atomic powered ships, but these ships could still have use.

33:30 The older ones they pay off down the line. For example, the Second World War Britain got a number of four stacked destroyers, First World War destroyers from America from these pools. Indeed they served a very useful purpose. The guns that were put on my ship in 1939 were manufactured in 1914. Indeed the 12 pounder anti-aircraft guns that were

34:00 in the ship when I joined her in 1942, '43, anti-aircraft guns 12 pounders were 1912 guns with 1912 ammunition. Dreadful old things. That's what they gave us to go to sea with as anti-aircraft defence.

Can you tell us what as a boy growing up what you knew about World War I ?

Well I knew quite a bit about World War I because my father had been there. He didn't talk much about it but

34:30 every now and then, you see as you get older, the hurt goes a bit, never leaves you, Anzac Day you do your share of crying, some of it's inside, when you march you march knowing the breaks in your ranks are brothers, names of fellows that were with you and copped it, you remember those things. It's not as

35:00 dramatic, it's a different sort of drama, you never forget it. If you go to a war you are terribly different when you come home. You're not the same, you're a different person. Nobody could see and do the things, the sights you've seen. Ships blowing up, watching men in the water die, on a beach blokes being, yes

35:30 "slaughtered" is a good word, around you, and during the day piles of bodies over there in body bags as the graves commission and they'd say give us a hand and so you'd take these back to the ship.

Before your experiences, when you were growing up, did you understand what your father went through?

No. I didn't. He never told us about the gory part of it. He wasn't directly in the fighting,

36:00 although that's not true in some cases, he did get directly because they got caught in it. Their job was mostly to bring the supplies forward and take the wounded out and bring the reinforcements up. He got gassed quite badly, not gassed as such, but he went into the trenches the day after the gas attacks and they were violently ill and sick, you know, etc. They didn't know what gas was, these guys, they didn't have gas masks in the first instance.

36:30 The carnage of the First World War was, I think, even more than it was in the Second World War. We had moments of carnage, we had dreadful places where you'd go ashore and it was dreadful. You're a boy for goodness sake. I was 18 years and 8 months when I went into the service.

37:00 **Before we get onto that, besides your father did other people in the community talk about World War I?**

Not the community, but the Anzac Day was always very well attended in those days. Not as well attended as it is now, but it went off a bit. War became a bit unpopular during the Depression years because the government wouldn't give the defence people money to keep up the defences.

37:30 When the war got towards 1939 I mean you've got to remember we were still exporting scrap metal to Japan in 1939, nobody sort of took that sort of notice of it. Yes, there was a consciousness growing. England had started planning for their defences, their navy was starting to grow,

38:00 their air force started to grow with Hurricanes and Spitfires. It seems that the democratic side of the world like England and America, they keep up their designs going forward but they don't always manufacture it. They always seem to be in a position to get to manufacture quickly. I mean the thing that won

38:30 the Second World War was production. When you think of the number of fighters and bombers that England produced in very limited factories, old fashioned factories. The production that America had, god without America you could have forgotten Australia. People talk about America as though they're unwanted relations, that's not so. So long as you draw breath, I don't

39:00 as you to beholden to the Americans, but I ask you to pay homage to the fact that they saved our bacon against some odds that weren't exactly attractive because our politicians at the time were almost, [I've]

got to choose these words rather carefully, the politicians of the time one particular party, and no names, no pack

39:30 drill, was totally anti the British Empire, there was even some suggestion that they were sending on signals through Germany on to Japan who didn't come into the war until 1942. There was a very strong socialist movement here in this country. Even when the war was in the Coral Sea, and we'd lost New Guinea all but, the

40:00 politicians and indeed some of the Labour factions, the unions and things wouldn't load ships because it was too hot, too wet, too cold, too this. They wouldn't let black troops land here because we had a White Australia Policy. One Australian general, I won't name him, fought with an American general, publicly, not fisticuffs, but verbally.

40:30 **Just back to before the war, when you joined the cadets did you understand the horrors of war?**

Oh yes I did. Not totally you can never understand it unless you see it and you experience it, you can't no matter what amount of reading or films you see, you can't understand it. It's one thing to go and see 'Saving Private Ryan' [film about the invasion and push into Europe]

41:00 which was a film made about beach masters, which I was a beach master that was my job in the landings.

Tape 3

00:32 **At the end of the last tape you were mentioning 'Saving Private Ryan' and how people don't understand war?**

They see the 'Saving Private Ryan' and that's what they think it is, but I just ask you if you've ever seen a motor car accident with people who are mutilated, bodies are mutilated. Imagine hundreds of such bodies and imagine you're part of the mutilation.

01:00 You feel terrible especially when you have to be sort of implicated in the clean up, not perhaps as directly as I'm inferring but you're implicated in it. They're not only people on your side they're people on their side. When you raided a beach for the most part we got

01:30 minor reception for other times we got a very, very hot reception. It depended where you landed. You might land, in one place we went to there was a pill box right in front of us that was fully manned. We didn't know it was there. All the shelling in the world had missed it, and when we came out of these vehicles this bloke in the pill box took off after us, as you could imagine and

02:00 let us have it. We lost 16 blokes, 17 blokes, not all my men I only had six, but the troops were with us. You have to do something about that. Now, having done it you then have to poke your nose in there and make sure everything is clear and that you're not walking over a set of land mines or something, because you're about to bring say

02:30 1200 men across that beach. When you say it's right, you can't give a written guarantee that it's right, but you can give a reasonable assurance that you've checked everything and it's reasonable enough.

03:00 **Before we move on to the specifics of that, did you see your father change without him talking about it?**

Well not change because he'd already made the changes before I came onto the scene obviously. I wasn't born until '23. He'd been out of the war by then by five years when I was born. You become desperate to make a living when you've got a wife and children. So

03:30 emphasis changes, stays changed until your listeners got a receptive ear. They don't have a receptive ear until perhaps they reach their teens and their late teens is when a war is developing and it's fairly obvious in the '30s the war was building up from 1933 when Hitler took power. Dad tried to teach us the significance of that

04:00 because he knew the Bosch [Germans], he tried to teach us the significance, he wasn't huge on the Americans because they got their backsides kicked very hard before the Americans came there, same as we did, but the Americans came in force both for them and for us. Certainly in the Second World War I don't know how much in the First World War, but yes their

04:30 arrival indicated the end of the war, but they didn't go on into Germany in the First World War like we did in the Second World War. You asked me about the change, and the changes were firstly when I went to Flinders first of all. You got to know these guys as pretty good guys and indeed they became, you respected them so much in the end because you realised that

05:00 each of you would have to depend on each other for your lives. Eventually the guys I got with me in my

little beach party, which I'll tell you about in a minute and I'll show you their pictures in a minute.

We'll move on to that soon, but sticking with pre-war, how important was the Empire to you growing up?

Well the Empire was, we used to look at the map and it was a hell of a lot of red around the maps, it wasn't important as such,

05:30 because we took it for granted. You see nobody had defected from The Empire in those days, The Empire Games and the Queen and the King were, I can remember in 1934 when the Duke of Gloucester arrived out here for our Centenary and indeed came out to be Governor of Victoria. He came up the Port Phillip Bay on a ship

06:00 called the HMS Cornwall. We went down to Rosebud in the car and we sat on the beach all night, slept in the car, just to see the Cornwall go past with the Duke on it. When he paraded through the streets there were hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people, and I mean hundreds of thousands of people. We weren't

06:30 used to royalty here so much. When it became self-evident fact that he was drinking too much and not doing quite the right thing, then we got a bit cross. He went home and he disappeared into obscurity like a lot of the royals do who've done the wrong thing. King George V who was the king up to the time I was,

07:00 the day he died the night he died the whole country went into mourning. I mean real mourning. We were at the pictures down in Yarraville and it was announced, no not that night we weren't, wherever we were [at] the picture theatre shut up in the middle of the movie and you didn't get a refund, just went home. You carried your grief at home.

07:30 The solemn music on every radio station, we had no television, was huge and yes the Empire was important. We used to have the Empire Day in May, it was very important day. Then we had the Empire Games, which are now called the Commonwealth Games. We just accepted that we were totally

08:00 part of England. To hear this talk here of Mr Hawke [prime minister of Australia in the 1980s] first of all that we should segregate from England and have our own flag, to me is heresy absolute heresy to all people of my generation. It's diabolical. To change our flag to me is diabolical. I mean I saw that flag on ships as they were sinking, for god's sake. I saw blokes

08:30 fight under the bloody thing and die under it. Gladly. Here some kook wants to change in for no good reason. Of course every country in the world has it's, even Hawaii has it's Union Jack in the corner this day and proud of it. Of course it was founded on England and we're founded on England. Heavens above it wasn't until Mr Hawke and Mr Keating changed our laws that we were subject to England's laws, I think that

09:00 had to be, that had to change. I think these other things have to change, I mean the resounding vote of turning to be a republic when [Malcolm] Turnbull promoted it would indicate you, to everybody that we don't have any interest in not being part of England. Yes I think we when they moved to Australia, governor-generals I think was very good, I think it was dreadful when Mr Hawke

09:30 traded it as a political deal with Bill Hayden, I think that's prostituting the office. Equally the Liberals have prostituted it since. They used it as a convenience to, oh I'm not going to go on with that, but it's used as a political convenience, the office. The trouble is a president will be the same thing, we get a president

10:00 it's going to be, it's all very well to say he won't be politically appointed but you'll only be offered a political appointees. I think that the Liberal party seems to promote good Australians, I'm not saying the Labour appointees are not good Australians, I hated to see Bill Hayden appointed as political expedience.

10:30 I think the guy we've got now, he was governor of Western Australia and was head of the SAS [Special Air Service] is a good Australian. They're the sort of guys that should be the governor-general, but there is no guarantee that it's not going to be used as a political footy. What sort of republic are we going to have? Every republic in the world

11:00 that I know of and you put America into this to a certain degree is not successful. Look at the trouble in America at the moment. Look at all the republics of Europe. Heavens above there's been mayhem and mutiny in most of them. Yes I think the Empire to me and my generation is terribly important. To my sons it's not. They couldn't give two things about the damned Empire.

11:30 I know the flag will pass. I know the Queen will pass as Queen of Australia, because my sons and their cobbers at school and everything reckon it's all bunkum. I don't see it as bunkum. The alternative I see as less acceptable. Nobody has ever said to me, put up a case of what sort of republic we're going to have or indeed how the

12:00 president is going to be elected. Is he going to have the same force as the American president? If he doesn't, it's a different sort of republic. You tell me a republic that's working well. Look at the countries that have ousted the republics, the Kings and Queens, Spain look at the trouble they're in for goodness

sake. Look at Italy, how many governments have they had in the last, since the war?

12:30 Anyway, you could go on. The answer to your question is the Empire to our generation was terribly important. I see, my sons for example don't have the same, anything like the same feeling I've got. They've never had to fight for it, they've never been part of fighting for anything. They've never thought about it. All the whingeing about Vietnam and Korea, was a volunteer force, but

13:00 for the most part the Second World War was a volunteer force, until Morotai came about and they moved some of the conscripts up there, but they didn't do anything, it was an overseas trip for it. They all got returned soldiers medals but they didn't do any more fighting than my kid sister had done. They got to Morotai it was a

13:30 playground. They had their volleyball courts and tennis courts and their footy fields and their cricket pitches. They got their beer ration every day, they had dances and things. Lights were on every night. One bomb Charlie used to come over every now and again, let one go for luck, but he was Japanese bomber that came from god knows where, they let him, because he didn't do any harm. That was the only enemy action

14:00 they ever saw, so you couldn't count that.

That was great stuff. Let's just move back, from '33 onwards with rise of Hitler and your father telling you, give us as much details as you can about those years building up to war and what you were hearing was happening in Europe?

It was out in the press, but of course at that age it

14:30 passed over my head a lot. It didn't pass over my father's, because he had the sort of interest in Germany [as] I have in Japan. He at that time took the opportunity to talk more to my brother and I about the war so that we'd know and learn. He took a great interest in my interest in the cadet corps and my going

15:00 for a commission. I didn't realise that come a war I would choose the navy above the army. During my school days I learnt to sail boats and indeed sailed boats. I was a member of crews that went to Tasmania and things, not in races, they didn't have those races in those days. We just went cruising to Tasmania and the next Bass Strait islands.

15:30 My brother and I had a boat, I learnt to sail in cadet dinghies at Brighton yacht club. Then I bought a boat and went fishing, deep sea fishing, all those sort of things. That took me to the navy, and my mother's ancestor's had all been sailors. Indeed my father's ancestors had been fishermen in the French islands, that was a fair way back. However I had a

16:00 history of sea. Yes I had been interested in the course of my life to perhaps even go into the navy on a permanent basis, but I didn't. At age 30 and I'm glad I didn't because I wouldn't have made a good permanent naval officer. Yes I liked discipline as I mentioned to you before, I think it's great. I don't like subjugation. I think a lot of the navy requirement

16:30 in the permanent navy is subjugation. I don't think it's relevant to the modern day and age of living. Indeed it's changed dramatically since those days. Indeed during the war it changed dramatically because when I was going through for my commission, they brought guys in off the street to do their commission. Guys who were perhaps well educated or something like that, had degrees, who came in

17:00 and got commissions. Even to this day what we call the "rocky navy," the reserve wavy navy stripes, we are not terribly recognised by the navy, our ships, the preservation of their being and their memory is left to us. Navy don't help us much. Indeed if you'd seen the trouble I had to get the builder's model of Kanimbla

17:30 from the war memorial and the amount of money I had to spend on restoring it, like $11,000. The reluctance of the navy to even assist in that in any way and the naval historical society never even answered my letters. They couldn't take it in the museum, I strongly suspect because it was a rocky ship,

18:00 a ship peopled by reserve officers . And although reserve officers during the war constituted the major part of the Fleet. They never recognised us. We were made to wear different stripes, they've changed that now. But we always felt that we were interlopers of the navy during the war.

Before the war when did you start to understand about Hitler in Europe?

18:30 The '36s, '37s. I thought Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia was terrible the way they machine gunned people, it really was shades of what they did in the Western Front. Bayoneting women and children and the Sino-Japanese war and Russian-Japanese war, the murmurings in Japan

19:00 and we're still exporting scrap iron to them etc. The navy of Japan was built and developed by the Royal Navy, in truth. The majority of their naval officer, their senior naval officers were Royal Navy trained. Their ships were, let's say, Royal Navy vetted. They were vetted by the Royal Naval architects because they didn't have naval architects, they built

19:30 some beautiful ships, the [Yamato class Japanese battleship] Yamato was a magnificent ship. Navy is a peculiar thing. You see the Japanese didn't understand navy. They made some dreadful mistakes and that was the mistakes that cost them their whole fleet. The Battle of Midway Island was the first mistake they made, where their admiral put up a search aircraft because he knew the American fleet was at sea and he didn't arm them

20:00 with torpedos or anything. If he had have, the war may have changed its course. The Americans put up their search aircraft with torpedos on, so that when they spotted the Japanese fleet they could attack them immediately. They sank a lot of their ships. That was the start of the stupidity. For them to do what they did at Pearl Harbour, that was a huge advantage, but they didn't follow it up. If they'd had a fleet at sea to follow it up they

20:30 could have invaded Hawaii just like that. There really was nothing to stop them. Hawaii wasn't organised to the degree to stop them, they didn't have the numbers to stop them because it was such a surprise. That was the first major mistake. The second major mistake or maybe part of that mistake was they came too far too fast. They didn't understand

21:00 supply lane difficulties. It's all very well to put an army of three or four hundred thousand troops into New Guinea, but you've got to feed them and you've got to give them medical supplies and little Willy's got to go home on leave because he's crook, somebody is going to get injured, they have to get out to hospitals. Fuel has to come in for the tanks and trains and you've got to have lots of aeroplanes, because your opposition had lots of aeroplanes. You've got to be able to bomb places,

21:30 you've got to have lots of tanks. They didn't have them. They couldn't get the fuel through. The Americans realised that if they put airstrips in, in little places all the way up, they could fly continuous sorties against these people. They had a minimum number of aircraft. Now, in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, when the Japanese fleet, sorry, some of the remaining

22:00 elements of the Japanese fleet tried to get supply ships through to New Guinea, the Beaufighters, the Australian squadron, busted them, busted their fleet up, sank a few of their navy ships and it depleted their navy, it depleted their merchant navy, which was never terribly huge, to a degree that they couldn't supply New Guinea any more. They wrote New Guinea off, 300,000 troops they

22:30 wrote off. They got to Morotai and in the invasion of Morotai they sealed off the whole of the East Indies. You know it now as Indonesia. That was the Netherlands East Indies, the Dutch East Indies, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Timor, all those places. When we got Morotai, air power was enough. They

23:00 couldn't get a ship in and out of the East Indies, so all that force was lost to them. Now, if you look at the map then you'll see Hawaii is up in the middle of the Pacific and down in the segments of the south, travelling west were the islands of Gilberts, the Marshalls, the Ellis Islands and these things, Truk, Arawa,

23:30 anyway you could go. Central Pacific Fleet did those they came across that way, we in South West Pacific Fleet, under an Admiral Wilkinson.

It's great stuff, but we're just jumping ahead, but it's excellent and I don't really want to stop you. Just a couple of little things to finish up on pre-war, was religion a big part of your life growing up?

24:00 Yes I went to a religious founded school and plus which fact it was virtually for every child no matter where you went to school because every kid went to Sunday school without question. My mother and father without being every Sunday at church were fairly, they'd certainly be there once a month or once every six weeks. Certainly be there at Easter and

24:30 Christmas time. Yes. They were much more religious based than we are these days, but certainly every kid in our neighbourhood went to Sunday school without question. They were huge in my time. There would have been, I went to Sunday school in Highett, there would have been, I met my first sweetheart up there, Estelle Cook, I hope she hears this message.

25:00 There was a little country town those days rather like you'd find I don't know very small country towns these days, Johnsonville and those places, I don't know how many people lived in Highett but it'd only be hundreds and I'm certain it would be less than a thousand, they grew rapidly

25:30 so we went to Sunday school and I came to Melbourne to East Malvern there would have been 120 or 150 kids in the Sunday school. There was junior school, there was senior Sunday school. We had certain days that we went to the main church service. I went to a private school, a public school, I know there's a confusion in terms there but please, you know what I meant, we had to go to school once

26:00 a month to a long chapel service, full service. Every morning we had prayers. Every day in the navy when we assembled at six o'clock to scrub down decks we did all that and at nine o'clock there was an assembly. The ship was still at sea and those off watch would assemble and we'd have prayers then, every day. On Sundays unless you were in action or in enemy waters,

26:30 you'd have divisions which was full blooded church service. If it was humanly possible, you were [an] eight on/ sixteen off situation you would have it every Sunday, if you were on a four on/ four off you'd have prayers. They were conducted by ship's officers, we didn't have a chaplain on board. I never saw a

minister of

27:00 religion in the navy. To answer your question, religion was a very, very important part of life before the war, yes.

What religion are you?

Church of England.

What did religion teach you?

What did it teach me? The tolerance for each other, helping the poor, the less fortunate than you, my father was always very big on this, as I told you he took us to the soup

27:30 kitchens and the Smith Family and we always had to, he was a Legatee, we always had to go, Legacy helps out the children of deceased ex-servicemen. Dad was a Legatee from about the mid '30s onwards, he was also Smith Family and we used to have to go to the Legacy shows and they used to have gymnastic appeals and show at Government House and they'd have badge day and we'd go and help Dad sometimes, or Mum sometimes, to sell badges.

28:00 Mum used to wear her medals and sell Legacy badges. We'd do all those things. We were taught that charity was a very important element of living. As such, yes I was a fairly religious person until I went to the war and I fell out of religion quite a bit, for reasons I won't go into. But I couldn't understand when I grew up and into a

28:30 world like that to see the millions or to realise the religion to which I believed was by comparison a very small one. It was a very unimportant one in the whole scheme of things. I looked at the American religions that they have, very important to the Yanks, they're not religious, but they've chaplains everywhere, on every ship.

29:00 In fact one or two of them used to come across to us now and again and give us a bit of a hand. I don't remember communion being offered in my ship from one end of the war to the other.

When you were growing up, were there fights between religions in Melbourne?

Oh yeah. They weren't serious fights. The Catholic school that was near us when we were

29:30 at Lloyd Street, we used to go over and have a bit of fight with them after school, but no it wasn't terribly serious. We used to call them Catholic Dogs or something like that and they used to call us, I don't know what they called us. Yes there was a deal of bigotry about those days. Parents were more bigoted towards Catholics. My mother, I took a Catholic girl out for a while, she was very friendly with me, she was a neighbour of mine, she was a girlfriend,

30:00 you didn't have many girlfriends in those days, not like it is today, you didn't have the social intercourse, it wasn't available to you then in those days. Your neighbours were your girlfriends and things. This girl I talked to her about two weeks ago. She lives in Sydney, she's got five kids, married to a doctor, I still talk to her. My mother was bigoted against the Catholics, yet this girl … my mother was very ill in the latter years of her life,

30:30 this girl used to come home on our housekeeper's night out and cook tea for Mum and Dad. There was a time my mother wanted to go back to England to see her sister who was still alive and her sister-in-law in South Africa was still alive then, and she had nobody to go with, so June was going to go with her. So the bigotry of my mother was diluted considerably because of that

31:00 particular action. The war diluted the bigotry. Whenever we had a church parade down at Flinders in the naval base, one of the calls was "Fall out the Catholics." Well, you've never seen so many Catholics fall out, including me of course it was easier to fall out than parade for Church parade. They started each week to get more and more Catholics than anything else. They put the Catholics to work and suddenly

31:30 the Protestant population went up again. Those sorts of things went on but nothing of any seriousness. There was always a deal of, what's the word, there was much more vehement than normal in our games against the Catholic schools like Xavier and de la Salle and these places and St Kevin's. When we played them footy and I wasn't any good at footy and I didn't make the big teams at footy.

32:00 If we ever played even in the lower teams, like we were good for two or three fights if you were playing Xavier for the day or St Kevin's or De la Salle or somebody. In the amateurs I followed them for a while in the footy and you could bet that the old Xavs and the old Melbournians would have a decent old fight on while those games were on. But that died

32:30 out a lot during the war. When a man dies and he's your cobber, you don't ask him what religion he is, when he's short of a bullet you don't say, "Mac, what religion are you?" if he's dying in your arms, you look after him. [UNCLEAR] and he for you and that's where people say that "I loved the war," I didn't, I loathed it,

33:00 I loved the blokes that were in it. I'll introduce you to some fellows afterwards who were my little group.

The old man said, “Pick who you want and if they volunteer to go with you good luck to you.” I picked my little group out and I couldn’t say if they were Brahmans, Prots [Protestants] or Catholics, I don’t know. I really don’t care and I damned sure, they may have known what I was, I don’t know it was on their meat tickets [identity tags]

33:30 that was the thing you wore around your neck identification. I didn’t know, didn’t care and still don’t. I don’t know who was Catholic in my ship and who wasn’t and still don’t care. That difference has decreased since the war remarkably, there’s much more integration than there ever was before. The kids

34:00 don’t have it like they used to have it. There’s still a bit of ill feeling when Xavier plays a Protestant school, more so than say Melbourne Grammar plays Wesley or Melbourne Grammar plays Geelong Grammar, but if Geelong Grammar played Xavier there’s always a bit of a hot feeling there, it’s deep rooted, [but] nothing like it used to be.

Can you tell us what you remember about the day war was declared?

34:30 Yes I can tell you. Yes I was still at school obviously. War was declared on September 3rd 1939 and those days we had a Superheterodyne radio, it was called. It had a plastic cabinet it, stood about that tall on the sideboard. We were all glued to it and the progress of the war being declared was

35:00 the invasion of Sudetenland which was the German land that had been occupied in the First World War by France was called Sudetenland. The Germans were warned that if they went into Sudetenland and continued with their demands Britain would go to war and Chamberlain went to Germany and came back with a piece of paper that

35:30 said, he waved it outside the aircraft, “Peace in our time.” You know, “I’ve fixed it.” Well the next thing that happened they went into Poland with their Blitzkrieg and then of course I can remember Menzies coming onto the air that night and saying that he “Regretted to advise the state of war existed between Germany and ourselves.” My mother who had been in the services and my father both looked

36:00 at John and I realised that we were of that age. Johnno was all right because he was in his, in ’39, he was in his second year of medicine I think and he couldn’t go. A couple of the blokes walked out on their medicine and went to the Middle East and were brought home and sent back to the medical college. They never did any good at it,

36:30 but however they were sent back to medical school. Enough to know that the rules were made that you couldn’t abandon a medical course, so Johnno didn’t get to go to the war until ’44. Mum realised, she looked at me that I was still at school that I would go to the war. She was pretty worried of course, every mother is worried of course.

37:00 When the war started you see that put Catholics, Jews, Protestants, everybody together and at school we had a bit of a mixed up mob at our school, there were probably Protestants in Xavier, I don’t know, there probably were. There were certainly Catholics at my school. We had Jews, we didn’t take any notice of that, nobody worried about it too much. In fact I had

37:30 some very good cobbers amongst the Jewish boys. I was instrumental in saving the life of a little Jewish boy when I was in the navy. I didn’t even know he was a Jew and he’s been my mate to this day. He’s one of Melbourne’s leading solicitors now. At school some of my good cobbers were Jews, but you didn’t, there

38:00 was a feeling there but you didn’t, not of any great consequence. That’s how I felt the night war started. I went back to school the next day on September 4th 1939 and quite obviously we all sat about talking, wondering what the hell we were going to do. Then some of the guys came along to school in their uniforms and then the lists

38:30 were put up every day on the noticeboard. This one had been killed in the Battle of Britain, a lot of our blokes went into the Air Force. Within the first, we had a lot of blokes in the Battle of Britain, when I say a lot of blokes, we had a number of fellows there and a lot of them didn’t make it. Every day the list would grow longer. When the

39:00 troops were up in the desert and going forward to Libya the first time up, we lost blokes I’d been at school with. Carl Jansen, Newendoff, these guys. It sort of brought it home to you terribly much. Every day you’d see the list grow longer. I think we’d lost about 369 in the Second World War, we lost from the

39:30 school. The guys was leaving school at ’40, I was spotted in the middle of it, full everybody that left in those days, well not everybody, but the majority of blokes went to the war and the majority of blokes ’39 leavers went to the war and ’41 leavers went to the war or ’42 leavers went to the war, ’43 leavers went to the war. By that time the casualty list got longer and longer.

40:00 It became much more important. I went back to school in ’39 in the September. We went away on cadet camp as a matter of fact, I think, just about that time. We went down to Queenscliff and I can remember the minelayer was down there laying mines in Swan Bay for laying around the coast of Australia and protecting the harbours.

40:30 The Bungaree was the ship. She loaded mines all night. I can remember sitting up down there with the guys and some of the masters, we were all 17 and 18. I can remember probably 10 or 20 of us sitting around the hut, of those 10 or 20 about five didn't make it. Didn't get home. We had a bloke called Bill Brady,

41:00 he was a master at school who'd fought in the Battle of Modderfontein, believe it or not, he was pretty old and he fought in the First World War and he knew what it was like and of course we're all talking "Oh we'll be back in six months" "No use joining because you won't get trained before the war's over" all that sort of talk. A lot of the blokes went into the air force. Two of my very close buddies were in the air force,

41:30 they didn't get home. Fellows from the yacht club joined the navy and a lot of them didn't get home. You'd be staggered how many fellows didn't get home. Every year I'm asked to the Anzac Day service at school and I've given the speech a couple of times there.

Tape 4

00:30 **What happened after the day war was declared?**

I did tell you that we went to a cadet camp down at Queenscliff that we were sitting about in a room with a bunch of guys, about 14 of us and we were all 17, 18 and talking about the war and going to the war and five of those blokes didn't get home.

01:00 We watched a ship the HMAS Bungaree loading mines down in Swan Bay. There came into the room a fellow called Bill Brady who was a master at school who fought in the Battle of Modderfontein in the South African war under Kitchener, he also went on to fight in the Great War. He knew what it was all about. He was in tears, the old bloke because he knew some of us wouldn't

01:30 make it. And of course everyone kept saying, "It'll be you and you and you, I'll be right, I'll get home." Cos that's the way you spoke those days, you never thought of not getting back. You never thought of the blokes in the room with you as not getting back. But five of those fellows of about 14 didn't get home. So it was so that was the story and the casualty list just got longer, 369 of my schoolmates didn't get home.

02:00 **Can you tell us briefly the school you went to? What was the name of it again?**

I didn't say.

You didn't say before?

No. I just said it was a private school, a public school you know, I was privileged to go to a public school.

You don't want to say the name?

I suppose there's no harm in it. I went to Melbourne Grammar. Melbourne Church of England Boys Grammar School, because

02:30 there was a Melbourne Church of England Girls Grammar School. We used to say Boys Grammar School just to distinguish them, but that wasn't official. That's where I went to school. I go to an Anzac Day service there every year. As I think I said I've made the speech a couple of times. I used to stand in the hall and look down upon and still do, that sea of young faces that are there now.

03:00 I see all the blokes that were there when I was at school because I used to sit up on the stage in those days too. I look down on the sea of faces and you see all the guys you used to know as though it was still happening and they're all still there. They were in every theatre of war there was. They were killed in Malta so we lost some blokes in the North Atlantic, some blokes in the Murmansk Convoy

03:30 and some in the Battle of Britain, skies over Europe, that sort of thing. We lost blokes everywhere. POWs [prisoner of war], Sea of Japan, on all the ships, whenever ships disappeared you could bet your life we'd have somebody on board. When the Sydney disappeared, she disappeared in November 19th no less, she was due in Fremantle

04:00 1941and it was before the Japanese war. She was caught by a ship called Kormoran who was a disguised merchant ship and a naval battle ensued and Sydney was sunk, went over the horizon burning apparently. Never seen or heard of again, not even a skerrick of wreckage or oil or anything. Nobody knows what happened to the ship. Petty hard

04:30 to blow up a ship of about seven and a half thousand tons with 645 blokes on her, nothing appears. A couple of things appeared but nobody identifies them as Sydney. The stories told by the Kormoran people which was also sunk by Sydney who are indeed were captured, came ashore and were captured, they gave conflicting stories, the navigator said they went that way, the captain said they went this way, the officer

05:00 of the watch said that way, the second officer said they went this way. Nobody knows which way they went.

Before we go on to this, I'd like to find out what happened to you, war is declared now?

I went to work in the January of 1941, my father wouldn't let me join up because I wasn't then 18, I was 18 in the February if you count back to my birthday. He said, "I was too young to go to the war"

05:30 and I had to work and I worked for Broken Hill Propriety as a commercial apprentice I was known as, and I got 75 cents a week for a 48 hour week. I stayed there and one night my father said to me on the way home in the car, "Why don't you join up, son?" I nearly fell through the floor, I had the papers in front of him before we got to the

06:00 next stop light, because I carried them with me all the time. I joined up, you see, fellows were like that, we all felt guilty if we weren't there. Every day our cobbers were getting killed and wounded, coming home with bits off and we felt guilty. So when he said this I got the form signed and I was then 18 years and, that was October, and eight months,

06:30 18 years and eight months. I raced down to Older Fleet building Collins Street and handed in my papers. The bloke said, "Have you had any previous miliary experience?" And I said, "Yes I had." And I told him. He said, "I didn't ask you that, have you got any previous miliary experience?" He asked the question about three times and I at last woke up to what he wanted to hear. So I said, "No. None at all." So he wrote down 'None at all." So the army didn't grab me. If he'd put down

07:00 "Yes, he was this…" The army would have grabbed me and by the time the army found out I wasn't there anymore it was too late. I was up and running and had a commission in the navy. I got away from the army.

Did you actually have an idea where you wanted to go before this?

I knew where I wanted to go.

It was the navy?

Yeah. I always wanted to go into the navy. I was thinking of joining

07:30 the navy and said earlier I was a cadet at 13 years of age, but I fortunately didn't go then, I didn't get in they didn't take me. That was before the war, that was in 1936, they didn't take me and I'm glad when I served out my time eventually that I didn't go in the permanent navy. But I

08:00 didn't and I went on and did army training, that was only as a matter of course . Again I always wanted to be in the navy. When I joined the navy I suppose I toyed with the idea of being an officer, but there was no chance of it. It was only, as I told you earlier, that they expected a rather long casualty list of young officers of landing craft on their way to Japan, that's the only reason I got a commission.

08:30 Lots of guys like me. That's why I was in combined operations .

Which we'll get to later. The Empire? What was your motivations for joining up? What did you see yourself fighting for?

What was I fighting for? I've done the Empire when you were outside before. The motivation for joining up was, well it sounds silly but

09:00 because everybody else did, and you didn't want to be left out. War sounded like a bit of fun despite the fact that your father had told you to the contrary and you'd seen many books to contrary. I don't know that there was any great risk for King and country and empire, but there was something of that in it.

I thought Melbourne Grammar was quite staunch about Empire?

Oh it is, it is. Still staunch about it.

09:30 So I was staunch about it, but you asked a question and I answered it. I didn't join for that reason, there was an element of that in it, of course, there were probably 10 elements in it. You've got a Japanese force hammering on your doorstep you've got to remember in 1941 the Japanese were making rude noises and there was all sorts of suggestions being made. We weren't exactly winning the war in Europe either, you know we were

10:00 losing, we'd lost every battle we'd fought in, for Pete's sake. We were losing the Battle of the Atlantic, we lost, we didn't lose but we stemmed them in the Battle of Britain, but only just by a hair's breath. We lost in Dunkirk, we lost in North Africa, we got kicked out of Italy for obvious reasons, France had gone. So it was a bit of a mess, wasn't it? You just can't stand back and see the world fall apart.

10:30 You've got to take a stand somewhere, well if that's Empire well put that down, but it really wasn't that.

So you saw in a sense there was something ethical about joining up?

Not ethical, survival is another word. You've got the Germans winning every battle they've fought and we're losing every battle we fighted. You've got the Japanese making demands and overtures and in

11:00 they went bananas. They bombed Pearl Harbour. They had a peace delegation in Washington at the time and people forget that. The peace delegation was in there and they killed God knows how many people in Pearl Harbour, over 3,000 and they sank a heap of ships, one of them is still there, the [USS] Arizona, upside down.

11:30 **Did the war with Japan influence your father's decision to encourage you?**

I think it probably did, it's hard to know. There wasn't a single directive, influence, there were a heap of influences. He stood tall in Legacy, Legacy as you probably know is a servicemen's organization. He was proud of his service in World War I and he would have wanted me to go into World War II. Certainly he didn't want you to get killed or anything like that, but

12:00 we were losing the fight, badly losing the fight. The Sydney was lost, she was after I had joined, but I joined the navy Sydney is lost, [HMAS] Canberra lost and they bombed Darwin on my birthday, February 19th 1942, Singapore had fallen, they were half way over New Guinea.

12:30 In May of 1942 there's a major sea battle on the Coral Sea, 125 miles off Townsville. The Japanese are 28 miles north of Port Moresby. People don't know and I don't think people realise at how close they were, 28, 26 miles north off Port Moresby on the Kokoda trail and a bunch of badly trained boy soldiers, was [the] only thing between them and Port Moresby.

13:00 These guys had never seen a rifle, they'd never owned a rifle they had to wait almost until somebody got killed to get a rifle. They took on the Japanese but the Japanese were at the limit of their extension, their full extension. They were starving, they were eating each other. They killed Australians so they ate them. That's in the record books, it's a fact. Along came 14th Battalion to give them a hand and stupid Blamey, don't quote that word please,

13:30 Blamey was told by Curtain at that stage to get up to New Guinea and do something about it. Blamey's down here not moving, going crook at MacArthur.

Before we talk about the strategic situation, tell us about your training. Where you were trained and what happened?

I went to Flinders naval base like every other bloke in the navy

14:00 and you do want you call boot training, boot camp. You march up and down, you turn left, you turn right, you go up, you go down, you drill with a rifle, then when you've done all that you start to school like seamanship schools, signal schools, you do gunnery schools, engine room schools, what do you call it, Red Cross work, like that all that so you've got skills.

14:30 Then you graduate as an ordinary seaman, well you don't graduate you're ordinary seaman by rank. Then normally you go to sea. Now instead of going to sea they said, "Fall out you're a CW-1 rate," pig material. Now, I went and did my officers course at Flinders and that's about a four-month course which is much more intensive,

15:00 you go day and night at that one. By the time you've finished I can tell you boy you have been through the mill. You do your seamanship which is knots and splices and bells and soundings, anchor work and all that sort of stuff, rowing boats, sailing boats, swimming, life saving. You do your gunnery courses which is gun drill and anti-aircraft gun drill, you fire

15:30 Vickers guns. You go along and look at engines as though you understand steam turbines and things, then you finish and you do an exam. In fact you do two days of exams. That's the easy part, the hard part is the interview board, which you go along in sailor's uniform and you present yourself to a room full of brass raters, usually an admiral block and one stripe, a rear admiral

16:00 and captains and commanders, probably six there and they're the board and they examine you. The sort of questions they asked you were, "What do you do if you're at the football and there's a naval officer giving away naval secrets?" And "You can't find a naval patrol. What do you do?"

How long did this process go for?

Which process, the questioning process?

16:30 **The basic training process?**

Basic training process because I did a CW-1 course on top probably six to eight months, because I had to wait, after my ordinary what we called New Entry course finished; that's the basic training that every sailor does, and I was then ready for sea, end of the New Entry course. I was then picked to join the officers training school. Well that

17:00 was the old officers training school, it changed at that time to accommodate this new demand for young blokes to fulfil the casualty list, which I didn't know at the time and I'm rather pleased I didn't. I had to wait then and those last few weeks I was mess man in the chief petty officers' mess, I was runner to the gunnery officer, and all those odd jobs that you have anywhere

17:30 in the navy. Then my course started . They moved the midshipmen out of college at Flinders, they went up to Jervis Bay and we moved in to their college. I was made leader of my class, I wore a leading seaman's hook on my arm. That sort of promoted me a bit. I was in charge of my class, I marched them from point A to point B and I reported them every morning to the commander etc.

18:00 Then everywhere we went we had to double, we had to double in step and double in step is very difficult and you have to learn it, it's an art, especially a group of about 30 blokes. We went through all this training procedure. One day we stood out the front and the commander of the college, I've forgotten his name now, and he said, "Fall out the following ratings." So these blokes fell out, some huge blokes fell out.

18:30 I didn't know whether we were officers or they were officers that we'd missed out or they'd missed out. I can tell you, I didn't know. He turned to me and said, "Page master class to the gunnery school." And I didn't know, we never saw those blokes again. We got down to the gunnery school and we waited, none of us knew, there were some first class in the mob that had fallen out over there. They apparently went back into the college

19:00 and were told by the commander that they'd dipped out and they'd be going to sea that afternoon. And they did, they all got drafted ships that day. We never saw them again, oh we saw them occasionally of course we did, and there were some first-class blokes. He came down to us about half and hour later and said, "You blokes are officers." We said, "God, just like that?" He said, "The tailor will be here this afternoon and will measure you up for your uniforms." From the Commonwealth Clothing Factory and they were there that afternoon.

19:30 They measured us up, we had our uniforms in about two or three days that was when I was a midshipman. You walked around the depot where you'd been as a seaman and now you're an officer. We immediately got drafted to various places. I got drafted to Balmoral naval depot. I told you the story there. The beginning of that course to the day I walked out was probably eight months. Yes I had various trips in

20:00 various small ships, the [MV] Bingara and those sorts of ships, around from Westernport to Port Phillip Bay and out into Bass Strait and around the islands just on training exercises in a ship. Then I got to Balmoral and I told you the story there and then up to Port Stephens and the landing crafts and it went from there. I went to the Manoora and we landed in Milne Bay with

20:30 24th Battalion that were Australians who were actually getting ready to go to Finschhafen. At Flinders naval depot I went to Balmoral, I did the things I've already told you in Balmoral. I then went from there up to Port Stephens where I joined HMAS Westralia, but not as ship's company, for training only. Westralia was a former armed merchant cruiser and had been largely stripped down.

21:00 Formed a training base for us until they finished the depot ashore. She was in behind anti-submarine nets up at the top of Port Stephens in a place called Salamander Bay, we used to leave her in these folding boats, paddling them, six of us to a boat and they were canvas and plywood. We were towed by these luxury launches that the navy had taken over, you know, Halverson 36 footers and things. We ran around the

21:30 bay and the assault depot was finished. We went into assault depot where we trained in the ALCs, I told you about those ALC landing craft. We went from there up to, well Jutes were there too. The whole area was given over to combined operations, the badge of which I had on the table, which you didn't seem to want.

22:00 Part of that operation was Jutes. Combined operations was a conception made during the war for quite obviously services had to be closer integration between the services to form the sort of units they wanted to fight in the war. Every war is different. Every war has had its own different requirements, because equipment is different, requirements of the war are different, you couldn't fight a

22:30 war in Korea with the same organization that we used in the Second World War. Because Korea was very different, they didn't do beach assaults, there was hill fighting and things of nature, gunnery stuff. Yes they had landing craft there but that was service more than anything else. The Vietnam was different, because that's a terribly jungled place, Vietnam.

23:00 Fighting in the jungle is so different to fighting in the freezing hills of Vietnam [he means Korea] if you fall over and you stayed there you'd freeze to death. In Vietnam you'd sweat to death in the tropics. To live in a jungle, you've got live there to believe what is possible, what it's like. It never stops dripping. At night it's damned cold in the hills, believe me freezing cold.

23:30 It smells because all the undergrowth is putrid, it's rotting vegetation. That's why the place grows like it does. When it rains, man. does it rain! You know, 10 inches a night is pretty standard.

What sort of things did they teach you at the joint operations training?

The taught us landing, how we'd land at night out of these folding boat things and how we'd come in on beaches and things like that. Then we got the bigger boats, we

24:00 got the ALCs and they weren't open at the gates, then we got the American LCVP that wasn't anything

either, that was a great boat but the design was wrong. The we got the right design called a LCP a landing craft personnel, LCVP landing craft vehicular personnel, and that was one with the ramp on the front went down. The first one that came out, you stood on the back, right out in the open there and you were a perfect

24:30 target for blokes on the beach to pick you off. They changed fairly quickly. We had those boats and we did our landings in them, we practiced landings in the surf with and without troops, we practiced landings in the dark with and without troops, we practiced landings on the rocks in the ocean with and without troops. All that sort of thing.

25:00 We marched until we were blue in the face, we ran these boats until we were blue in the face and they raised the Jutes on operation that was very secret, that was inside our compound and that was terribly secret and nobody got in there without umpteen passes and this, that and the other. The whole are was terribly secret because landing craft, nobody had seen them or heard of them before. If you went anywhere in them in public you almost had to put a sheet over them.

25:30 Port Stephens was cleared of everybody except for absolutely essential people. It was a big holiday town and it was cleared of people and combined operations took it over. We had Catalina aircraft, landing and taking off, we had paratroopers training and they had an airstrip just inland a bit, I don't know where it was exactly, we didn't use it. They were training in this combined-operations

26:00 thing, which as I explained to you, you have to in a modern war get greater cooperation and one of the problems in the Second World War was that commands were divided, the air force they thought they were running the show, the army thought they were running it, the navy thought they were running it. In the end it was a bit of a shemozzle, nobody got together. Navy guns didn't support the army to the degree that they said they did, so said the army.

26:30 The army didn't set their guns up on shore to protect the ships, so said the navy. The air force thought they'd bombed hell out of everything else, they didn't. We used to call the air force "Blue Orchids" because they were very rare things, we had very, very, very few aircraft. I mean you've got to realise that Darwin was originally defended by a couple of Bruce de Buffalos, they were aircraft that were back in

27:00 the '38s, not worth two pennies.

At Jutes was that the first time you actually came across Americans?

Oh yes. In our camp we had Americans that trained us in landing craft, in our camp.

At Assault?

Yes on HMAS Assault. They were individuals, then we used to go down to Sydney to get boats

27:30 and bring them up to train in. They'd come in on as deck cargo in ships from America and they'd come off in Sydney. A ship called USS Dobbin, which was a supply ship was down at Woolloomooloo docks and she'd have all these landing craft, loaded torpedo boats, all those sorts of things alongside her. Crews would come and get these various craft and take them to various destinations. We'd come down there, we'd

28:00 go to the USS Dobbin and we might get bunked in for the night and next morning we'd take off about, before daylight and we'd get to Sydney Heads and we'd head north up to Port Stephens. A very intrepid journey, about 125 miles, punching a nor'easter all day, very tough, about 50 miles off the coast with the Gulf of Newcastle. We'd be there all day and get in about 10 o'clock that night into Port

28:30 Stephens. Vice versa: when Kanimbla where we, as I say, went from there up to Toorbul Point in Queensland, and we did have jungle training up there. We did our jungle type landings and we did our landings down the backstairs passage between Bribie Island and the mainland. We did night attacks on pineapple plantations and those things.

29:00 We raided the Port Wharf signal station, by arrangement of course. To train us in night raids and all that sort of junk. We had trips down to Mission Beach just south of Cairns and it was just in from Dunk Island and we'd come in from Mission Beach out to Dunk Island and we'd do an attack on Dunk Island and capture the Port Waugh signal station way up the top. They knew we were coming of course. You'd have the

29:30 reds and the blues and you'd fire blanks and get wet and in the end you'd try and get captured because it was pretty gentle. However, then we finished our time there and we got drafted then into Manoora. We came to Port Phillip Bay with the Manoora, we joined her on site here in Melbourne. We trained

30:00 the American first marine division had just come out of Guadalcanal and we trained them in ranger battalion. They were thinking of breaking up to be rangers and they used to parade on Citation Park down here just where the creek goes in, the Mount Martha creek crosses the Nepean Road, you'll see Citation Park there and that's called that for a reason which I'll give you in a moment. They were in

30:30 the Balcombe camp and they used to go up there and parade and they'd come down to us and we'd board them on our ship via the barges or alternately they'd come to Port Melbourne and they'd come on

via the wharf. Mostly we'd put them via our barges and we'd go off in the middle of the night with our barges in the Manoora, we had the American boats then, the LCVPs and we'd go ashore on the cliffs, you know the cliffs at Mount Martha there?

31:00 Well you probably don't, but they're rocky and they go up about sixty feet or something. You'd go ashore in the middle of the night, freezing cold, wet as hell, you'd slip grappling hooks up the side of the thing and you'd climb up with a full kit and beat your way up through the scrub, there were no houses then. That was your exercise. Then just for fun, something else to do, you'd go down on to Safety Beach, which was a sandy beach which in a so' west in the winter there'd

31:30 be pretty fair lop on that beach. We'd come in there and you'd either be boat crew or you'd be a raiding party. You'd go up through the swamps, the drains for Dromana and all the sewage went into it and you waded up through the beautiful drains, it was lovely and smelly and thick black ooze and that was a training exercise. Don't know what they did it to you for.

You did train in tandem with the US?

Then we did with the United States

32:00 Marine, they were the 1st Division. Oh, we trained with the Americans in Toorbul Point for example. We trained with Americans there, we trained with Americans, small groups of Americans at Port Stephens we'd train with. They were via the Jutes or combined operations outfits with the American battalions.

32:30 So we trained, yes, with the Americans all the time. We rarely trained with Australians, we did at Canungra in the jungle training camp, but that was only a course that lasted about a week. That was teaching you how to live in the jungle, climb insurmountable objects and wade through deep ponds and dodge bullets and things.

33:00 **What was your opinion of the US marines ?**

I think they were an extremely great bunch of soldiers. We fought with the American marines in many places after that. Huge bunch of soldiers, so were the United States cavalry, 7th Cavalry, they were the guys, you see them everywhere. You see every army has its frontline troops. We had our 9th Division, which contained very famous

33:30 battalions, 23rd Battalion, 24th Battalion, Bernie Evans' mob and Spoor's mob, great battalions, did Tobruk, Libya and those places. The 17th Battalion, they were 9th Div, 17th Brigade, was 6th Div. Great soldiers. In general terms the

34:00 soldiers we got to train and train with we trained for specific operations. They were front line troops. Some of the American infantry battalion left a lot to be desired, the Australian infantry battalions, the lesser ones that weren't of those rather famous battalions I named, were good blokes but their heart wasn't in the war.

34:30 They joined for lots of different reasons but their heart wasn't in the war. Some were militias even, however, they didn't do much fighting as I told you before. Probably only 10 per cent and you' be lucky to have 10 per cent of those fellows that march on Anzac Day ever saw a shot fired. A lot of the sailors did and a lot of the sailors didn't, never saw a shot fired.

35:00 More of the army never saw a shot fired than anybody because of this altercation that took place in the beginning. General Blamey was a field marshal and senior in rank to MacArthur when he landed here and he started to tell MacArthur what he'd do. Well the Americans don't take kindly to that, so they immediately create a five start general, which is senior to a field marshal. So he's senior to Blamey.

35:30 They used to argue a lot. The politicians left a lot to be desired at that time too. They really did, their performance was particularly poor.

You're talking about Curtin?

Well Curtin wasn't in power until just after that, Curtin came into power just after that, yes I am talking about Curtin and the composite of government. But such blokes as Sharkey and Frankie Ford and these guys, please don't use their names or put them on tape.

36:00 I'll withdraw those names please don't use those names. But there were certain politicians who left a lot to be desired. Who fostered the action by a lot of the trade unions, what the trade union would and wouldn't do. They wouldn't work for example on days that was too hot or too cold or too wet or too dry or something and we've got ships that have got to get to sea and they wouldn't load us and this sort of thing.

36:30 Ships would come back for repair from sea and they used to work at a speed that would make a snail go sleep they were that slow. I could tell you, we were asked to do a trip, bringing these ALCs down from Port Stephens to Sydney Harbour to fit to the Kanimbla because the Kanimbla had just came out of the dockyard after a refit. They had to, before the navy

37:00 would take the ship over they had to see that the davits they made worked. They didn't have boats. So we brought the boats, 26 of them, down from Port Stephens to Sydney in deplorable weather conditions, in a sea that you should never have put boats like that in. We spent the whole time bailing on our way

down with our hat, because there were no bailers. We ran out of fuel off Newcastle. Nobody knew about us, so we had to go to Newcastle.

37:30 Everybody was going to shoot us up because we come in out of the mist and the fog in the evening and nobody knows about us. We get no food. We had to take the hat around and collect the money for everybody to buy a few sandwiches. The boss who brought us down, a bloke called Bernie Dick and he was a lieutenant at the time, he went around trying to get petrol to get us to Sydney. We get into Sydney at 10 o'clock at night after

38:00 the second day, our gear's all gone missing and that's all because the unions wouldn't go to Port Stephens to test the boats. They wouldn't make a journey of about 90 miles by rail to Port Stephens, to Newcastle and then a bus in, they wouldn't make that journey so we had to bring these boats down through these deplorable conditions for two days. Sometimes there was a

38:30 gas strike, you couldn't get gas in the cooking stove and you couldn't get electricity, the trams would be on strike, the railways would be on strike and the government would let them. This is in the middle of a war. MacArthur didn't understand that. MacArthur went to bring his coloured troops, he had some coloured battalions, who by and large used to be labour battalions and he wanted these blokes to unload his ships and do those sort of things and unload his trains and trucks and drive the trucks. He was told he

39:00 couldn't bring them because we had a White Australia Policy. There was much consternation. There was a big argument between MacArthur and the government, between MacArthur and Blamey, there was a big argument between Blamey and the government. The air force, the army and the navy had as much co-operation as a weasel and a mongoose. It was a bad time in Australia. A very bad time.

39:30 **Having said that can you please tell us about your first operational experience in a combat zone?**

Yes

With the 24th I understand?

We went, we picked up the 24th Battalion, a very famous battalion in Trinity Beach just north of Cairns. We did a couple of landings with them to let them know what was what and what the commands were and who did what to who and how it works. Off we shoved for Milne Bay.

40:00 The old man said to me "Le Page, you're beach master." That's how I got to be beach master, a volunteer "You're beach master." That's how you volunteered in the navy. I said, "Where do we go sir?" He said "Over there Le Page, you'll find it." I said "Yes sir, but is there anything specific?" He said, "Le Page, this is an operational zone, there are no lights, there is nothing, you'll find it, it's up there ahead of Stringer Bay" - which was like Half Moon Bay in Port Phillip Bay. He said, "You'll find it." So, it's about 10 o'clock at night

40:30 and I might tell you it's raining like the seven bells of buggery, rained 10 inches I'm told that night. I got hold of the army fellow and said, "Do you know where we are going?" He said, "No, I'd hoped you would." And I said, "I don't know where we are going, I'm just told it's up ahead of Stinger Bay." I said, "But we'll find it for you." I said, "You might have to be patient." And I remember remarking to him "A good thing this is not an opposed landing." We get up

41:00 and we find the beach eventually. We were told the airstrip was over there, there was a creek here and that was beach and that was how we recognised it. There were no lights of course, it's filthy with rain and black as hell and this creek is running 40 or 50 feet wide at 25 knots it's coming down which didn't help us very much. Whatever we got over that prob.

Tape 5

00:32 On the way into the beach this bloke said to me, "Do you know where we're going?" I said, "No I thought you'd know" He said, "Oh there'll be a reception committee." I said, "I wouldn't depend on it." Being my first taste of action I thought it would be like the American movie where you'd have dancing girls and brass bands and lights and streamers. No there was no lights and streamers, no dancing girls, not even a MP [military police] in a Jeep

01:00 to say, "Right oh 1200 men up here please." You'd think they would have spared you a MP and jeep, could've come down and said "Up here fellows." But these poor buggers get on the beach at 10 o'clock at night, pouring rain, never been in this country before and we have to do what we have to get ashore. About two in the morning suddenly somebody starts shooting at us,

01:30 bullets came from up the scrub at the back. We never expected to be inside enemy territory. So this major bloke gets a patrol and organisers to go and hunt out this shooting business. It was a Japanese patrol that had come down to see what was going on. They fixed that patrol up, that was ok that was our first taste of action. About half an hour later I said to this major

02:00 bloke, “Do you hear that funny noise?” Japanese engines usually had three, odd numbers of cylinders, we have four, sixes and eights they had three, five and seven and what have you. Well this funny noise was coming around. I said “They sound like Japanese motors.” Well sure enough around the point came three Japanese barges totally oblivious of our presence, because all these blokes being very good soldiers went around, these kooks landed on our beach. There’s only about

02:30 seven or eight blokes on these boats, so they got taken care of fairly quickly. We got these three boats, I said “We may as well put them into service they’re not bad boats. They can bring in more cargo for us. Finish quicker.” So we pressed them into service and I grabbed a couple of sailors and we manned them up and they lent me a few soldiers and we got it manned up and they joined our ferry run back and forth to the ship, which I thought was

03:00 rather funny. The old man’s hammering my ear about finishing it and getting back on board, don’t know why he’s hammering my ear, he’s got plenty of boats out there to load and he’s trying to get the cargo off the ship and he’s telling me to hurry. I couldn’t hurry because there was nothing else to unload and we put these extra boats in. Anyway we finished about half past four, a quarter to five, it’s sill black as pitch, still raining and he’s still hammering me to get off.

03:30 We get out off the beach on the way back with the beach group fellows and we can’t see the ship anywhere. I thought we had it pegged, but of course we didn’t. I said to the old man on the WT [Wireless Telegraph] thing I couldn’t see him just to give me a single flash on the signal lamp. He did that, we found him and we got back on board and we got to sea. I found out later

04:00 the reason was they used to send a cruiser across every night, just to deliver half a dozen shells on whoever was in the port as a message of welcome, the Japanese cruisers. He wanted to get out of there and I frankly didn’t blame him and I wanted to get out too. So that was my taste of action first of all. Very limited. My taste of action was Finschhafen, where we went in as a secondary landing on Blue Beach. That was a terrible beach to put boats in on. It was

04:30 made up of great big fat round rocks, no sand, just rocks, heavy surf. When we got there the odd Japanese patrol was in the vicinity, nothing of any great consequence. Gave us a bit of trouble, we fixed them up between the lot of us. We got back out to sea. The next place we went to as rather unusual. The captain calls me up

05:00 and says, “Le Page, I’m getting you to take 13 of the boats ashore, we got to take 13 boats up to Hollandia. We’re sending you and 13 crews and boats ashore and you’ll live with the marine transit camp.” I said “Yes sir. Where’s that?” “Oh over there, Le Page, you’ll find it,” you know, he goes like this. You look across there and as I told you we only grabbed little corners of the place to set up airstrips. So I

05:30 set off with 13 very unhappy crews who were sent ashore because the ship was going on to Hollandia to do a landing and they’re sent ashore because they’ve got to take American boats up, who would remain up there and the ship would come back minus 13 boats, because they acted as lifeboats, as you’d appreciate it. Thirteen was about half their complement of boats. They’d come back with about half their complement because they only had

06:00 the ship’s company to take care of them, about 600 fellows, they figured 13 boats would do that. I don’t know quite how, however that’s what they said, that’s about 50 blokes to a boat. They’re only built to carry 35, that was their worry, not mine. Of course we get over here on the beach and I get hold of these soldier blokes and they’re all Americans and I say, “Do you blokes know where the American Marine Transit camp is?” “Never heard of it,” he says.

06:30 “Ask the miliary police.” So they’re very decent these Yanks. They take us into their camp and they get the telephone, field telephone, “No there’s no marine transit camp on the whole coast.” Of course I’ve got about 60 sailors, very unhappy sailors I might add too, who wanted to say bugger the navy, we’ll walk out.

07:00 I said “The first man that walks beyond that point is going to get shot, so please yourselves. I’m telling you not to walk and it’s a direct order. You’re in a war zone and I’ll shoot you if you disobey me.” I don’t suppose I meant it, but there you are. This fellow said this American colonel, Kentucky Cavalry, marvellous fellows, said that there were a few spare

07:30 cots they were called in tents over there “That should be enough for your blokes.” So we went over and yes there were enough cots and things there. He said, “Well get some more blankets for you.” He sends his jeep up to the PX [Postal Exchange – American canteen unit] to get the fellows blankets and stuff. He said to my cobber and I, the other officer with me a bloke called John MacKay “You come and eat with us.” And the guys joined the chow line that night and they looked after us.

08:00 I rang up, I didn’t ring up I went over to see the naval officer in charge and he didn’t know about us, he wasn’t prepared to help, as far as he was concerned we didn’t exist. I don’t know who the bloody hell he thought we were or what we were, but we were there and we had a problem. He didn’t know, didn’t want to know and wasn’t prepared to help. He probably never had the means to help, because we had no money. Anyway this American cavalry division

08:30 were good fellows and they took us in and they fed us and they said, “Look, we’ve got to do patrols up

inside the wire, would you take us up?." We said, "Yes we'll do that." So we, every night used to go off on a raid up the coast a bit with these American troops on board and we'd wait for them and bring them off when they had done their patrols. There was never much trouble there. We had a bit of spasmodic firing but nothing Herculean. We

09:00 painted our boats and fixed our boats up and things. Some of my sailors got pretty sick because the uniforms they'd given us to wear were these cotton, rough cotton shirts with collar, separate collars that weren't attached to the shirts. I don't know what they call it now, but it's cotton material. It used to itch most dreadfully and

09:30 the hospital doctor said, "Well I'm not fixing those blokes until they get new outfits." "Well," I said, "I haven't got new outfits." He sent me down to the PX and we all go down to the PX about 60 of us and the bloke said, "What do you want?" We said that we want some gear that we can wear up in this country that's not going to itch us to death. He gave us shirts and singlets and underpants and socks and shoes and American tee-shirts, oh terribly generous.

10:00 They couldn't do enough for us. Then a couple of the American commanders said to the boat's crew, "Why don't you come out and attach yourself to my ship and you can do the ferrying business for us save their motor boat." So, OK we'll do that. We had a couple of crews go out and live on destroyers and cruisers and things. They got right royally looked after. That was our experience there, we used to go out on these

10:30 picnic raids. Now this camp was a little bit peculiar because they had two Japanese POWs, please don't print this, on the wood heap and they'd be on the wood heap splitting the wood to make the cooking fires. It always seemed a bit peculiar to me: they always had Japanese. The Japanese were very subservient when they were prisoners. You got the very patriotic fellows that wanted to commit hari kari and suicide and all that, murder everybody else. But they soon realised the position they were in,

11:00 there was nowhere to go, if they escaped there was nowhere to escape to. New Guinea was a huge place and A, they had to get out beyond the perimeter wire, B, they had to get through no man's land and their own people would have shot them anyway. They had no food so they were happy to live with the Americans, they had good tucker, they were in fatigues and they were pretty happy fellows. They used to laugh and joke with you. So that was that experience we had. We

11:30 went on there and the next one we did, I don't know why we didn't do it but Biak and Numfor Island, not by us but by somebody else, Manoora and Westralia did a couple we didn't do and we did a couple they didn't do. We went up the coast, we were all worried about Aitape and Wewak because they were big Japanese bases, but they bypassed them. They went to

12:00 Hollandia, then they went to Numfor and Biak, which were the last big knobbly bits on the end of New Guinea. Then we went to Morotai.

After Hollandia, which you weren't involved in the actual taking of, the next operation for you was?

Morotai.

The actual invasion of Morotai?

Yes Morotai. When you say the "invasion of Morotai," please don't think we took over the whole island. Morotai was one island in the

12:30 Selby's group and all we took was a narrow peninsula of land, probably between, oh, and eight, eight miles wide and 20 miles long. That was the Morotai we had. It had landing strips all over it. That's all the Americans wanted. They only wanted a piece of country here, there, there and there to put their

13:00 aircraft on. Now the Australians couldn't fight like that because we didn't have the aircraft, we just didn't have any aircraft, but the Americans had plenty. Their aircraft gave them control of the seas and control of the land and they didn't need any more land there was no sense in fighting for it, they just needed this bit. They put up perimeter wires, they put patrols on the perimeters inside the wire so they knew exactly what their aircraft reconnaissance with the Japanese were doing.

13:30 The Japanese didn't want to waste too much material on us, of course they knew that couldn't get rid of us. Now at that stage the Americans had taken over the Pacific war. Because of his fight with Blamey, the army got no action at all. They were left, they did Finschhafen, the did Buna and Cape Kumusi which I named before,

14:00 they came down on the Sanananda trail, the Australians and they met the Yanks coming ashore and they sandwich the blokes in the middle. We copped Buna and we put airstrips in there. If you looked at a map they've got Milne Bay, Finschhafen, Buna, and then on the other side of the straits as it were you had New Ireland, New Britain, New Ireland

14:30 where Rabaul was up one end and it came to a tip at the other and there was a town called Arawe there, Cape Gloucester. They took that, we didn't, Westralia did with the 1st Marine Division. They therefore had camps either side of the straits between New Britain, New Ireland and New Guinea out to the Bismarck Sea. So they controlled those straits that the Japanese

15:00 couldn't get back through them or out of them. They then controlled right up the other way, they'd taken control of the Solomons and they had control of that so the Japanese couldn't get up through there and they trapped all those people in behind themselves. I'm not going on about the Brisbane Line [an imaginary line of defence planning] some genius in the Australian government or hierarchy decided they were going to defend the Brisbane Line and draw a line from Brisbane to Shark Bay sort of thing

15:30 and said we will defend that line. That the fattest part of the country and they were going to defend it. I don't… if you've ever seen that country that's there but you couldn't defend it at all. It was sand from beginning to end. That was called the Brisbane Line. That was a decision that was made. Fortunately it never came to that because by this time the Americans had turned the Japanese tide. We'd done our bit up

16:00 on the Kokoda.

I'd like to avoid the strategic situations and concentrate more on your personal experiences.

Alright my personal experiences.

So if we can get back to Morotai? Tell us about your operation?

I was the beach master in Morotai or was going to be the beach master. We edged in towards the beach and it was the first time we'd gone in in daylight.

16:30 We found that we were hanging up on little heads of coral from the bottom there's these lumps of coral just a few yards off the beach because it was very deep water. Boats cruised, people get terribly anxious when you've got an enemy shore a few yards in front of you, they let the ramp down too early. Of course the soldiers are very

17:00 toey too, they want to get the hell out of that boat, they want to get some space. They dived out of the boat and of course they weren't anywhere near the beach and they sank in 20, 30 feet of water with all their full packs. We jammed the doors up and pumped out the boats and go back and feel our way past the coral heads. It was if you touched one you moved a bit left, a bit more left and you gradually got to the beaches.

17:30 When we got there we put the blokes off, but we had lost a few.

Was this under fire?

No. Nobody on us that day from Morotai. They fired on us later in the day, yes. The Japanese had gathered a force together and had come down and attacked us on the beach. We had a lot of troops ashore by then, that wasn't my problem. My problem was to get the blokes onto the beach. Now to do that

18:00 I'd normally go ashore either in the first wave or before the first wave. If I went ashore before the first wave we usually went in the dark. Now to do that I'd go up on the bridge with the navigator who would give me a compass course, but the compass in the boats were never very dependable, because you fill them with troops and fighting gear, like grenades all over you

18:30 and bayonets and rifles and bullets and things, you tend to muck up compasses. He used to say, "You see those two stars over there?" He didn't confuse me with a lot balderdash, he'd say, "You see those two I mean that one to the left and that one to the right?" And I'd say, "Yeah." And he'd say, "Just steer up to the left of those and just keep those on your starboard bow just gently and keep them there all the way to the beach and you'll be spot on." He said, "The drift of the tide will be down that way,

19:00 so you'll need to keep yourself just edging up a bit." He said, "There's no trouble to the left of that, trouble to the right where the rocks are." We found our way in like that every time. We didn't get lost. I've got a hand-bearing compass I used to use and a course he gave me. I found it much better to go in by the stars. We didn't get lost many times. We'd go in, the seven of us would hit the beach, we'd race around like blue back sided

19:30 flies for a while. We'd look for land mines and beach obstacles and beach obstructions like concrete blocks and barbed wire entanglements. You'd get somebody to shoot at you and you'd have to take them on. We weren't supposed to be a fighting force, we were supposed to be a seek force and if there was just minor resistance we'd try and take care of it. We managed to succeed in doing that.

This includes Finschhafen as well?

20:00 Yes we were beach masters in Finschhafen.

You did the same role and duty in the Finschhafen landing at Blue Beach?

Excuse me, blokes had been over that beach before us, so there were no mines, no obstructions, we knew that. But it was a bugger of a beach. It was all rocks and very heavy surf, heavy sea. Very easy to lose whole boats and propellers hit rocks and things. You get a propeller that's off whack because the engines

20:30 were so big the propellers had such revolutions on them and the way the blokes used to handle them to

get through the surf and had to handle them to get through the surf was that if a propeller was whacked or nicked or bent it used to tear the boat apart with the vibration and tear the struts apart from the propeller shaft. So yes that was the same thing. We'd run around looking for land mines and all this other stuff. When it was clear watching

21:00 the clock we would put up two red lights, one block down the beach end and one bloke up on the dunes at the back and these had tubes on them and they'd move these two red lights like that until the boats came closer and the blokes in the boats would tune those two red lights until they were one above the other. They didn't hold them still because they didn't want anybody to see it. You'd see the wake on the boat coming towards you

21:30 as he mounted the surf to come in. Then you'd hold them steady. The boat, the wave leader would draw up on those middle lights and he'd come in on the beach that you'd set for him, which means his blokes could get ashore without land mines and beach obstacles and all that stuff, which was the reason I took MacArthur on. I didn't know it was MacArthur, to me it was just another boat that day. The very strict instructions, you weren't supposed to land outside

22:00 the given beach area and nobody told me that MacArthur was coming or anybody else was coming. This boat came in, a LCM [Landing Craft Motorised] indeed, a 20 tonner came in, 50 foot long, beautifully painted with an American flag on the back, and I sort of looked at it and thought "That's a bit flash for the day." Of course he came into this beach and I'm trying to wave him off. Now

22:30 it would have looked very nice from there if he'd come and hit a land mine or something wouldn't it, or he hit a beach obstacle and torn the bottom out of his boat? We would have had to get wet and save them.

Where was this by the way?

That was in Lingayen, but I just illustrating the point to you that they had to come in over your beach. They'd hit the beach, and I'll come back to MacArthur later, they'd hit the beach. Now, you'd have the first two or three waves were infantry,

23:00 they'd fan out and just get the, my job was up to the high tide to the end of the sand dunes. Then it was the army's job. It was my job to get their stuff off the beach. It was my job to get it on the beach and off the beach. Army took it from there. We had to get roadways built, we had to in the course of those first few waves the casualty clearing stations,

23:30 emergency casualty clearing stations would come off. Now they were a series of tents, big tents and within 15, 20 minutes those tents were up, surgeons were gowned and sterilised waiting with sterilised hands to go and help the blokes who were wounded. That, there were probably four operating theatres, there were probably 15, 20 surgeons I don't know, 15, 20 medics to

24:00 assist them maybe more. Then there was a handling party outside that the medics in the field, then there were the graves people who used to bring the bodies in the body bags. Usually when the fellows came on to the beach a lot of them had dropped their equipment because they didn't want to run and fight with it. So we'd put that up to one side over there in a pile. They'd come back later in the day and pick it up. We'd get a beach roadway as quickly

24:30 as we could. We'd do that in several ways. We had this beach matting that they used to make the airstrips out of and we'd get that down and we could get a roadway done in five minutes, less than five minutes, if we had the blokes. I'd just pull the army blokes out, if there were any locals hanging about there, often there were locals who'd come down to see what was happening. I'd hire them same: so many men so many boxes of rations for some many hours.

25:00 **Just on the spot?**

Yeah, a lot of places weren't defended. These blokes are gathered around and they're looking as though they're just looking into space, like me at St Kilda pier on a Sunday afternoon, so we'd grab them by various and devious means. You'd get the boss man, you'd make a signal for 20 men and two cases of rations, four cases of rations, so we'd put them over there. I'd say "No. They've got to work harder, take one box back." "Aye, aye, aye,"

25:30 and we'd put back. This went on and it worked very well. We'd get this stuff down in no time flat, which enable you to get the wheeled vehicles ashore. Tanks were a problem. We obviously had to have a much more secure roadway for tanks. Now we did that in all sorts of ways. We used to cut coconut palm if there were any there and lay them down quickly or alternatively we'd get two or three thickness of that beach matting

26:00 stuff and we'd get the tanks off and in. Now the quicker we'd get them off they'd give cover. The infantry had battled their way to a few yards inland, sometimes there was firing above us, but not often, the army kept them off us. That was their job. The tanks would go in and go ahead of the infantry and then the rest of the waves would come in and we'd land about six

26:30 waves, seven waves of six boats each. Each one carrying about 40 men. We'd get the majority of their troops off, about 1,000 of their 1200 we'd get off. They were the fighting men that went forward.

That's the first wave?

Oh no that would be six waves. Six waves of six. We had to get them in, now if a boat got into trouble where I got into trouble I used to have to dive in underneath, and my boys, we'd go in underneath them and pull the boats out and get the ramp down and things like that so we could get

27:00 them out.

So you're talking about chaps had fallen into deep water?

No, the barges would come in to the beach and a big heavy sea would get them and spin them around and they'd roll like that. Now some of the fellows were injured, I'd scream for medics to come and help and the medics would race down, and we'd get the ramp down in no time flat and we'd get the ramp open, piece by piece, the fit men get

27:30 the blokes that are weak out. That's where I collected this oil first of all in my lungs. That was our job on the beach. We had to unload the cargo in… obviously you didn't put petrol and ammunition near the casualty clearing station, that was up the other end. Each one of these dumps was indicated quite clearly by beach signs, so that anyone coming to the beach straight away knew that petrol and ammunition was that end.

28:00 That medical supplies and food stores were up near the hospital. The middle section was reserved for wheeled vehicles coming ashore and tracked vehicles coming ashore and extra people. So the day went on. We'd unload probably 2,000, 2,500 ton of cargo depending on how much stuff they'd brought and obviously they were pretty limited to what they could bring, but they had to have enough to sustain

28:30 1200 men for probably a day or two until their supplies could get in, their real dinkum supplies. They'd have food rations, cases of food and cases of ammunition. Now the guys who didn't make it, their equipment was stored in over a pile over there, rifles and knives and binoculars and grenades and those things. Our armament,

29:00 we carried a Lee Enfield rifle, you wouldn't know what that is, that's a single bolted action Lee Enfield weighed about nine pounds. Marvellous in open country where you needed a shot of about six or seven hundred yards. Under our conditions we didn't need that, we didn't want it. We wanted something that we'd get a lot of bullets in the air very quickly. The Australian government didn't have it at that time. I said to this Yank

29:30 officer who was the beach master for the whole number of beach ends, there'd be four beach ends we'll say, and he'd be in charge of the four of them and I'd only be in charge of my particular ship or our particular squadron, as I got up in rank I took the squadron and then I took the whole kit and caboodle once or twice. I said to him, "What are the chances of getting a hold of some of those rifles of yours?" He said, "Help yourself." He said,

30:00 "We're all fighting the same goddam war." And that was their attitude. So I said to the fellows, "Look, go up and get a rifle each." We arranged to pick up the grenades that weren't being used and they had a marvellous knife, a jungle knife which was about that long with a good leather handle, which you could dig for land mines. We used to dig for land mines with a bayonet which is that long and of course you had to do it with two hands and it slowed you up. If you had a little short one

30:30 you could go like the clappers. They were also very handy for other things. We used to put a second edge on them which was always very handy, and sharpened up the other edge. The fellow said, "Take what you want." I've still got the binoculars I took that day. I surrendered the rifle I brought home, the carbine. We went to our engine room to the fellows on board and said, "Look

31:00 fellows!" They only had 14 shot magazines and you just keep pulling the trigger 14 times you'd have 14 bullets out. They made us magazines 28 magazines, we had them loaded with 26 because if you put 28 in they'd jam, so we put 26 in. They were much longer, but you had, you needed the firepower, you needed a quickie so when you hit the beach if something moved you could give

31:30 it a bit of a spray and you'd be ok. But you try and fire one bullet, reload another one bring it up and aim you'd be dead in a day if you did that. But these Yanks had marvellous equipment, they really did. I can't tell you, without them, when people get critical of them and they are in some way a bit heavy, but I can tell you boy we owe this country to them and everybody in it owes their life to them. I loathe to hear this criticism

32:00 because they weren't alive in 1942 if we depended on our government and some of our force commanders we'd have all been speaking Japanese now. I doubt you'd be here, you'd be back in Sri Lanka and I'd reckon you'd be lucky. I couldn't speak highly enough of the Americans. Yes I think the Australian fighting battalions, what I saw of them anyway and I saw them in two locations

32:30 early and a couple of locations after that and I would have preferred not to have seen them there, I'll come to that shortly. We did Morotai.

What was after Morotai? Your next operational landing?

We went back to Los Negros in the Admiralties [Admiralty Islands] and it wasn't a landing it was a mop up operation. They were sometimes tougher than the landings.

33:00 We got put out on the wings way over to the left, we were told to go and do a reconnaissance up there to see what was there for beach landings and we could bring troops in there, because they were getting pressed for room. We did all that, we bought a bit of a fight up there, but however nothing terribly serious. They were the mop ups that were often times tougher. We did a place called Toem, after Hollandia. I didn't tell you about this one, this was a tough one.

33:30 **How do you spell Toem?**

T-O-E-M. It was in the Wakde group which was a bit south of Hollandia as I remember it. This American battalion that was ashore was in trouble, they were being beaten back towards the sea by what they said was a superior Japanese force. We got there,

34:00 thinking we were just going on a supply run, you know, and it was tiny little beach, wouldn't be from that wall to the fire place and just as we hit the beach these Japanese bolted out of the scrub in front of us and right next door to us on the, just here, was a trailer, towed behind a car trailer, with

34:30 four 50 calibre machine guns from the tail turret of a Liberator, mounted on this thing and the bloke was sitting in it and of course he let these Japanese blokes who came out of the scrub within 50 yards of us shouting and carrying swords and shooting and doing all sort of nasty things. This 50 calibre belted them, the boat

35:00 hand on our boat got such a shock he let the door go terribly early so we half filled with water and we're stuck 20 yards off the beach because we're half full of water. So we jammed the door up and pumped all that and got back on the beach. We left the boat and get up on the beach and we haven't got any rifles or anything. There were only about 50 or 60 of these fellows and the Americans knocked them off. But they're all laying about over here. So we get the stuff off and get out of there in one hell of a hurry.

35:30 I had to laugh at that place, seeing this 50 calibre. The Americans were very inventive, like our blokes, you have to be inventive in a war. They got this tail gunning section out of a Liberator, where the bloke used to sit hunched up down the back end of the aircraft in a power operated turret that went up, down, sideways, with pedals and he had a

36:00 four 50 calibre machine guns that he controlled with two buttons. Well they'd mounted this on the back of a trailer and he used to pump the pedals to go up and down and right and it worked like a charm this thing and I can tell you it cleared this scrub of all these blokes in no time flat. They were the tough operations and we had a few of those. A little village called Tak Lomen, the Americans were in trouble up in the Philippines we got sent to and that was

36:30 a bit rough. However that was about the size of it. We went on from there. From Los Negros we went to Leyte Gulf which was a huge operation. We did Leyte Gulf and you could have taken the kids ashore where we went, a little island called Pena Island. Now, I've got to describe the Philippines to you. Comprised three main islands,

37:00 they were in fact 1200 islands in the group. The three big ones were Luzon in the north, Leyte in the middle and Mindanao to the south. Now forget Mindanao, nobody wanted it then and nobody wants it now, it is peopled by renegades, vagabonds, criminals, pirates, all the pirates of the South Pacific emanate from there. Capital city

37:30 is a place called Zamboanga and all the missionaries of the world tend to go there because they think they can cure these people and bring them back to God. You probably say some of them get captured every now and then and get very badly mutilated. Nobody touched that island, but separating that island from Leyte was strait called the Surabaya Straits and that came in from the South China Sea through the islands into Leyte Gulf.

38:00 Which was a gulf about four times as big as Port Phillip Bay, six times as big as Port Phillip Bay. Peopled on one side by Leyte Island and on the other side by various islands, which we had to get hold of before the main fleet came through. We did Pena Island alone, along to the south with Westralia and Manoora and Australian cruisers and ships helped us with

38:30 the bombardment, with the Americans of course, we didn't have nearly enough ships, but they helped us. To the north, the north end of Leyte, the straits between it and Luzon were the San Bernardino's. Now they knew the Japanese Fleet was to the west of the Philippines and they knew that they'd have to try and come through these two holes if they're gong to do any good. So, the American admiral sent his

39:00 Halsley's fleet out to sea to the north end of Luzon so he couldn't bring a fleet from the north around that side and trap us in the bay and Halsley was outside in the South Philippine Sea and he held that place over there. He lost a carrier out there, I've forgotten the name of the carrier now, I think it was [USS] Yorktown. But he got into trouble, he was a bit silly, he did naughties out there, he sent signals to the Japanese

39:30 to come and fight him, that was not the sensible thing to do. Anyway [Marc] Mitchener, the aircraft carrier [rear-]admiral, had his carrier fleet bottled up on the west side of the middle island out near Cebu, he was out of fuel and bombs, he'd been bombing. Anyway, at the top end of the bay, you can imagine, there were about six American battle ships,

40:00 [USS] Missouri, [USS] Iowa and some of the older ships [USS] New York and these things, were arrayed. There were umpteen dozen cruisers, more umpteen dozen destroyers, more umpteen dozen sloops, more umpteen dozen torpedo boats. How stupid and I said before how stupid some of the Japanese tactics were. They sailed through the Surabaya Straits. They

40:30 must have known we were there, the land-based gun in Pena that had gone ashore with us virtually had control of the straits and the Japanese Battle Fleet led by Yamato which was about a 96,000 ton battle ship, beautiful ship. I don't know who the captain was but it was named after Yamamoto the famous Japanese admiral that was

41:00 killed out here somewhere in the Pacific en route to the Solomons, he was shot down. Of course as these ships came through into the Gulf of Leyte, the battlers all broad side on opened up full broad sides. Twelve and fourteen inch guns roaring, there were more shells in the air than starlings on migration day. Of course Yamato gets sunk.

41:30 The moment the battle fleet open fire every cruiser on the wings got in for his chop and the eight-inch cruiser with eight-inch guns and six-inch guns they served him up big and proper. The destroyers, closer in again, with their twin four-point sprayed him. The 105 mm howitzers we'd put ashore sprayed him. So he didn't last terribly long. To help me Bob, comes through the next battler etcetera, and the whole fleet was progressively

42:00 destroyed.

Tape 6

00:30 **Just continue from where we left off?**

Right oh we're in Leyte Gulf and the battle fleet was coming through. Just before that happened, in fact the evening before, that's how close it was, we were still just finished unloading and an air raid started and what we thought were high level bombers came over, in fact they were high level bombers, they bombed us for a while

01:00 and the Japanese made a fateful mistake on all these invasions. They tackled the warships whereas if they'd tackled us we were much more vulnerable and indeed if they'd hit us they would have destroyed the invasion. Now they somehow never woke up to that simple fact, you'd think it would be self-evident, but they didn't seem to wake up to it. This afternoon we were just

01:30 finished and we, some of us had our anchors up and were moving because of the air raid and we went to action stations and the high level bombers kept busy. But they were after the cruisers, the Australia was just over there about a thousand yards from us and several other warships, whereas we have to collect every empty shell

02:00 in the lull and the fighting we had to put in bags so we could send it back. The Americans are out over the side kicking all the shell cases over the side, so they wouldn't get in the way of the turrets rotating. That was the difference between them and us. They had plenty of equipment and I said at one stage earlier that it was a war of production, of manufacturing skills. This particular day they're kicking the empties over the side and we're protecting

02:30 them one by one and their four point seven shell cases are just being kicked over the side, beautiful brass shell cases. The air raid lulled for a moment or two, and then there was a very heavy aircraft noise low down and we all looked around to find it, and it was the first kamikaze attack of the war.

03:00 Kamikazes were these suicide bombers, the Divine Winds who set out with aircraft usually with bombs that were secured into their bomb bays or explosive charges or even shells, they had all sorts of things, they didn't have the supplies. He landed on the foredeck of the [HMAS] Australia about a thousand yards away. That was the first kamikaze attack. Nineteen men were killed that afternoon on the foc's'le

03:30 and a couple of blokes that went to school with me, Keith Denham and Dan Levy, the two of them, John Collins was the captain, he was wounded. We of course nicked off to sea very quickly, being very vulnerable. Just outside Leyte Gulf in the Philippine Sea.

With the kamikaze pilot, can you just give us a bit more detail of what you initially thought was going on? And what was going through your mind?

04:00 He was wide of us and we couldn't see him at first, then you saw him, no you wouldn't know him next time because he was travelling a bit. And you thought, "Holy mother of Mary." You didn't have time to think, you saw him, you saw the pilot and you heard the wham, the flame and the bang and the caboodle.

04:30 Let's get the hell out of here in case he's got any brothers. We had been warned in Intelligence, the reports about the Divine Wind business. We used to call them the Katzenjamer Kids. You blokes

wouldn't remember. There was a strip in the American comic pages that used to come out in their field papers called the 'Katzenjamer Kids', who were kids that would do anything, they were totally uncontrollable.

05:00 They were colloquially called, kamikaze was their name, the office of the Divine Wind. They used to parade with a scarf around their helmet written the Divine Wind across in Japanese, they'd do all their bowing and they wouldn't come back. Well the poor old Australia copped it. We got the hell out of there, we thought how damned lucky we were because if they hit us we'd have burnt

05:30 like a match. Being old passenger ship there was more paint on it than ship. Anyway the Australia burnt for a while, they put the fire out, hosed the wreckage over the side, collected the dead, of course. She had to go down then to A and B. The turrets to the bridge were a bit buggered, so she steamed under her own power through to Esprit Santo where the big naval dockyard was. When they say they fixed it they worked

06:00 24 hours a day through every bit of heat, rain, shine and if they needed another 200 men they got them. Now in our country, we got something repaired they'd work from eight o'clock to four, they'd want an hour for lunch and half and hour for afternoon tea and if they wanted to go on strike they did. There was the difference. We got a bit disgusted with the Australian people, because of that. You'd go into an American dockyard

06:30 with something wrong, and they'd fix it for you. Here you'd get 45,00 signatures and if you wanted something you asked for it. Anyway I'll just finish another story and come back to another aspect of my operations. We got outside Leyte Gulf in the South Philippine Sea headed south towards Los Negros for another load because we had to come back and do Tak Lomen villages that I told you were in a bit of trouble.

07:00 We came under submarine attack. There was a submarine out there waiting for us. Well, the Americans had sent us out with five or six escorts because they always escorted us extremely well. The Australians gave us one core vessel, these blokes would give us four or five frigates or destroyers or what have you. They attacked this submarine and we got out of it, four or five of them stayed behind

07:30 and four or five came on with us. Of course we were really going flat out, as fast as we could, we went to action stations. Having been out of bed since about one o'clock in the morning, you were rather tired by 10 o'clock at night. Then of course you've got to go on watch and do your watch. Fortunately that day I had the four o'clock watch, the 4 am watch so I got some sleep. So anyway that was the first kamikaze attack. Another aspect I was going to tell you that's rather interesting:

08:00 in order to overcome this difficult supply problem - I put those words in such gentle terms of "difficult supply problem," absolutely bloody impossible is closer to the truth -because trying to get something for your boats, for your beach party, you might ask for hand grenades or ammunitions, at one stage I was going on a raid, the naval orders had said

08:30 that you could have five rounds a man in a beach-landing party. Well I tried to explain to our executive officer that "We weren't a beach landing party, we were going on a raid and I'd no more take my men ashore with five rounds a man than I would go myself with five rounds. If he wanted to arrest me, he'd better do it now because I just wasn't going to do it." Well he said, "How many rounds do you want?" "I want a hundred a man and I'll bring back what we don't use." He said, "You'll have to bring back the empties."

09:00 I said, "Sir I'll do what I can to bring back the empties, but nobody's going to poke their head up over the parapet to get empties." And these are these old bolt-action rifles. He said, "I don't blame you Le Page, but you shouldn't say it like that." "Well I'm sorry sir, but I'm due to go over the side in about five minutes." Of course you were never allowed to draw your stuff until minutes before you went. I found that, I told you about the American beach master who said we're all fighting the one war, and that was their attitude,

09:30 they knew you were forward echelon, I mean we took the war right forward and they did everything they could to help us. If the supply ships came to us we took our turn the same as everybody else. Admiral got in first as a rule, and you'd not wonder at that. We took our turn, you were told when to go to supply ships. Of course supply

10:00 ships like anybody else are susceptible to bribery and corruption and I found that if we were ashore on these things, if we brought back Japanese helmets and Japanese rifles and bayonets and tunics and bits and pieces of Japan, all the bits and pieces you collect on a battlefield. .. So we used to take a big interest in collecting a hoard of these things and we used to take them back to the ship. The XO [Executive Officer] said to me one day, "What are you doing with all that stuff, Le Page?"

10:30 "Well sir it seemed like a good idea to me when I go to the supply ships that if I took these over I might be able to get better rations." He said, "That's good thinking, Le Page." He said, "Is that all you could get?" We used to lock them down in number three hatch so the sailors couldn't get at them. We'd have rifles and bayonets and knives and watches and helmets and tunics and some had holes in them some were a bit messy.

11:00 When we went to supply ships we always took a number of these things with us. We'd say to the bloke

"Hey Mack look, I've got five rifles, four tunic and six helmets and some of this and some of that, how much does a ration go for that?" "That's OK, how many more do you want?" I can tell you I used to be able to trade my way into engines, boats, all the spare parts for boats you wanted, propellers we used to go through like you'd go through cigarettes. We could get spare propellers. You try

11:30 and do that through the Australian navy, you'd have been two years afterwards. If we lost a boat in the surf and I'd gone back to the Australian navy for it - oh I didn't, the ship did - it would have been years before we got a new one. Gave the Americans a couple of helmets and a couple rifles, it wasn't "Do you need a new boat?" [it was] "How many do you want?" You could go and get a boat, just like that. That's the way they ran their war.

12:00 They really meant it when [they said] we were all fighting the one war and consequently as a result of all these souvenirs we used to grab, pinch, steal, no, that's the wrong word, we used to pick them up from the beach, pick them up from the fellows that didn't need them anymore. We ate… well, we didn't eat well, but we ate a damned sight better than the dehydrated mutton and dehydrated potatoes and dehydrated carrots, and dehydrated eggs and dehydrated

12:30 potatoes they sent us. We'd get a bit of tinned turkey and you'd get enough grapefruit juice to make a couple of rations around the ship, enough tomato juice to make a couple more and you'd get tinned potatoes and tinned peas, beautiful quality stuff, and ice cream mix and stuff like that. Consequently we had an opportunity to get really good meals. You couldn't keep the whole ship's company in it the whole time, but

13:00 because of these goodies we used to purloin and I got rather a reputation for being able to acquire the odd number of supplies for these sort of things. Whenever the old man wanted something he used to pick on me to go and do the trading because I used to get, had the ability to trade these souvenirs, which the Americans used to offer to buy. You could sell Japanese flags for a thousand dollars a time if you wanted.

13:30 But money wasn't terribly good to you in those days, and I didn't seem to need, nobody needed money except for that particular night I told you about. Money in ships was terribly limited. The supply of notes and things, you'd spend it in the canteen and they'd give it back to the paymaster and the paymaster would pay the crew with the money they needed and put the rest in credit. So the same notes would do five or six jobs

14:00 on the way around. We didn't want the money. That's not what we wanted, we wanted the supplies. As I say rations were terribly light on and one of the problems with rations in our case was, there was nothing wrong with tinned herrings or dehydrated stuff provided you got it once a week or something, not three meals a day every day. Nothing wrong with tinned

14:30 herring, "gold fish" we used to call it, in fact I still buy them from the supermarket now.

Why was it that the Americans had such good food ?

Because the Americans wouldn't fight without, they would have mutinied, without it and they also would mutiny because they had too much turkey and too much ice cream and they wanted a change. But the Australian supply situation where we there was next to nothing because we were so far forward,

15:00 the nearest Australian bases to us are back in New Guinea. We're up in Morotai or in the Philippines or somewhere south, north, west of that. The supply ships used to come about and we used to go and grab them. We'd take our turns and we'd take our trading barter with us. We got known for this. They used to go down to New Zealand, these supply ships and

15:30 they'd come back with New Zealand lamb. Absolutely fantastic beautiful fresh lamb and we'd get maybe 200 sides of lamb and that would feed the ship's company for perhaps a week. When the Americans troops came on we didn't have much trouble getting our rations because the Americans brought their own rations with them as it were. Some of those used to disappear up towards our place too.

16:00 So within some limits we lived reasonably well, except when we were on the Australian diet. Yippee beans, big green lima beans, very nice to have a few of them. If you had dehydrated mutton, herrings in tomato sauce for entrée and dehydrated potatoes and yippee beans would have been a nice meal for once a week, but oh no they didn't do that, didn't work that way. You got all bully beef,

16:30 all herrings and tomato sauce, all yippee beans and that was the menu. When they said in the Australian Parliament that they were taking fresh food to the Australian front lines to troops, let me tell you what the fresh good was. It was lamb's fry and pumpkin and that was the fresh food. That's when, and I'm going to be very critical here, we

17:00 finished Luzon and we were due to go to Okinawa and I wouldn't say we were looking forward to that.

Just two more questions on the kamikaze pilots before we get too far away from them.

Please. We had quite a few of them, not just that one, yes go on.

What were your thoughts when you see someone sacrificing their life in that way?

You didn't think of it in those terms. You thought more about it in your own terms because when you

first looked up and saw this coot

17:30 changing course in the sky, you'd swear he'd picked you out. You'd swear it. The guys who had been in the Med, the Mediterranean, used to tell me the same thing about the Stukas when they used to peel off and come towards you, you'd swear the only bloke they could see was you. You'd swear this kamikaze, the only bloke he could see was you. We had another one, one night it came at us and

18:00 he was fairly low down he was about a hundred, hundred and fifty feet off the deck and he was coming off our port bow in towards us, he first came in I am sure he was heading to us, our guns pitched where my action station was right up in the eyes of the ship and the gunner was busy, you had to be terribly careful firing because other ships in the

18:30 convoy would cop it if you fired into their range. I could see this bloke now, yes I saw him clear as a bell, he would have only been 150 feet away from us and I thought he was going to go for us down the backside end, but he didn't, he changed course again behind us, I think probably what happened was he got hit by a bullet or something and he might have dragged the plane around or something.

19:00 But the ship behind us was Westralia and he went between the masts of the Westralia, they have a stay between the mast called the triatic stay, which often is a signal aerial for wirelesses, well he carried that away and he went in, just dipped in over the far side the starboard side of the Westralia. You used to keep your ash can

19:30 on the stern there and you'd dumped those every night so the submarines couldn't follow you. There's usually 20 or 30 ash bins there, full of rubbish, they all went over the side of course, he blew them over the side. The old tart was very badly singed on the bum. Her steering packed up, we thought "Holy God poor old Westralia, she's in trouble." Because she had to pull out of the line and any straggler like that would be fair game.

20:00 So the admiral told a destroyer to accompany her and told Westralia to quickly get repairs if they could, report and the column would move up to take up her place and she could come in at the back of the column that would save her a couple thousand yards of travel and gave her more time to fix her gear. They had the sailors down aft in the emergency steering compartment. You have a big quadrant.

20:30 Now in emergency steering you have blocks and tackle; that's… the blocks are which you sheath the roping, like pulleys, you have them on flags and things and sun blinds, much bigger you have rope. You line up the sailors on a block and tackle each side and the captain says port 15 so the starboard blokes slack away and the port blokes heave in on the block and tackle, pulling this quadrant around by hand. They put five wheelers [to] ease her back,

21:00 touch of the starboard, you see, that's the way you steered. Anyway they freed up the main steering, I don't know how they did it but they did it. Of course Westralia got back in the line. We had several experience of kamikaze flyers.

Did you think kamikazes was a sign of Japanese desperation or a good tactical move?

21:30 Absolute desperation because first of all they were only successful in a few occasions and I'll tell you some of them but the majority of the time they fell harmlessly into the sea because the short range fire power of ships was astronomical. You could have walked to heaven on the spray of stuff we could put up and the other ships near you.

22:00 Consequently you either blew a wing or tail off or you killed the pilot, or something they'd spin off into the sea, the majority of them. Not too many cases. Escort carriers which are small converted tankers - they just oxy [cut] the top off them, get them dead flat, put a hangar flight deck on them and put a control tower to one side and they've got a junior aircraft carrier.

22:30 They used to accompany convoys. Well this night we were out near Cebu up in the South China Sea and we'd been under constant air attack for about two days and all of a sudden the poor old [USS] Kitkun Bay cops a kamikaze. They had their elevators down because their elevators went down into what used to be their holds and their spare aircraft would be there and they'd

23:00 put them on the elevators and bring them up and fly them off the deck. When it was down this night because they were bringing up every fighter they could to protect the convoy, he got the elevator in the down position because the old tart burnt, charred and exploded. Usually the aircraft in the lower decks and the hanger decks were fuelled up ready to go and ammunition all ready to take off because they were taking off, and line them up on the decks and bingo they'd be gone.

23:30 Each one of those, and I don't know how many they would have below. She'd probably have 20 aircraft down there. They exploded one by one. Of course the old tart broke her back and she sank. Her aircraft which were airborne had to find somewhere to go. That's pretty difficult because there's no, usually every aircraft carrier such thing as a fleet carrier and escort carrier are

24:00 loaded dolly's wax and haven't go room for. So some of them they have to ditch. The destroyers went and picked up the pilots. Yes there was that sort of problem, USS Lincoln, a brand new fleet carrier, 86,000 tons up off Japan and they were bombing Japan around the

24:30 clock starting before daylight and they had the elevators down and they would have about 186 aircraft and this kamikaze came over, elevators were down, he went down the elevator and of course the ship blew and blew and blew. Brand new ship. The flight deck caved in, hundreds of blokes were dead and the old tart

25:00 twisted but she didn't sink. They took her back to Hawaii with the idea of repairing her but her hull was too twisted and she never went back to sea again. So virtually her maiden action she was destroyed within minutes by a kamikaze.

When you see a ship going down like that…

You cry inside, yes. You bleed for the poor buggers who are inside, "God I hope they make it,"

25:30 and you'd do anything to help them. You can't help, you know that. But you'd do anything to help. On the day we went into Lingayen only a couple of months after the Australia was hit down in Leyte Gulf, I think I'm talking about probably August, no probably June or July to

26:00 January and we're going up and we're just coming through into the South China Sea proper and there's the dear old Australia back in the firing line, we knew she was back. The bay's like a "V" we'll say to the coast and the cruisers, big cruisers the closest ones comes and then the heavier cruisers, then the battleships further out and the carriers further out again all covered by

26:30 destroyers and escorts. The first old tart we pass is the Australia. She had been hit five times that night and morning. She still on station. Of course you knew every ship in the fleet, you knew somebody. We all [knew] blokes in the Australia. [Admiral John] Collins was off it then because he was wounded back Leyte Gulf, but the old tart's got

27:00 the funnel over one and the other leaning over this side, rails are gone and she's burning a bit and they're hosing the fire and she's still in the firing line and of course the old man is standing off to her. We're in action stations of course, the attack was still going and as I say they didn't attack us, they attacked the war ships, god knows why. It really didn't make a, unless they'd sunk dozen of warships, it wouldn't

27:30 have made any difference. The big cruisers really are impenetrable to these fellows. The carriers are only, you could penetrate them through their elevator platforms. There's dear old Australia, we all sounded off and stood to attention and saluted her. I tell you I got, I still get cold chills when I can see the old girl. You could almost see the chaplain reading the services on the upper deck.

28:00 They've got to hose the wreckage of the plane off and some of the fellows go with it of course. I don't know how many she lost that morning, but I think in that whole action she lost about a hundred odd men a hundred and twenty men or something. The Australian navy lost very heavily in terms of their entire enlistment. Without the RAN [Royal Australian Navy] I think we ran to 22,000 fellows; we lost over 4, 000 of them.

28:30 That's a big proportion, 20 odd per cent. The Australia never went to sea after that. I lie. She did go back to Esprit Santo and patched and pushed her back to sea again, but she didn't do much good after that. She was an eight-inch cruiser, which means she's got eight-inch guns, very heavy gun and was therefore very useful for bombardment.

29:00 She had been refitted with anti-aircraft guns by the Americans and she was a very useful ship. But we lost, virtually lost her, [HMAS] Hobart was torpedoed and she was never any good after that because she twisted her hull, a whole twist. You could never get them back in shape again.

When you lose a ship, you see it going down, what does it do to the general morale?

29:30 Doesn't do morale any good. The fellows talk about it. "I wonder if George off? I wonder if Tom got off ? I wonder if my brother got off?" They're all craving for news. You think, "There for the grace of God, go I." Grace of God is the applicable thing because you see fellows killed every day, not our fellows, I didn't

30:00 lose any men. I lost one man further back when we were on that Cape business I told you about earlier. We lost a man, but it was his fault, he was stupid. I think he almost committed suicide this one. You saw it every day and you got hardened to it. You get hardened to it in the immediate, but you still come back at night in the quiet of your cabin and your hammock when you lay down to go to sleep

30:30 it gets you, it gets your gut, you get a bad feeling down here. I can remember when we attended a conference to go to Japan after Borneo and I might come back please to that conference because it illustrates a point I'm trying to make.

31:00 **Definitely. Firstly what percentage of the Japanese planes in an air raid would be kamikazes?**

It used to vary a lot. Kamikazes became much more prevalent towards the end of the war and they were using all sorts of aircraft, training aircraft they used as kamikazes because they ran out of planes. You've probably never heard of it but there was a thing called the 'Marianas Turkey Shoot' and in the days when they were forming up to go Japan and attack Japan

31:30 directly, poor Halsley, no wrong name, King, it was Admiral King would come across from Europe and

you see the European war was over and all their ships arrived in the Pacific. There were 200 Pommy ships here, battlers cruisers, there were hundreds of American ships, every sort, you've never seen such ships in your life.

32:00 They sent a signal to the Japanese what their position was what their course and speed was and would welcome any enemy air action. It was on the second day of such an action that I told you the [USS] Lincoln was there and she got hit. Now in that particular action they shot down 400 aircraft. Now that absolutely destroyed the Japanese air force. Their air force was gone after that and that was called the Marianas Turkey Shoot,

32:30 because they flew in aircraft that weren't frontline planes and by this time the Americans frontline aircraft had been developed to a degree of sophistication that the Japanese didn't understand. They had a great fighter in their Zero. In the early days their Zero was better than anything we had. Had no armour plate but that wasn't the fault of the plane, it was the design fault, had no armour plate and they couldn't take any

33:00 great punishment. They could turn inside the Americans fighters and could out manoeuvre them and out speed them and shot down a lot of American fighters. But then the Americans developed better aircraft, better fighter aircraft, better guns, faster firing guns, heavier calibre guns and consequently the Japanese didn't keep up with that production development nor the production race. After the Mariana's Turkey Shoot they only virtually had training aircraft

33:30 left, they have very few of those. They had a few civilian aircraft left, very few of those. They had virtually no battle fleet. Their battle fleet had been finished off, all but, in that action in the Leyte Gulf War. The biggest naval action in the history of mankind. I left a book on the table there. More tonnage engaged, more people killed than any other war ever. I think three times as much as the nearest, the [World War I]

34:00 Battle of Jutland. But it was huge. The tonnage that was sunk and I can't give you the numbers, if you'd like the numbers they're in that book on the table. I can't remember all those statistics anymore. I like to try and forget them indeed, in many ways I'd rather it was, today would have been forgotten. In fact this morning I would have backed out gladly if you'd said you've got a cold and I can't come, because I

34:30 lost the enthusiasm for all of it.

Were you there for the turkey shoot?

No I wasn't. No something stupid happened. We were lined up to Okinawa and Iwo Jima and indeed we were ready to go and load our troops and all of a sudden we got diverted back to Borneo. And for some god unknown reason they decided to attack Borneo.

35:00 Now don't ask me why because we're 200 miles to the north. The Japanese fleet is largely destroyed, the Japanese air force is being destroyed, all the Japanese troops in the field have virtually no supplies, they made a few bullets in Rabaul, they were able to fill a few bullets themselves, they had no supplies, they lived off the land and they were

35:30 a beaten force. They suddenly decided to invade Borneo. We didn't do Tarakan, that was done [while] we were somewhere else doing something. But we got sent around to Labuan on the west coast and it was from there that the Sandakan death march started. Now there were 600 men set out on that march and only 13 made the distance. It was totally unnecessary.

36:00 They wouldn't have done it, if we hadn't been coming. A lot of good men died on that in a hopeless way, they were just driven along a track. No food, no medical supplies, driven beyond the probability of human endurance. Only 13 blokes made the distance. That was because we were going to Borneo for absolutely no good reason.

36:30 Then we went around to Balikpapan.

Is this before or after Oro Bay?

Oh long after. These are in the closing months of the war. Where do you want me to go now? I was about to tell you about Borneo and the stupidity of it. As I say, we got hauled off Okinawa raid because of this Borneo caper.

37:00 We went around and did Balikpapan. Lots of fellows got killed at Balikpapan, including General Vasey, a great Australian soldier. For no good reason. We got holed up in Balikpapan by, firstly, a pill box which I told you about earlier, it was bang in front of us, 17 blokes were dead before we got off the beach.

37:30 Then we were told we were to protect the refineries as much as we could, for obvious reasons and not to damage them if possible. Well we're on the beach and there was a gun up on the side of a hill that was popping out and dumping some rounds down on us now and again.

38:00 A fellow went up, I think his name was MacKay, a Queenslander, anyway he knocked the gun out, he got a Victoria Cross for that day. But the Japanese started to fire at us from this refinery, they'd got the height in the refinery, they'd got up into the rigging of the refinery and they were firing down at us. We were not in trouble, but we couldn't move. We couldn't get people off the beach. We couldn't really

bring big numbers

38:30 of troops ashore because they would have been too vulnerable. Out to sea as I explained to you earlier, you had a ring of cruisers and normally battlers, but we didn't have them there, but cruisers and we had destroyers. I asked for firepower because each ship was allocated co-ordinates and if you wanted fire there you got the co-ordinates and you asked for fire. I asked fire command for

39:00 fire in this area and it was the refinery , because we couldn't get at it, our small [arms] fire wasn't doing any good. The ship on target range was a ship called [HNLMS] Tromp, a Dutch ship. Well I must have called four times for this ship to fire and I heard fire command order them to fire and she found 50 reasons why she couldn't fire. Well she was

39:30 a Dutch ship and they were Dutch refineries, I'll leave you to understand why. The admiral got very cross, a fellow called [Rear Admiral] Noble, got very cross and he kicked her off the range, way off the back end and he brought a ship called [USS] Columbia down. Columbia was that ship that was eventually sunk over in the Argentine. She came down and she got on the range and she took care of the, it only took two shells at the end of the

40:00 refinery. We kept the to the target towards the end of it because that's where the majority of blokes were. We could take care of the rest of the fellows. Once they started to fire we ducked and made ground and we got up underneath them and we fixed those that were still up on the left hand end. They blew up the right hand end of the refinery and there was a bit of a bang and explosion and a bit of a fire. Some of the local fellows came and put that out and we went on with our business. It was a

40:30 stupid day, there were a lot of fellows killed and maimed and hurt and injured, it was probably our busiest day because amongst other things we did we acted as a hospital ship when we finished on the beach. That casualty clearing station would give us the casualties to take.

Tape 7

00:31 … was stupid because it was totally unnecessary. At the same time they told the Australian 6th Div to do a sweep around Aitape and Wewak on the north coast of New Guinea. Way back, thousands of miles behind any action, absolutely useless. To employ the Australian army and to make them feel part of the war. I mean it was

01:00 so stupid. So totally unnecessary and lives were lost, costs were incurred, stupidity. I was telling you about the casualties we used to bring out from the beaches, the medics would come down and say, "Could you take some casualties?" I'd say, "Yes, how many have your got?" They'd say, "I've got 25 or so." We'd say, "We'll take the 25." You'd ring up the ship and say, "I've got 25 casualties." So many reds, so many blues,

01:30 so many greens, so many yellows. That designated how badly they were off. You got a quota of reds, yellows, blues and greens. Greens are walking wounded and reds are pretty badly hurt and the body bags you just count as 25 bags or whatever. You'd send these blokes back in the barges and they'd pick the barges up from the sea and bring them up to the deck

02:00 and take them straight off the barges onto the decking to the sick bay for the docs. We did that many times, we had, we picked up the crew of an LST one night, that's a landing ship tank, about 600 tons of the kamikaze had hit it, it was burning and the crew were very badly burnt and very badly injured. Poor buggers, you couldn't take them below decks, they didn't want to go below decks so they were out on B deck and the air and the smell

02:30 please, you wouldn't believe it. They wanted a fag and you couldn't strike a match of course they'd go bananas, you'd turn your back and light them a fag, half the time you went to put in their mouth and they were gone.

You did that personally?

Oh yeah we all did, not only me all those chaps, all the blokes that came on you'd go down to the sick bay and cheer them on a bit. Say, "Gidday

03:00 Mack how you going? We're going ashore this afternoon, do you wanna come?" All this crap you go on with and you might even be able to find them a small tot of whisky if you were terribly lucky. That's what war is about, when you march on Anzac Day, you know the blokes that were dinkum about it, you know the blokes who pretended. The blokes who were dinkum are bigger than life and that culture shock I told you about originally moved into, and I don't know what the word would be

03:30 but these blokes to this day, I have a cobber down here at Flinders, who got very badly wounded at Wewak, very badly after being in the Middle East and Greece and Crete, gets sent out on a stupid raid at the back of Aitape for no reason. Spent about six months in hospital and still suffers from it.

When you say "for no reason" can you elaborate?

04:00 No I can't. The Air Force were doing their bit. They were flying Liberators, Mitchells, Hairy Newton got a Victoria Cross, [Flight Lieutenant William Ellis] Bill Newton, a bloke I was at school with. He got a Victoria Cross, we were flying Americans planes, we had a big squadron of Liberator pilots. We had big squadrons of Kittyhawks,

04:30 had lunch last Saturday with a great bloke, a cobber of mine, Jim Anderson, flew Kittyhawks. Flew over me many times. He was the bloke you wanted me to tell you about, Bob Crawford in Sydney. If you want his name and address I'll give it to you. However, they were the dinkum blokes. Now I've got other cobbers who didn't go to the war, yet they talk more loudly than I do, they talk about things they

05:00 have read in books, they're very learned about that and this, but in fact they were never there, etcetera.

Just on the "no reason" to make it clear, do you mean that there was no strategic reason for it?

Absolutely, no strategic reason on the earth. The war front had passed. These troops were entirely

05:30 cut off, they couldn't go anywhere, they didn't have any ships, they didn't have any planes, they might have had a one-plane Charlie episode, they didn't have any ammunition, they had no medical supplies. They virtually couldn't go home because they'd lost face. A lot of them would never go home, a lot of them didn't go home, died in the jungle, because they couldn't go home and face the disgrace of losing the war.

06:00 We finished the Borneo operation. We buried probably more fellows that day than we had buried on a return journey before, on the way out, as I told you those casualties we picked up, and they'd have special medical crews who used to use our ship's facilities plus other facilities on the troop decks which were converted into operating theatres and things. They'd have special medical people

06:30 to cater for these hospital cases. A lot of them didn't make it, so we had many funerals at sea. Devastating to see a bloke go over the side wrapped in canvas and an Australian flag. Of course we didn't have flags to send with him a lot of the time, because you run out of flags. So we'd slide some under the flag, slid across the canvas of the

07:00 side his hitting the water is an interminable period, we'd commit the body to the deep and splashes in, "but for you, go I." It could've been you on a million occasions. Indeed when we finished the Borneo operation we got sent back up to Cebu Bay in the Philippines and we were addressed by the admiral that Japan was on the schedule, he didn't say so at the time but it came out later, it

07:30 was in the November of 1945 and there were to be two beach hits and that we could expect a million casualties on the first day on our side, on our side, a million. That's a lot of people. As it turned out afterwards there were two main beach hits, one on the plains of Tokyo, which was one major thrust and the other major thrust was down on the southern

08:00 island I think it was Oita to stop the east west traffic again, divide getting Japanese troops back from China and preventing the east west traffic. The report was it was heavily defended, the other report was the children had formed themselves into groups of eight of nine years of age and they had sharpened sticks, they gave them a name in Japanese but

08:30 I don't know what it is now. They'd attack you in groups. They'd come forward with the pretext of giving them food and usually a pretty much of a sucker, you find them a lolly or something in your kit you could give them and they'd come forward on the pretext of that and they'd attack you with these sticks. The old men and the old women would attack you with garden tools and implements. Some would attack you with guns if they had them in the way I describe before of going through villages

09:00 and how the war had changed.

Can you describe that again for us?

The war changed towards the end of it and the closer you got to Japan the more it'd change because people fought, in the beginning it was their uniform, their flag, their lines, our lines bang we fought it was over etc. You fought an enemy you could recognise I suppose is the word. The closer you got to Japan the old men and the women and

09:30 the children joined in, as I told you they had machine guns under their sarongs and skirts, the kids with sharpened sticks and the old ladies with garden tools. So the order was if it moves, you should shoot it. Well I don't remember anyone telling me I had joined up to shoot kids. I saw the wisdom of what happened. I could see from places other, the north end of the Philippines, I could see the way it was forming up.

10:00 Blokes like that fellow in charge of the My Lai and the My Lai massacre, I could readily understand what happened to him and his platoon. He lost a couple of men and he might have been a bit heavy handed, he killed everybody in the village, but he was goaled I think, he may have had it waived in the end behind the scenes because he was charged for war crimes. As I said to you earlier anybody could have been charged for war crimes

10:30 under those circumstances. These were innocent-looking people and you could imagine, Japan, there

was no food, there was no water, there was no electricity, they'd eaten everything that moved, the cats, the dogs and the rats had all gone. They were down to eating each other, there was no food. When you attack somebody, at your house somebody comes in attacks you, you would fight like a Kilkenny cat,

11:00 your wife would fight, your kids would fight and you've got to understand that. Well here we were told this and told a million casualties. I remember coming back to the ship with the executive officer and the captain…

Just before you move on there, with the citizens. Can you tell us about the naked girl that ran up to you?

Well that was, she didn't run up to me. We were in this place called Toem which I told you, this mob had just come out of the scrub and they'd been fixed up and these girls appeared over to the right, they appeared out of nowhere and they were intended to take the heat off these fellows coming out of the bush, but their timing wasn't quite right. They edged closer

11:30 and closer, not to me but to the blokes at the end of the line, we weren't part of the fighting force, we weren't intending to be, we were only going on a relief mission. We looked down there, we saw these naked girls, once tends to look twice. One of them ran and there was an explosion, then lots of rifle fire then those girls weren't anymore. That girl I told you about over afternoon tea, when she came down to the beach

13:00 we were very suspicious of her and we took no chances. Yes we did search her, pretty hard to search a 16 year old girl when you're a horny old sailor, I didn't get the job of searching her, Petty Officer Cook got that job, and he's long gone now. He got that job and there were no guns or ammunition on her, no

13:30 explosives, so she was allowed to come on in. You tend to get terribly nervous of civilians that approach you, albeit most innocently. We were always warned with kids if you ever gave a lolly or food to a child the other 5,000, 10,000 children within half a mile would rush you. It would kill you not purposefully but they'd run over the top of you. Go through your kit.

14:00 You didn't carry any great amounts of food. We gave a hand to release a prison, a place called San Cabancha I think it was and we were warned not to give these prisoners any food. They were merchant seamen mostly, Swedes and Brits and Norwegians because A we'd kill them and B the poor devils the only thing they wanted was clothing.

14:30 For the same reason you didn't give them clothing, we didn't have it to give. We didn't carry clothing we carried a clean singlet, a clean shirt, a clean pair of pants, a clean pair of socks, two days' rations and lots of ammunition. That's all we got. You couldn't dish that out. That's all they wanted. We were told if we gave any of these blokes food, we'd kill them. When the release staff, they were specially trained people

15:00 who brought, milk arrowroot I understand was the product to feed these poor devils, and they'd get them back to square one. Some of them are still alive today, as you can see. Back to normal, healthy human beings. My brother, who I mentioned earlier was a doctor, and he went ashore in Ambon to release the people in Ambon, the Gold Force that were in captivity for so long in Timor.

15:30 Their condition was such that some of them were just totally untreatable. They had diseases that you just couldn't fix. But others were treated and some are sill alive today. They were captured almost in their entirety.

16:00 They survived on Timor for a long time as a wide-ranging outfit punishing the Japanese as long as they could before they were all captured. They treated them horribly. A lot of them died, a lot of them survived. But you were told never to just give out food or anything like that because it wasn't fair to the people that missed out, and through no

16:30 fault of theirs they'd come running towards you for their share of it. They'd knock you down quickly and go through your pack. It wasn't so much that I suppose, it was just the fact that some many of them trampled you to death. So you didn't take any chances with people who came to close to you. Kids yes, I've thrown lollies to kids, out wide of me, I've done that but I gave that up too when I

17:00 saw things happen when the kids come down and want to come attacking you really until you have to put a spray of bullets in front of them to let them know that you're dinkum and you're playing for keeps. Those POWs they didn't know, didn't care and weren't terribly interested. We just said "Where are the Nips?" And they just pointed out to the back gate which was swinging open, they hadn't tried to escape. We went out through the back gate, we raced down the road a half a mile but there was no sign of these coots.

17:30 So we came back.

When you see those kids desperate for food and clothes, can you compare that to what you went through in the Depression?

Oh good god no. Theirs was much greater than the Depression. They were dying of hunger. Yes people died of hunger in the Depression. But that was a mass situation, nobody had any food on their side of the fence. In the Depression somebody had food somewhere.

18:00 These blokes would go to the soup kitchen and get a feed, they'd go and hammer on somebody's door and somebody would give them the stale bread even and they'd eat that. Very different, very, very different indeed. Kids didn't and adults didn't raid you for food, they would petty thieve out of your car for food, they'd petty thieve out of shops for food as I told you earlier on. But they're entirely different to those people.

18:30 That was a matter of immediate survival, those fellows who were going to overrun us. Many people were overrun when they tried to feed these people. When the Red Cross, or whoever it was came down to take over these guys in the camps and the women they had to put big rings of troops around them with live ammunition and play for

19:00 keeps, to bring them down in an orderly fashion. If these blokes had got up and run to the kitchen they would have killed themselves. If they'd have attacked the food bowl they'd have killed themselves. So food was given to them in very small sections to start with and the arrowroot milk I think it was in very small quantities just to keep them alive and start them on the road back. Gradually they'd get established, but if you just took the great

19:30 big cauldron of arrowroot or whatever it was and let them go they'd die, they'd kill themselves. Not because they wanted to but because they'd overeat. They'd go down, they'd give them a shirt each, as they came up to the line, the blokes would put the shirt on. They had lap laps with no degree of privacy.

20:00 Although we tend to be rude at times, we still try within our limits to try to preserve privacy to ourselves. I suppose the human being can be very perverse mob we're this and we're that at the same time. War teaches you that, those things. I used an expression earlier that you might have taken umbrage at when I said "it was a cultural shock" and it was. I learnt very soon

20:30 and very quickly that those guys that presented this culture shock, and probably me to them they probably thought I was toffee and I was a bit up in the air a bit, I'd been a prefect at school, played in the cricket team I was a pretty good guy. I'd come from a pretty comfortable family and we had a home and a car and things. I got down and I met guys who had never had a penny. The guy underneath me was an

21:00 ex-merchant seaman.

Was it harder to earn their respect?

You didn't try to earn it. You set about doing what you were there to do and learning and you just set about being part of the team, you didn't step out of line. When I first went into the navy I smoked tailor-made cigarettes. Well of course that's the first giveaway. I very

21:30 quickly learnt to roll my own, because that put you back at their level. Tailor-made cigarettes took you out of their level. Sometimes in a while I'd pull out tailor-mades and share them with the fellows. By and large I rolled my own cigarettes, but those sorts of things. When meals came on, they used to eat in a way that my mother would say that dogs eat that way, sort of thing.

22:00 Well you can't call a bloke a dog and you don't turn around and say, "Mack, where are your manners?" You don't do that, but you learn to live with it. You realise he sees you and he learns something from you and you learn something from him. You don't get down to his level, and he doesn't get up to yours. But somewhere in the middle you meet. And of course it doesn't take you long to realise that these guys who provided this culture shock who tomorrow will save your life.

22:30 That picture that you've taken today of those six fellows, were not as privileged as I was and yet everyone of those fellows would die for me and me for him.

Do you want to talk about those fellows now?

Yes I'll talk about them. I'll talk about them until kingdom come. They were huge blokes. Blokes I just picked out and told them the caper we were going to do, that's it, tell me know and

23:00 back out before we go, don't back out when we get there, because you'll leave us in the lurch, the remainder of us in the lurch. If you're going to back out, back out now. Two of them backed out. They're not in that picture. The remainder stuck with me, stuck all the way with me. Yes, we saved each other's neck a couple of times. To this day, although they're all dead, I ring up their widows, I'll ring them up this week as a matter of fact

23:30 before Anzac Day and tell them that we'll say a word about them. And I do say a word about them, because they were the greatest blokes I could have ever met in my life. If there's another war and I have to go from here to hell I want those six fellows. If I have to sail a submarine from here to hell I'll take those six blokes. They'd get me through. They're the roughest blokes you'd ever meet in your life. Chookie Fowler, Dusty Holland and Jack Sinclair and Jarvis Smith,

24:00 there's an interesting story. Jarvis was a fellow, wheat farmer out the back of Western Australia, very quiet man, very quiet, but a very capable man. Used to read his bible every night. When we were in B deck waiting to get in our boat and go over the side off on a raid somewhere or off on a landing, it's pitch black and I've inspected the fellows' gear so often I've nearly worn it out keeping busy.

24:30 Jarvis was on his knees praying. The first time or two that this happened, I sort of wanted to order him back on his feet, so I could look at his gear and keep him interested as everybody else. I didn't. In the end before it all finished I can tell you the seven of us used to get down there and pray with him. Not that I'm a religious man, I'm not, but I suppose it was the only thing left to do. Dear old

25:00 Jarvis came with us and was a very tough solider believe me. He was on the left flank and Sinclair was on the right. You could depend on either of those two fellows from here to eternity. Duchy Holland was next on one side and Chookie Fowler, then Ian Cook, Cookie was next to me, the petty officer. Then I used to have Max Bristow he was

25:30 the motor mechanic and of course we used to have pumps, if the barge filled with water and I couldn't get the engine started, I'd pump and then start that engine off a second engine. That's why we could keep the barges moving. So that motor mechanic came with me. That picture of me in that hat you see was that

26:00 if you look closely you'll probably find there were many holes in that hat because we used to cut washers out of it to fix the pumps when they went a bit iffy, the sand got into the washers or something. So that was my lucky hat. I took it off a girl in Cairns, I didn't take it, she gave it to me. You may have noticed a picture on the table with one epaulette and one cap badge. Well I used to carry the epaulette in my pocket and the cap badge I wore at the back of my hat,

26:30 because I didn't want the Japanese fellows [to pick me] from the mob and say well that one's for me. So I carried those in my pocket and you'll see they are very tarnished and salt worn by now. But they were my lucky things and you get superstitious. Like that day we were going to Japan. I must say I came back very maudlin that day. I thought a million casualties, I've got to be one of those, we've been

27:00 so lucky so far we'd been in action probably 25 times ashore and I reckoned our time had come for one of us at least. I couldn't tell the fellows that, that there was going to be a million casualties, I did tell them that it was going to be worse than we'd ever experienced. They'd have to be trebly careful. We'd have to be trebly dependent upon each other. The line were not to move one fraction forward

27:30 of where I said when I said. It was doubly essential that we were all going to get home to get our returned soldiers badge, we used to talk in terms of returned soldiers badge. That was the only decoration that we all wanted. I told them that we'd have to be trebly careful and they were. They were pretty rough diamonds some of them. They'd pick the fillings out of your teeth the same blokes

28:00 and sell you back the tooth, but great fellows, great blokes. Jack Sinclair, Jarvis Walker, Jarvis Smith at least and Duchy and Cookie. Dreadful fellows. Ashore they'd be drunk, dreadfully drunk and they'd come back on board and you'd be on watch and you'd normally have to arrest them. I used to pick them up and carry them down and stick them in their beds.

28:30 You did that for your fellows and they'd do that for you.

Can you give us some examples of say when Duchy saved your bacon so to speak?

Oh well on the beach, example no you can't give it like that, I've had them pull me out by the feet when I got stuck under a rolling boat. Yes I've had them do that. Equally we pulled Duchy out one day by his

29:00 feet, his pants came off and there he is in his underpants and he's running around the beach in his underpants so we had to get him another pair of pants, not the easiest thing to get from a supply store. We went through a bloke's pack that was on the beach, he'd dumped it, so we found a spare pair in that and gave them to Duchy and he carried on. Oh no, yes I've been looking the other way

29:30 and they've pelted a bloke to help me. They've done those sorts of things, and me for them. That's the way a war goes, you don't count who does what for who and why, you just do it for each other and you either do or you don't survive at the end of the day. We did. I say to this day I still ring their widows up on Anzac Day and Christmas time and say that we said a word for your man today, let me tell you he's not forgotten.

30:00 Some of them died 30 years ago and I still do it at Christmas time. They all get Christmas cards from me and so on. After about 40 or 50 years the Philippines decided to give us a medal, I got medals for each of them. Most of them had gone and took them to their widows, posted some to Western Australia.

30:30 But I made sure they all got them. They'd do the same for me. Not that it means much, but it does between us. It doesn't have a material value, but between us it has a huge value. The night I got my medal I was on watch as a matter of fact and a fellow came up to relieve me and he said, "I'm not allowed to tell you why, but I've got to relieve you. You've got to go

31:00 below. The captain wants to see you." I said, "Oh you're bullshitting me." "No fair dinkum." So I said, "Oh it's April fools day." He said "No, fair dinkum the captain wants you." "Why the bloody hell doesn't he whistle the blower I'd go down. You're a second digger you can stand in for a couple of minutes." "No. You've won a medal." I went down, he took my watch for me, and of course I asked the executive officer's permission to take a few bottles of beer down to my cabin

31:30 to buy my boys a drink, it was their medal as much it was mine. They should wear it as much as me.

Probably more. There were many blokes who, if you ever go into action during a war and you're worth your salt, I promise you, you should get a medal of some sort. Somebody gets them, somebody doesn't.

32:00 Victoria Crosses are particular because they stand out so dramatically on guys who almost lose their cool and would go bananas and save the day as it were. Hair Newton, Bill Newton we mentioned before got his Victoria Cross because he used to take his Maryland down to tree top heights and he used to give the Japanese hell. They spotted him and they laid for him

32:30 and he had to get it, he had to buy it in the end. Blokes were like that, they just took bigger and bigger and bigger risks. I never did that. Bill did. He went into the deck and of course the Japanese got cross with him, he survived the crash and they cut his head off. He got a Victoria medal and rightly so. Other guys who Middleton,

33:00 Bill Middleton a bomber pilot who made his crew jump out and he's down to about a half an engine and an aircraft that's barely stay in the air and he said to the fellows, "You're all out." And he pushed them out over the Channel near the rescue boats coming over the Channel and he took the old tart home, and god knows how, god knows how. He got it on the ground, it was good spare parts. Never flew again but it was good spare parts.

33:30 You go on infinitum with stories like that guys who should have got Victoria Crosses. Another guy, you probably heard of, a bloke called Jack Cannon, have you heard of him? Sport editor in the Melbourne Herald, he was tail gunner in a Lancaster and they were over Germany one night and a big bang and a big black puff and half the aircraft crew gets knocked out and Jack gets knocked out too in area down the back

34:00 end where the captain can't reach, and he thinks he's dead and the rest of the crew he can't reach and he knows they're dead. Anyway he's done to about two dogs and he dumps his load and he turns for home and his cobber, other side said, "Hey Mack you've got a problem." "What's that?" He said, "You've got a bomb hanging out of the bay." And it's because they were fused at that stage to be able to drop them, they could see this bomb caught up by

34:30 the tail fin in the bomb bay. So this guy gets over the Channel, kicks out everybody in the aircraft, leaves the dead on board and flies on home. He lands, he doesn't know where he lands and he landed actually in Yorkshire and as he hit the ground this bomb touched the ground and went boomf the aircraft blew up and killed him, the pilot and

35:00 Cannon's turret blew up in the air, Cannon tells the story he finished up in a tree. So I don't if he did or not.

When you first formed your little group there, on that first day what was the relationship?

I told them what the score was, as much as I knew about it, I told them what I thought we were in for.

35:30 If at any time they wanted to pull out for god's sake give me notice, that's all I wanted. I didn't want them to leave me in the lurch when we're half way through a show and I'm down to two men and I should have a full crew. No they all stuck to it. We all became friends. I used to drink a bit with them when we were ashore.

Was that an important part of it?

Yes that was an important part, but you couldn't do too much of that because if

36:00 you were seen drinking with the crew you were in a bit of trouble. The executive officer was a very understanding man, a very good fellow, he used to let me have a couple of beers in the cabin and I used to drink with them there. I arranged when we came back from operations that we could get a shower up in the engineer's quarters where there were always, water was laid on for them 24 hours a day. We didn't have it. We didn't abuse the privilege we used to go up and get

36:30 a shower after we came back. We might have been on our feet for anything up to 70 hours, 72 hours. You were worse than tired. They'd have a shower up in the officer's quarters and then they'd go below. Now that's entirely against all regulations. It was done. It was done for good reason. They knew that if they came back a bit late on a liberty and I was on watch I'd wink the eye a bit.

37:00 They'd always get a liberty boat when they wanted it. Normally when you're alongside a wharf you still have liberty boats at certain times, every half hour on the hour and things, well of course that you fell them in and you inspected them and see that they were all clean and tidy to go ashore. Well these guys had come along sometimes out of hours and I'd let them go. Yes I used to give them special privileges.

37:30 **Was that because of the job they were doing?**

Yes. Because it was part of the usual bonding, we didn't use those sort of words, they were new words. When we came back they were part of the reporting process, they all made a contribution to that. Nobody claimed anything that was theirs. They were a great bunch of guys. As I say, I wouldn't want a better bunch of guys if I started tomorrow.

38:00 **Why can't officers have a drink with crew?**

Because the navy frowns upon fraternisation of officers and crew. They have decided in their infinite wisdom, I suppose they're much wiser about things, that you mustn't get too close to the crew. I suppose that has been proved many times, however it's been proved equally that if you can get close to your crew without compromising yourself,

38:30 you can get close to your guys, those guys and any guys on your ship without compromising yourself. I'll go to lunch next Friday with the remainder of what we've got left in Melbourne, there'll be guys there that probably hated my guts because I did something, or ran them in or something. But that's all long since forgotten and we're all brothers under the skin as it were.

When you say compromise yourself, can you expand on that a bit?

39:00 Compromise yourself, you put yourself in a position of no return. They'll do something wrong and you can't run them because they can say that you did something wrong and they'll raise that new defence and dob you in if they're buggers. Those sorts of blokes wouldn't do that. We were lucky, Kanimbla was an odd ship. Ships are funny things, you walk aboard a ship, it either has it or it doesn't. Now I

39:30 walked aboard the Westralia and didn't have it to me. I walked aboard Manoora and it didn't have it for me. I walked aboard Kanimbla and it had it, from the moment I joined the ship, she was a beautiful ship. It had a feeling about it, a warmth about it and to this day every man on that march next will remember that ship with great pride. You wonder why I have all that memorabilia, I have it because I had

40:00 great pride in the ship. I told you the day I got my discharge, was sent off the ship from number one buoy and I looked back at the old tart, and yes I had a tear in my eye. I don't mind who saw it, because so did the other bloke who was with me, he was another officer coming ashore, his time was up. Because you felt something for her. To this day I call it, the Old Girl, the Old Tart. And that's the way you referred to her because you loved the old tart.

40:30 It was home, just like Manoora, a different home. When I used to come back to that ship dead beaten, the crew were dead beaten and the blokes were dead beaten it was like coming home to Mum and a hot meal, but we never got Mum and the hot meal. Every one of those blokes I promise you would love that ship to this day, 60 years on, would desperately

41:00 love that ship and would tell you it was the best ship in the fleet. Here the other day they just named a new Kanimbla as the number one ship of the fleet. Gives us huge pride, now we have nothing to do with it, just that the old tart bears our name. We've all been out to her and seen her and been down there and been invited down there, and indeed many of our pictures are there, those pictures are there.

Tape 8

00:35 This is a story I overlooked on Luzon, I told you about that battleships and cruisers were on the outer of rim of the bay firing and giving us support. It's just daylight, in fact it's barely daylight and we were on our way in and everybody is firing over the top of us, it looks like flights of starlings the shells going inland and on to their targets.

01:00 There was a gun up on the side of the bay on a headland, like a lot of these Japanese things they were on rails and it came out of the side of the hill and pelted two or three rounds off at us as we were on our way to the beach. We were pretty uncomfortable and we were on our own as a matter of fact on the way in this morning. It was barely daylight and I asked for a bit of fire support on this hill,

01:30 from this gun that was giving us a bit of curry and it was getting a bit close for comfort. So I didn't expect what I got. I got a barrage from a 14-inch battleship of full broad side, that's nine 14-inch shells, each I suppose a ton and a half, probably six or eight feet high, 14 inches in diameter.

02:00 You can just imagine the weight of them. There were nine of them. They hit the headland and the whole headland disappeared. The whole headland. It wasn't just a matter of blowing up the gun, which I expected to happen but nine shells out of this battleship took the whole headland. That's what I like about the Americans: when you ask for some fire support, you've got it. I've often wanted to look at a chart back in the Philippines in the Luzon Bay to see

02:30 what that headland is marked like, whether they've ever altered it to its new height. But gun and the whole hill disappeared. Actually I was quite relieved. To us it was a funny story. We were delighted that the hill had disappeared. There were many such little instances, I told you about the one in Balikpapan and there were many such instances. Towards the end the war they brought

03:00 in a very interesting weapon that I haven't mentioned: that was the rockets. Now these rockets were equal to the explosive power of about a four-inch shell. They had rocket ships that fired literally hundreds of these things. They used to sail in towards the beach, say four of these rocket ships and they would probably have

03:30 2,000 rockets in their tube in the upper deck. And as they moved in to towards the beach, they'd fire banks of these rockets. There were literally hundreds of them in the air at once and you could imagine

thousands of rockets equal to a four-inch explosive coming at once and this would be doing wave after wave after wave, until the ammunition on that number of ships would be expended.

04:00 Another group of ships would fall in behind them and they'd do it right up to the beach there on LSTs. They were a fascinating weapon these things and the air would be full of sky rockets as it were on the way into the beach and the noise would be absolutely deafening. A lot of guys to this day are deaf because of these barrages

Which landings did you see these at ?

04:30 We saw them in Leyte first of all. They were there all the time after that. But I was going to tell you, I think we finished on the other side of the story, that was this side. I think we finished Borneo and I was disgusted as to why we ever went there because it was the greatest stupidity I've ever seen. I'm desperately sorry for guys that got the chop there because it was done for

05:00 the satisfaction of a very few people. We got sent back to Cebu Bay as I told you and, pardon me I'm chewing some ice, and we get back and I told you about going to this warship and discussing Japan. They dropped

05:30 on Japan on Hiroshima the first atomic bomb. They didn't tell us that it was an atom bomb, they told us it was a gigantic bomb. They said there were 250,000 killed and I'm going to stand in line for criticism, and a lot of the do-gooders who of course weren't there, and would never go to a war anyway, would criticise me for this remark.

06:00 But I was delighted because I had suffered a night of agony thinking about the million of our casualties we would have. When we heard about this big bomb we were delighted, and we were appalled when the Japanese wouldn't surrender. So the landing was to proceed and we were on our way as it were. About six days later, they dropped another big bunger on Nagasaki. And of course we all cheered to the echo

06:30 because the million casualties had seeped into the crew and to my men and the boat's crews in particular [and] I've no doubt to the army personnel who - we hadn't picked up our troops at that stage. But it turned out it was scheduled for November of 1945, the war of course ended in the August, 14th 1945. When they dropped

07:00 the second atom bomb on Nagasaki, there were only a 150,000 killed. Please don't think I'm being patronising in saying that, but 15,000 plus 250,000 is 400,000 it doesn't reach the million casualties we would have suffered nor the multi-multi millions they would have suffered had we got ashore, because I could assure you we would have got ashore with power,

07:30 with firepower equal to which on this earth had never been conceived. You wouldn't conceive the power that we had towards the end of the war, napalm, those sort of things. I'd never seen an atom bomb, still haven't, don't want to. So I must say I was delighted to see it fall on Japan. We didn't start the war, they started it, they wanted it, not us. We were

08:00 delighted when that day they called it quits. I often say that to mankind we've never had peace as long as we've had, since the Second World War. Yes we've had small outbreaks with Korea, Vietnam and Malaysia and Borneo, incursions, but nothing of the huge worldwide conflict with a twenty odd million dead as there were in the Second World War.

08:30 The multi destruction of big cities and the disruption of life all over the world and the misery and suffering that war brings. It is worse than anyone could ever imagine or talk about or draw or write about, show you pictures about. You couldn't imagine the horror of living through a war, nobody could unless you been you wouldn't know.

09:00 We were at least pleased that these two atom bombs they dropped had brought to the world a peace that has stood by and large pretty strong for 60 years. That's a very long period, despite the advances in technology of even gone on from atom bombs to uranium bombs and thermos or whatever they call them these days. The technology of aircraft,

09:30 pilotless aircraft, the possibilities and these arms today are such that, to me, it is totally frightening because I know something about it, noting about that technology, but about the killing and the dying and the enemy and the shock of and the dreadful aftermath.

10:00 **So having said that about the repercussions of the war during and after, what was your attitude towards the Japanese people? Did it evolve in different stages your view of them?**

No. It didn't. It was what it is then and it is what it is now, just the same as it was then. I want no part of them because they were horrific in the worst sense of the word. In my humble opinion they have no place -they are not entitled to a place - in

10:30 the Western world because they don't know how to behave as a nation. They conducted themselves in a way that was horrific. If you'd seen those poor devils come out of prisons camps, the horror they created in China and Manchuria and places was beyond belief. I can't see how any nation can pass from that horror into the days of modern peace

11:00 successfully. Yes they've made a quid in Japan and done very well at it because they are very industrious people, that does not make them good people. They were a very wealthy people, that doesn't make them good people. They've done nothing for the earth since that time. They made no contribution whatsoever. They got a few aid workers in Iraq now, that's of minimum

11:30 contribution. They have done nothing to restore, to make good, to help to restore the horror they created, the absolute horror, the stupidity, the absolute stupid things that were done at the time. To treat human beings like they treated those prisoners.

12:00 Until you saw those prisoners you couldn't possibly imagine what I'm talking about. You think I've lost my marbles, you think the old bloke's done it at last.

What about in your operations? Anything that's outstanding in your mind of Japanese brutality?

Yes the butchery that they inflicted on people before we got there.

12:30 Their prisoners and their treatment of their own people, their own troops.

Can you give me an example?

Oh no. I'm not going to talk about that aspect of the war, I'm not going to talk about that horror of it, it's bad enough to have said what I've said. I probably said far too much for my own good. Yes I will be upset, I will find difficulty tonight in sleeping. I have lived these things now for 60 years and

13:00 indeed never talked about it. I talk about them today because my time is limited. I don't have many years left on the earth, I've had 81 years and I'm a pretty sick bloke. I have my problems, but not as bad as a lot of other blokes. A lot of blokes have got worse than what I've got. God knows they have. I got my share of problems. I live with those and that's my lot.

13:30 No I didn't want to bring all this up again and when all this subject of this film for the archives came up I emphatically said "No." But my wife said, she's always wanted me to tell the story, but I don't want to tell the story, I didn't want to. If you'd have rung up and said, "I've got a puncture. I can't come today." I would have said "Don't come ever again," because I don't want you blokes. Anyhow you're here and I've said what I've had to say and I've said it out loud. I've talked about [how] you have no idea of the horror of

14:00 a kamikaze raid. You have no idea of a bloke trying to commit suicide coming towards you, he shouts loudly and waves a big fat sword. You have no idea of the horror of seeing what's left behind of a beheading party. You wouldn't know, you wouldn't want to know. But it's all forgotten. Everybody says the Japanese are this and the Japanese are that. The Japanese were, are and always

14:30 will be, bastards in my opinion. They are the most horrific nation on earth. They are without thought or pride or international responsibility of any sort whatsoever. I get quite heated about it.

15:00 **I might just say that you were saying that we don't have any idea about this and I completely agree with you, but when you say these sorts of things and tell me this, I am starting to have some basic understanding of what you went through.**

No, no human being could convey to another. To see all those poor buggers who are burnt beyond recognition on the upper deck, you try to light a fag for them and they're dead before you can turn around, or when the

15:30 fag you've just put in his mouth falls out and it's on his skin and he doesn't know it's burning him because he's dead. The stupidity of Borneo, the stupidity of Aitape and Wewak, the stupidness, the political wrangles that went on during the war for personal reasons. Like the bloody unions who strike because it's too hot or it's too cold or it's too wet. We didn't strike because it was too

16:00 wet or it was too cold. We went to Milne Bay in 10 inches of rain for God's sake. A whole battalion of guys who had their backsides kicked around the desert in Tobruk up the desert and back down the desert and the Afrika Korps on top of them. Huge soldiers. We got through 10 inches of rain to get to Milne Bay, they didn't whinge, whinge because there was nobody there to greet us or

16:30 to say, "You fellows camp over here," or something. No I didn't expect a welcoming party or a band or dancing girls but I did expect some military policemen and a jeep to accept 1200 blokes and say, "Right oh fellows, you'll camp over here?" I said to this major bloke, "What do you guys eat?" He said, "We've got some tucker in the boxes." "But," I said, "where do you go to cook it and sleep?" He said, "Oh we'll find places to sleep."

17:00 That's what makes the 9th Division great. Makes the 24th Battalion huge. I mean people don't understand that now. Imagine the bloody union say "It's 10 inches of rain, 102 degrees, you [don't] work." We worked for 72 hours for crying in the kitchen sink without food. Oh we get a parcel sent ashore it's a tin of K-rations and that was food for three days. There's no hot coffee,

17:30 or hot tea. We ran out of tea on the first day. That goes with the territory.

This obviously affected your morale?

No it didn't affect my morale. I just wanted to get the bloody war over and get home to a returned soldiers badge. That's all I wanted. I didn't want a Distinguished Services Cross, I was mad about the war, I was mad about the stupidity of things and the Borneo's of the world and the death marches and the prison camps and those things,

18:00 that I saw. I was mad about it yeah sure, because it was totally unnecessary. At least in our Japanese prison camps this end, they were fed, they were kept warm, there were fires in their huts. They still break out. To this day they've got a piece of Australia that is forever Japan in Cowra. Why? Because we want to do business with them. OK I know that has to be: the modern economy.

18:30 **I'll just pause you for a second.**

You can't print all this up. You wouldn't print it, because it would upset the Japanese-Australian relations.

There's a lot of vets out there that have similar emotions to you.

We're not all wrong. We might be right or wrong in this direction or that direction, but we're not all wrong. We feel it deeply. We came home and the day

19:00 of my discharge, no I'm one ahead of myself. I'd like to say that that day they dropped the second bomb I know that greenies will say I should be crucified because they weren't there they didn't get the arse kicked off them from Milne Bay to bloody Luzon. They didn't kill and have to be killed. And see the results of all this thing.

19:30 You can't criticise me for that. I saw it, I did it, and I live with it. I live with it everyday. I still dream about it. I still get the jumps of a night. My wife would tell you I wake sometimes with a real jump. I will tonight. I'll drink a second whisky, a third whisky or even perhaps a fourth. I'll take a sleeping pill and I'll be alright, I'll be good I'll be over it tomorrow.

20:00 When we eventually came home and there were episodes I told you about the young girl in Macassar and I can tell you about the Japanese officer who brought his troops down to unload our ship that same night in Macassar. But I'm trying to teach these Japanese fellows to work hatches so we can unload this relief tucker,

20:30 for their prison camps and local people. This bloke wouldn't take his sword off, and the sock eye who was our executive officer, huge man, great bloke, great fellow took the revolver out and put it his back and said "If you haven't dropped it by the time I count three you're dead. One, two…" and he was dinkum, he would have killed the bloke. I agreed with him, I would have kicked his body over the side of the wharf

21:00 for him. The bloke dropped the sword. He kicked it over the side of the wharf into the sea. Just to let the bloke know that he didn't want the sword. Some of those samurai swords were very valuable. This one looked as though it was valuable. But I couldn't get him to take it off. I didn't have a revolver. I had a pick handle and that wasn't enough. I suppose I could have hit him with it, I would've enjoyed hitting him with it, butting him in the stomach and the balls and whack

21:30 him across the forehead with a pick handle. Yes I used to do a lot of that in my time. Couldn't say I enjoyed it, but I did a lot of it, had to. It was the name of the game. I told you about the double-edge knives and naughty things that were against the Geneva conventions. We made them because we wanted to survive, we wanted that returned soldiers badge very badly. When we got it we were delighted. I'm just sorry my blokes are not here to

22:00 talk with you the same as I am. The whole six of them, because they were tremendous blokes. Petty officer Ian Cooke of Tasmania, and Dutch Holland of Queensland, Chookie Fowler of Western Australia, Jarvis Smith of Western Australia and those blokes,

22:30 Max Brewster the motor mechanic. His wife unfortunately has Alzheimer's disease, I ring up and she doesn't know who I am, I speak with her daughters and they know who I am, that's what matters. To me they'll never go, those blokes. That's what Anzac Day is to me, those holes in the ranks are the fellows I've just named. All the other 360 from my school who

23:00 I knew and knew some of them very well, very, very well indeed. Ken Begg last seen with a wing off, 15,000 feet going down with one wing left. Never ever found him.

Having seen all this, very heavy incidents throughout the whole war, how did you deal with the possibility of being killed and wounded yourself?

23:30 Until that last show where they told us there would be a million casualties, I always said not me, I'll get there. I'll beat them. And I did. But that last time I lost faith. I thought I would have been in trouble, in fact I think I would have been. Because in that caper, your heart doesn't lie. I couldn't say to my blokes

24:00 that's what I felt. However, they knew that's what I felt. I didn't think I'd get there. So when they called me "Quitsy" and called me a coward, I probably was, because I didn't want to go and I didn't want to buy it. I thought my time was up. I'd had a fair go, and I'd done many things

24:30 and I'd been guilty of many things, which today wouldn't stand the light of day. I suppose confession is good for the soul, you've just heard mine. You must see lots of blokes like me, who bare their souls to you and cry like kittens like I do.

You're only a human.

25:00 No you can't be human, that's the trouble these days. You used to be able to let it go, but you can't any more, you've got to be tough and live with it. I will be tough and live with it, I'll get past this. Somehow, I don't know how, but I will. You have to do it on your own. You leave here tonight I'm on my own and I don't even have a dog left anymore. I've lost most of my sight

25:30 and I can't breathe much anymore, I can't walk much and I've got this bloody osteoporosis, I shrink all the time. So you see I feel sorry for myself today because I've let it all out. I was able to contain it all before you guys came and before Pat started on me and wants to hear it, I hope she enjoys it, I don't think she will. You can't tell these stories without breaking

26:00 down. You just live like you guys do in a normal house and home and have a mum and dad and peace and quiet and suddenly you burst upon hell and it's worse than hell was ever written. Anyway that was over a long time ago, but strangely it is never over for returned soldiers. It's never over for blokes who went to the war. Believe me. It will never be over until the day you die. When you

26:30 follow your cobbers down the aisle and their medals rattle on their coffin and you look at the box and you think of the all the things they did, you want to give your Service Cross to them, they should have it, not me. There were many blokes who were beyond me. I only did my bit I was paid for albeit 12 and six a day.

27:00 **The post-war period how did you deal with all these pressures up to now?**

You learn to live with them. Everybody learns to live with them. What about the poor people in Germany? What about the poor Brits who were bombed to absolute buggery? What about the guys who survived wrecked ships and prison camps,

27:30 transferred back to Japan and torpedoed in the Sea of Japan? What about Pete Rosenay looks up and sees a bloke above him with an 8,000 pound cookie, 20 feet above him and thinks where do I go from here and there's no sky left? What do you do? Everybody's got their story. My story is no different to anybody else's. Pete Rosenay, that bloke I showed you those pictures of today,

28:00 they're from nine years of age. From 1932 to the day he died, we were cobbers. And another bloke at the same time, I met, Peter Rosenay got a DFC he was jealous because they topped him, he was a beautiful cricketer, he really was, I'd trade his DFC for his bowl, he could field left and right handed

28:30 and throw left and right, battered right handed and bowled left handed. Beautiful bowler. But we used to joke about it, it doesn't mater when you win a medal because it's not yours. It belongs to your crew, it belongs to every one of my blokes, I'm just sorry I never sent it around to them on a rotation basis so they could wear it. I know they wouldn't.

29:00 **Anything you'd like to say?**

You've asked me to have last 10 minutes of this tape and there's something I would like to say over and above and beyond the war. I got damaged during the war as I told you, and how I got damaged. The DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] came to me when I was in hospital at Moorabbin with this problem after they found out what caused it. The doctor laughed when I told him

29:30 what I'd done and when and how and how often I'd smoked and I'd given it up and taken it up and I told him about this oil business and petrol business. He laughed and said, "Of course, that's it." And he rings up DVA and DVA have got it on my service certificate. So I was given a pension. I didn't need a pension then, I was on a good

30:00 salary on a good job and I had everything I wanted, no I was OK. It came the time to retire in 1986 and I retired in September 30th 1986, which was just a bit, 40 years and one month to the day after I joined the company at the end of the war.

30:30 Having wasted the time for May until September mostly with a glass in my hand and the world through the bottom of a whisky glass, because I felt those days, like I feel today, you know, terrible. Then time went on and I came to that day in 1981, I was at Pat's place for dinner and I went home to my little town house in Brighton where I was living because I was going to sail around the world.

31:00 My cobber and I had a boat, we were getting ready to do just that. We were going to retire, the both of us and sail around the world. He was with a motor company, sold motorcars and he was coming with me and I with him, we owned half this boat each. We planned it over a lot of years. We used to sail a lot and go to sea a lot.

31:30 He got the big cancer and died. I got this disease and the doc said you mustn't go sailing again because if you get cold you're going to get this problem. To bring it back to DVA, I had to sell the boat and we

did that and I taught the new bloke to use the boat and he wasn't a very experienced sailor, but however taught him what I could.

32:00 He thought he was better than he was. I remember getting outside Port Phillip heads with him and he gave me a course for Wilson's Promontory, I set it for Wilson's he said, "What are you doing?" "I'm tuning the course you gave me" and he'd given me a reciprocal course, which was opposite to what you should be doing. He had added instead of subtracting. I knew that. I'd been to sea for all my life,

32:30 and you know the sea very intimately. Anyway notwithstanding I'm faced with the problem of doing something with my life, I couldn't live in a townhouse, I got this problem, I can't sail anymore, the only thing left to me is golf, I haven't got a wife anymore and so I bought this house, which when I bought it was a total mess. The old fellow who lived here with his wife had only lived here a few years, but she died here. He was very

33:00 ill, in fact he was collapsed on the kitchen floor two or three days before they found him. So he moved out and they sold the house and I bought it. I arrived down here when retired, as you can imagine, an empty house on your own. I didn't have a wife then, I'd only just met Pat, I didn't know where to start, so I suppose, like everything else, you start at the beginning. I started in that corner and worked around room by

33:30 room and did it the way I wanted it. I bought what I wanted to buy. Then the stock market crashed. I lost most of my money. All my superannuation had gone. You suddenly, I was only 64 then, 63 and you have to start again, you have to look at how the hell you can start again. I'd paid this house off, I didn't owe any money to anybody.

34:00 I started the house off and I did it all myself. Liar, Pat came and helped me weekends. We used to sit here in front of that fire and burn a couple of miserable logs and try and keep warm. They had designed the house very badly and we had to build walls to stop the draft and all this sort of stuff and I got heaters.

34:30 Now we're very comfortable, we've got floor heating, heaters everywhere we're very comfortable here. To say about DVA, they were naughty in the beginning. I went to them for a full pension when I lost all my money and I had this problem because I couldn't go back to work. My company was sold underneath me at the last minute and

35:00 I couldn't go back to work, I wouldn't go back to work, once you've finished you're finished. I looked about to do something else and I was offered a job and I was thinking of taking it and I thought, "No that it is only surrendering to the issue. Battle it out you'll make it." So I took what money I had left and I battled along. I went for my pension to DVA and I battled with my pension with DVA and

35:30 they refused it. So I took them to the tribunal and that's the most peculiar set up. You don't have a barrister, you can have a solicitor but nobody is to speak for you except yourself. You have to do it in a way, you have a bench of three and you present your dossier in binder form, properly laid out although I was pretty good at that.

36:00 That cost me a lot of money to do, but I did it and I did it properly. I had to produce five copies of it, one for each of the three members of the bench, one for DVA or the repatriation commission as it was then and me. When I'd argued my case most of the morning and put my case. It came lunch time. We came back after lunch and DVA said "We're not entering a plea." The bench said, "You've got to be joking."

36:30 "How long have you had the dossier?" "A couple or weeks," or something. Well the bench was very cross. So they said to me "We'll write to you." They wrote to me and said, "You're a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated]." Now I didn't put in for a TPI pension. I put in for a full disability pension, and the difference is some hundreds of dollars a fortnight, which to me at that time was immensely important because I'd lost my money and I had to start again. So I got a TPI pension.

37:00 But I must say since then, the TPI card, which is the gold card, long before they were on general issue, is a very generous card. It gives me many advantages. They're a very generous organization. They do things I don't agree with, but there again I do things they don't agree with. I must say that in broad terms they are a very generous organization,

37:30 without them I wouldn't have been able to survive. I'm not a rich man by a long chalk. I have been able to make some money on my own account since then. How long have we got now?

We've got a few more minutes.

I have been able to make some money on my own account and I'm back to being comfortable. Thanks to their pension and the ability to make a few more bob. My house has gone up in value and therefore I'm back to where

38:00 I was when I started. I must say to DVA, they come in for a lot of criticism, but I'd been a critic of theirs and still am in many ways. I don't agree with some of the things they do and say, but however. I've learnt to live with them and I'm pretty sure they've learnt to live with me. But I must say how grateful I am to them for the help they've been and keep me fit and well. I would never have been able to afford the treatment

38:30 I get for my numerous diseases, god knows there are many of them at my age, particularly this breathing problem, which is major and will kill me eventually. I won't give into it. I keep my treatment up regularly and often and I accept that it's terminal and I can't do anything about it, I'm only on palliative treatment from the doctors and that's all they can do for it.

39:00 However I survive. I met Pat in 1981 and we got married in 1991. We've been married since then. We work it out because she likes to live in Melbourne and I like to live down here. She doesn't like the quiet of this. She likes the footpath and traffic and traffic lights and people and I don't need traffic lights and people, footpaths and things. I like to be.

39:30 So we have this arrangement. We're perfectly happy. She goes up today, I'll go up Friday. I'll be there Fridays, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and she'll take me to the march on Monday and I'll come back on Tuesday. That's how our weekends, she down here, I'm up there. That's the way it works out. I'm happy doing that. Thank you DVA for your help over the years; without it I wouldn't be this far along the

40:00 track. Thank you for that and thank you to all the other veterans, who richly deserve it, more than I do. I did my bit and I got paid for it, 12 and 6 a day I guess was pretty generous. When I came back from the war, and interesting thing I earned 6 pounds and four pence a week, that's $12.34 a week. That of course was for a 48 hour week you worked.

40:30 **Just about a minute left, is there anything else you'd like to say to the Australian people about your experiences generally?**

Only that war has to be, has to be, has to be, the last resort. Killing people is not the answer. It seems to be the resort that those people understand. I find it difficult to accept the Iraq's of the world against what used to be Rhodesia, we accept that, we accept the whole of Africa, which is in total disarray and we don't accept Iraq and the Muslims. I don't know how it works. I really don't. I don't know what the solution is, but killing each other is not the solution. We killed lots of people and lots of people killed us.

41:00 And it didn't solve anything. Twenty odd million people were killed that's more people than there is in Australia at the moment. All dead because of the Second World War. It's so stupid, what stupid cruelty of man to man. Even now when I talk at RSL functions and Anzac Day functions I talk about the atom bomb preserving the peace.

INTERVIEW ENDS