

Australians at War Film Archive

Roy Scrivener - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 20th May 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/171>

Tape 1

00:42 **Good Morning, Roy.**

Good Morning, Chris [interviewer]. Good Morning, Kath [interviewer].

To start off today I'd just like to get an idea about yourself, where you were born and where you grew up and we'll lead on up through different times in your life.

Ok, I was

01:00 born in 1923 in Paddington, not long afterwards my parents moved to Chatswood having now had four children, a bigger home. And lived most of my life in Chatswood in the same street. When I married, I took a suitcase, six or seven houses up the road and settled into a marriage home and

01:30 raised our family in the same street still in Chatswood, in Macquarie Street. Stayed there until fifteen years ago when we sold and moved out to this village. I had damaged my shoulders through too much swimming and arthritis, could not maintain the house, so we had to move to where we had a

02:00 unit reserved for nine or so years. We had rejected it over the years, because we weren't ready. Now that I had to leave the maintenance of our home and our cat died after 16 years, we couldn't bring her here. We decided that we would accept the next unit that was available. And interestingly I was going off to Adelaide with Doreen, I'd organised a navy reunion

02:30 down there and we would be away for a fortnight and I wrote to the Churches of Christ who own these villages, this village saying that we would be interested in the next unit being offered to us for our selection, but we will be away for a fortnight, so if you don't hear back should you communicate with us, be kind and let me get home from my holidays and read the mail and then

03:00 carry on. When I opened the mail on return, here was a letter from Churches of Christ saying that unit 22 was available, so I hotfooted it out here and thought it was marvellous. I had done work here in my selling career, I supplied the carpets for the units, so I was familiar with it, but I came out alone. But when Doreen saw it, it was an easy decision, "This

03:30 is where we'll spend the rest of our years," so we took it up.

And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

I have, I had 2 brothers, one passed away about 17 years ago. My older brother is alive and well in Queensland. I have a sister alive and well, there were four of us altogether.

And where did you do your schooling?

Embarrassing question, Chris. Can we cut that

04:00 out? I went to one of Sydney's top schools, Crows Nest Central. If the boys from Crows Nest were on the tram, the girls didn't seem to want to get on. Dreadful school, dreadful school, but started off at Roseville Public as the four of us did, I think we were all there at the one time, at some stages. And moved to Crows Nest and stayed there until 1938

04:30 when I finished my Intermediate Certificate and just passed through and then went to work in 1939.

What was you father doing at this time?

My father was a merchant service captain and home about twice a year, maybe three times a year. Mum was the mother and father and a very capable person. Brought us all up, we think creditably.

05:00 When we grew up a little bit more and with navy or military service behind us, Dad seemed to come home a bit more often. I met the most delightful girl and I think Dad used to come home and spend time with Doreen. And her grandmother, who was an English lady, who was a great companion for my Dad

and he didn't have to walk far from our old home at 28 Macquarie Street, Chatswood

05:30 to 57 Macquarie Street, our new home. So yes, Dad was a merchant service captain. Having served in the Royal Navy in the First World War after being wounded in the army in France, British Army in France. Came out here and decided to stay when he met my mother, 1919, 1920.

So your father

06:00 **was born in the UK?**

England, yeah. Yes, family background, Mum was never sick but she was riddled with cancer finally, and that took her life. Dad tried everything to re-establish, he had retired. Took Mum over to the UK for a trip, came home and Mum passed away, he went to Fiji to live with my brother

06:30 who at the time was an auditor for W.R. Carpenter, stationed in Suva. Came back home, couldn't settle, lived with us because of his relationship with Doreen, couldn't establish himself, so my sister took him. But he willed himself away and it took twelve months. He could not be without his wife. Marvellous man,

07:00 marvellous mother. Great experienced man, very good, very good.

And what was the job you said you went to after school?

I joined a company called Commonwealth Wool and Produce, as a junior clerk. We were studying accountancy; the four of us attended Metropolitan Business College in Sydney to do accountancy. I joined there

07:30 as a junior clerk and stayed for 18 months, and the war had started and I was now 17 and could join the navy, so I joined the navy as an ordinary seaman second class. A new, completely new era in my life that would have been a thousand times more involved and more interesting had

08:00 I have done Accountancy through. The navy opened great channels for me and I made the most of those channels decently. I succeeded all the way through, but I remained as a seaman. Interestingly, and it mystifies me, when I was twelve, I was determined to join the navy as a cadet midshipman, so

08:30 I could be a naval officer. I seemed to clash with my parents because they evidently thought that I didn't have enough intelligence, or maturity, maturity, I've always been a joker. And somehow my application was stalled to such a degree, that by the time I'd turned thirteen, it was too late.

09:00 So I discounted the idea of ever becoming a permanent naval officer. So when war loomed and war came up I saw the opportunity of getting into the navy as a lower deck sailor, so I did. And everyone's application form was marked with a grading and the highest possible grading would be A plus. If you got A

09:30 plus, they considered you to be officer material. I got an A plus and throughout my training days of probably 6 months; my lessons if I may use the term were concentrated so that I would absorb everything that I was being told and that absorption was very easy because I was

10:00 just full of saltwater in my veins. It all came to me, as though it was food. So I understood everything and I fortunately got very high marks, enough to sustain my officers' training course. And for me to pursue it I had to simply follow directions. So the directions

10:30 were, that when I had finished my elementary training at Flinders Naval Depot where 99.9 per cent of Australian navy personnel were trained at the time. From there I was to go to sea for sea experience, from my sea experience

11:00 I was to go to the United Kingdom to train in the officers training course aboard the Royal Yacht, Ex Royal Yacht Victoria and Albert, which were the training ships for future officers of any navy which the Commonwealth supported. I did my training; I came back to Sydney,

11:30 I was seen by the residing commanding officer of the Australian squadron, the Royal Navy admiral, digging trenches with the team, because there was nothing else to do. I was waiting for a ship; send him out to Rushcutters Bay Park to dig the air raid shelters, trenches, the admiral inspected them, asked what this fellow was doing and the

12:00 captain of the depot, Lieutenant Commander Albert, he said, "This man is waiting on a ship; he's doing officers' training." He objected to that, it wasn't sensible enough work for a future officer, "Give him something that's more polite, probably," was the word. So they sent me into the Recruiting Office into Sydney,

12:30 Loftus Street was the Navy Recruiting Office and I was sent in there as a man Friday, answering the phone, taking messages, answering questions from young and old, who wanted to join the navy, men and women. And to be there was a little bit of a lift for me, we had to be in our very best uniform, now white uniforms

13:00 in the British Navies were something lovely, its snow white with blue piping around the jacket and...

Roy, you were just telling me about the naval uniform and its appeal to you?

Yes, we had to be, those who worked at the recruiting office

- 13:30 had to be in the best possible uniform, especially for myself, because I was dealing with the public and on show. So I had these beautiful uniforms, fitted by David Jones, who had the contract for navy uniforms. And everyday I had to be in my lovely white uniform, which was quite a privilege because they'd been discontinued, we were now in shorts, white shorts and blue socks for summer.
- 14:00 And so answering the phone one day, no I'll go back a day, on a weekend I was off to a church activity in Dee Why, was one of my good church boy friends and on the ferry, HMAS Hobart had just arrived in port and she was filthy. Oh what a horrible looking ship, beautiful ship could be how dirty. Yeah, she had just come home
- 14:30 from Singapore and the Battle of the Java Sea and a little bit of hell for these fellows and she just arrived from Melbourne, and I said to my friend Stuart, "Oh boy, I'm on the next ship out, that'll be my ship, I suppose." I made the remark, "I'm on the next ship out, on the Friday probably." In the hectic time of lunch period, at the counter, at the enquiry counter of the recruiting office,
- 15:00 busy, busy, busy, there's dozens of people calling out over each other, questions and I'm trying to answer and take the switchboard at the same time, for telephone calls. And a lady in a very oh, British, pseudo British voice, called out, "Can you tell where Lieutenant Commander Flynn is?" And I simple said, "Yes madam, take the lift to the first floor, or up
- 15:30 the stairs to the first floor and right at the top of the stairs or outside the life you'll find an office, glass doors, he's in there." He was the medical officer and he was examining at the time, a room full of hopeful navy people, stripped to their underwear, waiting for a medical examination. Lieutenant Commander Flynn did not like this, so he flew down the stairs yelling out, "Who sent my
- 16:00 wife upstairs, without announcing it?" "I did, Sir." "You're under punishment, you will take my tin hat and respiratory to my office every morning from my car and you'll take it back to my car every night, every afternoon at 3 o'clock and you're on the next ship out." So I remarked to my friend Stuart, "I'm on the next ship out." So yes two or three days later, had to pack my bag and join HMAS
- 16:30 Hobart, so I did and I stayed on her for four odd years.

Without going into too much detail, because we'll be visiting all that detail later on. Can you tell me what campaigns or what action the Hobart saw, while you were on her?

While I was aboard, I started off with the Battle of the Coral Sea, the next action was the

- 17:00 invasion of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands by American marines, who we escorted from Wellington, New Zealand. We didn't actually join action but on one particular night in that campaign the Japanese Fleet came down and belted hell out of our fleet, but Hobart was not directly involved,
- 17:30 we watched it all and these three ships plus our Australian cruiser, HMAS Canberra were all sunk. Our next major upheaval was being torpedoed in 1943 and put out of action for 18 months. Rejoining the war, we saw action in the Philippines and the invasion of Cebu Island,
- 18:00 or Cebu city, four campaigns in the Borneo area supporting Australian Troops for the first time. Supporting Australian troop ships for the first time and coming down to Wewak to bombard that part of New Guinea.
- 18:30 And then peace concluded it all and we joined the Allied fleet in Tokyo Bay for the surrender.

And this was all aboard the Hobart?

This was all aboard the Hobart; Yes, Hobart came home a week or so after the surrender to Sydney to do light modifications or repairs and resailed for Japan, Tokyo

- 19:00 and I was then loaned to the Royal Navy as a office worker, as a clerk, with the Royal Navy Intelligence Organisation. I lived in the British Embassy, which was an absolute gem for a sailor and so many
- 19:30 things, little things are important to the servicemen at the time, and a very, very important thing for me at that time was I came home from the NYK Shipping Company's office, which the Royal Navy had taken over in Tokyo, one afternoon and there was a message for me to see Captain Grant. Captain Grant was the commanding officer of HMS Return [UNCLEAR], which was the identification of
- 20:00 the British navy ashore in Japan. So I went to my captain and he told me that I had been selected to open the car door for the top British Military man, Field Marshall Lord Alanbrooke, who was visiting Tokyo and therefore
- 20:30 was living in the British Embassy, he would be visiting and I was to be the car door opener. Now nothing special, I mean boy scouts, and anyone can open cars. But to be amongst the very top of the British Forces and involved with the very top of the American forces, MacArthur and his team, this was an honour for me. I

- 21:00 said to the captain, "But captain, I don't have a complete uniform, I don't have an official blue jumper for my uniform," and what I was not going to tell him was, that it was a sleeveless v-neck pullover with the V down the back, so I that the crew neck type front which satisfied the appearance but not the uniform. He couldn't have cared less and he made the nice remark to me, "Scrivener,
- 21:30 if all of my men were dressed as well as you, we would have a very proud navy." I wasn't special as far as I was concerned, I simply had my blue uniform, it was winter, Christmas, in Tokyo and you needed a jumper, you needed your full uniform, which was essential and I thought that was an honour. So I finally opened his door and threw him a navy salute and no one cared except me and I thought it was
- 22:00 wonderful. I had my first ever interview, radio interview, in Tokyo when the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] were interviewing personnel. Why they picked me, I don't know, but I had to front up for a radio interview and cheery wishes back home and wished a happy time for everyone I could think of
- 22:30 except my fiancée, so I had to apologise quickly and get her in on the tail end of my radio talk, interview. And so that was Tokyo.

When had you first met your future wife?

I met Doreen after we came home from being torpedoed, we came home finally to Sydney, for complete repairs, modernisation and

- 23:00 I'd been home about five months, when my mother got absolutely sick of me, the only one at home, all the rest were away fighting. Sick of me moping around the place, staring at photographs, talking on the phone to navy people, talking all this rot, poor old Mum who was bored stiff by it, to such a degree that she said, "Roy, you've got to get
- 23:30 yourself a girlfriend and take someone out. All this moping around home, you're just wasting your time; you've got to get out and get out of this war." And by the way, because our ship survived the torpedoing, everyone was given a month's survivors leave, which was due to everyone who lost a ship during the war. And our captain advised, very strongly everyone, to get into the country
- 24:00 if you could. If you did not live in country and therefore would be home for your leave, get to the country so you could get right away from anything to do with the sea and navy. So through my employers, Commonwealth Wool and Produce, naturally they would have many country people, as clients, thousands. "Could you think of one who would like to put up with a supposedly
- 24:30 sick sailor for four weeks?" Yes there was a fellow out at Forbes whose gift to the servicemen was leave. You come up here, so they applied to this fellow and I went to Forbes for my month's leave. Thawed out, they certainly thawed me out, by making me work. If ever they had a slave on the farm, oh it was this young sailor.
- 25:00 They had children, 3 or 4 children. And the older one and I just got on so well. And they helped me certainly overcome my distress from the trauma of being torpedoed. And so probably two or three months later, my wife was so sick of all of this business, "You'll have to get yourself a girlfriend. Aren't there any nice girls,
- 25:30 from the church, you would like to take out?" "Oh no, Mum, no, not really." "Well there's a lady up the road, who I deliver church papers to, I'm going to ask her if you can take her granddaughter out. She's home from school in Grafton, she's come back to her grandmother, left her parents, stepmother and father, her own father and I believe she's a lovely girl
- 26:00 and I want you to go over and meet her, with the idea of taking her out." So I did just that, I was off to choir practice one night, and on the way I went up the road to meet this young lady and ask her if she would like to have dinner and see a film with me? "Yes, but I've got a boyfriend in the air force." "Oh well, don't let me interrupt we'll find someone else." "Oh no, no, no, no I'll go out with you." So I took her out and took
- 26:30 her out and took her out and took her out and we finally decided that the boyfriend from the air force can go and another bloke hanging around from the merchant service, he could go. So I remained King [UNCLEAR] and I married, straight after the war. At the same time, I should pop this in, my elder brother, home from the Mediterranean and various areas
- 27:00 with his corvette, he was moping about the house, and Mum was sick of him being around. She said, "You've got to get out Alec, aren't there any girls at the church you could like, you could take out?" "No, Mum no." "Well, I'm going to ring Mrs Reid." Her husband, Captain Reid was a crony of my Dad's and they had three children, and the girl was about my elder brother's age.
- 27:30 "I'm going to ring Mrs Reid and ask if you could take Ailsa out." "Oh, no Mum, I'm not going to take her out. Maroubra, I'll never get the last tram from Maroubra and get back to the ship in 6 o'clock in the morning. No, Mum not for me." Which was the same thing that I had told Mum, when she suggested that I take Ailsa Reid out. However, Alex took her out and they married. So Mum had her way twice, so I met Doreen and

28:00 we were home then for probably 10, 11 months before the ship sailed again. And I received a letter in Tokyo, to say that we should be married, so think about getting out of the service and settling yourself down and we'll get married, which we did. And we've been married for 57

28:30 years, and it's been good.

Doreen wasn't in any of the services, was she?

Doreen wasn't in the services. She had an idea of joining the Voluntary Aid Detachment at one stage. I certainly would not have been happy with it, so she did not, no.

And you lived in Chatswood when you returned from Tokyo?

29:00 Yes, Doreen's grandmother had her own home; her husband had built it and lived in it. And he had passed away and at this stage, a little later Doreen moved in with her, and lived with her. And it was understood that Doreen would receive this home when her grandmother passed

29:30 away, and that was exactly what happened, she passed away probably six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, I don't remember, years after we were married. We'd had our second child and she passed away so the home automatically went to Doreen. We worked on it, improved it and found it very convenient, I was a keen gardener, and I grew

30:00 cactus and we had quite a picturesque garden in an amateur way, so that was good.

How many children did you have?

We have a son, 51 and we have a daughter 44, 44 or so, yes she lives in Dubbo with her husband and they have three grandchildren, they run and own a mushroom farm, which they completely

30:30 developed themselves. Our son lives at St Ives, he is a school master and his wife is a deputy head master in a state school and our son is in a private school.

Neither of your children followed into the services?

My family are not at all interested in service life, not at all. A sadness, I have

31:00 gear that I'd like them to have been interested in to carry on with, but they're not interested, so I disposed of a lot of it. I support a private Nautical Museum in Hobart, out of Hobart in Tasmania and so much of my gear has gone down to them. They do it wonderfully well, very prestigious and rather than my family

31:30 carrying it on, the museum carries it on for me.

Did you, were you discharged from the services after returning from Tokyo?

After?

Returning from Japan?

Yes, yes, I returned to Japan aboard a British Ship, HMS Undine and interesting thing there Chris, Undine had a captain, don't remember, lovely bloke who appreciated

32:00 having a few Australians onboard to clean the ship. We were all clean minded and met some marvellous warriors from the Royal Navy, oh boy they could run rings around us for experience, war experience. He knew that we would have had not contraband, but illegal items as far as customs were concerned and we

32:30 would have had to pay custom duties and he signalled to Sydney, HMAS Rushcutter for an ambulance to bring some sick people to hospital. So he had the fuel to go straight off to the UK, he secured alongside the oiling wharf at Kurraba Point at Neutral Bay, and the ambulances were there, one ambulance I think.

33:00 It took us to Rushcutters Bay and no one apprehended us. So we came home with items that should have been subject to custom duties. Not that I had anything really to worry about, but they worried about everything. So that was good, none of us were sick but from then I was put on leave I suppose, sent on leave and then finally discharged,

33:30 back into civilian life.

Was this - I'm just trying to get an idea of the time. How long did you spend in Japan?

The first time, we spent about eleven or twelve days at the signing, 10, 11, 12 days. The second time, I left the ship as soon as we arrived in Tokyo to be loaned to the Royal Navy in Tokyo, Yokohama actually the ship was, I went to Tokyo

34:00 and I came home at the end of January for discharge, so I was there in Tokyo, from October to January, ashore in the British Embassy. The ship carried on duties on occupational, carried on occupational duties visiting the various navy bases and depots and I don't know what they did, just kept the sailors

occupied

34:30 I suppose, but occupational duties, I had no involvement. I hadn't left the ship, my gear, a lot of my gear was on board, but I was in Japan, in Tokyo ashore. I joined the ship in April 1942 and officially left her in February, 1946.

35:00 **Did you return to working life quickly?**

Not happily, I used to get the jitters every time an aircraft flew over. I didn't like a lot of the ex-servicemen coming back and being sick, malaria, war nerves,

35:30 I had overcome my war nerves, perhaps not quite; I didn't overcome them until I learnt to drive a car, seven or so years later, that made me take control, but I objected to the young fellows coming into the office and wanting a day off because they weren't well and time off I suppose was the main thing. I didn't understand that other people had a worse war than I did.

36:00 And some of these fellows had a bad war and I did not and it took me a little bit of pressure on myself to grow up and understand that there are others that suffer, I wasn't suffering. I wasn't suffering to any noticeable degree by anyone I'm quite sure, quite sure. I was advised by a

36:30 psychiatrist at one stage when I was complaining about dreadful headaches, that I should get back to navy-orientated subjects and so when the opportunity came up, some few years later for me to become involved in what was now being formed HMAS Hobart Association,

37:00 I jumped to the opportunity with these advisory words in my mind and I took on soon afterwards secretaryship of the Association and I put my heart and soul into that and that gave me so much excitement and satisfaction and pleasure. Trips to sea, meeting so many navy people and different experiences to myself, thoroughly involved myself in

37:30 Hobart Association. We have a new Hobart that they brought into the navy, ours had been decommissioned and sold off to the Japanese, so she had gone, but the new Hobart came into the fleet and through the inspiration of her commissioning captain, Admiral Griffiths, Guy Griffiths, I was

38:00 happy to marry the two groups, I brought the destroyer Hobart, the new ship into Hobart Association with the old cruiser Hobart, and this was a very successful marriage. It gave our older blokes new interest, in a new navy, a lot of criticism about the new navy but the same sort of man, the same mess deck, the same type of

38:30 officer that we had when we got to know them. And we had a marvellous relationship until about 9 years ago; I had a very bad hurtful experience with the management of Hobart Association in Sydney. So I decided I would close down, get out and let them run it themselves

39:00 and at that time, Doreen had her stroke so I've had very little to do with the Hobart Association from thereon.

Did you join the RSL [Returned and Services League] on return?

I joined the RSL about 4 or 5 years ago. No need to, we're not club people, we don't look for outside entertainment. I'm not a

39:30 boozer and I had experienced enough through my work with Hobart Association with members. I don't know, too much club life is not good family life. So we're not orientated to that at all. The only Hobart activity that I have carried on really is marching on Anzac Day, but this Anzac Day just passed, I didn't have the will

40:00 to march, I rang those who like to march with me, or whom I like to march with, to say that I wouldn't be in. They'd be disappointed if I don't go, but I didn't go. But mind you I'd had a stroke in January, so I was a little apprehensive about marching too far.

And you'd also continued your love of stamp collecting after the war?

40:30 I could not be without my stamps; I have many friends in the collecting philatelic societies and groups and evidently they've given me a bit of a name in specialising in various subjects and I just really enjoy my stamp collecting.

41:00 I have millions of stamps ready to be given away because they're not needed now. And people can advantage themselves by them.

Tape 2

00:32 **Ok Roy, if I can just return to before the war, can I ask growing up in Chatswood, in a family of 4 children. What were your impressions of the Depression?**

This Depression didn't quite reach us, because Dad was permanently employed. Mum received her money, whenever she would receive money, monthly or fortnightly. But of course things were a

- 01:00 little bit tight, you couldn't overspend on we kids and we suffered in that very often we didn't have shoes to wear to school and the walk was about a mile to go to Roseville School. I can recall one day, Brenda my sister was selected to plant a tree, for what we used to know as 'Arbour Day',
- 01:30 and Brenda was selected to plant this Callistemon Lanceo Lartis, never forgotten the name, but because Brenda was an important girl that day she had to have the shoes, so we went without shoes and Brenda had the shoes so those of us that could wear those shoes, wore them, but this day it was Brenda's - they were lace up sandshoes, I suppose you'd
- 02:00 call them. But we didn't go without food, we had neighbours borrowing food from Mum because they had run out and we didn't see it back of course. I remember one day the particular neighbours, their family of 2 boys and a girl were at school with us, lived close by. They were on the dole and each day they would go up and draw soup from a soup kitchen about a mile away
- 02:30 in Willoughby. Why we did it, I don't know but whoever, I think my younger brother Jeff and myself and these two boys, we ate, we drank the soup before we got home, so those poor people had no lunch, we had polished it off, a lot of trouble over it. I think my Mum came to the party and sent them over some bread or something. But clothing was
- 03:00 not flash. We lived in this dirt road, which was concreted over by men on the dole, working for their dole money, from Willoughby Council and they concreted our street. Clean the paths up and that's what they did around the streets and this has never left me as an impression, I thought it was marvellous. It was marvellous in another respect
- 03:30 our next door neighbours, their family, the boys were growing up into men, one of them joined the army in the cavalry at Willoughby and we could hear his horses clop, clop, clapping down the concrete road and we would all get excited because Meads the man was coming on the horse, with the horses with him, so we could rush out and watch the horses come by, when it was
- 04:00 a dirt road we couldn't hear them. I don't remember much more about the Depression, no I can't tell you much more about it. It hardly affected us other than what I have said.

Would you get correspondence from your father while he was away?

Mum did, oh yes, yes, Dad wrote all the time to Mum. Yeah regularly.

- 04:30 I only wish that some of those envelopes were available for my stamp collection now. Oh very good. Dad would call into Newcastle and Mum on a number of days, occasions took us up there. Yes, Dad certainly wrote home and Mum used to write to Dad, none of us ever wrote to him, I don't think. But when Dad would be in - often when Dad was in Newcastle,
- 05:00 and it was school holidays, one of us or two of us would go up and join the ship and go for a trip down to Melbourne. Mum would go to Newcastle to be with him and leave the four kids in the double bed at home with comics and lollies. And that would be great, but we had trips at sea before the war, before I joined the navy,
- 05:30 which was just so lovely for me. My elder brother who also joined the navy was terribly seasick, every time they would start the engines and he wouldn't eat until they got back home. Oh, he used to punish himself and he was chronically sick in the navy, his papers half way through the war, marked "Never to go to sea because of his seasickness." Shame, and my younger brother
- 06:00 came for trips also, he would take a school mate, I would go with him. Yes good days, very good days.

Do you think it was these trips that sparked your interest in the navy?

Oh no, this only cemented it. No, I had navy in my mind from the time I was probably 10 years old, even younger. I can

- 06:30 remember repeating navy poems or ship poems, Drakes Drum. Oh ten, nine, ten year old, navy, navy and of course when Dad would come home his cronies would come to see him and they'd clear the table and there'd be knives and forks displaying the positions of ships in Jutland or Dogger Bank or Falklands, they'd be
- 07:00 winning all the naval battles with knives and forks being manoeuvred around the table. I was fascinated, but the others weren't, my elder brother no, army, army, my younger brother no, my sister no, and yet my sister joined the navy, and my elder brother. I was just navy, navy, navy all of my life. Stamps with ships on them, poems, I can remember poems navy
- 07:30 orientated, from before the war, whereas I couldn't remember a phone number. But I can quote poems, marvellous poems, one of them is an advertisement but that's a magic piece of poetry by me. And I'm going to work on it soon and add some more verses of my own. Which is a thing that I like to do.

Do you still recall some of those poems from before the war?

Would you like to repeat the advertisement?

Would you mind?

Well, you've

- 08:00 got to know what solvol soap is. Do you know what solvol soap is? Solvol is a soap that really cleaned grease and oil and stains off your hands, the motor mechanic wouldn't do anything until he washed his hands with solvol. It was a household name. And the poem was illustrated, "The admiral was as proud as punch of HMS Disdain, he was so fussy how she looked, he drove the crew insane.
- 08:30 He had them all lined up on deck, what grimy hands, disgraceful, no rum for you today my boys, but solvol by the case full." And it makes a lot of sense, so the navy used solvol. But that was an advertisement that was navy orientated, loved it, loved it. It was illustrated, no it wasn't illustrated, but I used to get the Bulletin and there was a
- 09:00 retired or serving Lieutenant Commander Lockwood, who drew cartoons for the Bulletin and he signed his name with a square with lock in the middle of it. But they were marvellous cartoons depicting navy life. The enemy fleet with smoke all down the horizon and the Australian Fleet rushing up to join
- 09:30 it in battle and a gruff looking sailor comes up to the bridge "Please Sir, no gunfire today, we've all got hangovers," that was beautifully illustrated, ah terrific. So these things have stayed in my life and these are all pre-war experiences that just cemented my need for the navy. I'd say need because I don't know what I'd have done if I hadn't have been in the navy,
- 10:00 life would not have been good. I wanted to be a missionary, even before I'd joined up; I wanted to join the church. I'm a Baptist and I stick to my Baptist principles readily and fervently and I'd have loved to have been a Baptist missionary and even before the war, I wanted to go to the Solomon Islands. I had a
- 10:30 school friend whose grandfather I think was a missionary in the Solomons and I would call into their place on the way home from school and get Solomon Island stamps from him, which to me started my stamp collecting. And I'd loved to have been a Missionary in the Solomons. And it's interesting that one of my campaigns, Solomon Islands. After the
- 11:00 war and say 10 years ago I was invited to join cruise ships to the Solomon Islands to give talks on the war, around the Solomon Islands or the Pacific area. The Pacific War navy, and I was invited by the government to spend a fortnight there in 1992, the 50th Anniversary of our
- 11:30 invasions and the American Marines invasion of the Solomon Islands and the Guadalcanal and Tulagi. Memorable days for me as scary as they might have been, but Solomon Islands again for me to be talking about on the cruise ships. I enjoyed that side of the cruise ship but I didn't enjoy the one to [UNCLEAR] though, got out of them, I just
- 12:00 had lost my interest there, I would rather have been home and Doreen had not been struck with a stroke. So between before the war and between the Depression and the war we were just normal kids, we were king of the kids every Empire Day, 24th of May,
- 12:30 because Dad would see that we had some ship's flares, emergency flares that you held if you were in a boat adrift to attract attention. We always had ship's flares to take to our bonfire and of course everybody would want to have a ship's flare, which would last about 10 minutes, 15 minutes instead of the little sparklers that everybody had. So we were king of the kids on Bonfire Night.

13:00 You mentioned that your father had served in the Royal Navy in the First World War?

Yes he did, yes.

Did he speak of this service to you?

To me, he certainly did on investigation. He never talked about it, with his cronies at home, yes, yes, yes and I listened, me listening in. But I tell a very exciting experience for me about Dad and World

- 13:30 War I on his ship, he was in the Mediterranean and his ship was the senior navigator's ship, out of Malta for the British Mediterranean Fleet and Dad was a navigator by naval profession and one day at HMAS Rushcutter,
- 14:00 after I had just about finished my first month of preliminary training, a Chief Petty Officer Mussett had been brought back in to the navy from civilian life, having been a chief petty officer in the navy from the First World War was now needed as an instructor as an older man of course and as a chief petty
- 14:30 officer, officially he called me into a cabin, I don't know whose cabin, maybe his cabin, at HMAS Rushcutter and told me about my results and how I had been passing out satisfactorily for officers training and he said, "Yours is not a common name, is your father alive?" And I said, "Oh yes." "Where is your father now?" And I said, "He's a merchant service
- 15:00 captain and he's at sea on the coast." "I see, when will you see him again?" And I said, "Well, Chief

there's a war on, and no one knows." He said, "Well, when you hear from him or see him again will you tell him that his old cabin boy from HMS Chrysanthemum in the Mediterranean in World War I is trying to make an officer out of his son."

15:30 This man remembered my Dad and my brother came into Rushcutter the next month and I had to train in giving orders, and platoon drills, and marching and rifle drill by instructing the next lot of civilians to come in, the next intake and my brother was one of them. And

16:00 after his month, my second month, I think it was the August of 1941, we entrained to Melbourne, HMAS Cerberus out of Melbourne, the training depot and on the platform without my knowing it, walking towards me arms around each others shoulder, was my father and Chief Petty Officer Jack

16:30 Mussett, they met, that was marvellous for my Dad. He just loved that occasion, I didn't ever see Jack Mussett again but it must have been pretty impressive for him, it was for me, after all of those years, terrific.

So given you father's stories that you heard, what was your impression of war itself?

Me of war?

17:00 I'd be the wrong person to ask that of Chris, because I've been chastised, once very seriously for saying I loved the war. I loved my war, but my war, wasn't a war compared with so many. I spent 18 months in Sydney after we were torpedoed; now there were only

17:30 50 of us on board for that period, when I met Doreen. I don't know why they would have selected anyone, or how they selected anyone, but I was selected to stay aboard in my home port for 18 months, the rest of the crew, all went off to join the war, for two reasons: they did what they were told and went where they were sent, but they were giving the opportunity officially by the acting captain one day

18:00 before the 50 of us were held back, the crew was dispersing. You can volunteer to go back to another ship to get into the war, because you'll get thruppence a day, danger money in certain area, so of course so many of them volunteered for their thruppence a day, so they went back to sea. Others just left it in the hands of the

18:30 hierarchy to place them where necessary. So 18 months in Sydney, I was out of the war, I could have said, "I was on holidays" but that's a bit rough, we still had to work, we didn't just loll around the dockyard, we still had our duties to perform. But the periods of the war in which I was involved

19:00 wouldn't add up to many days when you take the nitty gritty and calculate and let me illustrate this way Chris, people think, "Gee whiz, he's been torpedoed, his ship was blown up, how long did that take, a fraction of a second?" I can't claim that I had bombs and shells

19:30 and things being thrown at me for 4 or 5, 6 days in a row, no sleep at night time it was on then and come out in a cloud of shaking wreck, a second to be torpedoed, it means so much to the ignorant but it's nothing when you're torpedoed. To be bombarding, to be repelling aircraft, ok they're all having a go at you and you're having a go at them, aboard Hobart which is my

20:00 only war experience, I had such capable, well trained, thoroughly experienced men in my guns crew, or the guns crew in which I was a member, you didn't think of anything other than doing what job you were supposed to do because you were protecting yourself, but the bloke next to you was expecting you to do it properly because you were protecting him, he was doing it properly because he was protecting you and this was the training,

20:30 so when it's all over and you go to sleep that night, gee what was all that about, it's all been and gone. Sure it's on tomorrow but it wasn't on tonight because this is navy, you're not living in dirt with an enemy bloke bound to get your skull 30 yards, half a mile, quarter of a mile away, coming close to you and your apprehensive. That didn't appear, ours was clean,

21:00 nearly pre-arranged because radar would prepare us, knowing that there were aircrafts coming in, coast watches were watching the aircraft coming down past them and reporting it to headquarters, so that when they arrived everyone was just wiping their food off their mouths, and sitting waiting for them, easy and clean. Now

21:30 I think and I speak very seriously here, I think that my times of real worry in the war were when the ship was in a very rough sea and would we make it? Would it break in two? Ships were breaking in two in a typhoon that we went through, one ship rolled over, battleships with cracks down their sides. Hobart, "Gee, I wonder if we're going to make it?" And your heart

22:00 starts racing, but in a day it's all over. I don't know that my heart raced all that much, maybe it did and I'll illustrate it in this respect, my baptism of fire was in the Battle of the Coral Sea, ok the Japs were determined to stop us, because we were determined to stop their troops from coming around

22:30 the southeast area of New Guinea to invade Port Moresby and we had a rather narrow area in which to stop that fleet from coming through. Well all that's pretty scary, but there's no ships yet, they've got to come down, so you're apprehensive while you're waiting for them and you're bored because there's

nothing happening and you've got to stay in your post.

- 23:00 Over the speakers, and this is my first introduction to serious war, May, probably the 6 or 7th of May 1942, over the speakers came, augmented damage control
- 23:30 parties muster, now I'd only just joined the ship, three weeks ago. I didn't know what all these things meant as an eighteen year old, so I said to one of the fellows on the gun, and we were all standing by waiting for action, "Ah, what does that mean?" "The skipper expects torpedo bombers coming in and if we get hit he wants the
- 24:00 damage control people to be ready and expecting damage, so they know where their timbers are, their burning equipment, their whatever, their lighting equipment is, so that they can repair the damage quick smart." "Oh gee torpedo bombers, we're going to be attacked by torpedo bombers!" and yes I was frightened I supposed, I was frightened but you know they flew around us like
- 24:30 birds after some wheat, I was too busy to worry about them, and when it was all over, on that occasion, gee, what was all that about, nothing happened. Sure they came back and they worried us here and there, they threw bombs around the ship and you couldn't see. HMAS Australia at one stage, with water blowing up all around it but you didn't get hit, they ruffled the water pretty well but
- 25:00 it's only when you go down below and the things have quietened down and you have a cup of tea with your mess mates and no one wants to talk about it, except laugh and find something nonsensical to take your mind off it, and take our mind off it, it did. So if you talk about war experiences and you add all these things up. My war, yes I enjoyed my war, I
- 25:30 didn't enjoy the troubles but I loved the people and I learnt to appreciate the quality of the man and boy. Hobart had a stack of them. And this was proved after we recommissioned after the torpedoing and modernisation, a raw crew came in, most of the crew were first time at sea, and youngsters, I was like that 2 years ago,
- 26:00 I'd grown up and here they were Roy coming back aboard, out of school and just out of training classes and I could see the benefit of me joining that ship with a very trained, capable and character laden crew. I made a good selection to stay, I was doing officer's training, Chris as you know
- 26:30 and this was to be my ship, to get ship experience, sea time experience, before going to the UK for proper training. We finished with the Coral Sea Battle, two or three days later and we made our way down to Brisbane, for fuel. I had decided a real adult decision, for an eighteen-year-old, inexperience,
- 27:00 I think this was pretty mature for me, knowing how immature I could be at the time, I decided that I was going to reject my officers' training scheme, I wanted to stay on this ship. So I put in a request to see the commander, the routine, forgo my officers' training course. "Oh, I can't give you that
- 27:30 permission, you'll have to see the captain." So I had to put in a request to see the captain, so I had to go to the table, all this is a routine that if you like I can explain it but I had to go to the captain to reject my officers' training. And he said, "Why would you want to reject officers' training, Scrivener"? Or, "able seaman or ordinary seaman," perhaps he said. I said, "Well I think I've joined such a good
- 28:00 safe crew that I'd like to be with them for protection and I know what they're going to do to perform when the enemy is around and I feel so safe with my particular guns crew and I'd like not to be moved from it." "I see." Well there was discussion between the officers at the table and my divisional officer made a very wise statement, as hurtful
- 28:30 as it could have been, but it went over my head. He said, "Well Sir, if Ordinary Seaman Scrivener is so immature that he can't see the benefit of being an officer, he's not the right type." And he was dead right, so I was allowed to remain on the ship and I was not therefore in the officers' training course. Which I regretted later but I was so happy overall that no all that - I could have lost my life, who knows,
- 29:00 I was safe.

You touched briefly on the fact that you might have gone to the UK to continue your officers training? I want to get an idea of what that might have meant, or what sort of lure that would have been, given that your father was born in the UK. Did you have strong links or a feeling of attachment to England?

To?

To the Mother Country?

No, no I didn't Chris, I was an

- 29:30 individual, my life was now navy, I was practical navy instead of theoretical navy. Had I had gone to the UK as it happened with them all, and some of them came back to Hobart. I would have joined Victoria and Albert; I would have gone to the training base HMS Vernon, I think. Then I would have gone to sea in the Victoria and Albert,

- 30:00 which was the Royal Yacht, taken over by the navy as a training ship for the officers and I would have been hopefully successful and been commissioned as a sub-lieutenant naval reserve. Well from there, no one would have known where you were to go. If a tug needed a sub-lieutenant, that's your ship, if a battleship
- 30:30 needed a sub-lieutenant that's your ship. If a base needed a sub-lieutenant, so you went to that base. As a sub-lieutenant, as anyone in the navy, you went where you were told, and the appointments people would work it out. So if I had come back to Australia, one of my friends who left the ship as I did, there were 2 of us onboard for our sea time, Vic Clark, he was a captain of
- 31:00 a Fairmile, a little, long launch, a harbour launch, a sea going ship, for coastal escorts but he was a sub-lieutenant and captain of a Fairmile, others who I did not know previously came back to HMAS Hobart, having left the ship as a seaman, gone to the UK trained and come back as a sub-lieutenant. I knew two of them,
- 31:30 I knew two of them at the time, who had come up through Hobart, to the UK and back to Hobart.

What about as a child, you talked about going to Empire Day parades. Did the Empire mean anything to you?

Oh it meant everything to everyone in those days Chris, it was a big time. Empire Day was a holiday day from school, crackers and fireworks at night time and flag raising ceremonies

- 32:00 at school, maybe you had the ceremony in the morning and you went home after the Empire Day ceremonies at school. Very British, very regal, very royal, very Empire is all I can say. Yes the Empire was big time and to be related to other countries in the Empire was pretty nice, you know, friends with the Canadians,
- 32:30 friends with the people from Bermuda, Social Island, Canada, New Zealand you know all the red colouring on the map was pretty vast in those days and we were part of it. Yes Empire was practically everything for the majority and our late Prime Minister, Robert Menzies was the man,
- 33:00 brought up into this Empire business to be successful by most people standards, Prime Minister. He was Empire and since his demise the Empire effect on Australia has decreased tremendously of course. Yes it was important.

And what of Anzac day when you were a child?

Nothing to me. No, it meant nothing to me

- 33:30 until as a returned serviceman you automatically marched on Anzac Day. You see my father wasn't in the campaigns. The Brits of course had more soldiers in Gallipoli and France than Australian ever had, a lot more, but Dad was never involved in that sort of, in that side of the war at all. So Empire Day to me really meant nothing, Dad had not interest in it,
- 34:00 no, no interest in Anzac Day, until I was involved.

You mentioned that your siblings served. In what services were they?

My elder brother was navy, he served in a corvette, Mediterranean, bit of Atlantic, then an AES [?] sloop, a frigate HMAS Hawkesbury was where he was stopped from going

- 34:30 back to sea, he was on an anti submarine rating; he was an anti submarine operator on the loop, on the loop in Darwin Harbour during the war. My sister, the eldest of the three of us, she joined the WRANS [Women's Royal Australian Naval Service], Townsville I think was her furthest point, Melbourne.
- 35:00 There was an organisation, educational service, Service Educational whatever and Brenda was involved in that because she came from the public library in Sydney so she knew librarian's duties, so she was in the educational side of a group within the WRANS and she was behind
- 35:30 courses coming out of Townsville, going to New Guinea for the soldiers and for the navy in New Guinea. Younger brother was in the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force], served in the Philippines, saw no action but was selected to join the Victory March and joined HMAS Shropshire,
- 36:00 with a group of RAAF personnel to go to London for the Victory March in 1946. That was his highlight, which was really good. He thought he was a bit bigheaded after that though, he lived with it being special and that didn't impress the three of us. My older brother, my sister or myself, but Jeff thought it was good, and it was good,
- 36:30 he certainly served no way to gain honours, why he went I don't know, but he did and that was great. Mum and Dad were very proud. So we all survived the war, but my younger brother died as I say about 16, 17 years ago, not from war wounds or anything, just had a heart attack.

- 37:00 **When you first made some real moves to join the navy, what were your parents' reactions?**

Horried. Dad, couldn't quite, when he came home, couldn't quite take to anyone being a sailor; you

had to be an officer, he came from an officers' family, he came from a professional family

- 37:30 and my education wasn't anything special. He signed my papers reluctantly, but I think it helped him to realise that if his family was growing up, he's got to grow up to. Not that he needed to, he was a man of a lot of substance, but yes there was a war on and if a son wanted to join the navy as
- 38:00 a sailor, ok, so he signed my papers. Mum was not so horrified having been acclimatised to sailor's uniforms being in the house, I think in about 1937, I, against Mum's wishes joined the navy League, a group of kids who were navy minded who
- 38:30 wanted to learn to be sailors, so I joined the Navy League, so now I was in a sailor's uniform. Yes, I enjoyed that but because of my enjoyment in it and getting a little bit involved in it. Mum was not so starkly horrified that a sailor was going to be in the house. So
- 39:00 he and Mum agreed that I could go and then not long after, my brother had the same pressure on them and by now, yeah there was a war on and the Empire, and Australia and navy. Yes and then a lot of pride of course in what we did.

And you were the first to enlist then?

I was the first to do everything in our house; first to marry, first to have kids, first to join the navy, I don't know that I was the first to get out of

- 39:30 the navy, I might have been pipped at the post there.

Was it more the war or just being in the navy itself, that drew you to join?

Navy, Chris. Navy, navy, navy, navy, it's like a meal, nothing's going to put you off a nice meal, if that's where your headed, you know you want to get to that meal. I wanted to get to the navy and the satisfaction.

- 40:00 I didn't realise that I was in the navy until I was in Tokyo, when peace had arrived, the troubles are behind, I had a lovely girlfriend in Tokyo, whose family like me were Christians, they were Methodist and that brought us close, I dare say that I would liked to have married my lady friend, Yoshko, but I was honourable
- 40:30 to Doreen, who I was engaged to. And I was happy to come home and marry, but I had a great relationship with the family, a Christian family in Tokyo and I liked their girl and the same time, so there were bonuses and more reasons to enjoy my navy life. But the struggle of war was over and now the excitement of what you could produce
- 41:00 by day, is for your future.

Tape 3

- 00:32 **Yes Roy, if could tell me what exactly what happened after you enlisted and were called up?**

Yes, straight to HMAS Rushcutter, which was a permanent navy establishment, for kitting up, for identifying

- 01:00 navy ranks, rates, shipboard routine, parade ground work, rifle work and this lasted a month. And an interesting thing here, which people don't regularly know, and I'm happy to remember this so clearly. At that
- 01:30 time there was a women's voluntary group called WESCs, Women's Emergency Signal Corps, have you ever heard of it? WESCs were official like AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service], like WRANS and they had a green uniform. They came into our depot and they were signals, they'd been taught signalling. So they were to be the
- 02:00 original WRANS and they joined the WRANS as signallers, now WRANS were only just starting, WESC were the people that commenced it. So they went through the light drills at HMAS Rushcutter at the same time. We learnt sailing, we learnt rowing, we learnt general naval behaviour, how to address people.
- 02:30 Everyone of course called a petty officer or a chief petty officer, "Sir." "I'm not Sir, I'm chief or I'm petty officer, Sir's are officers." And these were the things that we were taught in preparation for, this is preliminary training and then standard training was down at
- 03:00 HMAS Cerberus out of Melbourne in Victoria. In my case my brother was in the next intake and as I mentioned earlier it was my training to teach these people how to step off with the left foot, how to swing your arms, how to carry your rifle, how to make left turns, left wheels, reverse turns, I had to learn all of this, on these new recruits,

03:30 one of whom was my brother Alec. It was a case of getting both your feet on navy ground instead of footpaths. Not a lot of subjects when you think about it, but it was a preparation for being

04:00 bullied, with serious training at HMAS Cerberus, and it was serious. It was training that stood you in good stead when you were up against whatever was being thrown at you by silly enemy. Orders were yelled, in Rushcutter they were more or less asked,

04:30 they were yelled. The instructors were fellows that had been through the service, been through the war, knew what was needed, knew what it was all about. And produced pretty good sailors for the Royal Australian Navy. I was always pleased and no one else was. I was always pleased to get my uniform nice and

05:00 creased with the seven stripes down the trousers and shoes polished and my hat so white and clean and my cap tally HMAS Cerberus all spick and span and go to divisions. Now every morning there were divisions, every portion of the training establishment was classified as a division

05:30 and each class was a portion of a division. And the division might have finally had 300 people, as a guess. And there might have been 6 divisions, and all of these divisions had a divisional officer, had a division chief petty officer, gunnery officer,

06:00 training petty officer, leading seaman, the ladder of rank was attached to each division, and we'll say 6 divisions, each one of the lowest rate had to report to the next higher, who had to report to the next higher, who had to report to the junior officer, the rank, who had

06:30 to report to the divisional officer, all in this division, and there's six or so of them all going on at the same time. I used to love it. And finally was the thing that used to excite me and I couldn't get to it quick enough, get to the timing quickly enough. The senior divisional officer had to have everyone report, the divisional officer

07:00 report to him, he had to report to the commander and the commander would be the bases captain. And by the time it got to the end voice from the first voice who was nearly asking you to stand at attention, because he was learning and a leading seaman, he had to tell you in his untrained manner and voice

07:30 to stand to attention, then he would salute his next senior, he would impress everyone, and so the saluting went on until finally the second in command had to report to the captain, who was miles away but they voiced it all and they saluted and he voiced his reply, no one heard it because he's too far away, overseeing the whole of the picture, whereas we were just the individual

08:00 weeds to shrubs, to trees to the hierarchy. And I used to love it; everyone would be spic and span. We would be inspected for faults, the cap's not right. We'd only just joined the navy, so someone's got to tell me that my cap bow is supposedly over my ear and I've got it between my ear and my eye or it's caught up here. Or my chinstrap is hanging down the back of my cap or

08:30 my shoes aren't tied up properly, all these things. And this would go on for probably an hour, an hour and a half, marvellous by me. And then we would disperse to our various training activities, some to classrooms to learn mine warfare, torpedoes, Oh no, you'd go to the torpedo school for practical torpedo work, to learn the innards of a torpedo, the propulsion

09:00 system. Mines, you have to be able to pull a mine apart and delouse it and understand how it operated or why it didn't operate. Signalling, we'd be there signalling from one end of this huge parade ground, half the size of Forestville, I think. A little diversion there, there might be a special visitor the afternoon, there might members of the public

09:30 coming in this afternoon and the whole of the base had to be just spick and span. So they would conduct, I suppose the other services had the same, what they called it I don't know. But we had an emu party, and the emus, we all had to line up right across the parade ground. Probably 200 and pick up every little thing that we saw in front you. And we'd scoured the

10:00 whole of the lawns in our emu party, picking up the rubbish. What we did with it I don't know, there was probably nothing there, but it was an exercise. We would do platoon drill, rifle drill, sentry drill, how to stand to attention, how to salute, how to recognise officers, the ranks of the officers. Lovely point in my experience,

10:30 lovely and this was education, because the vastness of this base, every officer had a bicycle, always kept clean by the staff of the college, the college was there. So the officers were doing training in the same place, later on it became Jervis Bay, here it is in HMAS

11:00 Cerberus at this stage. So all the officers were there being trained, but the officers attached to the base, had their bicycles with their rank painted in gold on the front mudguard of the bikes. I'd never seen it before and I thought it was beautiful, oh, marvellous. So you could see the fellow coming up was only a sub-lieutenant or he's a lieutenant or he's a lieutenant commander and by the time he was a commander, you had to stop and salute him,

11:30 rather than just salute as you walked by and all this was marvellous training for recognition. So our

days were taken up that way. I wasn't allowed out, into the depot at night time because I wasn't yet 18. So I was restricted to my dormitory, F block, we slept in hammocks for the first time. We had to learn how to sleep in a hammock, had to sling

- 12:00 a hammock, we had to learn to make a hammock. You don't just get a piece of canvas and tie some ropes down the end, it's all got to be done navy style, all the little leaves had to be wiped with fine - oh dear. All this had to be taught, rope work, how to heave a line for a lead to check the depth of the water and who to read the results.
- 12:30 The big piece of lead has got tallow in the bottom and the tallow would hit the bottom of the ocean and bring up what was on the bottom, if it was sand or rock or coral or weed, this would be noted because it would stick in the tallow and the marks on the heaving line all indicated the depth, all this had to be taught down there. Not so practically, but practically at sea,
- 13:00 so to take you to sea there were large launches that took us around Westernport Bay to teach us the practical side of heaving the lead, securing alongside the rope work, and general seaborne duties for just a half a day or so. We had to be taught
- 13:30 how to shoot a rifle, how to hold a rifle, how to use a rifle for parade work, sentry work.

Can I just clarify the barracks that you just described, where are they?

Where are what, I'm sorry.

The barrack that you were doing your training at, the base?

Point Cribb out of Melbourne.

- 14:00 HMAS Cerberus on the Mornington Peninsula. There would be a train from Melbourne for the sailors. I don't remember how long it used to take, but boring and nothing to do. And you relaxed on the train, not that I went on the train, other than to go to Sydney, because I wasn't allowed out. But the moment you got off the train, you were under
- 14:30 control, not by yourself but by the navy, and they just let you know it. You were completely under their control, watched not tailed but watched every movement. You had to learn to you had to prove you could swim, remembering that I was there in August, it was July/August, icy cold, icy cold and
- 15:00 one would say, typically navy, you had to swim to prove you could swim, in an unheated outside icy pool, which was no problem to me, for reasons that I was a swimmer for most of my life. No problems swimming in cold water, so in my case and I think in one other fellow, Neville Manstead's case, we were both advanced swimmers.
- 15:30 Joe Blow behind me couldn't swim and he wasn't going to learn in icy cold water. No one's there to teach you to swim, but if you can't swim, you've got to learn. So no one wanted to learn in that water so "Hey, Spruff, call my name will you?" So you'd do another lap, and then you'd call out some other fellows name and he'd be ticked off as able to swim and so this went on and I got cold naturally from being in the icy water for so long. But the horror of
- 16:00 that story is a nasty thought. My class went to HMAS Perth when they'd finished their training, now Perth was sunk, and those survivors were in the water, and those who could not swim, there might have been one of them who I swam for who could not swim, I don't know of course. But the nonsense of doing something for someone when it might be too important to neglect, so I
- 16:30 swam for people who could not swim. The country boys could not swim. They threw the bulldog in one day, no one would go in and get and it was paralysed practically, so I had to go in and get the bulldog, it was cold, it was Alexander. Alexander was traditionally, they had a bulldog called Alexander traditionally and he had a lovely felted wraparound with his rate on it, a leading seaman's rate.
- 17:00 It was lovely and he was Leading Seaman Alexander. I don't know how many that there were, there could have been half a dozen Alexanders, I remember him so well.

That was a real dog?

Oh bulldog, oh yes, yes, we had Alexanders; most sailors have got a photo of Alexander that they would bring home for the depot. Yes, and he dies and there'd be another one, Leading Seaman Alexander, to take his place. He was never a petty officer as far as I know.

- 17:30 They always just had leading seaman. I remember that well. There's a story there that I am happy to say is outstanding but nearly unbelievable. Because there were two Scriveners in the depot, at the same time, one an able seaman
- 18:00 no, one an ordinary seaman and one an ordinary seaman second class because I had not turned 18. Once I'm 18, I'm an ordinary seaman, so there was an OD2 ordinary seaman second class and an ordinary seaman, my brother was under to be trained for an anti submarine operator, 'Ping Merchants', they nicknamed them and I was to be trained as a

- 18:30 officer. So they had Alec to HMAS Sydney for officers' training and Roy to HMAS Perth for anti submarine training, preparatory training, you didn't train on the ship, you came back to the training depot for anti submarine. So
- 19:00 Alec came to me one night and he said, "Mate, you're down for asdic, anti submarine, and I'm down for an officer, no way in the world they'll get me to be an officer." And I said, "Alec, there's no way in the world that I'm going to be an anti submarine operator. What are we going to do?" And he being the older and a pretty bright boy, he said, "Oh, look we'll go to the police office and tell them." The police officers were the regulators, so we went to the regulating office and explained it,
- 19:30 "Oh yes that's right no, you're officers' training and your anti submarine. Look forget your draft, report here whenever it was and we'll change it all." Well my class went to Perth and Alec's class went to Sydney. Now Alec's class didn't come back, they all died on aboard HMAS Sydney, mine were aboard HMAS Perth, so we had our future, pretty well secured
- 20:00 I thought, not wishing to bore people about me being an active Christian but I firmly and Alex also believe that we were definitely under God's guidance and we decided, or Alec decided and told me so, in fact I can hear him saying "Roy, I'm going to recommend to you that we interfere with nothing from here on in. Don't
- 20:30 volunteer, don't try and do this, don't do that, just let the navy work it out and we'll survive," and so we did. I didn't volunteer for higher rate to become a leading seaman, Alec didn't become a leading seaman, we just stayed everyday sailors for the rest of our period and he did well and I did better. I did very well.

You mentioned earlier that

- 21:00 **Cerberus had some fairly strict bullies in terms of your instructors. Did you experience any kind of initiation?**

Any?

Initiation?

Oh no, on no, when I say bullying, perhaps firmness should have been the chosen word, but it was bullying to a bloke who was scared stiff to start with the wrong foot or put his

- 21:30 gun on this shoulder instead of that, it's bullying when you put it into your mind, but it was firm instruction. No, I never heard of anyone being ridiculed with his teammates, with his classmates. No, I didn't strike it at all and I don't know that I've heard of it really.
- 22:00 There wasn't a lot of it went on in the navy because you were under close observation so much. When you join a ship and all of your training is preliminary to this, in preparation for it. When you join a ship it's your home, I don't say these are your brothers, I wouldn't, like some of my brothers, to go on like some of these young fellows did. But these
- 22:30 were your brothers and some of those people were your parents, advisors, your divisional officer was your parent. "No, that wouldn't be the right thing for you Roy, you would do better doing this." All these things, thinking of your future and of the satisfaction within you home and so people respected you
- 23:00 as part of your little family. I can excuse them in one area, I have never been a swearer, I didn't drink, women played no part in my Christian life, all these things were based in the depth of my Christian belief. But of course the fellows used to play merry hell with me, they'd swear
- 23:30 like no one in hell, could have been worst. Just to stir me up and just to see my reaction. Oh they'd abuse of, accuse me of so many nonsense, but I'd just sailed through on a calm sea and this aggravated them so much and there was one day when they were really getting on to me and one fellow
- 24:00 particularly disliked me because I was just trying to be too pure, I wasn't being pure, I was just abiding by Christian rules and my principles which had been well and truly dug in and buried, securely in me. He was letting go one day and there was another rough, rough, rough fellow, who was a leading seaman, now he is the next rate above and he was in charge of a particularly area of the mess deck,
- 24:30 which is a mess, and this is my mess, and he was the leading seaman of my mess and he stood up, there were many people on the mess this day and he just tore strips out of this bloke and out of any other bloke who decided that they were going to have a go at me because I didn't go on like they did. And the next bloke he hears, he'll be thumped and he'll regret the every word that he says. And
- 25:00 they were good to me, not from there on, but they were good to me normally, but there was no occasion like this to make it clear. And he was a better man for it because now he couldn't go around swearing, he couldn't go around abusing the navy or whatever he wanted to yell out about because he was going to thrash the first person that did concerning me, so he was good to me. Yes they appreciated,
- 25:30we appreciated each other because it was home. An officer would not dare to come in to the seaman's or the lower deck area with his cap on. "No, no, you take your cap off, this is our house, don't you come into our house with your cap on." And a sailor could say to the officer, "Excuse me Sir, your

cap," and he'd understand, "Oh, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have my cap on in here."

26:00 An officer doesn't, didn't in these days, visit a seaman's or a lower deck mess without having a lower deck man with him as a guide, just so that he's not on his own intruding, he's got one of these people with him to level it all out. I don't know if it's like that today, I think it is with the caps, because some of the mess decks are in passageways on our new ships, so everyone's got to walk

26:30 through but, never with their cap on.

And how long were you with Cerberus?

July to December. I came back to Sydney in December of 1941. Japan was just about in the war. Japan was close enough to be in the war, when I

27:00 came back to Sydney and that was in the December of 1941.

And you mentioned, perhaps you can clarify for me when you graduated, I understand - do you call it graduating from training schools?

No.

What do you call it?

Passed out.

When you passed out of your training school,

27:30 **you mentioned that some of your class went to HMAS Perth.**

Yes my class went to HMAS Perth and my brother's class to HMAS Sydney.

Why did you then go to Hobart and not Perth?

Because we were kept back, my brother and I, because our futures were mixed, they had my brother down for officers' training and me down for anti submarine and we objected to that,

28:00 so they held us back while our class dispersed. And then they went to the ships, and I went to Sydney, came up to Sydney to Rushcutter, I just don't recall where my brother went, I'm quite sure he came home to Rushcutter, cause the Anti Submarine School is at Rushcutter Bay, HMAS Rushcutter. So he would have also come to Sydney but I don't remember when, probably immediately.

28:30 You're interested when I went to Hobart then, has Chris not asked me this?

It doesn't matter if we go over things again.

I was seen by the visiting admiral digging trenches, air raid trenches, as an air raid precaution for HMAS Rushcutters people in the bay, the park next door to Rushcutters Bay.

29:00 And the admiral wanted to know, why he picked me I don't know, "What's this man doing here? What's this man?" And the Lieutenant Commander Albert, the captain, said, "Oh, he's officers' training course and we're just waiting for a ship for his sea time." So the admiral said to Lieutenant Commander Albert, "Oh, this is no good, if the man is going to be an officer, shouldn't be digging trenches, you must have something more executive or more

29:30 polite." So I was sent to the recruiting office in Loftus Street, Naval Recruiting Office during my telephone and typing and general enquiries and a lady came in, in a very hectic lunch time period, over the heads that were

30:00 waiting for answers from me, called out "Can you tell me where I can find Lieutenant Commander Flynn?" And in my haste I said, "Take the lift to the first floor or up the stairs to the first floor and you'll come to some glass door and you'll find him in there." Next thing's, there's this man yelling as he was running down the stairs. Got to my little area and said, "Who sent my wife

30:30 upstairs without announcing her?" And I said, "I did, of course." He said, "Right, from now on you're under punishment, every morning at 10 o'clock you'll pick my respirator and tin hat out of my car and bring it to my office and every afternoon at 3 o'clock you will reverse that and take it down, and the next ship in you're on." So the next ship was Hobart.

31:00 **So by this stage, when you joined HMAS Hobart you are now called up to service?**

Oh I'd done

31:30 my training, you're called up to do your training. Oh no you're called up at the beginning, now I've been trained, now I've got to start being trained as an officer, so HMAS Hobart was to be my sea time. And there were two of us, I didn't mention this before, there were two of us drafted to HMAS Hobart at the same time. I did not know the other fellow, the fellow Vic Clark and interestingly he was on

- 32:00 my same gun, but he was to get his sea time before he went to the UK for training to become an officer. He left the ship in Brisbane, when we had came home from the Coral Sea Battle, I remained on board because I had rejected the opportunity of officer training, Vic Clark carried on
- 32:30 and became a sub-lieutenant and finished, survived the war, I saw him once after the war. So the training now was all coming together for me to join HMAS Hobart. Why I joined the ship from the officers' gangway I don't know, whether it was anything
- 33:00 to do with my hopeful future with being an officer, I have no idea. But sailors don't join the ship from the quarterdeck, that's officer country; you join it from midships, which is sailor territory. I joined the ship and it was an island then, you don't walk to Garden Island. I mean today you do, you didn't then, it was purely an island. So you had to get a launch over, and I had a navy boat, dropped me at the
- 33:30 officers' gangway and carted my hammock and kit bag up to the quarterdeck and then I was taken forward to where I was to be mess, lived and my clothing locker. And so my days started as raw as a new born lamb, had no idea what life was all about, yes I'd been to sea,
- 34:00 it didn't mean a thing. In the morning, I slung my hammock that night. In the morning, bugle calls, what the heck are they? I said to a fellow, "What's that men, get out of your hammock, sling your hammock in a hurry, get your clothes on and get down aft and scrub decks, or get to the quarterdeck." That was where I was, that was my area of duty, the quarterdeck. To clean the quarterdeck, wash
- 34:30 the ship. So I did that and then learnt that was the wake up bugle, this is the rise. So I had to learn that bugle, and I had to learn all the bugle calls, which theoretically I had been told about at Rushcutter, but not to understand, not to hear even. So I then learnt my bugle calls, which are a subject on their own in my time.
- 35:00 The different bugle calls, for a different purpose, and a different bugle call for a different grading of purpose. I'll instance, 'action station' - if there's a G or a single note beforehand that means a still, pay attention, the next bugle call is for you to follow, so if there's a bugle
- 35:30 call without a still or a G note beforehand, act on it. So action stations does not have a still before it, it's just straight blowing the bugle to tell everyone to get to their action stations quick. But if there's another bugle, a different bugle call again, that tells you that the bombs are dropping, you get there quicker than quick. And the different bugle call will tell
- 36:00 you what you're going to do. But if it's got a G in front of it you slouch along and you've got to go to action stations, that's to get you to the position where you've got to perform, without performing. So all the bugle calls had to come to me after that first morning. The bugle call telling me to go to lunch, the bugle call to tell me to finish lunch, get back to work and with bugle calls,
- 36:30 of course there the boatswain's call, a little pipe, as people call it. The boatswain call has a different meaning, which you've got to understand, to herald someone's arrival, to warn you of something that's not worthy of a bugle call, you know. If you're wanted on the quarterdeck an officer wants you, there'd be a call and the boatswain mate would blow his whistle if you'd like to say
- 37:00 and then he'd say "Ordinary Seaman, Able Seaman Scrivener muster on the quarterdeck." So you would go down there. So there were pipe calls to understand. Interestingly, as bugles have gone out of the navy now, out of our navy, the bugler is called 'Sticks', because before they had bugles they had a drummer and he had his sticks, so he was called 'Sticks' in
- 37:30 those days and to my day he was still 'Sticks'. If you wanted to change your metal attitude your call him drummer, and the pipe might come over the address system, the loud speaker, drummer lay aft, so the bugler goes to the quarterdeck because they had drums. I don't know that we ever called him 'Bugler'.
- 38:00 Duty bugler, yes maybe the duty bugler could have been called, but when he was wanted, he was the drummer. But man-to-man, he was sticks. And 'Sticks' Hourigan, I don't know that many people knew that his Christian name was Bob. "Oh g'day there Sticks, lovely." At night time, I think at 9 o'clock, not everyone on the ship would know this, because it was quiet
- 38:30 time, the bugler would go into the aft control, this was an area quite a distance above the main, Viking area of the upper deck and all glass in and protected from splinter damage with very heavy glass and should the bridge be knocked out, aft control takes over, and the bugler would go in there at nine o'clock and play
- 39:00 last post. I'm sure he played the last post and I used to be there every night if I could just to hear this, no one would know, it was dark and I would just be listening to this lovely muted bugle call. So that's our bugler. Everyone knew the bugler. He did nothing else; he was just there to call everyone's attention when needed,
- 39:30 and he was not a bandsman, he was a sailor. The bandsman didn't have buglers, bugles they had trumpets or cornets. We had a band onboard; I used to love mustering on the quarterdeck, at divisions every morning for inspection and by the band. And if it was Sunday the band would be playing hymns for us, they'd be playing,

- 40:00 no they wouldn't be there each day but at divisions, we had our band of 14 or 15 or so men and oh I got to know them well, because oh I love my music. I used to clean one of the trumpets, thruppence a time, to clean his trumpet for him. They were good people. One of them, we used to call him
- 40:30 'Reputing' Dan Cummins he, when he left the navy he was an instructor, a teacher at the Conservatorium, he played the slide trombone, that was his favourite and he would shave his hair every time we'd leave port and grow a massive thick black beard, and he looked horrible, so we called him 'Rasputin'. But he, we had concert parties onboard, you know
- 41:00 locked up, well black out recreational area and Dan would come up and he would have his slide trombone and he'd play it and he'd take a piece off and play it and take another piece off and he'd reduce it to the mouthpiece and he would endeavour still to play that same tune. That was his concert trick.

Tape 4

- 00:31 On a ship in the war, it's in various stages of preparation or relaxation, at the height at everything you're at action station. To give you a break from action station the ship goes into a degree, and it might be a second degree of action, its action positions are manned, but relaxed, you could smoke
- 01:00 if you were a smoker, you could take your earphones off, you could rest away from your gun, you could leave, but you were in a second degree of preparedness and then when the ship's at sea and it's monotonous and there's nothing going on you go into cruising station and you might have a different position in your cruising station than you did in your action station.
- 01:30 So in a cruising station everyone was taught to do their particular job on their guns, we'll talk about guns. Well I stayed on that gun all of my time, and this was a big advantage, because I got so familiar with the regular crew, I became so used to the routine, where things had to
- 02:00 go to, where things had to come from and you felt at home once you were exercising the greatest training that you've had, it all came to fruition and I was very satisfied with this crew, but the whole ship seemed to have this capability of
- 02:30 success in everything that we did, the gunnery was great. When Captain Howden, left the ship in Brisbane when we came home from the Coral Sea Battle he, there was a model of the ship presented to him, from the crew, made on board in brass, and beautiful. And that man was just about in tears as he went over the
- 03:00 gangway to shore, having now left the ship. He was so attached to that ship and those men were so attached to Captain Howden. They had a saying, 'If you got punished by the captain and it was serious, it didn't matter, it was by our Harry', and they had this attitude of fatherly respect for the man. And he deserved it; he was a very good captain.
- 03:30 The following captain was Captain Showers, who was the captain, when we were torpedoed, and he did cry, he was quite upset by it all. Captains don't cry but here were two of them, good men each, both in tears. I suppose they could see their future, maybe they were worried about the loss of life, I don't know. Diverging,
- 04:00 when we were torpedoed, we lost I think 17 altogether, either lost overboard or blown apart, the remains were buried the following day, and I volunteered for the burial party, which I could manage quite ok.
- 04:30 Yes, that was the following day while we were underway to be temporarily repaired. But it was a sad ship for a while and we'd all lost friends and good people. I don't know why I brought that up; I've got photographs of that happening. I was able to volunteer, I think because of my faith; I had a love of helping people
- 05:00 and therefore enjoying people. And when finally we came to Sydney after a month or six weeks. Some of the bodies and bits of bodies were floating in salt water and encapsulated in sealed off areas and they had to call for volunteers to remove them, so I was one of those volunteers, to help get the pieces out
- 05:30 for burial in Sydney. I could manage those jobs, just one of my capabilities I suppose.
- We might come back later and talk a bit more about that particular action in the campaign, but to begin with perhaps we could go back to when you first joined the Hobart, what was your impression? Was it a happy ship when you first joined?**
- 06:00 Yes, it was a happy ship, but I knew no other at the time, I was alone, I was not lonely, I was alone. And it was a welcome opportunity each time we went to action stations,
- 06:30 or when there was something happening on top because I didn't have to listen to the nonsense, I didn't have to be the odd man out, because I wasn't one of them, because of my beliefs. If you were action

stations or you had to do a lookout period on the bridge, which I used to enjoy. Then I was happy performing a navy job instead of relaxing, readying myself

- 07:00 for the next navy work, duty. I soon learnt to enjoy a lot of the men; a lot of them enjoyed me, because they didn't particularly enjoy a non-drinker and the like. A lot of them and I gave them a bit of a talk
- 07:30 one day, and I had no right to talk to them in that vain but they would stop swearing if I came in and I said, "You fellows are too artificial for me, you swear, what's stopping you just because I'm here," and they had this attitude, "Oh Scrivener's on the mess deck, cut out the talk." So they just didn't swear so much, and I thought that was nice after I woke up to being a man. These people are showing me a little bit of
- 08:00 respect. I was the odd man out onboard, not because I was funny but because nothing swayed me from my faith. And that stood me in great stead later on. I would, I got permission from the padre, chaplain to use his cabin, for my quiet times but many of the crew came in and had their
- 08:30 little talk with me at the same time. They would look to see if I was in the cabin, or if the padre was there they wouldn't go in. They had no interest in padres but they had interest in me, which was lovely. And when I got so involved in Hobart Association, the fellows knew that they could depend upon me. And I've had to organise a lot of church ceremonies and services and
- 09:00 sad, happy and whatever you like. And by golly they supported me, because they expected it from me. And they respected Doreen for it also because she was my right hand all the time. So all my narrow mindedness during the war, came good when these people were looking for a leader in the association and it was a very
- 09:30 successful association. So back onto the Hobart, an interesting thing about Hobart, that the gun deck, which was my spot, when the ship was leaving Singapore, before my time, not much before my time, the sailors were stealing everything they could because Singapore was about to go to the Japanese. And so they
- 10:00 stole different things and hid them onboard and they got to Surabaya, I think it was, after evacuating Singapore and alongside there were evidently hundreds of sewing machines waiting to be dispatched somewhere by ship, so the sailors decided that they would dispatch them, so they were carting sewing machines onboard the ship and they were seen
- 10:30 and they were stopped and all the sewing machines had to be returned. But that didn't go down very well with them, because of leaving Singapore, Captain Howden had the crane [UNCLEAR] life, a Morris Sports car, an Austin Sports car onto the ship, stowed down the gun deck, just forward of our guns, replacing a ship, a boat
- 11:00 that could have saved our lives, a life boat of some sort, a dinghy, and here this car secured, instead of a gun placement, boat placement and the car, he had the painter, the ship's painter - paint 'RAN H1' and that was his little motor car, which he took off when we finally came to, when he
- 11:30 left to go ashore in Brisbane, and I could say that today that car is still going. In recent years it was still operating. RAN H1, a little Austin Tourer, he took that from Singapore.

You mentioned that the gun deck was your spot. Can you tell me what your job was?

- 12:00 My job on the 4-inch twin mounted anti-aircraft gun with a shield around it. I was the communications number and the fuse setter. Now the orders would come from the transmitting station, or the director, mechanical equipment, engineering equipment that placed your gun on the right target, on the right position of the target,
- 12:30 and they'd come through the headset for the communications number to yell out the instructions. At the same time there was a big gauge in front of me, that had the position of the aircraft on it and I had to move a lever and cross and cover their directional indicator, so that when the fellow with the four inch gun, four inch shell
- 13:00 put it into the fuse setter, I would turn a handle and set the distance the aircraft was from our ship. So that the shell would explode at that distance, so I was the fuse setter communication number. I didn't have to lug all the heavy shells around. We had, I think 16 on the gun, by the time they're handling ammunition,
- 13:30 clearing the spent cartridge cases away and moving the gun to the right and left and elevating it and operating the breech and people in control. And a very efficient gun mounting, supported by very efficient people. So the two combined made a very, very special
- 14:00 team. And there were four such teams in close proximity on the ship and that made up the gun deck. During the Coral Sea Battle, torpedo bombers were attacking and the skipper was dodging torpedoes magnificently, one each side at one stage. One aircraft was on our port side
- 14:30 still with his torpedo attached, and too close to drop it, he'd lost the chance. Evidently it had stuck and every Tom, Dick and Harry was firing at it, with all our armament, but my gun, my gun the mount that I

was part of claimed and were given that aircraft. We hit it and the whole thing exploded, torpedo

15:00 and all. And while none of us were burnt physically, oh boy it was hot, it was so close. The thing just blew up in front of us by our gun fires, my particular gun and that was pretty good as far as we were concerned. It was a bit close, you couldn't miss it, you had to hit something. So but the captain was able to dodge the ship in between torpedoes and miss them in that

15:30 respect, we also claimed one by our gunners, pretty good.

Do you recall what aircraft that was?

No, I don't other than it was a torpedo bomber. I could say it was a Mitsubishi, but Mitsubishis were the high level bombers that were attacking us regularly, the dive bombers, no

16:00 I've forgotten all those things, I've forgotten. We had to study aircraft identification, of course. So at the time we would have known, but I don't know now. When they were finished, when they finished their dive bombing on us instead of nicking off and regrouping to, or go back home they only carried one bomb.

16:30 Rather than just depart they would strafe the ship with their light guns and one shell, I'm sure it was a small shell, hit a gun mount that was just forward of our bridge and damaged a bit of the paint work, and heavily

17:00 scored one of the seaman's faces, Able Seaman Whittle, John Whittle he was badly peppered with shrapnel and left the ship, wounded of course and there was shrapnel on the bridge also, but injured but not seriously. That's all that happened as far as that damage was concerned.

17:30 All over in a minute and no one shooting at him, no one firing. He was just not expected to be there, they'd had their run and got the last pennant out of us.

Perhaps, if I can just go back a little bit, how many were in the fleet that were in the Battle of the Coral Sea?

HMAS Australia, our 8 inch gun

18:00 cruiser, we had 6 inch guns, we were a light cruiser, Australia was a heavy cruiser because it had an 8 inch gun, they had 8, 8 inch guns and we had 8, 6 inch, carried the admiral, we had Admiral Crace, an Australian that was on loan from the Royal Navy, he was in charge our Fleet, of his ship Australia, HMAS Hobart and a very favourite 'Pally Ship', we called them in

18:30 the British navy, Pally if you're around a lot and you're all friendly, he's a Pally Ship, a pal, Chicago, USS Chicago, another heavy cruiser and three American destroyers in the van leading us. Our duties was to repel the Japanese invasion force that was bent on

19:00 landing in Port Moresby and because the Americans had sunk the escort carrier that was so essential to protect them, the aircraft carrier, not fully intelligent, thought that "There were bigger things

19:30 ahead for them and they couldn't cater for it without their aircraft carrier USS Soho." So they cancelled that plan and probably or possibly within hours of us meeting, turned around and went back home. Because their major fleet had been disrupted badly by the American aircraft, while their aircraft badly

20:00 disrupted the American aircraft carriers and cruisers that were over the horizon from us. So we were let off just by being bombed and the like. Three different types of aircraft, high level, torpedo and dive bombing. So the six of us all

20:30 made it safely.

I'm still backtracking a little bit; did the fleet leave altogether from Sydney to go up to the Coral Sea?

Oh no, no, no, HMAS Australia led Hobart, very interesting point here and I emphasise the importance of it,

21:00 in that our Captain Howden broke every important rule in the book, by warning the crew of Hobart, what they were going to expect. Let me put it this way, the ship came home from the Battle of Java Sea and Singapore and Indian Ocean activities which were hell, via Fremantle, Adelaide, Melbourne and then to be Sydney.

21:30 The ship left Melbourne, mid April of 41, oh 42 on its way to Sydney, and Captain Howden with his confidence and respect for probably ever man on his ship, were told over the public address system, the tannoy, by Captain Howden himself that he is going to tell them what their plans in the future are

22:00 and not a soul will dare mention it to anyone, you're trusted. He told those people that "the ship would be in Sydney for two weeks, for minor repairs, it will rendezvous and sail north to the point, to the area south east of New Guinea to rendezvous with an augmented American Fleet, survivors from Pearl Harbour, who have

- 22:30 come down to do battle with the Japanese Aircraft Carriers, which had been identified in the area and we will eliminate them." He even gave the date of the earliest day of May and not a soul evidently passed it around, no one seemed to know that this was going to happen, but he trusted those men by telling them the immediate future and no one in authority
- 23:00 is allowed to do that. But he trusted them so much. So we sailed with Australia, no escort. We went Hervey Bay and fuelled from our old tanker Kurumba. Interesting thing there, raw as blazers, I was on the deck one day and I saw a sailor struggling aboard Australia, he'd caught his head and he was flailing his arms and his legs trying to get himself free of something,
- 23:30 he had blue navy overalls on and oh my blood started to pound through my heart, I had to find someone to tell, and a bloke came by and I said, "Excuse me can you see that fellow, that's in trouble over on the Australia?" He said, "Oh what's the matter with you, how long have you been in the navy?" "Oh, not long." "That's a bloke's overalls," and he's hooked them up on one of the engine room blowers, hot air coming out of the engine room,
- 24:00 hooked them up with some pins or a couple of clips and he was drying them in 10 minutes instead of by the sun, and here I thought it was this poor bloke. So we fuelled from the Karumba and we were joined by an old four stacker, a World War II or an early post World War I, I mean, American destroyer, USS Whipple II, they escorted us up through the Barrier Reef to rendezvous
- 24:30 with this beautiful huge American Fleet and so we did, we had USS Chicago join us and we had the three destroyers and after a couple of days we were sent off to do our little duty with the repelling of the Japanese forces, while the two American aircraft fleets, belted heck out of each other. It was the first occasion
- 25:00 ever when there was no ship to ship warfare, it was all aircraft, from the fleets, from the two separate fleets. The ships did not see each other. Pretty amazing, it was all aircraft. And this was a completely new experience to the Americans. Sure they'd been attacked at Pearl Harbour by the Japanese, but here they were using their aircraft carriers which they'd been rehearsing for years and years
- 25:30 to take off, recover aircraft and disrupt the enemy's plans. And they did it well, they came off second best, but strategically they came off far the winner, far. Many exciting things, Japanese aircraft damaged and not being able to find their own carrier, mistook the Americans
- 26:00 and landed onboard the Americans. No shooting, they were not allowed, everyone was told, "This is an enemy, just let him land and we'll worry about him." Some of them touched down and took off, then they were shot of course, successfully or not, I don't know. We had - we were able to have relayed to the public, to the address speaking system, the words from the pilots of the aircrafts
- 26:30 as they were attacking these Japanese ships and Japanese aircraft. Relayed from their headquarters aboard USS Lexington, the big, beautiful big carrier, which was sunk, through the airwaves onto Hobart, so we could hear it too. Marvellous by me, marvellous.

What did it mean to you, to listen in to the pilots talking?

- 27:00 To be very truthful and candid it was horrible, I mean it was interesting and it was marvellous that we could hear this, but the slang is not what we were used to. Scratch one! What the heck does that mean? Scratch it off the list, it means that, doesn't it? But navy people don't talk this way, but the Americans did and this was marvellous, scratch one, or so many. And calling out as though they were in
- 27:30 films, you know cowboys films, go get them chief get that lasso ready and I'm going to - what was one fellow, rile this bloke, all this, comical but marvellous, oh marvellous. We had another good thing installed before we left for this occasion, TBS - talk between ships - you didn't ring them up, or you didn't have your signalman
- 28:00 raised them with signals, the bridge people simply talked to them between ships on a radio telephone. We'd never heard of this before and we'd only just got it. And the aircraft were identified very readily by our people with some Electronic device, IFF, Interrogate Friend or Foe and we didn't shoot our own people because they had the correct IFF response, whereas if
- 28:30 it was a Japanese aircraft he didn't have IFF, so he was shot at. Little things made this war, now something that hadn't been contemplated so readily. It was marvellous, and to fuel from these tankers that had survived Pearl Harbour, and to be with aircraft carriers that were not in Pearl Harbour, fortuitously, Japanese
- 29:00 thought they were there and were bound to eliminate them, but they were at sea and now we were sailing with these ships, oh beyond my greatest dreams and I had dreadful dreams about all this beauty and meeting ship and being with them, just love it. The same thing happened when we were preparing for the Solomon Island Invasions, meeting these huge fleets, oh my goodness, I can see them now, just
- 29:30 beautiful, exciting for me, who else cared, it meant trouble if you were with them, no not trouble for me, I'm enjoying the occasion, before the trouble.

And was the Battle of Coral Sea the first time that you experience the Yanks?

Oh this was my baptism of fire. Yeah this was it.

And was that your first contact with the American troops?

30:00 It was Hobart's first - it was Australia's first contact with an American fleet. Hobart had been involved with Americans around Java and Singapore. Hobart should have been with the Americans and the Dutch when they were all eliminated, but Hobart had to fuel and missed the occasion so they made home, but they were with Americans then but not as a close

30:30 partner, here we were part of the seventh fleet, marvellous with all these top admirals caring for it. Housie and Spruence and the other big name, yes we were now right amongst it, right amongst it and it stayed that way until we were put out of actions. And when we came back into action we were with it all again. And when we were preparing

31:00 for the invasion of Japan, the American fleet was just unbelievable to me, loved every ship, marvellous.

And what do you think was the general feeling on your ship, on the Hobart towards the Americans?

Oh marvellous, oh no problem. We had a little bit of doubt as to how battle worthy they would have

31:30 been without their marvellous equipment, they had equipment for everything, but the poor old Brits and the Empire fleet couldn't even think about, the Americans had them and whilst the Americans were wonderful fellows and so hospitable they had the equipment to replace lack of war

32:00 feeling. They weren't war people they were more peaceful, the Brits weren't war people, that's why we were so far behind Germany when they had so much war equipment. Now the Americans had this equipment and we admired them for it. Oh my goodness, and yet we had a more powerful radar set in the Australian navy in the Coral Sea Battle than the Americans did and they depended upon ours.

32:30 How about that? So the Americans finished up the leaders in radar and electronic, we had marvellous radar, I think we had a ninety-mile range, of which to them was just great. Call on the Australians, they soon got it themselves, very soon. We had no radar on our guns,

33:00 later on we were modernised, we had radar control for most of our weapons, which made them even more operable, successful.

So you as a gun operator?

I was a gunner,

33:30 I wasn't a qualified gunner. A qualified gunner's got a gun barrel on his arm, on his uniform. I had nothing, I was part of a guns' crew, so I was crew for a four-inch anti-aircraft gun mount.

And you mentioned that you didn't have a radar on your gun?

Oh no, not in those days. Oh no, not until after our modernisation

34:00 and not until 1945, or installed in 44 but operated at the end of the war in 45. Oh no, we didn't have anything like that. Radar was just out of the dream stage when we started to work in the Pacific Ocean and the Americans' war, nothing like that for the British. Dreadful.

34:30 The ship produced a high, the navy produced a high quality serviceman because he had to be it, he had not much else to depend on that was modern, mechanical or electronic, we had electrical but electronic is a filtered no,

35:00 an advanced electrical area, where we had electrics, but a lot of it was hidden with, a lot of it. And that made the man, the man had to make up for it. That's about it, I suppose I did too, because I was taught by these fellows.

Is that why you say

35:30 **you wanted to stay with a gun crew that felt safe?**

Absolutely, absolutely they were like oiled clockwork, they were marvellous, no yelling, no screaming, just getting on with it, a powerful job and I suppose every other gun crew was the same, I don't know, I only speak of mine and they suited me and something led me to say, "These blokes are going to see me through the war," and

36:00 so they did. Oh yeah they just stood out as great fellows, real good.

You mentioned that there were 6 to operate the gun together, in the team?

Oh in the team. Oh no, there were more than 6, there were 6 ammunition loaders and people getting, clearing the used containers away, no I calculated it quickly,

- 36:30 no let me try again, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 or so, 14 perhaps on a guns crew, on a 4 inch guns crew and then there are handlers down below, in the next deck down, but they might be stokers or they might be cooks or they might be telegraphers or people not with a direct duty to repel any invaders of our little territory. They were putting your projectiles on hoists,
- 37:00 shoot them up to the deck, and someone would have to take them there physically and put them on a tray to get into the gun, into the breech after they'd been fused by my little scheme, into the breech, someone had to close the breech and the fellows who were aiming and directing the gun finally had the say, a little brass lever on a, like a bicycle handle and he
- 37:30 fired the charger. A wonderful system, the British of course. Ours were hand loaded whereas anything over 4 inches had to be mechanically loaded, because the shells were too heavy. And they had a separate explosive charge, ours were all self contained and stood about 4 foot tall by the time the shell is there and the charge, within
- 38:00 the brass container, the cartridge case. And then someone had to get them out of the way, with a stick with a flan to it because you couldn't touch it because it would be red hot, burning the decks. We had great big heavy rope mats, oh a quarter of the size of this room, under the breech, so that the shells would bounce on the, the spent
- 38:30 cartridge case would bounce on the rubber mat and not damage the deck and set it on fire, because they were so hot, whereas they landed on these heavy, heavy, rope mat for protection. And then the sailors, the ammunition hands would dispose of them. Americans threw theirs overboard, because theirs floated and they would go back the next day and collect them,
- 39:00 we stored ours onboard. To be reused or broken down, and reused, recycled.

The gun sounds like a very specialised task, an area. Did you receive training before you joined HMAS Hobart?

Yes, down at

- 39:30 Cerberus, we had pretend training, they would have an old gun down there and you'd have to learn how to throw a projectile into the breech, and everyone had to do every job on that gun, everyone. And if you misbehave they made you stand with a shell in your hand and that was pretty heavy after an hour. But you were a naughty boy by doing something wrong. A silly statement
- 40:00 but it would not be right, pushing the wrong end in first, you couldn't do that but I mean a silly thing deserved a bit of a punishment, so you would be standing there with a shell for 20 minutes or something. Yes we were all taught the basics of gunnery. Some of them might never have seen another gun like that, on the smaller ships, I don't say it taught me anything because I was sitting inside the shield, I was protected, the other poor
- 40:30 fellows were running around outside, following the gunners as it would be moving around, trailing the aircraft, they were busy, busy boys, I was sitting down, could have been reading. I was in the fortunate position and it was fortunate, no exertion on my part. So my war was lucky, wasn't it? It really was, it was all so free flowing, and
- 41:00 nearly tense less. Maybe you should have had a more exciting person than me to interview.

Tape 5

- 00:32 **Roy, this afternoon I would like to start off by bringing up something that I read about the Hobart. At one time it was referred to as 'The Flaming Angel', is that correct?**

Flaming Angel was a description that the American allowed us after the Java and Singapore debacle when so many Dutch, American and HMAS Perth were sunk, the Americans just couldn't believe that

- 01:00 a ship could throw so much fire into the air, so Hobart was the Flaming Angel. And they carried it through those that were in the ship in the Indian Ocean from the American navy who we met with us and became pally ships with, they would again refer to the Flaming Angel back with us. Yes, a good reputation.

Did you have any other name for the ship?

No, we didn't,

- 01:30 no, no, not to my knowledge, no, that's the only pseudonym, no description that I've ever heard of the Hobart.

I'd like to talk about the ship itself, you said it's a cruiser?

Yes a light cruiser, light because she had 6-inch armament, if she was eight inch she would be a heavy cruiser,

02:00 nothing to do with the weight or the size of the ship, the size of the main armament, ours was 6 inch, we had 8 six inch guns, most of the 8 inch cruisers, the heavy cruisers had 8, 8 inch guns, 2 turrets forward, 2 turrets aft traditionally.

What were the origins of the boat?

Of the?

Of the ship sorry?

Origins of Hobart? Hobart

02:30 was purchased from the Royal Navy, originally HMS Apollo, commissioned in 1936, West Indies stationed, a bit of time down the South African station, with the Munich crisis and the European war looming, Australia decided to spend more on naval defence and purchased three British warships,

03:00 they happened to be Sydney, Perth or Sydney, Hobart in this order Sydney, Hobart and then Perth. Perth was not purchased or commissioned until during the war. Hobart was 1938 under a Royal Navy captain, a Royal Navy commander, that's the second in charge and then Captain Howden

03:30 was the Australian commanding officer and it was an Australian commanding officer from thereon. Mainly Australian navy officers but a splattering of Royal Navy. So she was one of three very, very sensible cruisers. A cruiser is a scout,

04:00 is a protector, a convoy protector, an in between size, the big fellows, the battleships and the battle cruisers are there to belt heck out of the opposition if they've got equal, well no matter what size. A cruiser is there to protect the battleships, but to protect everything else around, transports; I don't say convoy work, but of course convoy work

04:30 depending on what the opposition might be in wanting to attack the convoy but scouts would be cruisers, coming down to destroyer is a busy bulldog around the place, protecting everyone and the cruiser is the staid old scout, would be the correct and the regular term for a cruiser.

In a convoy then, where would the Hobart be positioned?

On the wing or beam of the

05:00 main convoy, destroyers and this can vary. A cruiser would be on the beam maybe not far off the horizon from the convoy, loitering around seemingly, but there just in case something else comes over his horizon; he's there between the two subjects, the enemy and the convoy. He's there to lend weight

05:30 to the protection, the destroyers are the fellows that are going to buzz around and position themselves closer to the enemy rather than their convoy. The cruiser is there mainly for the convoy's protection until called upon to get rid of the opposition.

What sort of distance are you talking about between the scouting cruiser and

06:00 **the rest of the convoy?**

Depending on the conditions again, we convoyed 20 odd supply and troop ships from New Zealand to the Solomon Islands invasions, and we were just off the beam, we were maybe 2 miles away from the convoy, all visible and we visible to them all the time.

06:30 **What actually do you mean by the beam?**

On both sides, the ahead is in front, the stern and the beam is on the left or right side just typical placement for a cruiser, typical. Under the conditions that you like to play by, but of course you might turn over two pages and miss what was in between so you've got a different story at the other side, the other page.

07:00 That's the theory of convoy and cruiser work. If you pick the case of the [HMS] Queen Mary and the [HMS] Queen Elizabeth being escorted they were of enough speed themselves, not to need as escort. But there was one time when the Queen Mary, I'm sure it was, was being escorted by an Anti Aircraft old Seaclass British cruiser the [HMS] Curacao,

07:30 she got too close to the Queen Mary and the Queen Mary chopped her in half, so she was close. But the Queen Mary, I imagine with my mind was catching up of the escort all the time if she was forward because Queen Mary had a great turn of speed and the old Seaclass cruisers might have been able to do at the best 25, 26 knots, the Queen Mary could outstrip that speed. So her escort

08:00 was close in a turn, but close enough to be ready to shoot off at the sign of a submarine, a U-boat or an aircraft coming in to attack, it never happened but fortunately.

Now you were, you had experience in the gun placements on the Hobart in the 6-inch guns?

Four inch, I was on a four inch anti aircraft.

Sorry, can you tell me

08:30 the placements of all the armaments on the ship?

Yes the main armament, the 6 inch, 8 turrets each with two six inch guns, two forward, that's in front and two aft, superimposed one above the other. Four inch anti aircraft, we had two on each side of the ship, two mountings of each two

09:00 guns, on each side, so there was port side, port one - P1 and P2 which was my gun, and on the starboard side directly opposite and about a beam of each funnel of the aft funnel another 2 starboard side 4 inch guns - S1 and S2, coming down now to a light

09:30 hand operated close range anti aircraft guns, we had many, we had an additional gun mounts erected forward of the bridge attached to the bridge construction and just below the eye level of the officers in the bridge, one each side, probably

10:00 eight feet apart, six feet apart, a single hand operated Oerlikon gun anti aircraft. We had nothing forward of that. Later on we got twin Bofors, another light anti aircraft guns, on either side of the bridge. We had a midships, what was popularly known in the Royal Navy

10:30 and Commonwealth Navies as pom poms, we had a four-barrel pom pom, good gun, it fired a two pound shell. HMAS Australia had an eight-barrel pom pom, magnificent to listen to, a real roll every time the eight-barrel, they didn't fire it together, they fired it in a sequence, ours was a 'Bom, Bom Bom', the

11:00 eight-barrel was 'brrrrm, brrrrm, brrrrm' and it was lovely to hear. The British with bigger ships, the battleships and battle cruiser had 16 barrel pom poms, I wasn't fortunate enough ever to hear them, but they must have been great to listen to. So ok that's them, not us. We had our pom pom and then coming aft we had Oerlikons either side of our main

11:30 mast, that's the aft mast, a man strap in with a leather belt and an ammunition feeder to load, reload him all the time. On our second aft turret we had two more close range, I don't know whether they're Bofors or Oerlikons now, but there were two guns position on the second last turret.

12:00 And right on the stern, but not replaced after we were torpedoed, was another 4 barrel pom pom, so we had two of those and they were lovely. That's probably close enough to our full compliment of armament.

The pom pom got its name from the

12:30 sound of the gun?

Sound of the gun, I should imagine so, yes. Some of the earlier British ships had a single barrel pom pom, I can't imagine much good use for it, but anti aircraft wasn't sophisticated in those days. We came in at the end of the war with our reconstruction, a lot more sophisticated because we had radar control on a lot of them, and that was just

13:00 marvellous.

Now what was the difference between the Bofor and the Oerlikon?

The Bofor was a lighter calibre, I just can't tell you what they fired. And a sort of two-man team, one sort of strapped in shooting with a webbed visual sight only, the Bofors had

13:30 stabilising and later radar and a different number of crew, probably if you had a twin Bofors you might have had 6 crew to the twin mount. Whereas it was a two man team to the Oerlikons - the lighter ones. And the Oerlikon was a bit old-fashioned, but for close range fire, satisfactory.

14:00 The Oerlikon was just an advanced, a more punch to it, and more powerful gun, Swedish.

Was the ship equipped with torpedoes and depth charges?

Yes, you see we forget about this and that's pretty naughty. We certainly had two quadruple torpedo tubes sets, one port side,

14:30 and one starboard side just directly below the gun deck. Four torpedoes in each mounting and they were mounted, they were manned by specialist torpedo people, at action stations. All was fired from the forward torpedo tube first so that there's no clashing of torpedoes in the water. And they were numbered

15:00 F.I.R.E. on our ship. So if you were told to fire E. you fired the last one, if you were told to fire F. you fired the first one. So we had two sets of torpedo tubes quadruple. Depth charge - we had depth charges on our stern, I don't say more of a joke but not a, not much excitement

15:30 to them. We didn't drop depth charges ever, for practice or anything, they were simply on their rack and from memory we carried four or five, ready to roll over the side. Now this is the antiquated way, later on

and in the smaller ships they had Y mounts, a little Y shaped mounts with a cradle to be blasted out and a depth charge

16:00 in that cradle. But we weren't up to that stage and cruisers weren't expected to be. That was just in case you were alone and there was a sub there needing to have a lesson taught it, so you had a depth charge rack. Not a serious part of our armament. In fact when people write up, probably not navy people, write up about armament of a war ship,

16:30 they include searchlights as though you are going to shoot down aircraft and keep boarders at bay with your searchlights, but they insist on saying and 2 sixteen inch searchlights. I can never get the hang of that, but they like to say that the ships got searchlights. Yes, we had searchlights too but they weren't defensive or offensive, they were just there for need, of course there was need.

17:00 **So did you find the gunnery armament onboard the ship an exciting part of the ship to work in?**

Marvellous, I couldn't have been more, I use the word blessed in my life, I couldn't have been more fortunate in being placed on a four inch anti aircraft gun, for many reasons. I would not like to be below decks when

17:30 we were having things flung around and about, because I wouldn't like to be trapped down there, I would feel claustrophobic probably, I don't know. But I would not like to be below decks when I couldn't escape readily. But to be above deck, on the upper deck and amongst it all, what better. And to be in a gun that was the purpose of the whole of the ship's business

18:00 at a time, to repel aircrafts, Wow, part of it. It was part of me too. Yes, I couldn't have been more satisfied there, loved it. And that's why I got to know the crew, see how professional they were in their operations, no skylarking, it was all fair dinkum and they treated it very seriously, and they had a great gun to treat seriously.

18:30 All very successful for me.

Did you ever work in other areas of the ship?

Yes, I did and there's so much there and I'm thinking of another, action, no an action station, but an action area where I was. If there's a cruising watch and things aren't hectic, you're not

19:00 fully relaxed but you're in a relaxed state, ready for the next move which might be serious. And under such conditions, at one stage I was a surface lookout, on the bridge on the port side, outside the platform of the bridge, with big heavy binoculars positioned, two on each side of the ship and I was

19:30 a surface lookout, and behind me would be two aircraft lookouts. They would be looking in the air, and I was looking at the surface. And here again, I was so fortunate in a very controversial night when the American cruisers were sunk off Savo Island in the Solomons, I was on the bridge as a surface lookout, the night the Japanese came

20:00 in and belted the Americans, and I was there for quite a while, because we did not sound action stations straight away, the moment there was an engagement of surface ships, because our people knew - and I don't put 'knew' in quotes, they knew that the Americans were firing at each other. Now the world doesn't like that, it's now coming out, a little bit more in

20:30 reading that the Americans were trigger happy and they started to fire at each other, illuminating themselves or positioning themselves for the Japanese Fleet to come right through, on a very dark night, no one saw them and their targets were illuminated. Now I watch all of this and unfortunately I did, because I know what I saw and so does every lookout on the bridge, every officer on the bridge,

21:00 and they were talking amongst themselves, "Oh they're shooting each other, oh there's that Vincennes with another lot," and we were watching all of this, but when we realised that the Japs had also arrived, we went to action stations and I saw no more, because we were waiting to be used ourselves, or cop something ourselves. So I watched all of that and whilst I'm maybe a bit noisy about it, I'm not alone and the Americans now

21:30 are whispering, "That that's the right story," very controversial, so yes I had other positions. And mind you you're not sitting around at your gun all the time; someone's got to run the ship. There's painting to be done, there's other duties to be done. So my duty when I wasn't around my gun was cleaning

22:00 a lobby area, down below, outside the wardroom, where the officers, in officer territory if you call it that, the Americans do. I was a cleaner there so I would have to wash paintwork and touch up paintwork, and scrub the deck and keep it nice and neat, as the whole of the ship was. Very clean ship, but that's Australian, very clean navy. And then later on after we recommissioned

22:30 in December of 1944, I was fortunate again, very fortunate again in being given the duties of commander's writer. In cruisers and in, no, I can't speak for battleships, but in cruisers throughout the British Services, the commander, that's the second in charge of the ship had a seaman who was his clerk, if you like to be fancy, he was his secretary

- 23:00 and I was given that position, which was just the ultimate. I was paid extra for it, I think I got thruppence a day extra for being the commander's writer, I had an office, I had all the file and signals, not all the signals no, I had signals that pertaining to current duties aboard the ship itself, not anyone outside the ship. The commanders activities, and he was in charge of
- 23:30 the upper deck and this was his office, which was my very, very sweet job, lovely job. So I was commander's writer there, and the engineer commander had a writer, I think there were only the two of us onboard, because the ship also carried writers, which was a rate in the navy and still is.
- 24:00 **Roy, on the Hobart before, you said there was a lobby and a wardroom, was it?**
- Wardroom. What's that?
- Well I imagine that these aren't common rooms across the ship. What differentiated the officer's territory from the rest of the ship?**
- Oh, much. Officer's territory was a passageway with cabins on either side, where the officers bunked. They had bunks, with a curtain across it, no doors, a curtain.
- 24:30 And that was on the aft end of a cruiser. Not the same case with destroyers or other ships, we're talking cruisers. Aft below the quarterdeck which is the last area of the upper deck to the stern. You had to salute to go across the quarterdeck, you had to salute the quarterdeck and that was officers only, if you
- 25:00 were a sailor or a lower deck person, saluting there, you were there for a purpose, not allowed to linger or loiter there unless you were cleaning it and I had to scrub the decks of the quarterdeck, I had to grease the guardrails to keep the rust away, I had to paint, and when I was painting over the side, it would be the quarterdeck area all the time. The ship is divided in four theoretical parts
- 25:30 foc'sle up forward, foretop starboard side in the centre main top, port side in the centre and then the quarterdeck aft and I was a quarterdeck man cleaning the quarterdeck. Scrubbing the ladders, keeping everything clean. The captain had a day cabin leading onto the quarterdeck.
- 26:00 Portholes there, square ports to be clean and derusted, and cared for.
- It sounds to me from your description like lower decks weren't a particularly attractive place to be. What were the lower decks of the Hobart like?**
- As accommodation, or people, two terms, the lower deck are the people and you lived on the lower deck. You lived
- 26:30 in the mess decks. The mess decks were in the next deck below, the deck head was the upper deck of the ship you were in the deck below with your hammocks, if you had time for hammocks, you're messing. Everyone lived in the mess and there were probably 10 messes in the ship. And the sailors, the
- 27:00 crew, or the sailors of the crew lived in those mess decks, in those messes on the mess deck, and each mess had a leading seaman in charge of say 10 or 12 people. So the specialists also live in this area on this deck, the bandsmen had their mess, and the bandsmen being bandsmen they were allowed to have a seaman
- 27:30 as a mess boy, so he drew their meals, washed up, cleaned the table and set their knives and forks for them. Bandsmen were a bit spoilt there. The others, the torpedo men, they had their own mess decks, just the same of the seaman they were forward, torpedo men. And the stokers had theirs, but theirs were down a deck again, directly above their engine rooms.
- Is this what I understand as below decks?**
- 28:00 That's below decks, but anything below the top deck, is below decks, you can be below decks forward, you can be below decks aft, below decks aft is officers, below decks forward sailors. And the senior sailors, petty officers had their own mess. And they had a mess boy or seaman in charge of their catering,
- 28:30 drawing their meals, cleaning up. And the chief petty officers, and there's many chief petty officers onboard a ship, I'm thinking of artisans, I'm thinking of communicators, there's torpedo party, gunnery, all these senior rates, the chief petty officer had their own messes, scattered throughout the main deck,
- 29:00 directly below the upper deck. And they also had their mess boys. A good job, a good job because you missed out painting ship, and having to appear in uniform all the time on the other decks, you were busy in a little specialised area.
- What for you was the most distasteful position to be in on the Hobart?**
- 29:30 **The most distasteful, oh goodness, don't laugh, don't laugh, having to use the heads, the toilets without any seclusion, lined, bodies lined up one after the other, didn't enjoy it, did not enjoy it. I don't know that anyone did. That was the only problem I had on board. And if you let it be a problem you were silly,**

- 30:00 **it wasn't a problem because it was there for everyone. And speaking of the heads, the toilets, there was a captain of the heads, he was a seaman, usually an older, been in the navy along while, an older man and he was captain of the heads. And he had a heads party; he might have had 2 or 3 sailors with him, depending on the ship again. But with Hobart, he might have had half a dozen**
- 30:30 **assistants, but he was in charge of the heads, but he got paid extra for it, and they did nothing but clean the heads, replenish the toilet paper and see there's soap in the ablutions area and those duties. We had a time onboard, later in the war when dysentery attacked and probably 70 per cent of the ships company was suffering dysentery. Well with dysentery you have very horrible**
- 31:00 **diarrhoea, well how could the toilets, the heads cater for say 400 patients, it couldn't. We were on American stores at the time and dehydrated potato came in probably a five gallon drum, well they didn't throw the drum out, they wrenched the lids off them and we used them as toilets around the upper decks forward. Otherwise the toilets couldn't cater. And there was such an urgency**
- 31:30 **about it one day that the captain of the heads - being a self promoted special bloke - had his own bucket, metal bucket, galvanised bucket, padlocked into one of the toilets, well if the toilet needs to be used no one's going to care whether that's the captain of the heads bucket so, his bucket was regularly used also, much to his disdain. A big thing at the time on board - "Someone's been using**
- 32:00 **Alex, captain of the heads' toilets!" And he was furious.**
- You've portrayed a liking for being on the upper deck. Did you ever have to or would you have ever have like to say in the stokers' area?**
- The only time I had to work, was when I was perhaps
- 32:30 given the job as mess man, each mess had a mess man, who knock off work early because they called him over the address system, the tannoy, cooks of messes to the galley, now each mess had a sailor allocated to be cook for the week. So you could know of your job. "Where are you going, Scrivener?"
- 33:00 "Mess deck cook for mess 22." "Ok." You went early to draw the meals, set the tables, get the bread out, put the plates and cups out, ready for the crew to come down at say 12 o'clock to have their midday meal and you'd go up to the galley to draw the food for that mess. So each mess had a mess boy if you'd like to call them, and I would naturally have a turn, so I would be
- 33:30 working below decks, but not a worry, my only worry happened on a number of occasions, I'd be down in the shower, in the bathroom which was two decks below, when they were dropping depth charges or bombs might have been falling and action stations hadn't been called or sounded over the tannoy. Frightening, I would not have liked to have
- 34:00 had stayed, wrapped your towel around and got up top, quick smart. And if it was action stations, then you'd leave your towel on, you'd get to action station quick smart, and then when things quietened you'd be allowed to go forward and get your clothes on. But yes I've been in the bathrooms when things were a little bit worrisome outside and not at all happy. Couldn't stand it.
- It might seem obvious, but why was that a worry for you?**
- 34:30 Why would it be a worry? Easily described, easily answered. To be caught below decks, with one ladder close by to get out and up, remembering that there were people whose jobs were down below, who action stations might have been in the engine room, might have been in the steering compartment down below, in the shell handling room in the
- 35:00 cordite rooms, all had to get down there because things were hectic, Action stations, my action stations were up top and I've got to get up the same ladder that only carries one person, but you do, two people pass and that is the fright, not being able to get up on that ladder. Dreadful, we had a one case only, and it's not official, but I knew the man and Doreen and I were very friendly and happy with him, but he was the only person
- 35:30 who has talked about us panicking when we were torpedoed, he was down below, he wanted to get up top, his action station was where he was. He wanted to get out and he couldn't get up the ladder because others were flying down to get to their action stations and he panicked and blocked that ladder, which is too serious to contemplate. You've got to get down and others have got to get up. And this poor fellow
- 36:00 just couldn't manage. The only case ever that I've known of that on that ship, everyone else was controlled. He was controlled by, he just busted for a moment.
- What sort of evacuation procedures did you have in place for you action station?**
- None, Chris. No, one didn't think of
- 36:30 getting away. If 'abandoned ship' had have been called and thinking HMAS Sydney would have had

abandoned ship if they'd have been able to get through before the big explosion that took them all. HMAS Perth had abandoned ship. I can't recall ever having been taught, what to do, where to go, and I didn't need

37:00 to because the water was just down there for me. And when we were torpedoed we didn't abandon ship, but we would have just jumped overboard. Don't ask me about the fellows below, they must have had training for it, I don't recall anything like that in my 4 years aboard the ship, being prepared to get out. Maybe there was, we all had what you call blimps or Mae Wests,

37:30 blowing up rubbers around our, like a raffia around our chest and you slept with them at sea. You used them as a pillow, half inflated, you would deflate it to jump overboard, you knew how to use your equipment, we were certainly trained in that. But you didn't blow it up, because if you jumped overboard and you had it in place, you'd break your neck as they were doing, so you weren't

38:00 expected to blow it up, you just left it lightly blown up, but if it was a great pillow and you carried it with you all the time. In dangerous areas.

Where did you sleep on the ship?

Where did I sleep? Around the gun, around the gun, in troublesome areas otherwise, an interesting thing that people wouldn't ever

38:30 think would happen. In the tropics it's very stuffy, below deck, no air-conditioning in my day. We had squared trunking and a brass punker, not a blower but a director, a little brass, half sphere,

39:00 blowing air from the square trunking system into the mess deck, not cooled just air, sucked in from above. Trunked through all parts of the ship and they called it a 'Punker', was the blowing jet. So you didn't choose to sleep below, but hundreds did of course, but if you were more a fresh air friend or

39:30 I don't know why but there were two areas, one on each side of the ship, a midships called the waists, the starboard waist, the port waist and it was a mustering area for crew. The forward part of each of those areas was screened off at night time, with 2 screens and a space to walk through

40:00 that baffled the light, so you could sleep in there if you got in early, and you would simply put a piece of canvas down or cardboard or whatever you could, or you could just get your blimp, your life preserver, and blow it up and that was your pillow and you could just sleep there, but it was very uncomfortably close because there wasn't much air, so the next best and the best was to just sleep out on the decks

40:30 on the deck, you would look for a wooden area, or where the deck was planked, rather than on a steel deck, but around the guns it was steel. You'd sleep out knowing that it was going to rain during the night, so ok when it rained you got inside in the uncomfortable stuffy area. But you could go to sleep under the stars, it was comfortable,

41:00 you couldn't go to sleep down below or in that screened off area. But when you were half doped with sleep, you'd find a spot, having walked on 3 faces or kicked another 4 bodies, you'd find a space and you would go off to sleep because you were half asleep, and you would do that sleep out in the open.

Sounds like camping out?

Just like camping out, which leads me to.

Tape 6

00:32 **Roy, you were about to lead me to an interesting episode of your sleeping arrangements?**

Later on in the war, and I might say 6 months before the war finished, leaving it a long while, late, isn't it? We were issued with collapsible camp stretchers, metal frame with two metal

01:00 spring steel legs and bent in the middle for the frame. Collapsible rolled up and easily stored, stowed is the navy term. And at night time you would put this down and you'd sleep on the deck on canvas stretchers and this was pretty neat. Pretty good,

01:30 a lot more comfort and good sleeps and very popular, whether everyone was issued or not, I don't recall, certainly I had one. And on sleeping, here's something that, oh I was proud of, but I got ragged for it, because I was always friendly with cooks, I'm a food man, always was friendly with the cooks and those people who issued the food. I asked one of the

02:00 petty officer cooks one day if there were any spare flour bags ever. "Oh," he said, "Yeah, I can get you some flour bags, how many do you want?" I said, "I don't know, just enough to make a sheet for my hammock." "A sheet for hammock from flour bags. What a great idea!" So he issued me with I think 6 and I sewed them together myself and I had a sheet. Well, no one in the navy lower deck, had sheets, but I had my sheet in my

- 02:30 hammock, the few times that I slept on it or the palliasse, the mattress out of the hammock, very proud of my little sheet. And also speaking of sleeping and hammocks, I'm sure we were in the Philippines when it's horribly hot at night time and its rainy most nights, one fellow in the very peak of the bow, where the point
- 03:00 is, guard rails, slung his hammock between the guard rails and he would sleep there at night time, lovely to see and no one would dare take that position, "Oh don't you sling a hammock there, that's so and sos." And so and so would get up there each night, and we'd be at anchor, we wouldn't be at sea, we'd be at anchor and he would be up there, comfortable as he could be, with his hammock slung between the starboard and the port
- 03:30 guard rails, right forward. We would have to air mattresses occasionally, not to often, I think the Americans did it more than we did. But they'd pipe over the tannoy speaker system, that quarterdeck will air mattresses at 10 o'clock in the morning or whatever, so you had to find your hammock because they were all in great big bins and you had to find your hammock, and you'd undo it and air
- 04:00 your mattress over the guard rail and secure it with a lashing so you'd get rid of the bugs or whatever you were suppose to have, which we did not, airing mattress, yeah. And to scrub a mattress was a, to scrub a hammock was a difficult job because, the eyelets on each end of the hammock are attached to a major piece of rope
- 04:30 by clues, a thinner rope, all very professionally bound on each end, and very ship shape. You would have to take all of your clues off and scrub your hammock and air it and dry it and then put it back all together again, which was quite a project, but it was lovely to sleep in a clean, washed hammock. On one occasion, one of the fellows
- 05:00 had permission to trail hammocks over the stern, and didn't last very long because it was a bit of a thing, but he had hammocks trailing over the stern of the ship, washing them in salt water, which was lovely. And hammocks were washed in saltwater anyway; you couldn't afford fresh water for hammocks.

You mentioned sleeping in anticipation of rainy weather. What of

05:30 rough weather at sea? How difficult was it to sleep if the ship was pitching and rolling?

You got used to it Chris, everyone on the one ship for say three months at sea, at sea learnt to roll with a ship, you walked with the ship. I feel to this day and this does seem immature on my part, I don't stretch my legs,

- 06:00 I don't straighten my legs when I'm still, I like my knees bent because I'm still preparing for a roll of the sea, and that is how you stand on a ship at sea, so you roll with it. On a rough sea you roll with it all the more, you don't lean, if you lean on the guard you'll have your name bellowed out, "Get off the guard rail, so and so!"
- 06:30 Because it might collapse and you'll go overboard with those others who are leaning on it. So you don't lean you stand but you roll with the ship all the time. And if you're trying to go to sleep, yes you might roll with the ship, but you don't know that you're rolling as a body. I've seen the ship in a very severe typhoon, when new crew and when we recommissioned at the end of 1944, the crew probably
- 07:00 60 per cent, hadn't been to sea before and they were chronically and putridly seasick and on the mess decks they would be rolling in vomit and whatever else but paralytic, couldn't do anything about it and they would just roll amongst all the filth and everything and bash themselves, when they hit that area and hit that locker or whatever. Pretty nasty but
- 07:30 once you got used to it, it doesn't concern you and you just carry on with the same sleeping routine. No, you roll with it and you learn to take it. Sometimes you might stand up and have a bit of a stretch and you've got to go back to sleep and if you're half asleep it's easy. My early days on board we had a great big piece of canvas that
- 08:00 around our guns, you slept either on the canvas, or if it was spray or raining you'd sleep on the deck under the canvas, 10 or 20 blokes under the canvas. And also in my very early days on board between the starboard guns and the port guns on this gun deck where I was stationed, was a
- 08:31 shelter with racks, but with timber for damage control, big 12 by 12 logs, squared logs, 6 by 6, 8 by 8, 4 by 4 to sure up damaged bulkheads, deck heads and we made a cubbyhouse, I didn't, I had nothing to do with it. I slept in it but
- 09:00 well those before me made a cubbyhouse out of that, and they'd sneak into there and when they were needed to relieve a position on the gun, because you did it for 4 hours or an hour, someone would go in there and call out your name and you'd get out of your little cubby hole, it was very convenient, most un-navy, quite civilian, but it was very, very convenient, but it was stopped after we were torpedoed of course.
- 09:30 That space was used up for other things.

There's a couple of other places on the Hobart, I would like you to take me to?

Sure.

Did you ever get up on the bridge?

I was a bridge lookout at the time of the American cruisers being sunk, the Battle of Savo Island. Yes I was a bridge lookout. Nothing dramatic in my time,

10:00 I do remember one day, a bit of an alarm on the starboard side when movement of water indicated to someone a torpedo had recently been through this area. And of course the officer of the watch and the other officers there, did their best to decide whether it was or whether it wasn't but

10:30 otherwise I had no activities on the bridge, I was never a messenger, I was never an anti aircraft lookout, no I only had the short periods as a surface lookout on the starboard side.

I am just wondering what the inside of the bridge area itself is comprised of?

Number one, it's all got lovely clean, scrubbed grating,

11:00 timbers, crossed timbers, plenty of area on a cruiser. We had a roof in an un-navy term, a roof on our bridge, added after we were commissioned, between commissioning and when I joined it, I would say for the Mediterranean heat, they covered the bridge over, so therefore it was completely enclosed

11:30 and glass all around with windscreen wipers as we know them today, no steering on the bridge, the steering was down below. A thing that, a subject that people don't realise, orders were given to the helmsman down below, couldn't see anything but there were two or three of them down

12:00 there, duty coxswain, the fellow that steers the ship, he had the wheel but way down, two or three, three decks below, with instructions from the bridge, from the navigator or the officer of the watch to what degrees to turn his wheel and the like. Officers to cover all the various aspects of navigation and

12:30 well that's all, there'd always be a signalman there to signal if necessary or pass a message to the signalman on the wings of the bridge, just a stern of the bridge, always a yeoman of signals, very smart man, knew everything about the navy and that's why he was on the bridge. For any emergency or any non

13:00 emergency, communications generally the yeomans on the bridge and messengers, two messengers to run an urgent call somewhere, to wake an officer to get the captain or whatever. Not a busy place, not a busy place at all until action is sounded. And the night that I was the surface lookout, I was there for the beginning of action and

13:30 the bridge fairly buzzed, people coming up and yelling out that they were there and reporting and carrying out their action station, very, very busy then. People plotting the activities and recording and just watching everything. Busy place.

How would instructions pass between the bridge and below?

And below? The old voice pipe,

14:00 telephones, telephone system, that's all, very successful, very successful. A whistle or a - I think there was a whistle attached to each voice pipe, covered with a brass cover to each pipe, for the days when we had no roof over the bridge and it was open to the elements. Yes, communication from the bridge was pretty good, there were two ladders

14:30 to the bridge, one on the port side and one of the starboard side, and if you were joining the bridge or going to the bridge you would always use the port side up and the starboard side down. And one day a new fellow rushed up the starboard side, I suppose I don't know, yes he went up the starboard side, just when the captain was coming down, "What are you?" "A farmer, Sir," and he couldn't have answered more correctly because he was a raw bone - A raw bone as the new kid

15:00 is called - he didn't think he was in the navy, he was getting a blast from the skipper, he was a country boy. And he was going up the down ladder and you don't do it. You mustn't do it.

I'm sure there's a reason why that is, or why that originated?

Simplicity. No clash. Does that answer that?

Yes it does.

You mean up the port and down the starboard?

15:30 **The only thing I can equate it to is climbing on a horse, which you do from the left side?**

Never, it's exactly the same. You never mount a horse on the off side, do you? It's always on the gutter side or the right side, left side. Yes up the port ladder and down the starboard. And we had a crow's nest on the Hobart as cruisers did, nearly the highest point and there would be always

16:00 someone on duty in the crow's nest, with a voice - with a megaphone, and I think a voice pipe, but that

doesn't seem too good to think now. I don't know how he communicated to below, unless he just yelled out, I'm not sure about that but we had a bridge lookout all the time. And when we would go to action, the bridge lookout was usually given a camera

16:30 by an official, but unofficial photographer, we had a photo firm, if you wanted to run a little business onboard, haircut, washing, ironing, selling photographs which were not allowed unless it was all through the captain or the commander, it all had to be official, but the official photographer, who was not a naval photographer, the official

17:00 ship crew photographer would give the masthead lookout a camera and I think that we had 2 masthead lookouts in action, well what if, they couldn't do anything, everyone else saw what was going on, so they took photographs and many of our photographs came from our crow's nest, the seamen up there on duty.

Was that a common practise?

I imagine so. All ships,

17:30 I can't speak for them, I can speak for Hobart, I imagine it would be a common practice. The photographs when they were printed had to be passed for censorship; and they weren't all to be printed. I gave them, I had a camera, illegally, I gave them photographs, many of them they spoiled in the developing but they didn't, they were confiscated. Common practise onboard Hobart, I've got many

18:00 photographs there taken during action by unofficial photographers. We didn't have photographers in our navy, that's today's navy, we had our own people who were permitted to use a camera. It was my duty as commander's writer to register every camera onboard, well I forgot to register mine so, I could use it.

Although that's an irregular

18:30 **practice. Were there traditionally practises onboard that harked back to old navy days?**

There was one practise we did not have. Which people don't quite know, there was no rum in the Australian navy, and many people to this day think that we got rum, but there was no rum issue in the Australian navy that was purely New Zealand navy, Royal Navy, I don't know about Canada or

19:00 South Africa, none in the Australian navy. The old idea of the drummer/bugler sticks is from the old sail navy of course. Chris, the whole navy in my day was run on the past, nothing was new. There were new items of equipment but it was all run on the

19:30 past. Oh goodness me, toilet, how do you go to the toilet if you're in action stations and you've got to go? You can't, so the moment there's peace and quite, a tin is produced and you use the tin and they pass the tin around so that everyone's got to use it.

20:00 And anyone who done the wrong thing just lately and has got to be punished, cause that was stupid, "Right, you'll have the tin," next time we have the toilet tin, we'll be polite and call it a toilet tin, so he's got to empty that tin. And a young fellow will empty it into the wind, whereas the knowledge bloke empties it past behind the wind, he doesn't get it

20:30 back in his face. And all this has happened, that's a thing from the past, that's carried on since Adam was a boy. The ceremony of raising the flag at sea, there's no such ceremony. The flag is flying all the time. Chris, I can't answer anything there, it was all just everyday living, how far it went

21:00 back, I couldn't answer that.

What of superstitions?

Superstitions, you never whistle, no one whistles onboard ship. It's frowned on because that can indicate a mutineer or you must ring your fellows to start a bit of a strike if such a thing could be contemplated, and it wouldn't be. No, you didn't whistle onboard ship.

21:30 Gosh, I can't think of any!

What about sighting an albatross [bad omen]?

Oh no, we used to love albatrosses, no, that died with the romantic authors, they've gone. We fuelled the night we were torpedoed or the next day, the previous

22:00 day, we fuelled from a an American Liberty ship tanker, Liberty ships were a standard design that the Americans produced by the hundreds, and they used them for all purposes, and here was one fuel tanker in a big American base, Espirit de Santo in the New Hebrides and we came

22:30 along for fuel, all innocently and at sea whenever you rendezvous with a ship, everyone's up on deck stickybeaking and looking at the blokes and criticising or admiring and I was around my four inch gun, which was a mustering place, a popular, a favourite place, you know, you knew your way around there and over on the other side just

23:00 20, 30, 40, 50 feet away was a similar condition on the American ship, and three or four sailors just looking over at Hobart and us wee fellows and this fellow had a mesh singlet tattooed on him in wide mesh, memorable to this day in my mind, just as a singlet and no shirt of course and trousers, Americans didn't wear shorts very often,

23:30 we all wore shorts, and this bloke, one of his team yelled out "Hey guys, you're number 13 this trip." So we were the thirteenth that they had fuelled since they left home. He may have been pulling our leg, he may have said this to every ship, well I think it was that night, I think it was that night 10 to 7 when we were torpedoed, so we were number 13 maybe, but

24:00 if we were number 13 it was our unlucky number. I don't know much else that was of superstition onboard, I really don't.

Did you have any lucky charms with you?

Did I? Or did the fellows?

Well you personally?

No, you see I was a practising Christian, I didn't need any lucky charms, that was my luck

24:30 and that was very, very fortunate. The fellows used to say because I was not an obnoxious Christian - I didn't preach - I didn't tell them that they shouldn't swear or go out with these women, it's none of my business. I minded my own and I heard one day one of them calling out to his mate, "I hope he never leaves the ship, if God is looking after him; he is looking after us too." So take it as you like it but they jokingly were glad that I was there because they were being protected

25:00 too.

The American sailor that you just mentioned before with the tattooed singlet, was tattooing a common practice aboard your ship?

Yes it was. We were advised not to, stokers especially were advised not to because with the fumes from the oil on the newly broken skin, very, very often festered and became not disjointed in design, but the design became

25:30 blurry because it got infected and lost the nice precise drawing and tattooing, but yes there were many tattoos onboard, I wouldn't get tattooed but I envied the man who had 'thank you' tattooed on his hand, and I thought that was marvellous. It tickled me to think that this chap had 'thank you'.

26:00 Yes, they had their regular tattoos, yes some of them were dramatic but they didn't overdo it. They weren't encouraged enough; yes they had tattoos, death before dishonour was the very popular one with the skull and Mum's name and the wife's name.

Did the Hobart have a motto?

Oh yes, our motto was 'Sic Fortis

26:30 Hobartia Crevit', 'Thus through strength does Hobart grow'. It's a rough pronunciation; I was in discussion with a professor at Sydney University, during my time as Secretary of the Association and he told me it was a mixture of French and Latin, well I was never a linguist, so I could never add anything to that but yes that was our motto, my

27:00 very word. And it was carried on to the second Hobart, the one that's recently been decommissioned, yeah Hobart. And that was not the motto of Hobart City, but the motto of the Hobart family from the UK in ages past.

27:30 Hobart's town motto, whose badge we used, I can't recall it but it was not the same motto. And when the new destroyer Hobart was commissioned, the nicer bits of equipment for the captain, I'm thinking of drinking glasses, I'm thinking of other things that looked, perhaps serviette rings would have the

28:00 badge and the motto engraved or printed, had the cities' motto, which was not the right one. And that wasn't known for many years until the two groups married and they followed our motto, which was the correct one.

Do you have fond memories of various ports of call you visited?

28:30 I can only say Tokyo, I would go ashore every opportunity, yes I can give you another port of call. Port of call in quotes. After the Coral Sea Battle when the Japanese Fleet was not,

29:00 when no one knew what they were going to do, nor could we contemplate what they were going to do, naturally you didn't know, but you had to try and outguess them and we expected them to come back and have another go at something. Knowing that they didn't completely win the battle, there were a lot of ships left to get rid of, on the American side and the Australian too. We spent a lot of time in the Great Barrier Reef

- 29:30 in three areas, Princess Charlotte Bay, was quite up towards Cape York, a nice little quiet anchorage, Dunk Island, which is a popular resort today and Palm Island which was and still is a mission settlement. There was no reason to go ashore at Dunk Island other than perhaps to play football with the Aborigines who were there, which our fellows did. Our bandsmen would go
- 30:00 ashore and play music for the residents, the whites and the blacks, and that's not far out of Townsville, a lot of whites there and their trade was with Townsville. But I got very friendly with the Baptist Minister there and his family, his wife and family. They would load me up with fruit to bring back for the troops. And I got permission from the commander to store the fruit
- 30:30 in one of the jail cells, while they were not occupied. So there was fresh fruit for the fellows in my area of the ship, living area, because of my visits to Palm Island settlement. Yes I used to love going ashore there; I got to know the three daughters of the missionary, and I could have had a heart flutter over the elder one, but I wouldn't allow that, so it was a very
- 31:00 favourable call for me, but not for anyone else. No one else wanted to go ashore. In fact one day when liberty men was called to go ashore, the landing boat was alongside waiting to be filled up with sailors going off and I was the only one. The commander was on the deck at the time and he said, "Are you sure you want to go ashore, Scrivener? It's wet." "Oh yes sir, yes sir." I had to go ashore
- 31:30 to see my family and that was great, it was a big break from the ship we were all tense after the experiences a few weeks before or months before, it was a great way for me to spend an afternoon, loved it. So the boat had to go and drop me off and then go back later and pick me up, with bags full of fruit. Tokyo of course would be my favourite of all but I was living there, I was ashore there, stationed
- 32:00 ashore. Palm Island, and navy fellows would wonder who on earth this bloke is; fancy enjoying going to Palm Island, loved it.

What of Townsville that you mentioned earlier. Did you have leave time in Townsville?

In Townsville, no. No, we didn't go to Townsville, we called in there, we called into the bay, the harbour area one time. We had a body on board. Oh yes we'd been to Dunk Island

- 32:30 and one of our sub lieutenants, the most delightful young fellow was on the four inch gun deck as the officer of the gun deck. He, right in front of me, officers were unloading on a wharf for a swimming afternoon and on Dunk Island and a makeshift wharf, and he dived instead of getting off out of the boat onto the wharf, as was the officers' style, he dived off
- 33:00 the side of the boat, or off the stern of the Liberty boat and right into a Portuguese Man o' War [jellyfish], which deadly sting and died on the spot. So they got him out and tried to resuscitate him but failed. So we had to take his body into Townsville one day but we didn't go in, we simply, I don't know rendezvous with a boat or one of our boats might have taken his body
- 33:30 into Townsville and they buried him at the cemetery there. No, we hadn't been to Townsville other than for that. Dunk Island was a separate, was away from the Island, from Townsville and in fact close by a leprosy island, a leprosy colony for Aborigines,
- 34:00 so it wasn't all that regularly visited by non-people, non island people.

Were there occasions when sailors would get themselves into trouble onshore, during, on leave?

Yes, I can recall two, one embarrassing and frightening experience that I personally had. And I can recall very

- 34:30 readily horrible experiences for many sailors in Manila. I'll talk about when I was brand new on the ship, we'd come home from the Coral Sea and went down to Brisbane and Captain Howden had left, no I think before Captain Howden had left the ship. We were not allowed to wear HMAS Hobart tallies, you had to wear HMAS, I had never been issued with HMAS, so
- 35:00 my cap Tally was HMAS Hobart. And one night in Brisbane a girl had been raped by a sailor who had HMAS Hobart on his cap, so her mother went to the police of course and the routine was get down to the ship and get the bloke. Well they knew who had Hobart tallies, or maybe they called for everyone who had a HMAS Hobart cap tally
- 35:30 to muster on the quarterdeck. Well, naturally I went down and this lady was there with police and our senior, our officers to identify the sailor. And she was pretty sure it was me and I was ashore that night but I can't remember the finish of that, but I do know it wasn't me, so I had no worry but I had to convince people
- 36:00 that it wasn't me, but I don't know whether they even caught the fellow. I have no idea about the end of the story other than the very embarrassing conditions for a young raw sailor, 18 years old and this was my first call outside Sydney or Melbourne, first ever. The second one that I can recall so unhappily was in Manila,
- 36:30 coming on towards the end of the war. We called into Manila quite soon after Manila had been relieved

of Japanese. The Americans were now in control, but of the many, many, many damaged and sunken Japanese ships in the bay. Japanese survivors were still living in them.

- 37:00 Those that were reasonably level and they were making it their home still. Well, no one bothered to catch them it seems, but these fellows were active and going ashore and selling wood alcohol, making wood alcohol, don't ask me the derivatives or anything, I don't know what I'm talking about. But our fellows were drinking wood alcohol, readily available
- 37:30 because the Japs in the boats would come over with loads of it. So, ok to drink wood alcohol, they were warned after others before us were hurting themselves by drinking this. Our people were warned not to drink wood alcohol ashore, drink legitimate bottled stuff if you can. Well those that were craving for a drink and were drinking wood alcohol
- 38:00 were just paralytic drunk, very very quickly it seems. And we were some 15, 20 minutes away from the shore in an American Landing Barge on rough, choppy water, we were anchored way out. And by the time these fellows rattled their tummies around this horrible boat with the waves bashing it apart, were pretty
- 38:30 dead drunk by the time they got alongside the ship, so many of them were hauled aboard by the ship's crane with wire cargo net, back onto the ship, and in serious trouble of course. One the - my dear friend, a dear friend to Doreen and myself, was one of them, but because he was the officers, Chief Petty Officer Cook, he wasn't in
- 39:00 any trouble, if they put him in jail, or put him back ashore in jail, they wouldn't have a good cook to look after them. So George got away with that, but he was paralytic, dreadful to see, and he was a good friend of mine even though he was a chief petty officer and I was only a sailor. His galley was on the aft end of our gun deck and any time he wanted to mix ice cream for tea for the night, for the officers, he would pick
- 39:30 a sailor and we'd turn the churn for him, on the condition that we got a cup of ice cream. Well, I was a very good friend of George's onboard, because the ice cream suited me down to the ground, but he was dead drunk, dreadful. I can't recall any other real trouble, they'd come aboard wobbly
- 40:00 and waving, weaving up and down the gangway. But the master at arms, the head policeman or security man on board, he would eye everyone up and down and as long as they didn't bring it aboard, that was their danger. At one stage, some of them got a bit thirsty and mixed up some torpedo fuel with some carbon tetrachloride from our fire
- 40:30 extinguishers. Fire extinguishers used to have carbon tetrachloride, it's illegal now to be sold, but they'd mix this up and make a real good drop of 'hooch', they used to call it.

That sounds like real rocket fuel?

Rocket fuel. Well, they would get onto this but so carefully and so cautiously. There was a lot of nonsense on the old ship, not a lot.

Tape 7

- 00:31 **So Roy can you tell me about the music aboard the Hobart?**
- Yes I certainly can, because it was a lovely, favourable subject of mine. I befriended all the bandmen because of my interest in music, in fact I was paid thruppence every time I cleaned one of their cornets, just as a bit of fun, but it developed into a job. We had a band
- 01:00 of fourteen or so people and every opportunity that I could, I would attend for a band rehearsal or concert party, maybe and I'd like to talk about concert parties, but the band's territory was really on the quarterdeck and fortunately being a quarterdeck man, that means I worked on the quarterdeck to clean it and everything. We would at times muster on
- 01:30 the quarterdeck right by the band, now I would be as close as possible to the band so that I could hear this beautiful music and rising up on the top of a wave and down on the stern and leaning over with the wave and tossing the ship around lightly to see the movement of the body and the instruments still being played, I thought was marvellous for training and control of their
- 02:00 skills. But we saw a lot of the band as individuals when time permitted. We had a big recreation room, directly below our second forward turret, B Turret and this recreation room was able to be blacked out completely and practically airtight, because we would test gas,
- 02:30 respirators, testing I don't know what else, but anything where you needed a sealed compartment, this rec room was marvellous and it was a recreation room. Well word would get around that there's going to be a jam session in the rec room at say 1600 today, 4 o'clock this afternoon. Well of course I seemed to hear about it

- 03:00 every time, I would be up there sitting on the deck, no seating and there'd be bandsmen up there, playing requests, just all unofficial, not in uniform whatever their uniform of the day was, shorts nothing else maybe in the tropics and locked up to be, if it was a night time, blackout, daytime a bit of air coming through. And these fellows would play their
- 03:30 instruments and just have a request afternoon and just absolutely marvellous and one of the sailors would bring his mouth organ or one of them would bring his spoons or they had their various means of musical entertainment. But the most outstanding performance in my book was by a, one of our cooks, Norm Murdoch from Melbourne. Norm had
- 04:00 what I termed and I can't think of any better term, a piano playing stick. We had a piano in the rec room, well secured with ropes and Norm would play any tune you liked on his black ebony stick which had 8, I suppose little knobs on it, extended knobs to give you the octaves and the quavers and everything that was needed in music,
- 04:30 and this was absolutely beautiful music by manoeuvring the stick up and down the keys and I was fascinated by that and I often wondered what happened to it. Probably 10, 15, 20 years ago before he passed away, I asked him, "What was the background of this piano playing stick?" "Oh," he said, "It was just something that I took to Roy and I just absolutely loved mastering the music with it, and
- 05:00 an old musician made it for him and he just took to it and played it beautifully." We had a bandsman who was a Musical Arranger for Jim Davidson's Orchestra and he was a marvellous musician. We had double bass, all the brass instruments and these people of course had to play string, but they didn't ever play string for us, that
- 05:30 was for officers. We loved; we really loved our recreation room and the jazz sessions, very good. And was also our gambling room unofficially, the gambling people would get up there on pay day and play their crown and anchor and two up, I don't know if they could play two up, when I think about it the deck head was all that far away. But they had their illegal gambling and
- 06:00 we had a seaman from Hobart, Tasmania who was not a popular man because he ran the gambling, the older hands objected to him in this respect, not because he won their money, but he'd look out for new comers aboard the ship and he'd make himself known to a raw looking innocent, just
- 06:30 away from Mummy's apron type of bloke and welcome him aboard the ship and any time you want to win a few quid come up to the rec room on whatever, and he played on these youngsters and we didn't like it. But he made a lot of money and it was all frowned upon and he couldn't bank it because it was all unofficial, so he had to carry this wad of notes with him and strange as it was and
- 07:00 peculiar as it may sound, he was in my mess, number 22 mess and one night at tea, at say 5 o'clock at night time he undid his shirt and pulled out this huge roll, fat roll of notes, pound notes and 10 shillings notes and 5 pounds and he handed
- 07:30 me a whatever I don't remember and he said, "Oh, pop up to the canteen, Scrive, and get the mess some tin fruit, I'll shout the mess tin fruit." You didn't have tinned fruit, it was a canteen job, so our canteen was opened and I just went up and got x number of tins of fruit paid for by the fellow who ran the gambling. At 10 to seven that night the torpedo struck us and took Sam and his money over board in pieces
- 08:00 so we lost all our money finally. And it was a sad thought that I was the bloke who had to help him spend a bit of it on our team of 12 fellows in the mess. The recreation room was a good room and for the gambling it was a bad room. The band used to do their rehearsals there in the daytime. The bugler used to lock himself in and practice his
- 08:30 bugling. When we were torpedoed the band were given the duty of playing soft music over the speakers throughout the ship as a soother and they played Strauss and some of the light hearted, Austrian, German composers and it was lovely, lovely. So our music was
- 09:00 pretty good, pretty good, especially for me being so keen on it. They would play for our church services but they didn't have all that much to do, other than once a week it seems, they had, they didn't play their music when we were at action stations, their duties mainly went down to right below decks where the transmitting station was,
- 09:30 where the range of enemy and speed of enemy and wind direction, and wind rates and everything were coordinated into a final directive to go to the guns, the four inch guns and the six inch guns, and the bandsmen operated that. In the British navy they would have been marines, our bandsmen did it.
- 10:00 So the bandsmen played a big big part in the navy life for a cruiser man. The destroyer man and the corvette man would say "Who'd want a band? We're not sissies, we don't need pretty music, yes we loved it, we loved it." And talking about music, the night peace was declared, not signed, the night peace was declared, we had a disc jockey for the want of a term, there was no such term
- 10:30 at the end of the war. But the fellow who got the nickname of 'Jitters' because he loved doing Jitterbug, mad dancer, Jitters Tregar used to play music over the tannoy, the address system and in quite times, not during the day, say in the dog watches from 4 o'clock to 6 at night sometimes and he

- 11:00 played Rum and Coca Cola nearly all night, just for the heck of it and if I was to hear Rum and Coca Cola or the Andrew Sisters now, takes my mind straight back to the 15th of August when Japan said they would give the war away. Jitters Tregar, and he would be in our rec room every time there would be a musical night, just lovely.
- 11:30 I had a nice music occasion in Japan, not to do with Hobart. But the Royal Marines attached to the British Embassy where I lived under the title of HMS Return, the base that the British navy formed 'They Beat the Retreat' one night was an augmented band made up of bandmen from the various battleships
- 12:00 and aircraft carriers and cruisers in Tokyo bay for the surrender and had lingered on or had been replaced or come up fresh. They Beat the Retreat, and what a marvellous musical occasion that was for me, military music with pick of bandmen, of military bandmen from the worlds forces as far as I'm concern Royal Marine Band and
- 12:30 it was a parade outside the main entrance, the front gate of the British Embassy where there was plenty of spectator area and bandmen and marines, rifle marine for parade, thousands of Americans there, goggle eyed at this parade, couldn't get enough of it, beautiful and a smattering of Japanese who were
- 13:00 game enough to come out into an allied crowd. And people, Japanese who looked after the embassy, they were out there watching it and admiring every ounce from the Royal Marine music, beautiful, just lovely.

I'd like to go back to after the Battle of the Coral Sea.

13:30 So we're now in 1943, what was the Hobart doing?

The Coral Sea was in 1942, between 1942 and when we were torpedoed, we had the Solomon Island Campaign in between. And I'd like to recall a reason why the Japanese knew the Americans were around. The Japanese had

- 14:00 come down and landed and occupied areas of the east coast of Papua New Guinea, Lae, Salamaua, Madang and the Allies could see that there was a nasty purpose for our cause in this that they were determined to expand south
- 14:30 and if they were going to take and occupy Australia, then the Americans supply line and forward base was going to be thoroughly threatened, so the Americans had to get rid of them quick smart. So they sent two American, two of their Aircraft Carriers down and carried out raids on these
- 15:00 areas. Unfortunately, for them, for the Americans, the Japanese were astute enough to be able to identify the aircraft carriers that these aircraft were coming from. Number one, they were identified very readily as seaborne aircraft, so they had to have a carrier with them. And unfortunately each aircraft
- 15:30 had its carriers number painted on the side to identify it and of course the Japanese then could tell the world that they knew that the [USS] Enterprise and [USS] Lexington were in their vicinity. Send some aircraft carriers down. So this they did, now the Americans had learned and knew that the Japanese were mustering aircraft carriers,
- 16:00 will muster aircraft carriers and get rid of the Japanese. But the Americans themselves indirectly told the enemy that we were around, simply by identifying the aircraft carrier's number, fatal mistake but perfectly normal. I'm sure the Brits would have painted out the number but this is the Americans, early war we're talking about April,
- 16:30 April even to March in 1942, only 3 months after Pearl Harbour, 3 or 4 months after Pearl Harbour, so they had to recover not daring to give time to respond, how to respond they forced their response themselves by alerting the Japanese. But the code,
- 17:00 the Australian code people in Melbourne were able to decode the Japanese signals and knew what the Japanese were preparing for. So to alert the Allies, the Americans, to the plans to come into New Guinea and take Port Moresby. So that started the Coral Sea
- 17:30 part of it. Now between the Coral Sea and our next vicious campaign, the Solomon Islands. We patrolled the area between New Caledonia, New Hebrides, Solomon Island, Cape York, a big circle, a big area too. HMAS Australia and USS Chicago
- 18:00 and destroyers remained in the area of South East New Guinea, Papua after the Coral Sea Battle waiting for the return of the enemy. We were needing fuel so we went to Brisbane and did not go back for awhile. But it developed into just patrol, patrol, patrol. We did not know that the Japanese Fleet came back
- 18:30 and it's not generally spoken about, but the Japanese came back to the South Pacific to an area if my memory serves me right, parallel to Townsville, now that's a long way out of the area where we expected the Japanese to go back to. They did not go back. They came back into our area to find us, but

we had all gone down to Noumea and probably Samoa

- 19:00 was another area the Americans were using as a starting up point. So we had disappeared but Hobart and a couple of American destroyers sheltered and waited in the Barrier Reef for the next move but we did not know the move was under way so we escaped any more trouble and the Japanese escaped back to their advance bases in
- 19:30 the Northern New Guinea area. Our patrols were completely boring for many, many months up and down 'the paddock' as we called it, waiting and alert and prepared and rehearsing, doing evolutions and learning to tow a ship from the stern or from
- 20:00 forward, anti aircraft shoots, someone would allow us an aircraft so they'd flew an aircraft over with a drogue, being the target being towed, and everyone would have a pop at it. All these things went on for months until finally the decision by the Allies to invade Guadalcanal to get the Japanese away from an airfield, which the Americans finally won
- 20:30 and called Henderson after a hero from Midway Island Encounter, American and Japanese, 'Henderson Field'. Japanese were developing this field and were within days of it being operated when the Americans landed to take it away from them and these preparations were probably in practice a month before
- 21:00 hand troops coming up from Wellington, New Zealand, Hobart was one of the escorts. We did a practise invasion on Koro Island, an island in the Fiji group, all the people were evacuated while the marines landed. Their first rehearsal for a combined operation with Australian navy
- 21:30 under British system and the American marines. The marines were landed, as though it was a hostile shore, we threw fully armed ammunition at them, knowing where to shoot, knowing where to drop them ahead of the troops all the time. Bombs, the aircraft bombed them with full bomb loads and exploded them
- 22:00 close enough to them to let them know that this was going to happen in a few days time, fair dinkum. So they had a, what we would call a full calibre rehearsal on Koro Island. When we left Koro we rendezvous with the most gorgeous sight I could possibly envisage of the full American Fleet coming down to support this big turn in the war,
- 22:30 oh marvellous fleet, some of them joined us and carried on with our little fleet while they stayed over the horizon, armed and ready for whatever the Japanese would send down to repulse us. The weather straight away became overcast and was so for
- 23:00 I think for the next 3 days, which was what we needed to get to our positions in the southern Solomons. So no one knew we were coming, they did send an aircraft over one day, but it was shot down but evidently before it got any messages out. It probably didn't see the fleet because of the mist covering us. So we arrived and carried out the invasion of the Solomon Islands
- 23:30 and won the day. The Americans won Henderson Field and the aircraft carriers were able to not only support us to counter the Japanese air attacks, but they were able to use the airfield now and day by day their strength appeared to be stronger and
- 24:00 to such a degree of course that it was taken over completely, not before there was some very, very heavy fighting in the hill and mountains behind Guadalcanal., very bad for the marines. Unfortunately for them, bad mistake on the Americans. When they lost so many of their ships and their support and the aircraft carriers had retired because they expected opposition and they
- 24:30 wanted to be ready for it with fuel and more bombs and ammunition. We also retired and took with us all of the unloaded troop and cargo ships, so the Americans fighting deathly ashore were short of medical supplies, ammunition,
- 25:00 desperately short of food because we took it all away, escorting the transports to safer positions, to Noumea, I think all to Noumea. And that was disaster for the poor marines, they were left destitute practically. They would get the Solomon Island natives, who became friendly
- 25:30 and supportive to raid the Japanese food dumps and ammunition dumps, so the Americans could carry on. Disaster really, a sad part of an important campaign, and it took them until February to dislodge the Japanese completely from August.

During the Solomon offensive

- 26:00 **action, were you called upon to fire your gun?**

Oh my very word. We were bombarding ashore with our 6 inch guns, with our 4 inch guns, our anti aircraft guns were well and truly busy with dive bombers, with torpedo bombers, and high level bombers. And we in the four inch just as busy, our 6 inch weren't used other

- 26:30 than for bombarding, but I don't know that they used them very often for that. We were fired over by the heavier 8 inch guns from the Americans in the early days of that campaign. But an interesting thing

there, torpedo bombing was not new to the British side of the war, but it was brand new to the American side of the war. Theoretically of course,

- 27:00 they'd rehearsed over the years to perfect their torpedo bombing aircraft and they were torpedo bombed in Pearl Harbour but there was no response from the Americans, now they had to at sea repel torpedo bombers and they very soon copied the British scheme of firing
- 27:30 their major guns at the low flying pack flight of torpedo bombers to break them up and to put them off course and to put the pilot's brain a little bit out of sync to disrupt him entirely, so instead of coming in as a flight of torpedo bombers, the six inch guns would not fire to hit the aircraft, they
- 28:00 would fire the water ahead of them to put up a wall of heavy water, which the torpedo bombers had to dodge or fly through and get pulled down into the water, but it disrupted them entirely to have a big sheet of water in front of them, a very professional way of damaging a good intention of the Japanese. And when they did come through, every gun at every ship was firing madly and
- 28:30 cross firing into Allied ships themselves. We all had to wear tin hats, as we called them. Not only for splinters from what the Japs were dropping, but cross fire from other ships that was striking us and not necessarily striking a ship, but hitting the water close by to pepper you with bits and pieces of
- 29:00 shell or bullets whatever. So everyone was pretty hectic, very hectic. I used to have the number of shells that we fired, but of course I've lost that over the years but busy days, busy days. I think on the next, the second day the Japanese woke up to us a little bit and instead of coming straight into the fleet
- 29:30 they would come in behind the hills on the Tulagi side, on the eastern side, the north eastern side of this bay, "Iron Bottom Bay" they finally called it, away from our radar, they knew that the radar could not catch them because it bounced back from the hills, and over the hills without much
- 30:00 warning would come the dive bombers and the torpedo bombers. But we were awake up a lot of the time by our coast watcher purposely placed on the island, in the central Solomons along a route along, which the Japanese would fly to come direct down to
- 30:30 Guadalcanal, Tulagi area where we were performing and the coast watchers would report, 'so many aircraft and such and such a type, flying by now, headed your way, such and such miles per hour'. So we would be waiting cause the next coast watcher down in line would report the same thing and another would report it,
- 31:00 so successfully that we would be sitting waiting for the attacks to come. And we would be fed, they'd be cooks to the galley and each gun position would send down whoever was nominated, to get some food for everyone on the gun and this would happen all throughout the ship, all the areas would send their nominated person to go to the galley to get sandwiches or Cornish
- 31:30 pasties on one occasion, fruit cake probably, or prepared bulk food, and you'd have a quick meal and a cigarette if they were smokers and because at 2 o'clock there was going to be another attack or a time that the coast watchers nominated, arrive you 15:00 or 13:00 or whatever, so we would be sitting waiting
- 32:00 and that did catch the Japanese unaware. Whether one of our ships, one of the American store ships was struck with a Kamikaze determination we don't know but one of the ships, the [USS] George F Elliot was not unloaded, she was struck by a crashing Japanese aircraft, later on when Kamikaze was perfected they did it
- 32:30 purposefully and without being damaged, this fellow was damaged and was about to ditch when he struck the George F Elliot and put it on fire and created a beacon for a few nights which was very exciting. So from the Solomons it was back to the paddock, back to the paddock, up and down, up and down, I think we came to Sydney at one stage,
- 33:00 well Brisbane yes. New Caledonia yes, fuel, fuelled at sea so many times on magnificent tankers to us, our fellows not me, our fellows previously had experienced British tankers which were just ordinary merchant ships fuelling a fleet, marvellously, wonderfully,
- 33:30 most valuable but here the Americans were now fuelling a fleet their way and their tankers had armament that was unknown to we fellows, 5 inch guns in turrets and close range anti aircraft guns, spotted around these big ships, marvellous and of course they held their own when they were being attacked, unfortunately we
- 34:00 fuelled from one of these lovely of two, of three, [USS] Tippecanoe, [USS] Simerren and [USS] Neosho were three modernised American Fleet tankers, big. Neosho fuelled us, this is back to the Coral Sea, I'm sorry, I'm sorry we're talking about tankers perhaps, Neosho fuelled us the night
- 34:30 after the Coral Sea engagements concluded, before the Coral Sea Battle started the Neosho fuelled Hobart, went off the Brisbane to top up and refill but the Japs got her, sank her. And we were sad at losing such a lovely tanker, but we
- 35:00 fuelled at sea in the paddock, from these beautiful tankers that we called into Port Vela one time, or off

Port Vela in the New Hebrides desperately short of fuel but unfortunately the tanker had been sunk, so we had to go down to Noumea to top up our fuel. So up and down the paddock and in and out of Brisbane on an occasion

- 35:30 or two, Noumea and into New Hebrides, Espirit De Santo to fuel the night before we were, the day before we were sunk, being number 13. And that concluded the paddock for us; we came home for repairs and stayed out of the war for a long while.
- 36:00 **I'd like to hear more about the night, and I understand it was night at 7 o'clock that the Hobart was torpedoed?**
- We were torpedoed at ten to seven. If it had have been at seven o'clock a new watch would have taken over and a lot of the positions would have been more heavily manned, would have meant more deaths,
- 36:30 but the deaths mainly were from people airing themselves on the quarterdeck or waiting to go into a turret to relieve the present crew and being exposed when the torpedo hit three quarters of the way aft on the portside, just after my guns position which was more or less midships. Many of the crew were
- 37:00 waiting there to move into a turret and of course exposed, they were just blown over the side, and one of them was our paymaster and acting commander who had all the keys tied to his waist. The keys to his safe was gone, because it was attached to him, so they had to fly up a safe breaking
- 37:30 jailbird from I think, Sydney to open our safe for us, they couldn't crack it on board, so they sent this fellow from jail, escorted to the ship to open our safe. So the commander was lost. The turret closest to where the torpedo struck was reportedly blown 18 feet
- 38:00 into the air, and this is a very heavy piece of steel casing around the gun turret. Horrible for the people inside, had no idea what was happening, cause they're locked in. No injuries there, the injuries were from those people on the Upper deck who were blown overboard, or in the wardroom directly below
- 38:30 right where the torpedo entered, who were mangled and messed up a lot and then the force of the explosion even penetrated to the starboard side of the ship, to kill, I think 2 of our warrant officers who lived there, they had not a wardroom, wardroom was for officers, but a gun room was warrant officers
- 39:00 and these fellows were in their gun room having just had the evening meal, when they were killed. Our stern was practically broken, the keel, quick thinking and fortunately on a very smooth sea, but pitch black the engineering department, secured a very heavy
- 39:30 wire around the ship's stern to prevent it from falling off and this succeeded, it held the stern together. If there had have been much more than a ripple, the stern would have overpowered everything and fallen off and probably capsized the ship, this didn't happen, everything was under control, very quickly
- 40:00 they had electricity back on board, back in operation, the steering was difficult, so they had to have propeller steering, we lost 2 propellers and nearly lost a second propeller, so steering was difficult so we were towed in back to where we fuelled at the Espirit De Santo,
- 40:30 some hundred of miles distance, by two American tugs and escorted by 2 or 3 American destroyers, all very capably done as though they'd done it every day of their lives and here, yes the war wasn't all that new by now, August nearly twelve months old but very capable handling by the Americans. We secured alongside a,
- 41:00 nothing special ship but a lovely ship, USS Vestal, a repair ship, saw World War I, was directly behind one of the battleships in battleship row, when Pearl Harbour was savaged, so survived that and here she was permanently moored at this big base, powerful base, for the Americans,
- 41:30 Espirit De Santo, New Hebrides.

Tape 8

- 00:33 **Roy, you were just telling us about the night the Hobart was torpedoed, you mentioned earlier that the Hobart had refuelled the day before and the day after was the day you were torpedoed, it was night time 7 o'clock, 10 to 7. Was it a surprise attack?**
- Absolutely, to use the current
- 01:00 word, absolutely. Our Flagship, HMAS Australia was leading us. We had been out to rendezvous with HMAS Warramunga to pick up dispatches, why they then signalled them I don't quite know, but this is as far as I know is the right side of it. We had to rendezvous with Warramunga to pick up dispatches or orders or whatever.
- 01:30 Dark night again, typical Pacific Night, moonless and where we were headed for, I don't know, I don't think we were going back to the New Hebrides, I think we were just going to then reverse or something

and go back into the paddock when a horrible, but muffled, not ear splitting by any means

- 02:00 explosion occurred. Few would know where the explosion was. We didn't know if we'd blown up or whether something had hit us, we didn't know whether it was forward, midship or aft on the port or starboard side. But of course within moments something was wrong aft. Our speed was slowed and our list, so it was on the portside
- 02:30 and it was just below our guns. So those of us close by knew where it was, lots of stuff went up, I got hit across the nose with a piece of, I assume a piece of water pipe. Stuff was raining down all over us. But no one was expecting anything because, nothing had happened for months and this was the boredom of the paddock. It transpired that the Japanese
- 03:00 Submarine Commander spotted an American cruiser, of the San Francisco class, well that could sound like us, but stories and evolution in stories told us that he fired at the first of the two ships, which was nothing like us,
- 03:30 three funnelled HMAS Australia, but if he was ten miles away, which is the case, to spot a ship on a dark night and aim for a particular ship would be very difficult. But these long lanced torpedoes which the Japanese against the rules of war, designed and used were very, very smart.
- 04:00 Travelled very fast, propelled by oxygen, instead of compressed air. And oxygen would explode rather than pressurise to give the torpedo speed and with that velocity, just made it such a very powerful weapon. At ten miles he missed his supposed target and caught the one behind. Now I
- 04:30 can only go by supposition, that he aimed at the flag ship, cause he saw it, but the flagship...he missed out on his calculations and missed it well enough to hit the ship in stern. I can only go by reports there, I can't answer for
- 05:00 it, because I wasn't involved in the decision making area of the navy by any means, but the ship slowed to a stop, my gun P2, 4inch was ordered to fire star shell to illuminate, illuminate whatever we could, but at a 10 mile distance it wouldn't have done much. The American destroyers
- 05:30 raced around, our escort, raced around pinging for submarines on their sonar, asdic as we call it. They found nothing because 10 miles was out of our range anyway. So we calmed ourselves down and prepared to re-enter and repair, which we did. After the war I contacted the skipper
- 06:00 of the submarine, through the Japanese Consul. They would not let me write to him, he was a farmer now, between Yokohama and Tokyo. They would not let me write to him, all communications had to go through the consul's office in Wynyard in Sydney. And I would go in there and hear his replies to my, to their letters on my behalf.
- 06:30 I invited him down to a reunion in 1970 in Hobart, Tasmania, the first of our big national reunions, which was my joy and pleasure to organise and he was to be part of it, but he would not come down because, he knew that it was only a trick to get him down so we could square ourselves off with him and kill the poor man.
- 07:00 I endeavoured to get my message through to him that it was patting on the shoulder and handshakes that would kill him, nothing else because we would love to meet him but he didn't see it my way. The Association saw it my way, they just left everything to me, otherwise I would not have worked for it. But he wouldn't come down, neither would he answer any questions about the torpedo. So I'd loved to
- 07:30 have known whether he saw us or the Australia or just how many torpedoes he had fired. We were supposed to have been hit forward by a torpedo that did not go off. I don't know much about that other than for the fact that when we were dry docked in Cockatoo Dock for repairs, there was rather a big dent on the port side forward, as though
- 08:00 that could have been that second torpedo. I have my doubts because I can't imagine a Japanese torpedo miss firing or not firing, because they were so good, they'd mastered them. However, there's some conjecture on my part and I can only say that we thought we had been hit by a second torpedo. There was no panic other than the one person, everyone
- 08:30 just got to their action stations without being told. The deck was blown high, timbers were all askew, frames damaged, internal frames, many of the areas were locked off so that the water would not overtake. A point that saved us from further damage, would have
- 09:00 saved us from further damage, had the sea been rough was the fact that our main deck, which is not the upper deck, but the main deck below was one foot above water level on standard displacement, so the ship had to sink a foot before any water took over forward to damage our balance. Added to that was the fact
- 09:30 that we had had a plate welded across each entrance to a compartment below decks on the passageway, one foot high which would have caused the water to rise yet another foot before it spread throughout the ship. We were pretty safely secure against flooding, and we were not flooded, they soon corrected the list and

10:00 managed to get back to the repair ship, the USS Vestal in Espirit De Santo.

You told us the story earlier on that you'd gone to the canteen to get some tinned fruit and then you'd come back and then you were torpedoed. You were hit on the nose.

10:30 **Do you recall much of that moment?**

It was only that moment, yes I can recall it, just something belted me across the - between the eyes across the bridge of my nose, there was no blood, there was no need to do anything, I just got a hit and so did many people, thumped on the shoulder and bang, did you hear that on my tin hat, gee did you get any of that, no it's just

11:00 like lighting a cigarette I suppose, no there was nothing, no follow up, no damage or anything. There were many wounded, many injured, I had nothing to do with them. I had nothing to do with the horror side of it until we had a burial party the next day when bodies and bits of bodies were put together on a plank and one

11:30 by one slid over board, they endeavoured to match the parts as best they could, it's difficult when it's raw meat of course but some of the planks, they're all laid on a plank before they'll stitch into canvas. Rather than just bury

12:00 a half plank's worth, does that sound decent, they would accumulate parts to make a worthwhile appearance of a body under the canvas, some of them were complete. I think from my memory now, most of them were composite but they were all

12:30 given a decent burial, the captain, firing salute, firing party. As a volunteer, I don't feel that I was proud of doing anything special, I think my principles of helping and love for my fellow man would have forced me to volunteer for something that others would find a little bit obnoxious,

13:00 I had no worries. I suppose I was proud, but no one patted you on the back, you just went and got about business when it was over, but it was a nice occasion, very hallowed, very polite and typical navy, just lovely. And so we said goodbye to, I think

13:30 10 or 12 bodies, I'm just not sure now, I'm not sure. Worst than that was when we came home and finally to Sydney, we stayed in at Espirit De Santo for a month, sailed off to Sydney, escorted by our Australian destroyers Warramunga and [HMAS] Arunta, got to Sydney and when we got into dock which was not straight away then, they drained the dock of course and then drained all the areas that had been wet,

14:00 filled with water. And they called for volunteers to clear the remains out of these flooded compartments, and I was one of those volunteers, that was gruesome, not nice. I couldn't eat quince jam now because there was... it was a store and the bits of bodies were blown into the store through the bulkhead and

14:30 quince jam was evidently a popular item in the wardroom and here was flesh and quince jam all mixed up. So I can hardly eat quince jam, not since, dreadful.

And that was a few days after - ?

Oh that was a month, probably a month and a week, two weeks after they'd been sealed off.

15:00 I'm going to cry, that's not like me, what have you done to me? I've never done that in my life, except the other night on my book, sorry about that Kath, I should talk about it more often.

15:30 Oh what a disgrace.

I don't think it's a disgrace.

See, you shouldn't sympathise, you did that, you did that. You're not rolling, are you?

We can turn it off if you want.

Oh, Ok. What, are you letting a few go?

Yeah, you're not the only one.

I've ridiculed people for doing that.

I think it's good.

What 60 years later, I thought I was a big boy.

You are.

Ok.

Hang in a minute, what am I going to ask you now? Ok.

16:30 **The Australian navy was able to determine who the aggressor was?**

Who?

Who the attacker was?

Oh yes, everything was identified. Remember, I'd contacted him. Yes, the Australian navy knew about it. He was attacked again I think in Truc but managed to survive.

17:00 He had a lot of success around the Australian coast, he had a successful tour, I think he went back home after our episode; I'm not quite sure about that. I think that was the finish of that cruise, he survived the war, which is marvellous for a submariner, marvellous.

So it was a Japanese Sub that torpedoed the Hobart?

Mmmm

17:30 Yes there were many survivors, I'm quite sure. And I was very sorry that I couldn't meet him, it would have been wonderful.

And did you twenty odd years later, really want to meet him?

Well, I was wrapped up in reunions and the Hobart Association. No one would

18:00 know other than Dorian just what effort I put into that and just what utter pleasure it was, as hard as it was; for hours, I would work over, after midnight, so, so often, typing up and preparing whatever had to be prepared with thoughts and a million

18:30 goodies for the Association people to make it the most successful and strongest Association of any ex-ship Association in Australia. I'm careful how I say that, because I wouldn't say any Naval Association because the Corvette Association is made up of members from 63 corvettes, I only had one ship and then finally two

19:00 ships, two Hobarts. But we were by far the strongest of them all, all because of my efforts, if I may say so about myself, which I don't like doing but this is why I received the OAM [Order of Australia Medal] because of the work in the Hobart Association. And just one of the marvellous things would be to get this Japanese skipper down to meet the fellows. They would be very warm to him, no risk,

19:30 sure we lost our friends on that night, I had a marvellous experience, talking about meeting people after the event. Many years after the event, in fact in about 1980 we moved here in 1988, I'll say 1980, I got a call from the Australian navy asking "If I

20:00 was the Roy Scrivener who was aboard Hobart when she was torpedoed?" "Yes" "Do you remember an American navy liaison officer by the name of Saddock?" I said, "Well, I don't remember what he looked like but I can certainly remember a liaison officer by the name of Saddock and I assumed that he would be American, but I didn't know him, I knew he caught a shark one day." "Well, we

20:30 have had lots of communication from his family, since the event of him dying aboard the ship, the torpedoing. We are now endeavouring to close the subject and help these people and someone has in desperation suggested that you might be someone of help." So, naturally I was only too happy to help them

21:00 they gave me the address of this ensign's brother, sorry I'm moving forward, this ensign's brother in America who is still determined to on behalf of his family, get the reasons behind

21:30 his brother's death. So I wrote to them, but I don't think they would have had the letter for 5 minutes, before they wrote back and I had a lovely letter from this Ken Saddock asking for whatever details I could give him. So I rattled on another letter and letters flowed between the U.S and Australia

22:00 for the Saddock's and the Scriveners and we got to know each other personally through correspondence, very personally and one letter or a phone call one day, said, "We're coming out to meet you." So the brother, his wife Norma and his sister, Elaine all came out to meet

22:30 Doreen and me because of the effort of finding his brothers information. And we had become very personal friends and it still is a great friendship. They only came out here the once, and we gave them a good, royal welcome and did so much for them, lovely. Our local RSL here had a memorial day, when anyone who lost anyone during

23:00 the war invited to place a white cross on the lawn, and because I had lost no one through the war, I asked the Saddock's if I could place one for their brother, and I did and I posted it off to them, all great, all great.

After the torpedoing the Hobart returned for repairs, which were quite lengthy?

23:30 Oh yes the whole ship was modernised. Belted apart.

And I understand there was one more action at Cebu Island, that you took part in, in 1945?

Oh there were a number more, but none dramatic, our war had closed down, really. Shame that they

spent 6 million

- 24:00 dollars on the ship and it wasn't used for its purpose again. But we joined the American 7th, 5th Fleet and 7th Fleet in the Southwest Pacific Area. Starting off in the Philippines we went into Leyte, sight of a horrible lot of battles between the American army and the Japanese.
- 24:30 When we got into Leyte you had a handkerchief to your nose all the time, the bodies were still floating around bloated, dead, Americans and Japanese, it was so soon after the engagements that we were there. But we were not involved in it, but we were called on to assist the American marines to land in a Phillipino city Cebu,
- 25:00 which we did with the Australian destroyers Arunta and Warramunga and other heavier American warships. Bit of an alarm one day a submarine was picked up, but that was a false alarm, there were no aircraft, nothing came back from shore to us it was just a case of us bombarding with our 6 inch and 4 inch guns, a peaceful part of the war. From there we were in and out of Manila
- 25:30 and Subic Bay, a very strong and large American Base. We were called over to the invasion of Borneo, the campaigns at Labuan, Balikpapan, Tarakan and Brunei, bombarding with 6 inch and 4 inch. Supporting the AIF for the first
- 26:00 time for us and a real thrill to think that their were Aussies going ashore and we were there to make it easier for them. But there again nothing came back from the shore to us, no aircraft worried us, there were none there, it was just another peaceful war as far as we were concerned. And an easy area of the war for our new crew, because the crew
- 26:30 was majority of new people. Most of them just out of training, as I was for the Coral Sea but I was only one of 3 or 4 who joined, here we had maybe 200 joined who had never been to sea before, so it was an easy way for them to experience the use of the ship in war, but a one sided effort as far as
- 27:00 the ship was concerned, because nothing came back or down. So we simply did our duty in supporting the soldiers going ashore. Bombarding the oil fields, caves, we had targets assigned to the ship, from spotter aircraft and military people ashore guiding us,
- 27:30 guiding our direction of fire. In fact at this time a new group had been formed, within the Australian navy, of army people and it was titled the Naval Bombardment Group, and we would have soldiers onboard who would coordinating soldier's ashore messages or
- 28:00 appeals for help or your undershooting by half a mile or directing our gunfire through their liaisons ashore by army people, talking army language cause they were soldiers, our soldiers. So we had bombardment liaison group onboard and my brother married into one of the families of one of them, to a family of one of them. So our
- 28:30 targets were well prepared for us and understood because it was Australian language that we were listening to and obliging, so while all that was going on, we were called away to bombard again in Wewak, New Guinea, so we went down with our Australian destroyers again and rendezvoused there with some Australian Corvettes
- 29:00 we went down with and we took in fact, HMS New Finland, a beautiful British Royal Navy cruiser, who I had a lot to do with, because her commander and our commander knew each other and because I was the commander's writer and it was up to me to prepare my commander's needs for the
- 29:30 liaison and we took the New Finland down and bombarded Wewak again, nothing came back from the shore, nothing came down because we had control of the air. And just a diversion from the Borneo Campaign. From Borneo we rendezvoused with other ships and we rested and fuelled and replenished our stores in a place called
- 30:00 Tawi Tawi, a picturesque place with a dreadful history, the Japanese had used it as a major assembly point for some of their big campaigns against the Americans and Shropshire and Australian, HMAS Shropshire and HMAS Australia, HMAS Arunta, in the central Philippines, disastrous
- 30:30 naval battles, they sailed from Tawi Tawi and here we were rendezvousing with supply ships and tankers in Tawi Tawi directly between the Philippines and North Borneo, a memorable place. In and out of Tawi Tawi and back over to Subic Bay in the Philippines and in and out of Manila
- 31:00 until another trip into Manila the American Fleets had arrived and here was the harbour just chock a block of everything the Americans could muster in every type of warship. We saw our first helicopter, they were brand new, the American hadn't quite realised they had them, so here was a helicopter flying around to show itself.
- 31:30 Battleships, aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers everything that a ship lover would be so excited about, boy. So we knew that there was something coming up and it was to be the invasion of Japanese, which we were mustering for. We went to sea, in and out of Subic Bay to hone our anti aircraft firing skills

- 32:00 with American equipment in targets that we were shooting. I can remember one day, oh there must have been 10, 11, 12 American cruisers in line ahead of us, shooting at this aircraft, drogue, target, that the aircraft was pulling along. We didn't ever get a shot; they'd shot it down well before we came up to our turn. But we were there to rehearse and
- 32:30 see what the Americans were doing and what marvellous preparations they were making. So we were preparing for the invasion of Southern Japan when out one day, peace was not declared but the Japanese were suing for peace to agree to the Potsdam Conference Restrictions on them and
- 33:00 so we went into Subic Bay and peace was declared, that they had surrendered. The Americans shot themselves up, they fired every possible colour flare and shot some of their companions and played up a little bit. Our best celebration was that we were allowed to swim over the side for the second time that day. There was a bottle of beer issued to each person who wanted it onboard.
- 33:30 So peace was declared and we then moved over to Japan.
- And when you left the Hobart, I understand that navy boys have a very special relationship to their first ship, like the mother ship. Was the Hobart like your mother ship to you?**
- 34:00 I was as important a part of Hobart as her funnel was, as her mast, as her bridge, I was part of it. You're only allowed two years, in my day, two years aboard a ship, they say that you get too familiar if you're there too long. I was four years, our Chief Cook, George Ingram was four years,
- 34:30 some of them were longer, but I was very favoured in having a second, two year period on board, but by the time you've done two years, everyone else thinks you're part of the ship too, you're an old hand. A new
- 35:00 group would join one day somewhere and we all know that they'll be a destroyer alongside or a boat alongside with new draft in, new people, oh you'd muster there to see if you knew anyone, and if you did know someone you felt more part of the ship, you felt so important that you'd been there longer than these
- 35:30 people, but you'd grown up longer onboard with those who were already there. Superiority itself produced in the lower deck, not many people are put on a pedestal, but a lot of them put themselves on a pedestal by being on a ship for two years, they put you on a bit of a pedestal,
- 36:00 to be there for four years you're on a big high pedestal, and so it was with me. You sort of accepted as part of the ship and you feel it yourself. I felt so proud to be selected to go ashore to Tokyo and to be lent to the Royal Navy, but by golly I was sorry that I was
- 36:30 leaving the old Hobart, very sorry. And I was very proud to let those who wished know that I was Hobart, HMAS Hobart always very proud of it. I imagine it would be with any other ship; I'm only speaking of me because I know me. I was very proud of that ship, I was very satisfied that
- 37:00 Hobart was to be my ship, to do my sea time in before I went to the UK for training, now I decided to stay aboard it, but boy I knew what ship I was wishing to stay aboard. I loved that ship from the word go, great ship. And my days in Tokyo, probably soon took my interest in the ship off the fore part of my brain
- 37:30 and it went to the back a bit because Tokyo was exciting. Yes, I had a good war, aboard a good ship.
- We've come to the end of our session, is there anything that you would like to add to that, before we close?**
- I don't think so other than my respect
- 38:00 for, my respect for those people whom I chose to befriend. I've always....until I was involved with the Hobart Association, I always been very selective in people who I wish to be bothered with and I don't have a lot of bosom pals. For the first time in
- 38:30 my life, I've got a neighbour who I can go and visit. I've never visited neighbours. I've been thrown into all of these families through HMAS Hobart Association and I didn't do the selecting, very happily they selected to support me but on the ship and
- 39:00 in the days aboard ship, whilst I thoroughly respected their training and their ability and their warriorship, is there such a word. I knew that these blokes were great blokes in a war and in action and that they made up the crew what I was going to live with for as long as navy
- 39:30 had me. But I didn't choose many of them as go ashore 'oppos', now that's a term that is so navy. If you've got a fellow aboard who's your type enough to want to go for a run ashore with, in the majority of cases it would be to get boozed up, I didn't do that, but for me to want to go ashore with a fellow
- 40:00 and go to see a film or to have a meal ashore or to go to a dance ashore, I had very few on my selection list. So now coming into the association, I was thrown into people who I would not have selected as friends, but because they have selected me as their secretary, and the complete organiser of the Association,

40:30 I was their friend and many of them were my friends too. But I don't have many, they've been very cruel to me, I gave the Association away because of the most cruel deed, that could have ever happened to a supportive worker, that I was. Would you like to hear that? No, I don't think I should because it's

41:00 impolite to a few people who think [UNCLEAR]. So.

I know that we're coming to the end of our tape so - ?

Yes, no I would just confirm that we had a masterly captain in Captain Howden and a commissioning captain, if he's a good man, his good reputation lasts the life of the ship.

41:30 Captain Howden wasn't quite our commissioning captain, but his reputation lasted right through that ship, we had an Admiral Guy Griffiths who commissioned our new Hobart, that ship had the greatest team, because Guy Griffiths was the commissioning captain and he was admired by everyone and carried a great burden on his shoulders personally to make a good ship out of it, and he succeeded. We had

42:00 that in Captain Howden, we had that in Freddy Cook.

INTERVIEW ENDS