

Australians at War Film Archive

Graham Logan - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:35 **Ok Graham we were talking off camera about this life overview. I'll first ask, if I could just you, keeping that in mind, starting with where you were born and when?**

Ok, I was born Moree, New South Wales in 1949. I grew up mainly on the east coast of New South Wales down at a place called Greenwell Point. From there,

01:00 I was just a little kid and went from there to a dairy farm at a place called Milton on the New South Wales coast. I stayed there until early teens. Early teens moved to Sydney, went to high school in Sydney. Left school in Sydney and went into the workforce. And from there, I think they must have been doing promotions on the military at the time, the navy at that period. Looked like, I don't know, some way of going away from home, 'adventure' whatever it was and I took the plunge and joined the navy.

01:30 **And tell us about joining the navy, what you went through and what service you did?**

The first part of the navy is much the same as today's recruit school where, you front up there and you do your basic aptitude fitness test. Then after they weeded out the people, they want to keep the ones that are staying in, we had to do a further medical test. That was our first encounter where they put all the group in a room, did the medicals. And then they had us enlist

02:00 in front of a Bible, turn around and say, "You join the navy for the rest of your life and you're going to be a good boy." From there you went back home and I think we had roughly about a month before you had to actually join up and they gave you a letter of warrant. From there, went to Central Railway Station in Sydney, then we were put on a train and went to Melbourne by train. When we got to Melbourne we were transported out by bus to the navy base. First encounter there, was all these people screaming and yelling at you to, "Hurry up, you should have been here

02:30 five minutes ago." So from that stage we went into basic, from memory you'd have to start your physical training, you're doing gym work, you're doing running, basic exercises plus tons and tons of marching. You got issued with your uniforms. Then you were taught how to look after your uniforms and then you'd start to learn the navy law and the way the navy wanted you to act. That went on for a period of twelve weeks. At the end of twelve weeks we had a draft to

03:00 the HMAS Sydney. Joined that in the middle of the night, didn't know one end of the ship from the other. From the Sydney, I went back to HMAS Cerberus where I did my gunnery training and from there we were told that we were going to America to pick up the HMAS Brisbane. And we were getting prepared to join the Brisbane but that didn't, they said you are going to the HMAS Hobart. And that was my first thought when I realised and said, "Isn't that in Vietnam at the moment?" And they said, "Yeah

03:30 but it's coming back." And we thought, "Ok it's coming back." And when we joined the Hobart they turned around and said, "You bastards are going back next." That was the first real encounter when we realised, hey we are going to Vietnam. Then I did the Vietnam tour and when we came back from Vietnam I was still on the ship for a while and then I went to HMAS Albatross, down near Nowra on the New South Wales coast. And from there I was working on, we were doing weapons research and bomb range

04:00 training for ships, aircraft and helicopters and we were doing the final shakedown of the aircrews that were coming back to Vietnam. From there I joined the ship in Darwin, then we went over to Japan for 'Expo 70' [Exposition]. We came back to Australia and at that stage I wanted to change my trade in the navy and they said, at that time, I couldn't. So I looked at the avenue of getting work outside of the navy. I went through the proper channels, found a company outside that were prepared to

04:30 take me on and I resigned from the navy early than my nine year enlistment. And from that time I worked in the commercial building industry and I worked up in there until a few years ago. And since then I've been retired from work.

And just briefly, I'll just ask you a question about your Vietnam service. What kind of

operations were you involved in?

I was in the gunnery branch on the Hobart. We were providing gunfire support for land based

- 05:00 army. Also we were doing sea control which they called Operation Sea Dragon where we were controlling ship movements up and down the coast and we were destroying any ship that shouldn't have been there. Any ships in covert operations we were taking them out. Then we were moving into land bombardments in support of the army. Mostly the Koreans was one of the biggest users of us, but we also did
- 05:30 a lot with the Americans and also did, I think, a small amount with the Australian Army, but very little. Most of our targets were acquired by spotter aircraft, if it wasn't spotter aircraft it was land based troops that were calling us in. And our targets I'm sure, ranged from troops to buildings, bunkers, fortifications, field depots, bridges, trucks, any aircraft that had (UNCLEAR) rocket sides. Virtually anything that was required heavy bombardment on
- 06:00 that we encountered. From there we went down to the bottom end of Vietnam, they were having problems around Vung Tau, with heavy fortifications there, and they were putting in actions against troops down there. We went up into one of the rivers there and we were wiping out the bunkers in support of, we had a high flying helicopter that was our 'spotter' and we were firing into all the bunkers destroying what was
- 06:30 there. And at that stage they tried to put divers onto us with mines and they were detected and we had to move out of that area, to clear ourselves. But at that stage we were doing a lot of damage and they were trying to react to it. There is another segment there I've missed, we came under fire, 'official fire' on three occasions from shore batteries and each time that happened, we had to retaliate, to neutralise the shore batteries.
- 07:00 Also we were off an island called Tiger Island and that's when the aircraft came under attack, sorry the ship, came under attack by aircraft and we got hit three times with missiles. And at that stage we had to withdraw, with the gun line to be repaired in the Philippines, after that we came back, straight back on the gun line.

Excellent. Ok that was a good overview. Now we're going to go into a lot more detail and we'll start with your family.

Right.

- 07:30 **Tell us about them.**

Ok with the family there was three brothers and two sisters. My brother, he was doing an apprenticeship as a bricklayer and I don't know at the time what prompted him, but he joined the navy as a construction engineer and he went into normal intake. He was down in Victoria for a while, then he was down at Canungra, not Canungra, Kapooka, I think it is

- 08:00 in Victoria [actually in New South Wales]. Then from there he got shipped over the Vietnam, so he did a tour over there as well. His tour over there was, I think two years after mine. Since then, he came back and he was a bricklayer plus, doing contracting brick work and all that, up till that stage or up until now. My younger brother he was virtually doing labouring type work, travelled all around the state, or all around the country really and he died about ten years ago.

- 08:30 My two sisters apart from normal, going for schooling and normal childhood, they have just got normal families that's it.

Tell us about as a kid growing up in, was it Green Point?

Greenwell Point.

Yeah.

Ok at Greenwell Point, of course, I was only a small kid, so I was only going to primary school and our adventures there was really because it was only a quiet village, type town.

- 09:00 You had the things like fishing, playing around on peoples boats when you shouldn't have been, just being normal kids. In the same area there we had a town, that was just out of town and, oh sorry a town, we had a house just out of town and on that we had a couple of animals. So you had your normal pets plus you had cats and dogs around the place and then you just had kids' yahooing I think, playing around
- 09:30 and not worrying about the world in general. But from there we went to a farm and on the farm you discovered that farm kids work seven days a week, it doesn't change. It was a dairy farm and you discovered that while the sun was up, you had to sort of do farm type work. And the times off, you had, again you used to do things like bike riding around the place, doing a little bit of fishing and misadventures that kids can get up to

- 10:00 on farms that your parents don't find out about.

Like what?

We had a quarry on the farm and the farm, the metal quarry was leased out to a contractor but they had an explosives shed there, and listening to the old hands talk, they used to catch fish by using gelignite and detonators. So being kids we were watching how they set up the detonators and the gelignite and the fuse and when they weren't there, we pinched all this stuff and took it down the river but the explosion

- 10:30 we had, near cleared the river along with anything else. And we never even seen if it caught fish or not because we were that scared, we just bolted. Those sort of misadventures.

And tell us about your father what kind of man was he?

Dad was an ex-Second World War 'digger' and the farm I believe that he got it through the, I think 'soldiers on the land' or something like that, I'm not sure on the detail on that and he's background

- 11:00 was mainly farming. Before he went on the farm or before he went in the army, he'd worked on the railways then he went to the war. Then he came back, he was doing a little bit of timber cutting and then he got the farm, he was a farmer. Then when we left the farm and went to Sydney he became a motor mechanic and he was working on truck maintenance and repairs. In his later life he stopped being a mechanic and he was virtually delivering the trucks to customers plus he was going to exhibition

- 11:30 shows with the new vehicles, up until he retired. That was about his life.

What would he tell you about his war service?

He didn't, in the early peace, he didn't talk much about the war, apart from that he was there in New Guinea and he had a real bitterness towards the Japanese. He would, if you mentioned the 'Japs' he would 'burr up' real quick and he'd just say, "The bloody Japs," and he wouldn't

- 12:00 pursue what was on with it. As he got older he'd talk a little bit about a couple of mates that he was over there with and it turned out then, that he'd spent a bit of time in Bougainville as well. And he kept sort of repeating, about how sort of, the Japanese were that lacking of food that they were eating their own troops and they were eating the Australian troops to survive. And that was sort of something hard for him to comprehend or acknowledge that it happened, he was very

- 12:30 angry about that. And that's about as far as he went with his stories about over there. And there was a lot of things there that he would drop bits and pieces at, but wouldn't go right into it. So he tendered to keep it to himself.

Did you notice any aspects of his behaviour which might have been a result?

In years since then yes, I've seen things there that these days you'd put down to 'stress of war'

- 13:00 and at that stage it was something that I think of that age group they just said, "That's my life," and put up with it. But yeah, later on in life, I realised that there was things there he should have been helped with and he wasn't. And I don't think the system looked after them, from when they came back, from there.

What kind of things would you see as a kid in his behaviour?

His stress of outbursts from something that would upset him or scare him and he'd have an outburst over it and to us it just looked

- 13:30 not to be normal. His fear of different things that would 'pop' up at different times, we didn't understand why, but in later life you realise what was causing it. So yeah, all that types of things and yeah, he didn't know what it was, no-one else knew what it was. When you spoke to other people of the same era as him, it was quite obvious that yeah, there was a problem there or something that they didn't want to talk about.

And what about your mother,

- 14:00 **what kind of woman was she?**

Oh just a normal housewife. There was nothing stands out or glowing different from that, just as a normal housewife mother, that was it. I can't really say much more than that, yeah.

Fair enough. Tell us about your schooling.

Schooling. Going back to like Greenwell Point that was my, mainly primary school that I recall from there. It was an era where you had

- 14:30 different classes in the one room and you had different teachers handling several different classes. That seemed ok. Then from there when we went from Milton, to the farm, it was more structured schooling then, it was larger schools and it was more, smaller class numbers, one teacher and I think there was a fair bit of fun there. Some of the schooling I naturally didn't like as a kid because you had to do homework and that. When we left there and went to Sydney,

- 15:00 when I went to high school that was the first experience I'd had with high numbers of kids at one school

and you realised that if you didn't make an effort yourself, you could easily slip into the area where you didn't perform. And in high school, I went to two high schools and one was Hurstville Boys High School and another one was Granville not Granville, Westmead High School. Westmead was a pure boys' school and the discipline there was a lot more strict. And

- 15:30 I think you had more individual tuition there as far as your education went. And again out of school, you just had normal mates where you used to 'yahoo', go to the shops when you told not to go to the shops, 'wag'[truant] school when you shouldn't have 'wagged' school, normal things kids do.

What was it like for you moving from the country to the city?

I think when you first moved you're sort of behind the city kids mainly in the social

- 16:00 'pecking order' where you, you just weren't up to current expressions, styles of dress, but it didn't take long before you become one of the city boys but at first, I think that was the biggest thing. You were just an outsider walking in but it didn't take long to blend in like everyone else.

What kinds of thing were going on with dress and culture?

Mainly hairstyles I think were, seemed to be starting to

- 16:30 pop in there. And it wasn't the later period of the 'Afros' it was before that, where kids were a little bit more self conscious about types of haircut and there was nothing glaring about it but it was just starting to hop in. Then it was the trousers you wore, like the shape of them more and that. And yeah, whatever bands were around, specific bands but if they wore something the kids were trying to imitate what they saw with the bands of the time. And a

- 17:00 big thing at the time, was when the transistor radios first came in, the portable transistor radios and you weren't 'in' unless you had one of those. It didn't mean it worked well, but if you didn't have one of those you were behind the scene.

And what kind of bands were you listening to?

Not specific ones, just current, what you could actually hear on the radios at that time. There was only in the later teens really where shows on TV and that was the biggest one that jumps to mind is like the 'Bandstand',

- 17:30 the Johnny O'Keefe type shows and the various bands they used to get on, you don't have or didn't have the range that you have now. And even a lot of that was controlled by what the parents would let you watch at home. Then it was sort of the pecking order at school, "Did you see this?" Or, "Have you heard that?" And I think the same happens today.

Why had your family moved from the country to the city?

I'd say just finances. The house, I imagine as parents are looking at the kids

- 18:00 becoming older trying to get them into better education before it was too late and that's what I imagine it would have been.

And you mentioned what your father was doing, what was that?

He was a mechanic in Sydney, a motor mechanic.

What was he working on exactly?

He was working on truck, trucks mainly, interstate trucks. The company he worked on was virtually repairers in the city, he didn't do country repairs it was all virtually, new vehicles and maintenance on new vehicles.

- 18:30 And he did that for, nearly right up until he retired.

And so tell us about ending schooling and what you went into?

When I left school at the time you're not sure, I don't think it's changed these days, you didn't really know what you want to do. There was a millions things there apart from being an astronaut to being a gardener, you didn't really know. But I went into customs imports and exports with a company in Sydney. And at that stage they were the oldest

- 19:00 importing and exporting company in Sydney. A company called W. S. Tate and I virtually started there as a boy, in the warehouse. And it's a bit different to a warehouse that you have now. With that job you had to do all the franking machines for the posting. You had to go down to the ships and do the manifest of the goods that were coming off the ships. Then you had to go to customs, take every sample in there and they'd go through and work out the percentage of duty that had to be

- 19:30 paid on the products coming in. Stuff we're exporting, again you had to go through customs so you could do all your tariffs that had to happen on that. Doing goods in bonds stores but as a kid you though you were doing the slave work because you didn't realise that customs, imports and exports, involved that, but that's the type of work I was doing. And at the time, because you're working around the harbour areas and that, and you could see the ships, and I don't know whether that sort of prompted me

to

20:00 think, "Oh they seem to have a better life than what I'm doing." And these days I'm not sure what the reason for it, apart from thinking, it was a bit of an adventure to join the navy. But I was working around ships and the ones with the freight and that they were sending a lot of stuff through to the Solomon Islands and up and down the New Guinea coast and different islands up there. So you start to have a little bit of dreams about the adventures of sailing to these places.

Would you talk or see any of these sailing?

20:30 No, everyone you dealt with was wharf type people or customs people that you were dealing with. You only saw them in the distance you never, never had any chance to communicate with them. And even if you did go on a ship you were only going up to the, it's not the captain but it would have been the first officer, I would imagine, that was in charge of the freight, that was on the ship. And being a boy at the time, he really didn't talk to me he just handed me the paper work and that's about all he really did.

What about contact with some of the merchant

21:00 **sailors?**

No, no because by the time they come into the wharf area, they'd be working with the 'dockies' [dock workers] lifting stuff off, you never had any contact with them. So there was no attraction there.

Ok. How did you get into this work in the first place, what lead to this?

I assume from going on memory, that it would just have been a job that was advertised in the paper and I applied, like applied for several jobs at the time. I went in there for an interview

21:30 and it must have been my good looks and charm that won me the job. But I really don't know what they were looking for at the time. To me it was just, I had a bit of interest in it but I didn't know if it was going to be the job for me or not, I didn't know.

What kind of shifts and hours were you working?

At that time it was seven thirty to roughly half past four plus then you had your travelling time each side.

22:00 Meal breaks, you virtually didn't have because of the type of work you were doing, you sort of ate on the run. There was no laid out time for morning tea or lunch. If you were in the office it was a bit formalised, you knew roughly about nine o'clock they had morning tea. Roughly in those times it was about one o'clock you had lunch but it wasn't always standard because you were in and out so many times with that.

22:30 I know other people or your mates at the time they were pretty structured in when they had meal breaks and all that and in some stages you thought you'd been short changed, you didn't realise that in the industry that's how it worked.

And what was the future for this for you?

There would have been a big future there if I'd stayed with it. There would have been progression through the company and I'd say it would have been an industry that you could have stayed in until you retired.

23:00 You would have advanced further into the importing and exporting business side of it from the shipping but yeah, but it had a lot of future there but to me it wasn't going down the path I wanted to go down.

Were you part of a union?

No.

What were you noticing about the unions at the time?

At the time unions didn't really worry you in that stage. But where you saw it was on the wharves where the 'wharfies' could virtually get away with taking whatever they wanted to out of the

23:30 containers and there was just a 'blind eye' to it. And if you went into one of the pubs around the wharf areas there and you wanted to buy something, it was there. And you knew very well that it was coming off ships. So the union sort of controlled that pretty well. If you wanted something, all you had to do was say to someone, "I'm looking for something," and next minute they'd have it. So you, my early experience with unions they seem to be corrupt, mainly from what I saw in the wharf areas.

24:00 I mean the building side in later life I found them a lot different from that, but that was my early experience.

Did you buy anything?

At the stage I didn't have to because of what we were working in, it's like having ice cream at home, if it's there you don't eat it and so there was never a need to want because you were dealing with that stuff all the time, it was there.

24:30 You didn't have to go and try and get it from anywhere else.

Where were the goods coming from mainly?

At that stage we were getting a lot of, it was mainly clothing and shoes. A lot of the clothing was coming from Japan and China. The cheap type shoes were coming from China and we had a small percentage of European fashions coming through. And with that stuff that's how you work out the tariffs coming into Australia by the contents of leather, rubber, whatever is in it.

25:00 But also from that you were having kitchenware products and that came from absolutely everywhere. And from kitchenware you are starting from knives, up to pots and pans. And they'd come from places like India, England, so it was a pretty universal source of products coming in, but the biggest ones were China and Japan that was coming in, and then you are virtually on-selling it then, through to suppliers.

And where were most of the exports going?

Exports

25:30 was mostly South East Asia and the islands off Australia. Small percentage to New Zealand but most of it was to the islands. And plus the stuff that stayed in Australia, I never had a great deal with, but mainly the coastal shipping stuff, that's where it was going.

And so you mentioned briefly that navy being out there on the harbour was a motivator, what about your father's military service?

I thought about the army and

26:00 I didn't see anything that was a great attraction to me. I thought, "Yeah it's army," it didn't seem to go much further than that. And I imagine now looking at it as a kid on the farm you understood what it was like to use rifles and things like that. There was no attraction from that side, to 'play with weapons'. And you also knew from being on a farm that it meant a lot of walking and I thought, "Stuff that." So I didn't

26:30 look at pursuing his early career of the military side of it or maybe the army side, I thought, "No."

So what kinds of motivations were there for you to join the navy do you think?

I think sense of adventure and when you used to look at these ships disappearing, you'd think of where they're travelling to. And it's hard now to really put a firm thought in your mind of that stage but I think in a lot of ways you think, oh you're travelling,

27:00 you're moving away from home, there's another world out there to see. And from the work you're doing in the customs side of it well then, you're going, "Oh I wonder what this place looks like." So there was that mystery there and intrigue.

What about your personality. What kind of a youth were you?

Adventurous. I'd say yeah outgoing, adventurous not over the top.

27:30 And as far as being the leader of the pack I'd say no but you weren't at the bottom of the pack you were sort of between the middle and the top. That's sort of where your pecking order was. You may instigate a lot of adventures and that and that stuff there, where you were.

What kind of adventures would you get up to?

From Sydney, remember and that

28:00 you're looking at suburbia. You'd find local creeks and you'd go and yahoo and play in the creeks and whatever. You'd get up to swimming and a bit of fishing. Blocking waterways and making small dams, things you could get up to. Tunnels, main sewer tunnels and things like that you'd go down there to see where they went to. A couple of areas you found that you needed lights and you found bats and that in there, so you'd go in there chasing bats.

28:30 Normal beach going to the beach and things like that. So just I think a normal youth at the time.

So tell us about the process, like when you reached the decision you wanted to join the navy. What happened exactly?

Again it's so long ago. When I worked in the city, it wasn't hard to walk past the Recruitment Centre, so I think I went in and got the brochures that were there and sort of looked at them. And Its like anything

29:00 military, I think it's the same today, they show you the 'rosy' pictures they don't show you the dark picture and you think, "Oh yeah that sounds interesting." So over a period of time you start to ponder more about joining. Then I mentioned it to the family, no doubt, that I was thinking of it. Then one day I walking in and I then said, "Yeah I want to join." At that stage they gave you the paperwork, you went home with your parents and they had to sign consent for you to go in. Then nothing happened for a while and next minute you got called up to come in for your medical aptitude

29:30 testing. From that away you went. That was, that was an experience when you got in there how they did things because at that time they were being very civil to you as far as you know this is what we offer

you and this is so nice. Until when you hopped on the troop train to go to Melbourne, all these strangers were yelling at you and screaming at you to, "Hurry up," and "Get here and do that." It was so different from Recruit Office, but when you look back at it now you know its part of the

30:00 game they play. I don't think they've greatly changed even today. And that's about the biggest experience I had at the time. And when you got to Melbourne, again, you didn't have a clue what you'd just committed yourself to. Everything was totally different but you realised everyone around you was in the same boat. They were sort of you know, "Home was never like this," and I don't mean home-home, I mean the environment you came from. Then you sort of quickly adjusted

30:30 to their way of doing things and I still say it now, if you learned to play the game, it wasn't hard. And I think that's one of the things I did, you realised early, 'play the game' and you'd virtually cruise through.

Well thinking about it, what kind of expectations did you have before?

Before I went down there I felt it was not to the extreme, where your morning tea's laid on for you, "Sir, here's your tea and bickie [biscuit] and shall we go out and have a little sail

31:00 this morning?" I felt you'd be doing those sort of things but I didn't picture that it would sort of be really crammed down, that you've got to run every second, the discipline was so strict. I didn't realise that's how it would work. So from what you understood from the paperwork and what you saw, you didn't have videos like today but what you'd see on advertisements and you'd think, "Oh they all seem to be having a good time." Then all of a sudden

31:30 you're not having a good time, as such, it was a lot of controlled preparation, getting you up to the standards that they required you to be at. And one of the things that struck us was, because it was just after the Voyager accident that they were very concerned about the ability for someone to survive at sea, so they were very strong on learning how to swim, doing your 'survival at sea' training. And when I went into the navy

32:00 it was in the middle of winter in Victoria, so the conditions weren't the best but there was no hesitation of making you go into the ocean and you do your proper survival at sea stuff. And that's one of the things that stands out pretty well, about how intense they were from that side. Apart from your naval law side but yeah the training was very solid and full on.

Before we get there I'll just ask you about the advertising. Can you remember some of those ads that you saw?

Looking back on it and

32:30 perhaps the only thing that stands to mind is that they were showing like the aircraft carriers. And they sort of showed you operations mainly from aircraft carriers. And the ships they showed you, the destroyers and the things like that, didn't really intrigue you as much. And I think the reason for the aircraft carriers you could see 'action' like for planes and helicopters and you thought, "Oh that looks like fun." And you didn't really consider the other ships

33:00 mainly because what was focused on their ads. As far as what you saw of the people in there, it virtually showed you then, in foreign countries meeting and greeting people on an official basis. They didn't really show much more. And that's about all I can recall from their ads.

You mentioned the accident in Jervis Bay, did this have any affects on you?

No because

33:30 you'd joined the navy just after the Voyager incident, it was quite open, spoken about, but it was sort of, the only time you realised it, was when they were really pushing 'survival at sea' on to you. About how you had to be a certain standard of your swimming and that was sort of a, I think you had to get up to bronze medallion stage. And from there it was sort of, you were actually in the ocean survival, that training side of it, using

34:00 life rafts, swimming to life rafts, being lifted out and all that stuff, all that procedure with it. That was about the only thing they really pushed at that time.

When, what year exactly was this when?

1966.

So what were you hearing about possible involvement in Vietnam?

In Vietnam. I'd heard, I'll go back a bit. When I was at high school it was our science teacher that kept saying, "We're going to be involved in

34:30 Vietnam." And at the time the media was pretty well low key about Vietnam but was sort of like we are sending army advisors over there and there was like a peace keeping procedure. And you thought, "Oh yeah, you're not in the army, so sorry." At that time I was still a kid and didn't think much of it. Then when I joined the navy, you'd heard about the Sydney taking supplies up there and the Vietnam War had escalated a bit more but you were going, "Oh, it's still

35:00 'someone else's war'. "You weren't really considering that you may be one of the ones going. So you weren't overly concerned about it you just thought, "Oh yeah." From the navy's side you were supplying equipment and stores that's about all, so it wasn't a fact that you were going to turn up there.

Well now that you've talked about some of the impressions teachers and other people gave you, what were you being exposed to about the idea of

35:30 **communism as you grew up?**

I feel communism at the time, was more something that the media pushed, the old expression 'Reds under the bed' but as far as the military side of it went, when we were doing our training against chemicals and nuclear and biological wars, these are the things that the enemy can use against you and that was pretty generic. They didn't so much turn around and say this is

36:00 the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the Russians, that really didn't come into it, it was all these things that have been used in conflict. After I came back from my initial time at sea and I was training for the gunnery side and that's when we started to send destroyers to Vietnam and it became more serious. Our training then started to focus more on the enemy you'd be fighting, if you went. The type of backing the enemy had from

36:30 China and from Russia. The type of equipment they had. A lot of it, I still feel, they didn't really know, they were sort of offering general things, saying these are the sort of things that you can encounter. And the type of training we were doing, we were still out of step to the Vietnam type war, where we were still training under the British style of, the chain of command was too long. And when we went to Vietnam, you couldn't use that long

37:00 type of chain of command because things happened too fast. So you went virtually from the Second World War type training structure, to a modern style of structure, where you had to react in split seconds. So that was the biggest change I saw from that side.

And what about as a kid and a teenager before you were in the navy, what kind of impressions were you building about the communist threat?

I don't think I really had

37:30 an impression about them. The only thing, every time I saw something about communism they always seemed stocky peasant type people and they just seemed not to have the technology or the resources that the western world had. And that was portrayed that way but you kept thinking, "Hang on, if they're such a threat to the world, they've got to have technology behind them, to be equal to the west." But the advertising at the time

38:00 didn't portray that side of them. It was an intrigue you used to think, "They're telling you this but why are we worried about them?" So there was no real fear in my mind about communists as such. It was, just sounded odd.

And what kind of, where would you receive this kind of information and imaging?

I think mainly it was on newspapers and TV. I think that's mostly where you picked it up. Not much on the radio, some backchats no doubt they had it there.

38:30 But yeah I don't think it was sort of drummed into us or from a military side of it. I don't recall much at all about it, it was mainly from what was happening outside. It seemed more political than it did military, the data that was coming from.

And what about, as a teenager, things like such as the Cuban missile crisis was this known?

Not really you sort of lost

39:00 track because as a kid it didn't mean a great deal to you. You know, you knew it was going on, you were going, "Why don't they fire it?" Not thinking of the damage or the war that had started. They were all talking about it, why doesn't someone sort of attack it, destroy it, or go home. There was no other real worry or concern to you because you didn't comprehend what could have happened on a global basis, it was just to us I think a 'storm in a teacup'.

Did you have any mates joining up with you?

A few

39:30 gunners. They were gonna join up but I applied the style I said before because I was near it. And when you are sort of talking to mates you say you know, "I've got an application for it." "Yeah I'm going to do something about it." And they never did. One of the kids joined up about four years later. I met him but at the time a few was going to do it but they never did.

We'll just pause there because we're at the end of the tape?

00:37 **So you got on the train to go to HMAS Cerberus and somebody yelled at you?**

Ok, with our letter they said we had to front up at Central Railway Station and the interstate train was leaving at a certain time that night. So when you fronted up there you didn't understand what was happening,, there was heaps of people around. At that stage you sort of had an idea that half the people were

01:00 service people or new intake people going in. Then there were some naval people walking around looking at your paper work and stuff, yelling and screaming saying, "Come on get onto this carriage," "Get onto that carriage," and you thought going home was never like this. So they shuffled us onto the carriages and when you got on there, there was the typical kids way first, where they just stood there and their yelling and saying you know, just sit down and shut up. Then we had dreams about going down there, I suppose

01:30 I had dreams going down there you'd virtually be on your own. But then you discovered that there was no civilians in the carriage with you, it was all new recruits going down. We stopped at a place, where did we stop at? We stopped at Albury and they had to change the wheels on the trains because of different size carriages. And by this time the kids on the train were talking and said, "Oh we can go to the pub in Albury," but we didn't realise that the military was four steps ahead of us. And when we're pulling into Albury they turned around and said, "You bunch stay

02:00 here on the outside on the platform." Then once we got there and they waited for the civilians to go through and get their cup of tea and bikkies, we could go in and get some sandwiches then back on the train and by this stage they changed the tyres, oh not the tyres the wheels around. Then we got to Melbourne. It was early in the morning when we got to Melbourne and at Swanson Street Station they had buses there and they put us all on the buses. And we drove from there out to HMAS Cerberus. And from

02:30 the moment we hopped of the bus, they were all screaming and telling us to get into lines and straighten up and all that. And you're going, "What's this about?" So we were all totally lost in what they were screaming about. Then they were giving you your enlistment number and telling you what part of the accommodation you were in. Then we was taken over there and they showed you which was your cabin and your beds. And at that stage there was absolutely nothing, there was just bare bed frames.

03:00 Then they lined us up again and they made us run up to the supply store. Got up there and they handed you bedding and some basic clothing, not much. Back, then you got a crash course on how to make the bed. And that was the only time they actually helped you make the bed, after that they'd only pick it to death when it wasn't made right. So from there it wasn't too bad, you started to realise that a lot of the screaming and yelling was just the way they did things. Then you quickly fell into the routine but

03:30 the next morning, I think it was around about five or a bit after five, they're screaming at you to get out of bed. And you had to be out the front and they were doing just like a warm up exercise, then you'd do a compulsory run around the base and us being the new kids, you weren't fit like the ones that had been there before. So you had the senior cadets in the front and the bunch of rabble, which was us, at the back trying to catch up and trying to do what they were doing. Then from that

04:00 typical day sort of, you came back from that, had your showers, go and have your breakfast, come back make sure your rooms spotless, then you'd front up for your days training. And in the early part of it it's, I suppose it's breaking you down from your civilians way of doing things to a military way of doing things, then bringing you back up and having it done how they wanted. And then in the end, you don't think twice, you do it how they want. And around about the middle of your boot camp your level of fitness

04:30 is right up there, so you would be in the kids that were in front of the bunch running, and all the training and that because your fitness had come up. But at that stage you were becoming more intense with the navy style of training, the navy law, how they do things, why they do things. There was no trade specific at this time, it was still navy, how they're structured and you had to do your basic swimming test, where you had to roughly

05:00 to the stage of bronze medallion in the pool. And with your survival part of it you had to swim so many laps and tread water for so long with overalls on. And they took you from that and you went in to the inlet bay there and you had to swim out to a life raft, inflate that then you had to get every one into the life raft and do the basic signalling, what you'd do at sea like to an aircraft, to other ships. Then back into the water then you come back

05:30 and there's different styles of lifting people out of the water, so you had to go through all that exercise. When you thought all that was all done they'd turn around and do it again, just to keep you on your toes. Then from there you learnt about fire fighting on a ship and they had, I don't know if it was sections cut off an old ship, but you had compartments and they'd light fires in different areas and wait till the outer side of the metal glowed red then they'd sent you in there to put it out. So you did that.

How would you put

06:00 **it out?**

With fire extinguishers or fire hoses or foam, chemicals, different ways of putting different types of fires out. And they taught you all the various levels of, if you use one agent on a fire you can make the fire larger than it was. So they take you through all that side of it. Then from that they, we had a big dam there that they used to have oil on it, they'd set fire to that and you had to go in and put it out. So you became confident in fire fighting. Damage control on ships like,

06:30 they'd flood a section of a boat that was on land and you had to stop the water from coming in, so you understood that side of it. Then you did your chemical warfare and they'd put you into a citadel and they'd show you the gas bowls and they'd release gas in there. You had to take your gas mask off and get a good lung full of this gas and go outside and recover from it. So yeah it was all new learning curves. And even as far as ships, they wrote down how

07:00 they compartmentise a ship, different sections of ship how you identify where you are. Communications, basic boat handling, yeah things you never thought you'd ever learn about, they had you doing. By the time you left the boot camp you would have been 'able' on a ship, I won't say you were fully confident but you understood what they were on about. That's about the most I can recall from there.

And what sort

07:30 **friendships did you form with other?**

You sort of have the ones that are in your cabin not necessarily going to be your 'buddy buddies' there. I think that I've really only had one mate from there that I still got, as such long term. The other ones are like associates you meet at the time, they're your mates and buddies at that time but when you move ship or they move ship, you meet another bunch of them. So as it is there's only one that really

08:00 stays, the rest of them are transient type friends, but you still had good times.

And how did over the period of your time there, how did you respond to discipline?

I realised that if you tried to buck the system because you saw people bucking and it become harder for them and you go and use your brains, don't buck it and then it's easy. And you also learned don't be the 'number one' in front and don't be the 'tail end Charlie' because they're the two ends they attack. So yeah,

08:30 you learned how to cruise.

And what did you see in the things, that you were learning, that the purpose of discipline was?

At the time I couldn't understand the reason for it. It just seemed a military ego running mad but later on, as you got more experienced in the navy, you realised that you needed discipline where you said do something that it was done. And especially on a ship you couldn't have people discussing the rights and wrongs about being told to do something. If you said do it or you

09:00 were told to do it, you went and did that thing. And you have to do it where you've got a ship load of people and there's different reasons why you got to do things fast. So then you realise that the discipline that they're putting in you early has a purpose.

And were you given any social or leave time or anything?

You were, I forget now, you had to do roughly I think, half your time in boot camp before they gave you a limited time on leave. And I think first leave

09:30 you could stay overnight if you went to the White Ensign Club, which was a navy controlled sailors' accommodation place. If you didn't go there you had to be back by midnight. So they had a control on your early bit of leave, just so you don't go stupid. And towards the end of the leave, you virtually could go on a Friday and come back on the Sunday night, so it was pretty open that way. Not Sunday night Monday morning. So they sort of gave you it in sections and once you got used to going

10:00 out again, it was right.

And aside from the exercises to do with the water that you explained before, was there any actual time spent on a proper big naval ship?

No not at that time you didn't see any big ships in boot camp it was all, there was an old ship tied up at the wharf down there but we never went near it. The nearest we saw at the time is you had some, what they used to call sea air rescue boats, they were like a converted

10:30 PT [Patrol Torpedo] boat but they were mainly used for sea air rescue type boat. You did a little bit of time on that and that was mainly how to turn left and right, not a great deal. Most of our boat work was down there would have been rowing boats and that's what they taught you on. These days they're similar to a surf boat, that sort of style and that's where you learnt your basis rowing and stuff like that and sailing.

11:00 That's the biggest boat you had at that time.

And how pedantic were they about things like the care of your personal items?

They were 'anal'. They would absolutely 'jump on you' and at the time you didn't understand why but later on you understand yeah you had to be, but that first time they'd just go off if you didn't have something right.

What sort of things had to be right?

You

11:30 hear about it and its general but the little things about if they saw a crease on anything you've got on that shouldn't be there, they'd crack up over that. Your bed had to be made a certain way and it had to have a certain tensile so if they flicked a coin on the bed the coin would bounce up and all that. And when you first start to make your bed you didn't know the skills or how to get it this tight but after you quickly learnt, you don't go through all the crap of remaking your bed, it's just how you tighten your final bed cover. If its

12:00 that tight the coin will bounce, so you didn't worry about that. And things like your clothing and your lockers had to be stacked in a certain way. Heavy clothing went first and the lighter ones on top and it had to sit a certain way in the locker. So they were very thingy about that and even your towel how that was put but yeah, you quickly understood what they were on about. Didn't agree with it, but that's how they wanted it, so you left it like that.

12:30 **And did they explain anything to you about the different sort of positions on ships and the different...?**

Yeah that comes into it, where you start from the outside of the ship and they explain everything from the outside shell to the last piece of the ship. So you understand the different sections, different compartments, what they do, what they don't do, how the machinery works, not into fine detail but just on an overload of how the machinery

13:00 works, how the electrical side works, how communications work, steering of the ship. All that sort of stuff they give you an overview on how it all goes.

And was there any type of I guess mustering or allocation of different specific areas that you would go into at this time?

With 'mustering' I think you mean your trade, but before you get to that, you have a ships layout that everyone's got to

13:30 do certain duties on a ship and that happens early in the boot camp, where you have different watches that you keep, in the navy they call them 'watches'. And with that watch normally it's broken up into four watches, morning, afternoon, evening and night. And from that you've got to do certain duties even through your boot camp. What they're doing there, is when you first join up you give a preference to what trade you'd like. So while you're going through boot camp they're bringing you back up to speed with your basic education

14:00 because some blokes haven't been, or have been out of school for years before they go in. So they have to bring everyone up to a standard. So you have compulsory schooling in the early peace and from that they're looking at the trade you want to go into and they're giving you an overview of all other trades in the navy, which means nothing to you because you don't understand what they're on about. Towards the end of your boot camp then, they turn around and say, ok we need so many people for this trade, so many people for that trade. Now it

14:30 depends on how they fill those positions. And I know in my group, by the time we come through there were about three groups in front of us who virtually go every allocation they wanted, so they were filling up those requirements. When the group I was in was coming through then it was started to become, "Oh that vacancy's full, you've got to look at this side." And I suppose it's today when you're looking at employment prospects they turn around and say we only need four there and we've got five going for it, you've got to look at your second choice

15:00 or your third choice and the navy's was much the same. You know, I mean if your first choice was taken then you came back down in the rank to what you wanted. Same as the one I ended up taking, I really knew nothing about it. They just said, "Oh yeah, that's great." And I thought, "Oh yeah, that's great." It's only afterwards that you start to look closer to what you'd got.

And at what point did you make the decision about your trade?

I was still in boot camp and it would have been towards that last two weeks of boot camp

15:30 when they say, ok you've got to make a decision which area you're going into. Which didn't mean anything, you still finish boot camp and they are saying you know, everyone's the same still. You're still a recruit and yeah it didn't mean anything to you, you knew you were going into that trade.

And tell me about the decision you made of your trade?

Before I went in I had an interest with mechanics and I had an interest with electrics. So naturally my first two choices were on the

16:00 mechanical side and on the electrical side. And when it came up to the time for your selection on the

mechanical side they said, all the vacancies were selected there and on the electrical side, I didn't fully understand where it went. And I ended up being more into the seaman side than I was in the electrical side because they mentioned you know, you're dealing with electricians and electronics and you think, "Oh yeah that must be it." It was only later on that you turn around and you go, "No that's not quite what I wanted," but it was too late by that stage.

16:30 **And so what was the sort of passing out or was there any kind of ceremony for finishing this?**

Yeah there was like, they have a base parade on the day you are passing out. From memory of that, it was sort of like you were in 'number one uniform' for the day. And they have a band because you march a certain way and you come down to the parade area and they have

17:00 the commander of the base there and a few other officials there. At that time you never really had family come to a 'pass out'. It was sort of something that, it was not as common as it is now. You do your parade and you get inspected by the commanding officer. You do a couple of march around bits and that's it. In my time we, because we were going straight to the Sydney, we had transport waiting for us. So we virtually finished the parade, marched

17:30 straight off, straight up to our dormitories and got all your gear, straight on the bus. So there was no sort of, "That's it, great, let's have a break up," or anything like that.

And what were your feelings about going to the Sydney?

I suppose in one way you were going, "Thank heavens I'm out of boot camp," and the Sydney, that's an aircraft carrier, that's sort of about all you knew. And soon, you got Garden Island, and you saw this great big hunk of steel and you're going because before we got

18:00 there they gave us no indication of what part of the ship you were going to be on. And you were flat out trying to work out how the hell do I find these numbers because it was so foreign to you even though you learned about it in boot camp. Yeah so that was strange.

Well describe in a bit more detail what the Sydney looked like at Garden Point?

At Garden Island. When you got to it you realised it was an old aircraft carrier that wasn't being used as an aircraft carrier any more. It was being used for transporting army equipment.

18:30 And when you went on board it, everything was old, even down to the accommodation you got issued with a hammock. And you had to make these up and that's what you bedded in, you just had an open space in the ship with rails going across and you rigged up your hammock there. Then your showers were as old as you could think of. The toilets were old, the kitchens were old and you were going oh you know, it was near due for the scrap heap. That was your impression of it, at the

19:00 time because everything about it just seemed so old. Even though it was so big, it was just a shock that you were going onto something that looked so old.

And how did you find your way around the first time that you got onto the ship?

Sheep. Hoping someone else knew. Not really, you had a rough idea of where you were going, you could understand but it was just because it was so massive and so much of it. It took a lot to feel confident in what you were doing. You had enough

19:30 knowledge to get around but it wasn't the best. But because there was so many of you it was just so easy, you just virtually follow the sheep. So yeah you got around ok.

And take me through sort of step by step the first things you did as soon as you got onto the ship?

When we first go on there the first night we had, because it was evening, we had to make up our beds. And the next morning you naturally got up before they hit the alarms to wake you up just because it was

20:00 so foreign to you. So you had a shower and you were going, "What the hell's this?" Then it was breakfast time and after breakfast they got us to muster up on the flight deck. When they got us up to the flight deck they sort of then gave you an overlay of the ship and where different equipment that we'd be working with, where it was stored, where it's not stored. Then they took you for a walk down to the front of the ship, where the anchors and that were, and all the winches and that by the anchors. Then they took us down to the back end and showed us that. The middle

20:30 section they didn't greatly show you a great deal about because being kids just on a ship they wanted sort of just to do basic jobs. So you virtually for the first day walking around, you were walking around with a controlled group, there was a couple of people in charge, you were just, you weren't working at this stage, you just got a layout for the ship. The next day you had to muster with what they called your part of ship and you had to do work as directed there. But again being kids

21:00 the work they had you doing was 'dogsbody' type work. Scrape this, pick that up, stack that there, unstack that. So yeah there was no skill involved, it was just a mass of labour they had. And it stayed like that I think for most of the time you were on it because there was a ship where they had it as a training ship, even though they were taking the army stuff around on it, us as kids, they just had cheap

labour, so you did everything.

21:30 Highly skilled and unqualified that's what it was.

And in the first few days that you were on there, how did the crew that were already on there, the more experienced crew, how did they treat you?

Oh they thought it was heaven, they had cheap labour you know and when you look at the military pecking order, anyone that has had about that much more experience than you, is screaming at you to get things done. And that's just how they did things. The general crew, the more

22:00 experienced ones, they really didn't have to worry about you because they had the blokes under them, that were doing all the yelling and screaming for you to get things done. So like virtually from leading seaman up, you never really had a great deal to do with it, it was mainly able seaman type people, telling you what to do a lot. The petty officers and chiefs that tell them what they wanted done and they would just turn around repeating the same order, knowing that they had the backing of the senior blokes over them. So yeah

22:30 it was just a mass of young kids.

And tell me about some of the things they had you doing?

Well on that, being an old ship there was a lot of ongoing maintenance that was required. And one of the things that you seemed to encounter is painting, chipping rust and repainting rusted components. The pipe work on the ship, the old lagging that was sort of deteriorated they'd have you working on that. And they'd have experienced blokes there knowing what they were cutting out but they'd get you to do the dogs work

23:00 of ripping it out and putting back new asbestos lagging and pipe work. Lifting up defective flooring stuff, repairing it and putting it back down, just all under instruction we were doing that. Boat work, using the different boats they had on the ship you'd be maintaining them, doing work on that. Working out how to lift the boats out of the water, put them back in, how to tie them down for rough seas.

23:30 The anchors have to top, they'd let so much of the cable out and you'd clean the rust of that and repaint it so when they brought it up the section that was on deck was still clean and looked shiny. Basic housekeeping was fair, as you know the things you don't like doing is cleaning the toilets, everyone got a chance to do that, there was no ifs and buts. Cafeterias you got called to help there because cheap labour, so you did virtually anything that was on it. If you were out to

24:00 sea you had to do your sea keeping watches plus steer the ship. Do all the monitoring as far as man overboard, lifeguards and things like that. And being the type of ship it was every now and again they'd chuck a life buoy over the back and call out man overboard and if you were near a boat you'd had to jump in that and be dropped into the ocean and go back up and pick the life buoy up. So they certainly chucked the training to you. The time I was on it they were doing,

24:30 we went on an exercise up off New Guinea and we had to paint the flight deck to make it look like the Melbourne. So that meant we had to put an angled flight deck on it by paint. So from visually it looked like it had an angled flight deck. And we changed the numbers on the ship so if any aircraft spotted us they thought we were the Melbourne so they were playing deception games.

Why?

Oh just war games because in those times like an aircraft would spot you and they'd take a photo and they'd say, "Oh that's the Melbourne." In actual fact the Melbourne

25:00 could have been another couple of hundred miles in another direction.

And how do you paint an angled flight deck?

With great big yard brooms and tonnes of paint. And you, what you'd have is some of the blokes would be pouring the paint out the front and you had the yard brooms and you'd paint that way because you had so much to do and you had to do it quickly.

How did you not tread on the paint?

I didn't say you didn't it was just, you got it all over you as well but.

25:30 Your clothing and that got all paint on them and you couldn't clean that but it had to be done quick, so if you got paint on you too bad.

Did you get footprints in the paint?

Only the same colour as the paint because the first couple would be the same colour. If you're doing like the yellow strips they are about half a metre to a metre wide, so you are walking up the middle of that or walking backwards in the paint and that, that didn't matter. Because it wasn't going to stay there forever so it was just camouflage.

And you mentioned that it

26:00 **had to be painted to look like the Melbourne, what had to be changed about it?**

Well the Melbourne aircraft carrier instead of having a straight runway down the top of the deck, the flight deck it had an angled one as well. So by paint we had to make the Sydney straight deck to look angled as well. So you just did it with paint.

And who would set out markers and things like that?

It would have been the senior people that knew exactly with proportions, what to do. We were just the gophers doing it. You know you were told to do it and that's how you did it.

26:30 It did work because we, from recollection it took about three or four days before they discovered we weren't the ship they thought it was.

Who was looking for you?

At that time we had the British and the Australian navy searching for us as well in exercises. So it worked, the deception worked long enough, for the Melbourne to do what it had to do. So yeah it's the little games they played.

And in the first sort of few days on the ship, how long did it take for

27:00 **you to start to feel comfortable, feel routine?**

I suppose about a week. You know each day you got more familiar with the areas and you understood where things were. But you'd still get caught out when someone would say they want to go to an obscure area and you'd have to stop and think about how they work out compartments and that. And you'd get pretty close to it and once you got close to it then it was self explanatory, you could find where you were going. But in the early peace you knew the basic

27:30 places to go then the odd places just took a little bit longer to get used to.

And how long were you on the Sydney before you actually went to sea?

Virtually straight away. We were in Sydney, it's hard to say, a few days before we went to sea. So yeah virtually straight away we went to sea in it. And again going to sea in something as big as that was totally different to what you thought it would be.

28:00 You'd see waves and that and it didn't seem to be moving that much in the ocean. Early in the peace we hit a big storm off Sydney, somewhere between Sydney and Jervis Bay. And I was up in the bridge of the ship steering it, no sorry not steering it that time, I was up on the lookout just up there. And we were copping big waves underneath the flight deck, so they're pretty big. And this one came over the flight deck and that was the first time sort of got apprehensive and didn't realise

28:30 big ships could go straight under a wave. So that sort of surprised you and it had you a bit concerned. You're going, "Oh if it's doing this to this ship what would it do to a smaller ship?" So yeah that was something, you didn't realise the sea could be so big.

And what were you like as a sailor in terms of illness and?

Never had a problem. Didn't really think of it but yeah, never had a problem. It was just, yeah I

29:00 don't think there was any worries about seasickness or rough seas or anything like that. The only thing you sort of noticed if you were on the flight deck and that, how much wind was up there. Because being a flat area the wind used to go across and it used to be quite strong. And that sort of you had to be a bit careful that you didn't get near the edge of the ship when you're on the flight deck. The rest of the area it didn't matter but up there it was quite windy.

And tell me about

29:30 **steering the ship, what you have to do?**

On the Sydney the wheelhouse was inside the ship, you don't see where you are going. What you have is magnetic compass and it's what they call a strip repeater and all you see is a straight section with the numbers on it. And you would steer into a point of that, if they say, "Steer zero, nine, zero," the 'zero, nine, zero' would come up on a pointer and you just try and hold the ship to that.

30:00 You wouldn't know if you were driving into a brick wall or over the edge of the world, you wouldn't know.

What does it feel like to be steering a ship?

It's a lot different to a small boat where you can feel what's happening. On a big ship you don't really have a sensation that the ships moving or you're actually steering towards a purpose. It's just that you're sitting there, or standing there with a wheel and just watching a compass and that's about it. So you get no sensation of speed or direction you're going.

30:30 You just know that you got an hour on the wheel and you're sort of going, looking at the watch going, "Oh I haven't got much longer to go before some one else does it." So yeah you've got no concept of

what you're actually doing.

And as you headed up towards New Guinea what sort of changes did you notice in?

Colour of the ocean I think, was the biggest thing I noticed. You start to see the colour changes and then you start to spot small islands and bits of atolls that you didn't

31:00 even know existed out there. And when you sort of get up before New Guinea, there's a hell of a lot of reefs and that that's around. And just the different bird life and sea life you see around those areas, and different temperatures. So yeah it's all new and not how you sort of experience the oceans down south. So all from that side it looked different. Then when you got close to islands you start to see coconut palms

31:30 and tropical type vegetation. Yeah so you notice the change that way.

And what was the experience like of being sort of, in the middle of the ocean for the first time?

The first time, and that was out off Sydney, you start to feel as though the earth had a curvature to it because you've watched the ocean and you had the sense that the earth did curve.

32:00 Then you looked around and realised that you're the only thing out there but as you sailed in one direction you could actually sense the curvature of the earth. Because from where, if you're looking at a cloud, it was slowly getting closer and you realised that you were going around the curvature and to me that seemed odd, and you could sense it. And even when you're heading back to where you knew land was, even though you couldn't see land, you had the feeling coming back. So yeah you could sense that weird feeling of, "Hang on the earth is round."

Was there any sort of feelings about you hear people talk about

32:30 **the myths of the ocean and sort of a hypnotic?**

There used to be things that defied the imagination. I think one of the things that jump to mind now is, we're out in the ocean and as you're saying, miles from nowhere and here's a crab swimming on top of the ocean and I'm looking at it and thinking, "What the hell's that doing here?" And you could see it and at that stage you didn't even

33:00 realise that crabs sort of travel on the surface of the water and you saw that. Then sea snakes, you spotted especially in the tropics, you start to spot sea snakes and that was an intrigue to you going, again you looking and they were so far from land you think, "How do they survive out here?" but they did. The mysteries and the phantoms of the deep, you start to notice there of a night time is the phosphorous in the water and the luminous affects, and different

33:30 waters and different temperatures, you'd see the phosphorus brighter, duller, larger and all that. And your mind used to wander and you'd think, "I wonder what it was like to the early explorers who didn't understand some of this stuff." And you could think, "Yeah this is how they used to see monsters of the deep," because of the things you understood and could see.

And does the atmosphere of the ocean change at night?

I don't think so. I never really noticed any difference between daytime on the ocean

34:00 and night time on the ocean. About the only thing that would happen of a night time if you didn't, that would happen unexpectedly, if there was a sea chop change and you copped all of a sudden you copped spray and you'd sort of think, "Where did that come from?" Where of a day time you'd see it developing but of a night time it would just happen to be there. And that was about the only thing but yeah there was no real, I don't think there was an atmospheric change from day to night.

And what's it like to observe or how dramatic are changes in the ocean in terms of

34:30 **weather and?**

You start to understand and I think some of this was a bit of imagination or dreaming of how the early explorers like of sail, experienced it. You could look at the weather and you'd just sort of watch the clouds and you could see by the wind change and that how it would affect how the ocean was. And you could see the clouds building up and with that a portion of the sea would build up and with the wind, then you'd go from a 'gentle' sea to a 'savage' sea. Then if you

35:00 saw an 'angry' sea then you could see there was less and less clouds, you knew it was going to ease off again. So just by watching the weather you could see what was happening on the water. And from that I used to go, "Yeah just watch nature it's telling you what its doing."

And how did things like changes in the mood of the ocean affect you on a ship?

I didn't really notice any great change or trepidation about it. You understood it was just a cycle of nature and it was fine.

35:30 **And being on a ship, like a huge ship like the Sydney, how do you describe your relationship**

with the ocean, does it really affect?

You're an object on the water and even though it was a big ship, you also had a feeling that it could be destroyed by the nature as well, because nature was bigger than the ship. And it really doesn't matter what size ship you're on, you've got to have it in context of where you are. And I think you got to

- 36:00 appreciate it say, "Ok it's getting too rough here, should go for safer waters." You realised that the ship wasn't bigger than nature. So you hoped that people in charge were sensible enough about you know, where they're sending the ship to. And you had to trust that you wouldn't be doing something stupid.

And during these war games exercises around New Guinea did you ever stop at any?

Yes.

- 36:30 What you did is in the early peace we went to an island where the Australian Navy used to have their fuel supplies, that was Manus Island. And you went in there and that was the first concept you had of experience from the Second World War because as we're coming in, there was rows of landing craft up on a reef and at first you thought, "What are they doing down there?" And when you got closer, they were all destroyed landing craft.
- 37:00 And they were just left over from the war. Then when we got in, there was military stuff that was sort of blown up still around on the island. And you're going, "Oh," and it was just a big surprise to see that. And that was the first encounter you had with the natives because you know from here you hadn't seen village people or anything like that it was sort of, that was odd. We left there then, we went across, I just can't think now of where it was in New Guinea and we went into a bay area and the water was that deep
- 37:30 and when we were anchored the back of the ship was almost touching the palms that were hanging over on the beach, that's how deep the water was. And these villagers appeared out of nowhere and that was just a new experience to a young kid.

And whereabouts was that?

That was on New Guinea itself. And we're in hiding playing the war games and they were trying to find us and the other ships. So little deception things they did.

And tell me about the interaction that you had with the locals who came out?

- 38:00 Not a great deal because you're pretty controlled because you weren't going ashore as such. And you are doing the souvenir bit trying to buy bits and pieces off them because they were trying to sell their souvenir spears and shields and things like that. So you're doing the bartering bit with them and buying bits and pieces of them. And with the kids you discovered they'd dive into the water for a shiny coin but they wouldn't dive in for a dark coloured coin.
- 38:30 So what you used to do sometimes being buggers, you'd have two coins and you'd throw them like that and watch the one kid making the decision which one he was going to dive after, real civilised we were.

And when you mentioned that you were hiding, was there any particular ways that you would camouflage the ship or?

Only from what I said before with the paint work on it. Apart from that it's too much to do. Then that's why we went in closer to land because playing the war games [war games] they'd be

- 39:00 expecting it more to be out in the ocean not right along side. So just yeah, nothing else you could do.

Did you ever get to see any of the British ships or anything?

Yeah as the war games went on the aircraft found us and the first thing we heard was the roar of the jets going over the top. They spotted us from a distance and came in on 'attack' on us. And by the time we could react

- 39:30 they'd already you know imaginary got us first, so our game was up there. Then being on exercises that's not the end of it then you go out, then you had to sort of hide from the other ships that were out there and yeah we were discovered by the British ships and the Australian ships and yeah then you saw them up close and all the rest. But that's just part of the exercises.

We'll just pause there because we're at the end of this tape.

Tape 3

- 00:38 **Ok, you were talking with Naomi about some of those trials with the war games, what other kind of 'trials' were you doing and learning about?**

With that, it was an exercise that you just had to be one of the crew numbers with, it wasn't specific training for us. But from that same time, we were doing anti-aircraft attack training

- 01:00 and I got told by 'action stations' because I was a 'loader' for one of the Bofors [heavy machine gun]. At that time I didn't even have a clue what they were talking about. And when we went up to be taught how to load this gun, it was one of the Bofors and they were going, "Oh yeah how do you load it?" And the bloke was saying, "Just put the clip or ammunition in here." And we went through it and nothing was happening. And then when we were actually doing the live firing, they didn't tell me that when you put it in there, the gun went 'bang' there was sparks, smoke, noise and everything else.
- 01:30 And the first clip you put in, has four shells in it, so it went bang, bang, bang and stopped. And they screamed out, "Load it," but they didn't realise that this gun jumped all over the place and I'm sort of chasing it like that. So for the first few times I loaded it, there was a series of four shots and a big pause and four shots and a big pause. And it was only me trying to catch up with it, until you understood and got used to this thing leaping all over the place. And at that time we were just shooting at basic 'drag' type targets that were towed behind aircraft
- 02:00 or they would drop things into the water and you were shooting at that. But that really wasn't any training on your trade, that was just part of the ships crew, you had to do that. Yeah and that's about the only training you had at that time, you fired at anything that went 'bang'.

And what about other things that the ship was doing, after the war game?

From that, it was also doing load calculations. We left New Guinea and we came back to Sydney

- 02:30 and we loaded up with a full 'comp' [compliment] of model army vehicles. Heavy and light vehicles and we went up to Port Alma which is the main port for Rockhampton. Then when we went in there they had a problem with the tide that the ship was going to sit on the bottom, so they were concerned how the ship was going to tilt, with all the weight on it. So we had to wait until nearly full tide, go in and as fast as they could, they had to get all the vehicles off the flight deck, to reduce the
- 03:00 weight of the ship because they were concerned. But everything went ok and they got the vehicles off at a fair rate of time. Then when it was sitting on the bottom, they just continued getting all the jeeps and trucks out of the inside of it. Then they were concerned about how the ship was going to lift off the bottom because being so heavy and pushing in the mud, they didn't know if it was going to be stuck in the mud when the tide came in. So they were sort of taking measurements there, to make sure it was lifting off the bottom and it came up, no problem. Then we left there
- 03:30 and we took some equipment down to Tasmania. And in Tasmania we went into Port Arthur, we stayed there for a few days and with that, we went ashore and we were doing like cross country exercises, basically sport type exercises. Then we left Hobart and we went down south, towards Macquarie Island. They dumped some of this stuff into the ocean and in the distance you could see the island and they said, "Yeah that's Macquarie Island there." And we turned around and
- 04:00 we come back up the coast again. The real reasons why you were there, we didn't know.

What were they dumping?

Well it was just obsolete equipment, military type stuff that they wanted to dispose of, so they were dropping it into, it must have been a deep channel or something down there, so they dumped it down there.

Did the ship ever have problems?

From its size, I recall mainly in harbours where it touched the bottom

- 04:30 and you know you could feel it shaking, clearing itself from the bottom. But it wasn't stuck as such, it was just they were aware that there was a couple of high spots on the bottom and when they hit that it just had to put on more power to get it over that area. And up until then, I didn't realise ships would do that, I thought if they touched them, they'd have to pull them back off, but it didn't seem to deter them that much, they knew what the bottom was like, it was just a matter of kicking the power up whenever. As far as break downs and that went
- 05:00 they used to do simulated break downs, they'd stop the engines, demonstrate engine failures and different procedures they'd have to carry on. Same as they'd demonstrate loss of steering on that side of it and there'd be different ways they'd have to manoeuvre the ship, without using the rudder but that was sort of an ongoing type exercises they'd do.

Well when it would hit the bottom or something like this, were there any occasions where it would get a hole or?

No.

- 05:30 In the time I was on it, it never got a hole from touching the bottom because it was muddy type bottoms. And you just sometimes, well you'd feel it sort of shake when it hit. It was mainly places like Sydney Harbour when manoeuvring, it would touch there. Yeah it was nothing major when they did it. There was no real concern, they just knew what they were going to 'scrape' and that was it.

And so tell us

06:00 **what it was, how prepared you were after your stint on?**

From that, its really the six month period you were on the Sydney, it was learning basic seamanship and how to go about running a ship, as far as tying it up, letting go, dropping anchors, picking anchors up, steering the ship, how the ships affected by ocean and wind when you're manoeuvring it. And your parts of the ship, you become more confident in that. The

06:30 trade you were going into, really had no relevance on that ship, it was mainly you were there for basic seaman training. And that's all you really did on it. In yourself you felt more experienced and mature by the time you got off it because you understood more about how the ship worked. But as far as trade side goes, you'd had learned nothing, it was basic seamanship type that was it.

How did you know, you mentioned to Naomi about choosing trades but how did you

07:00 **personally feel about the trade you were choosing?**

The trade I was in, I think on my period on the Sydney, you start to think and question the trade you went into going, "This is not quite what I wanted. I wanted to go more into an electrical field than I was in." But it was really, you were locked then, you couldn't do much about it and they weren't flexible like they are now, where you can swap and change. And in those times you are, what you are, what you are. So from that you just had to go,

07:30 "Oh ok, I'm stuck with it." But yeah, when you were first selected it, you didn't have enough knowledge about what you were going into, but it was too late then to change.

And how were you enjoying the navy at this stage?

It doesn't sort of stand in my mind, so it must have been ok. You got quite used to the way they did it. As far as your leave, you understood the time parameters and they were pretty paranoid

08:00 about you had to be back on a certain time and all that. And if you stayed within those boundaries life got on ok. The people you were working with because they were virtually all the same age, so your peers were pretty much the same, you got on well there. Management side of it and the upper ranks you never had a great deal to do with, even though they were in charge of you and it sort of doesn't stick in your mind now of what they were like because it didn't greatly you know even though they told you what to do, it wasn't irritating

08:30 or anything like that.

You mentioned leave there quickly, what kind of things would you do on your leave?

With your leave, the best way, is if you're in Sydney, you had normally from say, four o'clock or half past four on a Friday afternoon to seven o'clock Monday morning, if you got that whole period off. Because I lived in Sydney, I'd tend to go home. So you'd leave there and you may go first place you had was either

09:00 the hotels at Woolloomooloo or Kings Cross, and you'd have a couple of beers there with your mates. Then you'd go home and you'd maybe get in touch with the friends you had, before you joined in the navy, or be with your family, see your family and hang around home. Then you'd go back to the ship normally Sunday afternoon because it was easier to get transport then, than it was on a Monday morning, so you'd tend to go back earlier than that. If you were in a different place, like if you're in a place like Melbourne, you didn't have as much

09:30 time off. You may have the Friday evening off or the Saturday because you'd be working one of the days over the weekend. So you'd go into town being young and you'd go to the pubs and try to find out whether there's something on that night and that was in the era where most pubs closed by ten o'clock at night. So you never had a big night session as such, you know the hotel stopped, you'd find somewhere to either stay or generally, because you didn't really know where you were, you'd tend to go back to the ship

10:00 and stay there, because you knew everything was there. So yeah, you'd go and have a few beers maybe to a place that had a band, when it shut down you'd hang around for a while get bored with the place and head home, or head back to the ship.

Would you be in your uniform?

In that time it was compulsory to wear uniform ashore. Yeah, so you certainly stood out, people knew who you were. Shore patrol knew who you were. Military police knew who you were. So yeah if you didn't know anyone

10:30 and you're hanging around there after pub close, you'd sure enough get pulled up by one of them and they'd say, "What are you doing here?" It's mainly because you stood out in the uniform.

Were there any blokes who were a bit of a kind of bad influence or?

There was, you know you're looking at the whole community, so you got good and bad. Normally the bad as such, get weeded out pretty well, they tend to

11:00 end up being on a discipline charge. So if you've got leave, they haven't. So they don't tend to influence

you that much. As far as on the ship, if you got one that's a bit, that pushes the boundaries with officialdom and that you tendered not to run with them because you knew not only was he getting into strife, you'd get into strife too. So it was better to stay on the peripheral a bit, not play the muggins game as well.

So tell us

11:30 **about going to further training?**

Ok, after Sydney you get notified that your training trade course is coming up and they'd tell you where it's at, and in my case it was back at HMAS Cerberus because I was in the gunnery branch. And you went back to Cerberus and from there it was totally different to recruit school because you had freedom. You could have things like a radio in your cabin

12:00 with no hassles. So from a day to day living experience, you had more freedom. You could go the canteen which sold alcohol, you had more decisions you could make yourself. Then your trade training time is you had to make sure you were there right on eight o'clock and have the day laid out in front of you depended on what you're doing. Then it was virtually like going to college now,

12:30 or university now, where you've got compulsory study that you've got to be there for, and so all that went and you had to do compulsory exams. From Cerberus they used to go out to a place called Flinders and that's where they had their heavy gun firing systems. And being on gunnery and gun fire control, I was mainly operating the gunnery computers, the gun plotting, the gun radar, not actually in the gun turret. So you went out there and you could pick up merchant ships going past and you'd lock on with the

13:00 radar, do all the ranging exercises and do all the plotting but you're not actually firing the gun. So you could still do all the technical hands on stuff as far as tracking targets. In the same area they'd send the aircraft out, you'd track them and lock all your equipment on them, being brought up to speed how to operate them and how to handle breakdowns, how to handle failures and everything else. Then at the end of that, the gunnery, the actual blokes that are firing the guns, they'd be working training on their side,

13:30 then at the end of it, you'd, both lots, would come together and you'd lock on to the targets and you'd do the full firing and that. And they'd make sure you had ammunition in the turrets and all that. So then you could see your shells landing near your target and you could adjust for it, do all your calculations, ballistics, lock on to everything and then you do successful firings on that. And once you passed all that, then you're ready to go back to sea, on a ship.

14:00 I'm trying to think now, I was down there again on a course I think, yeah nearly twelve months.

Well tell us how you were not only taken in to gunnery but specifically into your role, what was the process of choosing you for that?

It goes back to what you put down when you first joined the navy, it feels nice looking at

14:30 mechanical and electrical. And in the boot camp when they're showing you so many different fields of trade, the way they describe each trade to you, because you don't understand the full amount of it, when I looked at gunfire control they were talking about the electrics and electronic side of it and I thought, "Oh ok, that's electrical I'll go for that." Its only later you realise, it wasn't a pure electrical trade, it was combined seamanship and a bit of electrical, not a big

15:00 electrical range, it was more electrical operation of it but not getting into the nitty gritty of it. By that stage it was too late and you made the best of where on the gun fire side of it. So yeah there was a little bit of disappointment there, because you hadn't understood fully what you were going into.

And what about the personal qualities that you needed for this? What did you have to be good at? How did they choose you like through tests or?

Well I was always intrigued with that, because at high school and that

15:30 things like science, I was very good in. Things in mathematics would have been one of my weaker subjects. I went into gunnery which was high in mathematics and it used to intrigue me how they picked someone with like a limited understanding of mathematics, to be working on gunnery calculations and that. But I had a natural aptitude to it. I took to it dead easy and

16:00 I used to sit there amazed and going, "Hang on, all your academics says that you're low on maths but in that I was quite strong."

Had they conducted any tests or anything?

We'd had ongoing tests in boot camp too, on your educational levels and that, and they sort of put you into a big pool then. And again there's only so many positions and if you don't jump into those first, you're going to go for second choice type stuff.

So tell us what where the things you were learning

16:30 **initially?**

In the gunnery, initially you're learning basic electrical circuits, basic mechanical circuits involved with gunnery computations and radars. You're learning about radars, how they detect the targets, how you transmit and receive electrical voltages, how and why, you use different ones. With your radar, your screens like your cathode ray tube, radar screens, how they worked.

17:00 **How do they work?**

Magic. No it's with the electrical, different voltages and activated tubes and how your target is set up on the tube, the images on that. And same as with your radar how much power you use to transmit and your echo comes back. So you're learning all that field of it, then with the computers you're learning the limitations on your band rates on the computer, at that time they weren't calling it band rates,

17:30 but on its processing speed, its capacity, how much data it could handle and interference, what was happening and why it was happening. Oscilloscopes, what you were looking at when you were looking at oscilloscopes. So yeah, it was all just all a new, new world on that side.

What are you looking at when you look at oscilloscopes?

At first it looks like magic because all you see is these fancy, bright lights moving

18:00 across the oscilloscope and you're going, "Wow." Then they start to show you, by changing voltage signals how you get voltage drop and what it means when you get that. Then its, then they go on to ok with your different drops on your voltage will do this on your target and this is how a target shows up. So yeah, you're going through that full range.

Well explain to me what kind of changes in voltage?

With the changes,

18:30 when you're looking at the screen, you normally have just a clear white line across, which is your mean line. Then you see a 'blip' on it and that blip is activated by a voltage drop and from that blip it would tell you the target, or the strength of the target coming back for your radar and for processing. And you have lines then, how far your blip goes and that's all voltage affected. And from that blip, they would know if it's an aircraft or it's a ship or if you're looking at something on land. Then once you start to,

19:00 adjust on visual, understand what you're looking at there you can, from first impression, say what it is. Then from there they can assess what type of target you're looking at. And with the oscilloscope, not with the oscilloscope, with the radar screen it's virtually the same as a ship navigation screen. You've got a sweep arm going around and a blip will pick up where your target is on it, but it takes 'you' to work out the angles to it. The

19:30 military one, as soon as you pick the blip it automatic put a range line on it and it would come up and would tell you exactly distance away, speed, travel and then again, same again with the size of the blip and you can work out what it is. If it's an aircraft your rate of close, is a lot faster. If it's a helicopter it's a different rate of close. And then with other radars you'd overlap and you can tell exactly what you're looking at. And they're the things you were learning on the gunnery side of it.

20:00 **How new was a lot of this equipment that you were learning on?**

I'd say technology, forefront of technology wise, and stuff. One of the things I know that I was working in the sixties, is only virtually becoming common knowledge now in the commercial world, so it was very advanced.

What was that?

That was on a radar

20:30 system. And yeah what's out there now, is what we were using then. So yeah that's a lot of the military stuff was very advanced on the technology side.

So who was instructing you then, if it was new?

With a lot of it the instructors would go overseas to, an easy one was because we were for instance, at 'Marconi' say for radar, people would be going overseas to these places and they'd be doing

21:00 from the military side of the training and that, they'd come back as then the teachers, the instructors, the trainers of this new product. And the same as when we left the British type systems and went to the American type systems. We had American advisors coming plus Australians that were coming back from America trained up on how this stuff worked. And that was my first experience with modular type components, if something failed on a gunnery system that you didn't have to shut it all down and

21:30 solve a problem. You could isolate a section, take a rack out, put a new rack in, power it up and you still had your target and everything fully operational and that to us at that time, was magic. Because the early stuff, if it went down you lost everything and this modern stuff came to us was pure modular. And that was a big leap forward to us. Even with, if you were tracking a target you never lost it, one section would go out

22:00 you could replace it and 'back up' still while you're tracking. So it was pretty good stuff.

And tell us about some of the firing you were learning, like some of the skills you had to learn about firing?

Ok the mechanics of it, you used to do, or when you were still down at Cerberus, the mechanics of firing there, naturally because you're controlling the turret, so they'd take you through the turrets and show you the barrel, the bridge, how the shells

22:30 came up in the trays, how they dropped in the cradles and loaded and all that. So from when you gave the command to 'fire', it showed you the all the mechanics, how it worked from the moment downstairs to when it came up with a magazine, until it went bang. So you understood when you're back inside doing all the lock on and that and saying, "Fire," normally before you say, "Fire," you're already loaded and there's a procedure you go through. So as soon as you get a target they're automatically loading and when you go 'bang', its 'bang'. But you understood the time lags and

23:00 if you wanted to change the type of shells, if you're changing from high explosive shell to variable time shell, it was different components and different time span it took to come through from the magazine. So you understood the mechanics of what was going on and in your mind you had a clear picture of what the other people would be doing and you'd be looking at your stuff and locking on. So yeah you got an overview that way.

What about some of the aspects, like the conditions that you were

23:30 **firing in, would weather affect it or?**

Ok when you're doing your first set up, if we're looking at a peace time set up now, it's a more casual approach. You know you're going to be coming into a 'firing' this afternoon, so you have enough time to check all your equipment out and that everything's ready to go. When it's getting closer to the time, you're doing your latest download on your weather information, temperatures, humidity, sea states, wind, all that,

24:00 the ship movements and you've already put all that stuff in. But even though you've done all that you still require your first shot you fire, or normally the first two shots you fire, you do what you call a 'pre-action calibration'. Now you put all your offsets in and those two shells will tell you what's happening in real time. And where your shell lands, from where it should have landed, you can do your calculations back and you put in the offsets for that. So you set up everything ready for the actual shoot. In wartime,

24:30 or I shouldn't say 'wartime', in conflict time, you don't know, or you haven't got that luxury of time. So that you still keep your system up to date as much as you can with your current ballistics, but as soon as you fire at a target, your normal first shot to your second one, is you're doing a quick action calibration and most people wouldn't even realise that that first shot is just a check shot. But you can

25:00 put it in so fast, then you can lock on to it. So that first one is, "We'll see where it actually lands," how close to where we're going and correct for it. So from that, yeah it doesn't take much to set yourself up.

How do you measure exactly where it lands?

If it's on water its dead easy because you've got radar and you'll get a very distinct echo when your shell hits your target, and it's dead easy to correct for.

25:30 If its aircraft, and we're talking about aircraft, either pilotless target aircraft or the aircraft with a 'drogue' on the back. So you got the blip of the tow plane and you got the blip of the target. And your first shell, where it goes off near that target, you can correct in seconds, you'll see where it is and adjust for it. If it's on land, depends how far inland. If it's coastal you can pick it up on your radar. If it's out of visual site then you would be

26:00 relying on a spotter on shore to tell you where it's landing, or someone in an aircraft to tell you where it's landing. So that's the difference on those two. But still, even on land you can drop them very close to where it should be.

Now you mentioned that you correct them really quickly, how do you get to be confident at such speed?

That's from the training you do when you go back doing your trade because you're doing repetition on

26:30 it, simulations all the time. Lock on, totally shut down, come back to action and doing that and its just continuous training. And even when you're on a ship cruising up and down the coast, people look and think, oh its just going up and down. You'd find the people on it, doesn't matter what area they are, would be training all the time. It's not just sitting there looking at the water and looking at the sun, they're working all the time.

And what was the computer equipment like, that you were doing it on?

The

27:00 early ones, the British ones, were more electrical mechanical. They had a series of gears and cogs and they were very slow. And when we left that and went to the American ones, which was all electronics,

there was virtually instantaneous. And from going from electrical mechanical, to going straight to the electronic, so from that it's nearly the same as switching on your TV now or your stereo system, the switch of the button and things are ready. The only lag you've got there is

27:30 your gunnery turrets and the only lag there is actually loading from the magazine into all the ammunition hoists and all that. so you've got the mechanical lag there. But if you're going into an area and you know it's happening, I'd tend to have the first shells they're going to use already loaded, not in the barrel but they're sitting there on the 'transfers' ready to go.

Would you also practice maybe the circumstance of the equipment breaking down and doing it manually?

Yeah, yeah.

Tell us about that?

With, because

28:00 of the gunnery radar side of it, you simulate a radar failure, now on a ship you have more than one radar. Now your attack radars are different to normal surveillance or coastal radars. But what you can do if you lost your gunnery one, you could quickly then, on the gun plot, which is up in operations room, because they're looking at the same target on a table, then they can just use their normal navigation radar and say, "Ok it's still there," and you do everything by manual then. You can't use your computer for your fine

28:30 calculations but you have other override equipment that you can adjust and drive the thing blind and you won't be accurate but you'll get it very close. Then again, you go back to virtually what they're doing in the Second World War period, look and see, fire and adjust by visual adjustments on it. Or they can use the type radar and say, "Ok let's overshoot," and adjust back and forward. So you go through all those eventualities, how to rely on 'redundant'

29:00 equipment. And going, that's from a redundant gun, right through to redundant computers, redundant radars. So they don't just rely on one thing, they can handle a whole multitude of failures and still operate.

And what kind of exercises were they making you do, to learn all this?

Again using the equipment, practicing on the equipment, so it becomes second nature. What they'd do in the exercise,

29:30 in a room like this, you might have thirty blokes in here and in exercise they may walk up to you and just hand you a bit of paper and say, "In five minutes' time you do something stupid." To me they might say, "Simulate you've died." So they do the scenario of not only equipment but the personnel become non functional in their job, so you got to jump in and take over from that person. They'll simulate the ship on fire, they simulate flooding and you got to handle all these other scenarios at the same time.

And at

30:00 **Cerberus, when they're simulating this, did they have certain rooms for it or how?**

It still uses your training rooms which simulated a compartment on a ship. It still looks like a ship inside, the whole atmosphere, apart from the rocking and rolling is a ship. So every thing you're training on is real time training. So yeah, what you're doing there is the same as you'd be doing on a ship. Out at Flinders where they used to have the turrets in a radar room, there was a big gap between them, but internally they're

30:30 exactly the same as what you have. It used to be funny, sometimes you'd be in there for so long that you'd think you're on a ship, then you open the door and you're looking outside at lawn and it took a little bit to adjust where you were, but yeah, the equipment and that was one hundred per cent what you were using.

And what was a typical day for you during this training?

In the, down at Cerberus the training, you tendered to get up about six thirty of a morning, go to breakfast around about seven.

31:00 Eight o'clock you had to, oh between having breakfast and eight o'clock you'd clean up your room, not like boot camp but clean it up, so it's neat. Get yourself ready. After eight o'clock you mustered, then you'd march to where your training centre is. Then you go about whatever duties are required for that day. And you'd have like a daily routine, what is going to happen that day and where you've got to be available because sometimes different areas, will be doing different

31:30 things to you and you might be observing today and not doing it. Then you'd work through to about twelve o'clock and that would be lunch break. At one o'clock you'd come back and then you'd go from one through to four, four thirty and that's your study day from that side. That night you'd have notes you'd have to study, then you may have exercises you've got to go through and set up ready for the next day or a couple days if they've given you

32:00 a project that you've got to do and you'll come through, then just keeping up to date with what you are learning.

After the twelve months how prepared did you feel?

At that stage you felt you could handle anything that was required, you were more than confident at what you were driving. Then you understood the basis of seamanship when you went out from recruit school, so you weren't worried about that side of it. From your trade side of it, you were quite proficient

32:30 and yeah you weren't concerned about how you performed on that. I think you were more than capable at that stage.

And what kind of things, maybe upon reflections, couldn't they simulate about conflict situations?

And this is true, that it's ok when you're sitting there comfortable, even though you might be under pressure when you're shooting at a target, they can never simulate something coming back at you. That's something

33:00 that no training can do.

So tell us about finishing up here, did you ever pass that parade or what happened?

No that was more low key. What we were doing, as we were getting towards the end of exam and you'd virtually been passing everything and you just had the last bit to do. You'd start to get told about what ship you'd be going to and at this stage we looked like, the group I was in, that we'd be going to America, to pick up the latest

33:30 DDG [Destroyer] which was the Brisbane [Perth Class, Guided Missile Destroyer]. They said, "Oh you're going to the States," and we were all under the assumption, "Yeah we're going to the States." So then they said, "You've got to sort out your personal affairs," you know, so you won't be here for eighteen months, two years. So anyway yep, still going and then at the last minute, they turned around and said, "No you're not going there, you're going to join the Hobart." Then we sort of looked and said, "But that's in Vietnam." They said, "Yeah it's coming home." We said, "Oh ok." So you weren't over concerned, you thought, "Ok when that ship comes back

34:00 we're going to the Hobart." So when we finished the training at Cerberus you had about a week or maybe there, just floating around after your trade course. Then we got shipped through to Sydney and we joined the Hobart in Sydney and they said, "Oh you blokes are going back to Vietnam." And that was the first encounter that we realised that, "Hey, we're the next crew going back." But the hard part we had, is that all our training was on British type gunnery systems and then we had to come up to speed on the American system.

34:30 So everything we'd learnt at Cerberus you had to virtually put in the back of your mind, then concentrate on the American systems and how the American systems worked. So yeah, that's the transition we had from the trade school, back to a ship.

Why hadn't they brought you up to speed on the American systems?

At the stage we only had two American ships, that was the Perth and the Hobart and the new one coming through, was the Hobart. All the rest of the fleet was British type ships.

35:00 So in training they've got to train you for the majority, which was British, British style equipment. So that's what our training was.

And did you have any suspicions that you would be going back to Vietnam or did you know this?

At that stage we didn't. I think when we first knew we were going to the Hobart and they said, "Oh it's coming back from Vietnam," and you just thought, "Oh ok." And you hadn't even thought it was going. It was only when we joined the ship and they turned around and said, "You're going back," and we went, "Oh." Up until that stage

35:30 you didn't think you were going.

What were your first thoughts when you heard that?

Surprise I think. From memory it would have been just a bit, oh because nothing had even been said about going back there. But once you realised that the blokes were saying that you're going back there, it wasn't just 'nest egg talk' amongst blokes saying, "Yeah this is what's happening," it was fact. And you were going, "Shit," and yeah and you hadn't even considered it at that stage. Then the thing from that is,

36:00 it was more professional where they didn't mess around with the training, they said you know, "We've got to go straight back into this training stuff." So virtually the ship was here and all the blokes from Vietnam were leaving the ship, well most of the blokes were leaving, there was only key people staying there. Then they started to train us then on how the systems worked, even when you were along side on Garden Island, you were learning how the stuff operated. You couldn't transmit in Garden Island with

the radars because they were too powerful, you'd have problems in the City and

36:30 that, but you were running them 'dry' which means you could look but you're not transmitting. So we were doing all that. 'Mr Qantas' had a fair few trackings, as he went over the top with planes, because you'd be training on those as they went past. But yeah, even the time when we first went to sea after then you could drive the American stuff because it was a lot easier, a lot simpler than the British stuff and it was just then really getting used to working with solid state equipment.

37:00 To us it was so easy compared to the old stuff. So it didn't take you long to work out how it all worked and the speed of using it was a big difference.

You just mentioned that just key people was left, I mean what kind of percentage or what amount of people were left?

It's hard to put a percentage on it, you just know that there were key people. I'd say about forty per cent. I mean just key people in

37:30 key areas but it didn't take you long to come up to speed.

Is that quite a dramatic change for a ship, to lose over fifty per cent of its crew?

No, if you jump away from there and look at now, the Americans they did it with one of their aircraft carriers off Western Australia; where they did one hundred per cent crew change and the new crew coming on took straight over. Going back to our time because you understand

38:00 basic layouts of ships and how they all work, it's the finer polish that you're not sure about on that ship and by certain people being left behind, they could say, "No you don't do it that way, you do it this way." So yeah, it doesn't take long to understand how it works. The ones that would have a bigger learning curve I'd say, would be the mechanical blokes learning how the boilers and that worked on the new type of ship and how the drive systems work. The rest of it was no real drama.

Were

38:30 **there any tongue in cheek or fun comments there as they left the ship to you?**

There would have been. It wouldn't have been natural of Australians, if they didn't, but there is nothing that jumps to mind about what was said. Just the normal things that blokes would say, yeah but there's nothing specific that I can remember.

What about in regards to you going to Vietnam?

Virtually about the only thing they were saying was, "You bastards will find out

39:00 what it is like." And that was about the biggest thing they were sort of saying, you know. And we did, but you didn't understand from their experience what they meant when they were sort of saying, "You'll soon find out." Yeah so that was all in front of you at that stage.

Well how were you feeling about the prospects of going?

Because there hadn't been any real major damage to Australian ships at the time, even though you knew that the Hobart

39:30 had been under fire when she was there, there was no real concern about your safety or your future there, it was just sort of, "Oh ok we're going there." Then they were saying you know, "It's no picnic. You won't know what sleep is like," you know and all this stuff and you're going because you hadn't encountered it yet, it was hard to understand what they were saying. So it was sort of more intrigue then fear. I think you just didn't understand.

We'll just pause

40:00 **there Graham because we're at the end of the tape**

Tape 4

00:36 Are you right?

Yeah.

With the Sydney it's an aircraft carrier in tonnage, I couldn't tell you, but with the Hobart it's a destroyer and it was an American built destroyer, so compared to a British destroyer, the American one is very streamlined. They are designed to be a

01:00 seagoing ship, so therefore they are very streamlined and very quick. With the weapons on it, the comparison between the British one, the British one had a turret which had two barrels in it and the American one had a single barrel. And the barrel on the American ships were fully automatic and that

meant that even though you had a chap in the turret, as a safety officer, or several blokes in there as safety officers, the whole mechanism of the gun was

- 01:30 automatic, so the rate of things changing in that type of gun, was very fast. The rate of fire in a 'four point five', which was a British was around about eighteen to twenty rounds a minute and they required blokes in there to help transfer the shell and the powder. In the American ones the rate of fire, I think they had a 'fury' of around about 42 rounds a minute, but in actual practice they used to run at around about twenty to twenty four, so you didn't break equipment. So they were very
- 02:00 rapid in their response to firing. If you looked inside of it, it had a big breach mechanism and you had a cradles each side. And if you looked in the cradle they had a shell and powder and they used to work in sequence, one would drop a shell and powder in and it would drop back. As it dropped back the ones in the tubes coming up from the magazine would reload that one. So each time the bridge went back the other transfer arm could drop a shell and powder into it. So that's how you got the high rate of fire.
- 02:30 At the same time electrics of the turret would be adjusted for any errors and movement, so it was a very stable platform. From that, the signals you used to get down at what was called a transmission station and that was your gunfire computer area. And inside that gunfire computer room, you picked up data from the operations room, you picked up data from your lookouts that were up above the bridge which had an auto electric selector. If they saw a target
- 03:00 they could trigger into that and you could select down below if you were going to use that target. You could select if you were going to use the operations information that was coming to you, or you could use your own gun radar. And at the back of the ship you had another automatic turret exactly the same as the front one, so between those two turrets and your transmission station you had a very fast and very effective weapon system. Also your computer could take out speed and course of the ship that's it on,
- 03:30 so it was very modern in what it could do and how well it did it. And the British ones, it was a lot slower process, you were still working virtually back to Second World War technology. So between the two of them, it was chalk and cheese.

And where about on the Hobart is the gun control room located?

The gun control room, if you look at roughly the middle of the ship

- 04:00 underneath the aerials, come straight down from that, the gun control room is just below the boarder line, in the middle of the ship. The reason for that is because of the equipment that is used in there and it's very vital to the operation of the gunnery and you want to protect it, so you tend to have it below the water line.

How does that protect it?

Well if a shell hits a ship, from let's say from an enemy shore battery, it's tendered to be heading

- 04:30 the higher part of the ship not heading below water. So for that reason that's to protect it from that type of attack, so the ship can be hit by shells and the gunnery fire control system would still work.

And describe to me the set up of the room on the Hobart?

The gunnery control room, if you walked into a room approximately eight foot by twelve foot long and right down the middle of it you have a

- 05:00 massive bank of a computer bank, down the middle of it. On one wall you have radar screens and another screen similar to an oscilloscope with all your associated control consoles with that. The computer bank down the middle, would have all chairs sitting in front of it and four operators were driving various parts of it. Directly behind them where I said about the radar screens, you'd have two operators there. On the other side of the computer bank you'd have the technicians that would be
- 05:30 working on the electronics, in case anything failed they could pull out spare components and put in new, while you're working it. And you had all your headset communication gear and that's for communicating with the operation rooms. The gun turrets and you could also hear the spotters ashore putting data through. So you had any a pretty surround view of what was happening outside of where you were, just from what you could hear on
- 06:00 communications.

And what was the sort of, can you describe the atmosphere, what it's like in that room?

It's very cramped. Again because of the equipment you've got in there and the number of people you've got in there and we're one of the few parts of the ship that they tend to lock you down in, because of what you're using. And it goes back to the stage where they've got to keep it water tight and they've got to also, that if you've got 'boarders' on the ship

- 06:30 they can't break into you easily, so you all tend to be locked in, when you're in there. The air in there is pretty dense because you've got everyone living on top of one another, or standing on top of one another, or working on top of one another, so it's very cramped. And in those days there were no restrictions about smoking, so the blokes would be smoking in there as well. So you were in a very

foggy little environment.

And what's the lighting like in there?

The lighting was,

07:00 it was a dull lighting because you needed to see the instruments and the equipment that you are using, so you didn't have super bright lights, it was dull lighting. You could actually turn the lights off and just use the reflection from your dials and screens that you were using, plus you were looking at your radar. But you still had enough light that you could see one another and plus the various equipment that you had to operate.

And where about was your seat, your chair?

I used to operate, either facing the

07:30 computer screen, depending what section you were working on there, or you would be turning around the other side and you'd be using the oscilloscope or the radar screens there. So you used to not be stuck in one spot you'd rotate to where you're working.

What was your favourite position?

There, I used to like the oscilloscope more because you could see straight away your target and you could lock on, if it was surface target you could lock on very quickly with that. While other blokes were still running up

08:00 their computer and the radar screen, you could still lock on with yours, so that was it was quicker. And you could see what was happening when your shells were landing near it, you could pick it up straight away.

And how did it feel being so removed from the actual guns?

You didn't think of it. Because of the training and that you had, you didn't stop to think about that side of it. You were trained for a job

08:30 and you really didn't stop to ponder about, "I'm not near that," or, "I'm not upstairs," or anything like that.

And how long would you spend on a regular shift in there?

In peace time it would only be while the exercise is on. You might be in there for four hours you could be in there for six hours before a break. When we were in Vietnam, we were doing roughly twelve hours on, twelve hours off. But when they say, "You, twelve hours off," if anything was happening and you were required to be there, you just stayed

09:00 there. So there was no defined time, if there was any conflict and you had to stay down there, you just stayed there.

And being in a small cramped room with lots of screens and things like that, how do you keep your concentration up for twelve hours?

I don't know, youth I think, but there was so much happening. In periods of lull, you could get away with someone taking a catnap and other blokes doing it. If it was 'full on' there was just so much

09:30 happening, that time 'went', you didn't realise what you were doing, you just had to keep doing it. Fatigue used to get you after a period but when everything was really happening, it was just one hundred per cent focus and you kept going. So it was only afterwards it would hit you but not at the time.

And what was the chain of command like in the ship?

We had to change the chain of command because your early training back here, when I say back here, in Australia

10:00 was the British system, where someone sees something and he repeats it and repeats it and repeats it. So you might have four people repeating the one order and when we went onto the DDGs for that type of command to happen, it took too long. So you virtually had to cut the middle people out. You virtually then, got to the stage where you were nearly dealing one on one. So it was certainly deleted, redundant information.

So who, sort of

10:30 **which different ranks and things like that were in the gunnery room?**

The ranks, when you were in there, didn't really mean much. It was individual because if you started worrying about ranks, you don't function correctly. So you virtually operated nearly on one on one names. If there was officers there with you, it was not, "Sir this," and, "Sir that." You had to function as a team and you did and that was the only way you could

11:00 do things quickly. The time for pomp and ceremony was outside of the conflict period and when you're

in there, it was virtually one on one.

And what was the communication like with the rest of the ship, what sort of channels of communication came through?

We had radios and you also had the ship broadcasting system. Ships broadcasting could come through to you, or you could delete it, depending on what you were doing, if it was interfering with what you were doing. Every one of us had headsets and

11:30 microphones on. So you were virtually up to date with everything that was happening on the ship. All different sections talking, it was like an open channel. You could hear what was going on, except, the only ones that couldn't, was the people in the magazines and the turret because you needed dedicated information with them, for speed. So you could control when they spoke and you just had a switch that, you could click them in and out and it was the same as on an aircraft, the captain can talk to everyone and we could talk

12:00 to specific people and we had the same capability. Nearly every department in the ship had the same capability. If it was essential for you to be able to communicate, you had ways of communicating. If it was 'chat' or minor data transfer, you could delete them and do the essential.

What were the rules about idle chatter on the intercom?

It depended on what was happening. If it was an 'idle path', there were really no problems for chatter. If it

12:30 become serious, where you had to be able to communicate precise what was required, you'd just tell everyone to 'clear the line' and everyone that wasn't required would shut up and the ones that were using it could transfer data as we needed it. So it was just a written rule, that if it was urgent stuff come through, it just come through.

And you mentioned

13:00 **when you were in Vietnam, it was twelve hours on twelve hours off, how about before you went to Vietnam?**

In the training period on the Hobart, we started to simulate those times, so you were conditioned to that type of exercise. So when we left Sydney, we were doing most of the training off the east coast and off the areas of Jervis Bay, you were doing Vietnam type time pieces, where you had to get used to that style of operations. And also they were bringing you away from the

13:30 style we had before, the big chain of commands down to reduced chain of command. So yeah they were bringing you up as much as they could to real situation time.

What were the differences in lifestyle and things like this on the Hobart, compared to your time on the Sydney?

You went to a modern ship, with modern living quarters, air conditioned ship, to a basic ventilated type ship, so in that style, there was years ahead

14:00 in comfort. Your living quarters were air conditioned, your eating quarters were air conditioned, your gunnery system areas were air conditioned, where if you compare it to the Sydney type one, they only had ventilation if you were lucky. So there was a big difference like that. So yeah that was a lot better.

What are the modern living quarters, what were they like on the Hobart?

You had bunks instead of hammocks, even though you were crammed in because you haven't got much space.

14:30 We had individual bunks so therefore you had a decent bed, as far as sleeping arrangements. You had limited space around you in the mess deck, so you had virtually had a table with a couple of fixed chairs around it, so you had somewhere to sit in your mess deck area. You had facilities down there for better lighting, individual lights over your beds. You had music, piped music if you wanted that just in the mess deck area, it didn't come

15:00 individual, but you had that advancement as well. Your cafeteria, you had proper tables and proper bench type seats for that. The sitter, you had the cafeteria was a modern layout. So just from the day to day stuff like that, it was better. The showers and toilets were of a modern design. You had decent areas to go to. So yeah it was pretty 'classy' compared to the Sydney

15:30 type of accommodation.

What was the food like?

Most of the food we had, when we were supplied from Australia was very good quality. When we were in Vietnam, you were stuck to the American supply network and some of the stuff we had there wasn't the best. Different style of doing things, different food, yeah you just had to take what you get there.

What sort of things would the Americans have?

What we had

16:00 is one of them, was milk that jumps to mind. It was milk that was virtually processed in the tins, in the forties, that they've had left over and they were using. So what the style was, you didn't shake the milk can up, you'd puncture the side of it and you'd leave about two inches of milk in the bottom because if you'd tip that out and it was like white mud, and that was your fresh milk. Sausages tasted like cardboard with a bit of string through the middle of it to give you a bit of texture. And chicken was, I don't know what they

16:30 did with the chickens but they used to smell revolting, if you had chicken. So they were the main ones though, it took a bit of getting used to.

And you mentioned that you were doing bits of training off the east coast of Australia, when did you actually sort of, head to Vietnam?

From the time we joined it, we had six months before it went back. So in that six months we virtually were full training for that full six months. It was full on, bringing the ship back up.

17:00 There was essential maintenance had to be done on it, for natural wear and tear from over there and our training never stopped. And at the end of six months we were straight on our way. And we sailed from Sydney and went to the Philippines. Then we did a transfer of command between the Hobart and the Perth, and that's when they give all the different technical data over, about what's going on. Our equals on the Perth at the time, gave us a bit of up to date

17:30 information about targeting and what you do.

What did they tell you?

Oh just forget that rubbish, that's crap, that's out of date, this is how you do it now.

What sort of things were?

Just like locking on targets and the delay between actual firing at the targets. They'd reduced the chain of command again. It was just very little technical things that they changed to.

What sort of things did they tell you about the type of targets to be on the lookout for?

No so much the 'type' of targets to lookout but

18:00 from the time you contacted the target to the time you fired they gave you, you know, "Don't do it this way, do it that way." It just reduced the time.

And what was your awareness of the type of targets you'd be firing on?

Just general at that time. Our impression of Vietnam really, is everything we'd seen in newspapers where they showed villages with tunnels underneath them. It didn't really show much of the water borne craft, what you'd be encountering. And even our training

18:30 the blokes there, started to tell you about water borne craft and you were going, "Oh," because you didn't stop to think that the North Vietnamese had ships that could attack you, but they did. And things like what we'd deemed junks here, were armed over there and different types of craft they used. So that was a bit different to what you expected before you went.

And what sort of basic general briefing were you given by

19:00 **anyone?**

Before, we virtually got no serious briefing about the place, until we got to the Philippines. Then we had the Americans come on and start talking about how their ships are and what their aircraft do. Then they started to talk about the proper targets we'd be encountering over there, and what the enemy did and what they didn't do. And that's when you started to get to the serious stuff thinking, "Shit, this is not playing at home you know, this is serious."

19:30 **What sort of information did they give you about the enemy?**

That it can strike from anywhere. Don't take them for face value, to what they're in, or what they're using, because they were very tenacious and what they used is any type of machinery they could, to attack they would. So that's when you really started to realise that it's not ship fighting ship, it's absolutely anything can be having a go at you.

20:00 So you start to realise then, that they certainly used anything they had at their resource.

And how would you describe the atmosphere on the ship at the Philippines?

It was still, "Yeah we're going, but we're not there yet." So there was, it wasn't 'crunch' time. You know, you knew you weren't there, so it didn't really hit home that you were there. You were sort of not far from going

20:30 there, but yeah, you were sort of knowing that it's going to happen in the next couple of days but yeah,

you were sort of, it still hadn't hit you fully that it was definitely going to happen.

And how long did you spend at the Philippines?

We only spent a couple days there. It was virtually refuel, do the transfer of stuff. I think we may have topped up on our supplies like our shells and stuff like that. Just so you're a hundred per cent fully loaded when you go there, you're not needing anything, they just

21:00 did the last minute. The same as going shopping, "Don't forget the milk," that sort of last minute stuff.

So where did you head once you left the Philippines?

We left the Philippines and we headed straight to Vietnam and I think the night before we got to Vietnam, we tendered to go up near the DMZ [Demilitarised Zone] and then they started to give us a run down on what was happening in that area and what to look out for. And we, virtually the next morning, we were straight

21:30 into bombarding ashore. And as we got closer they start to call you up because you're still coming and they say, "Ok you're going to that area." Then when we went into that area they said, "Ok." In no time you had targets and you were going in.

And you said that when they would talk to you altogether on a ship, how do they do that?

Just with the ships internal communications system, you couldn't sort of all leave and go to one area and sit down and have a talk. But you could as an individual team,

22:00 like we, as being in the gunfire control side, you'd have a briefing about, "Ok this is what's going to happen." So you knew you were talking with the operations people, you knew who you were talking to and you could hear what was coming into them. So you had an open line knowing what was coming down, even when your doing your side of it. So everyone understood what was going to happen and the format you'd use to operate on that basis.

And take me through step by step

22:30 **that first bombardment?**

Ok. On the first one you could hear us, we'd start to talk to someone ashore, so you could hear the American accent coming through the headphones, even though you couldn't talk to him. And he was starting to give co-ordinates towards one of the targets he had and then your going, "Shit, this is real." And you go in closer and then you're in range of it. Then they said, "Ok," and then he started to tell you what kind of rounds he wanted. And at this stage, in Australia ,when we are doing training and that

23:00 we were very conservative about how many shells you use for a target. And he starting to talk about twenty and thirty rounds he wanted fired first up. And you're going, "Hang on, we don't do it that way," because we're conservative with what we use. So there was a bit of comeback and going, "No, we'll give you two rounds before the shot." Now I don't know specific, but you were pulling back and saying, "No this is what we do first." So we fired our first couple of shells and then he corrected for it, then we were right on target, then I think we fired ten rounds or twenty rounds in that

23:30 area and took out the targets. And that's when you start to get an idea that we were better than the Americans, using the equipment, because you're getting a reaction from him of how professional you were, putting on the targets. Then you'd continually, he'd point you to a couple of different targets and you were taking those targets out. And the surprise of how quick you could do it compared to what they were doing.

What were the targets that you?

The first ones we, this may not be exact because

24:00 there was so many changeovers. But we were doing troop concentrations, where the North Vietnamese were moving up onto the Americans and we had to sort of destroy the North Vietnamese that were advancing on the Americans. Then we had some bunker type concentrations that you took out as well.

How long did it take to complete each bombardment?

Depends on what you're shooting at. If it's a simple, say one building, from the time he puts you onto it

24:30 until it's destroyed, a couple of minutes. But if it's more area, naturally it's going to take more time because you're not only just shooting in the one spot, you could be changing your targets in the one. It's still the one target but you're shooting in the area around it so you're not just going within a ten yard circle, you might be doing two hundred metres, moving up and down on that area to take out, if it's troop there, or if it's trucks, or if it's artillery pieces. Your time on target varies because you're covering so much area.

And you mentioned

25:00 **that you were more conservative with how many rounds you've used. Did this, through that first bombardment, did this continue or did you match the Americans?**

No, I'd say we were conservative every time, where the Americans tendered to do blanket bombardments. You know they just wanted to keep chucking at it and hope that they destroyed what they were shooting at. It didn't matter how much around it they destroyed, as long as they hit the spot. Where

- 25:30 with our training and that , a target is a target, you don't shoot the whole country side off, to hit one thing. So we were still very conservative about what you actually shot at.

What exactly does the actual ship do, while the guns are firing?

It still functions like a normal ship. People still go about their tasks. The cooks still prepare meals. The writers still do all the paperwork, engineering crew still work

- 26:00 running the ships boilers and generators and water equipment. You still require people to sail it, steer the ship, make sure what's going on, navigators have still got to do their work. And radio operators are still communicating with other sections as well as the person you are dealing with at the time. So yeah the ship doesn't alleviate, it's not everyone at 'action stations', everyone's got work to do.

How does the ship move during this time?

It's still sailing.

- 26:30 If you're doing say, fifteen nights before you went into your target area, a lot of times you'd increase speed so you are moving quicker, so the people driving that would be making the ship go faster. And the reason you put speed in is because with speed it's harder to lock onto you and if they do start to shoot at you, you've got speed to manoeuvre as well. So it makes you, a moving target's a hard target.

And what's the affect of a guns

- 27:00 **firing on a ship?**

You'll feel the vibration through the ship when they go 'bang'. It depends what part of it. Sometimes you'll hear the bang because you're close to it. Down in below, depends where you are, you'll just hear a 'thud' and you'll know that the shell or the guns been fired. A lot of times, if you're not on duty at the time and you hear it firing, you can tell the target, if it's something that can have a go back at you by how fast or how many shells

- 27:30 they're firing. You go, "Oh that's a bit more than normal." And you can sort of sense, just from the noise of the guns, to how big or how minor the target is.

And in that first bombardment how many different targets did you?

You'd jump around, at the time it was mainly troops that you were shooting into and bunker areas. But just in that one encounter, that's what you were shooting at. And continuation from there,

- 28:00 then you start to encounter boats in the area. And there was various ones, that if they were in certain areas, you'd attack them straight away because they're in what you call 'hot areas' and you know that they shouldn't be there. Other ones you have designated areas where like fishing boats can be and you don't' attack them but you've got to watch them because sometimes the 'fishing boats' are not fishing boats. So you've got to watch everyone there. Installations on the coast, close to the beach could be

- 28:30 a village, what we call a village here but it can be, like a military compound, so you attack that, take that out. Roads, bridges, truck convoys, anything that you can think of in a war conflict, is what you take on.

And I've heard about in the infantry like a body count attributed to different units or sections, does this work for a ship, is there a?

We never looked for a body count as

- 29:00 such. By realising what you're using there's going to be a high body count. From various times the Americans would say they had an 'X' number of body counts attributed to what we did, but it's not something we did. If you took out a 'junk', you'd never go and count the bodies that were in the water afterwards. As far as you were concerned you took out a junk and that was all. So there was no body count.

And what's the feeling like of even just being

- 29:30 **in the middle of the ship and not seeing any of what the guns were doing, what's the feeling like?**

At that time?

I guess of relating it to what the guns were actually doing?

I can only relate myself there. The first time you are doing it, it's so intense, it's very technical and it's just an end result of what you're doing and you haven't got time to ponder about it. If you're off duty and you hear the guns going because that's your field, you'd tend to be listening

- 30:00 to the rate of how the guns are firing. And from that, you'd sort of form a bit of a picture about what type of target they're going to. If you're close to underneath the guns you could hear the 'servo's' going which is the 'pips' of the guns barrels are dead straight, so you'd hear the 'giros' working. And if you'd hear the 'servo's' going then you'd know they'd be shooting at moving targets. If it's a lot of rounds going through the guns then you'd know they'd be on a fair concentration of either machinery or
- 30:30 troops because of how it was working. And from that, on a professional level, you'd be mentally picturing what the targets are. And if it was a junk on the water you were shooting at, or what they used to call 'water borne logistic craft', you could tell it was doing manoeuvrings trying to get away from you. Again, from what the ships doing and what the guns doing, you could sense that inside.

What's the psychological affect of visualising a target?

At

- 31:00 distance, the first couple of times, it seems unreal because you see it happen and you don't relate that it's you doing it, even though you know that it is. It's only when you're coming close to something and you take it out, that's when you have the impact of it. I know myself a lot of times you used to have compassion for it and you'd think, "Poor bastards," because we had the technology and we had the resources, where we could sort of destroy things at will. From their side of it, even
- 31:30 though they had a lot of land based equipment and a lot of land based resources, I think we were quite superior on the water to the technology we had. And you felt, a lot of times, you felt that it was one sided.

And how far inland could your guns shoot?

We could fire twelve and a half miles. So that's just simply double that, about twenty two thousand yards. Depending where you're target was inland, to how close to the shore you'd get.

- 32:00 There's times you'd go inside bays and shoot, to get the distance. Inside a large river, you'd go inside that area to shoot at targets. Depended how far inland it was. But Vietnam for what it was, a lot of their road networks were close to the coast so you could do a lot of damage in close. And a lot of supplies in Vietnam travelled by other countries, so as much as you're controlling the area, there was a lot that used to into
- 32:30 Laos and Cambodia and come down and come back in. And they were two countries involved that early in the peace they weren't, because Americans weren't attacking. So they had to try and keep it within that coastal area. And you could tell what they used to call 'choke points' is an area that the North Vietnamese had to bring supplies to get them south. And when you went into those areas they were very well defended, you'd pick up radar sites locking on to you. And when you
- 33:00 went in, they didn't hesitate to shoot back at you because they had equipment there to have a go at you and you knew you were going into a sensitive area.

And take me through step by step, from when you I guess, in relation to the first bombardment, from when the Americans called in the target, take me through your jobs specifically what you did?

Ok, the ship would be going parallel to the coast and you'd get a call in. Now whatever the target is you'll hear a request for

- 33:30 gun fire support. And if we're the ones nominated for it they'll say yeah, whatever our code was you're nominated for that target. So then you get a grid bearing from where he is and it's the same as using a land map and it's all in co-ordinates and that. So then he'd jump onto you and apart from the small talk he'd say ok my co-ordinates are 'blah blah blah'. He'd take the co-ordinates and read back to him and confirm that you've both got the same co-ordinates. Once you've got that, he'd say what the target was and in the
- 34:00 meantime your gunnery system would be loading and locking into that general area that he just said. And from that, from his co-ordinates he would give you where the target is. And once he's got the target and you confirm the target, you fire.

And using your equipment, how do you isolate the target?

With the computers, you put the offsets in on the co-ordinates, it's already got the co-ordinates there and it can, then you just adjust from what you've picked up on to your table co-ordinates.

- 34:30 **And when you say, he gives you the target, is that a set of numbers, is that a...?**

What he'll do is, he'll give you his position, which is co-ordinates, so you'll know where he is. And he'll say north of him four hundred metres, south of him, east or west of him, so far away and he'll describe the target to you. And from that, from what he's told you verbally, you adjust from his point to that point what he's given you. So you're hoping he's got his figures, or he's hoping he's given you the right figures.

- 35:00 They tend, what they tend, they won't tend to get you to fire over the top of them, they'd want to be to one side, in case he stuffed up. There are cases when they've called us in on top of them but that's just

the pressures of war and time. But they tend to try and be away from the target and so you can fire to the side, either side of him and he can adjust from that because naturally there are errors, in the maps he uses,

- 35:30 from the errors we'd have as well. So the first shell he's pretty apprehensive about where it's going to go until he sees it and then he's quite happy then to correct from it. And what he's got to do is he'll give you the corrections from what he's looking at and then we've got to transpose it because we're looking at a different angle to him. So if he says, "Left 50," while he's looking at something, that means for us, 'up 50'. So you've got to change the process of what he's telling you.

And

- 36:00 **how far generally is he away from the target?**

We've had them virtually nearly, at hand to hand with the enemy and what you do is drop behind and walk the shells up to him, that way. So sometimes he's right in the middle of it and other times he's got enough, he might be on a hill and he can see into a valley and he's got a bit of distances. And if he's in an aircraft, he's generally right over the top of them.

And when he's not in an aircraft what sort of a cover or?

- 36:30 The best he can find. With the spotters, normally the spotters will drop into an area that's hostile, or he might have been dropped by helicopter, or he may have had to walk in. So he's had to sort of carry his camouflage with him. The Vietnamese were very good at it, as soon as you'd start to shoot at them, of working out where the spotter was. So you had to be very quick because within no time

- 37:00 they'd start saying they'd been found. So they were very good at working out where the spotter is because they were fighting for years, so they understood these things.

And would you ever encounter the same spotter?

Yeah. Yeah there were certain spotters you picked up, mainly the airborne ones, not so much land based ones but the airborne ones, yeah you'd get the same spotters.

Would you develop any kind of relationship?

There was but it was,

- 37:30 it was really an artificial relationship because you never personally met the person. It was all just what you heard in your headphones.

What there any kind of obviously tense situation but any kind of banter or small talk?

Typical of Australians you know, they'd make humour out of disaster. So yeah there was always banter. And sometimes when you would lock onto a target and especially if the target moved and you put in a

- 38:00 correction, so you'd be giving him a serve about how stupid he was, about, "Can't he work out basic co-ordinates?" and things like that.

How would he respond?

When they got to know the Australian sense of humour, they could banter back ok. But if they didn't know Australians, it used to throw them, there'd be a period of silence because they didn't know how to reply to it. And same as other things and if you were waiting for corrections and he's slow, you'd say you know, "Are you still awake?" Yeah so there was little

- 38:30 you know throws, back and forth like that.

And would they have any nickname for the Australians or?

The Hobart was called the 'Green Ghost'. That comes from the North Vietnamese radio propaganda mechanism nicknamed it the 'Green Ghost'. And what it comes from is, if you look at the grey of the American ship and look at the grey of the Australian ship, the Australian ship appears to be green. And we had

- 39:00 a bit of a reputation, or the ship had a reputation of appearing where they didn't expect it, so yeah' we got nicknamed the 'Green Ghost' and that was the nickname that stuck.

And is there any kind of particular, when you're talking to a spotter over the radio, particular radio call signs that you use?

Oh there's a procedure, there's different call signs change all the time and you've got to because you have the Vietnamese listening in on the radios and a lot of the radio operators

- 39:30 are reasonably well educated and also they've got dual language, so it doesn't take them long to sound like a 'yank' [Americans] or whatever. I think it was a bit harder on the Australian drawl, but they could mimic yanks pretty well, so you had to make sure you kept changing your protocol on your call sign.

We'll just pause there because we're at the end of this tape.

Tape 5

00:36 Ok on the last tape we were talking about firing into certain areas. Tell us about the first time that you received an enemy fire coming back at you?

Well virtually just before that we were starting to get really edgy because we'd been firing at targets and you could see your damage you were doing, you could see secondary explosions, you could see things being destroyed.

01:00 And all we were getting back was machine gun type fire and small arms fire and you were starting to get apprehensive because you didn't know what they had. So you were pretty on edge wondering what actually they had that they could use on you. So the first time we actually came under fire, it was a relief in one way because you would start to realise what they had, apart from the seriousness and what they could have done if they hit. But actually, when the first couple of rounds come in, it was a load off your mind, you'd start to realise that, "Hey,"

01:30 now you know what they've got and what they're using. It took a lot of that apprehension off you, but then you quickly switched from that to the realisation that they're trying to hit you and in the interim then, you are trying to manoeuvre away from where they're shooting, so you wouldn't get hit. But from that first instance it was a relief to know what they had and then the fear and realisation came after that.

What did they have?

At that stage they were using six inch shells.

02:00 And being a land based gun they never had the range we had, so it wasn't hard for us to get outside of their range. And there was a land based artillery, so their rate of fire was a lot lower than ours, so we had that advantage as well.

Did any their firing come close to you though?

They came close but the hardest part of anything on the water because you haven't got anything to measure distance with, it's very hard to put precisely, how close they were.

02:30 I think its individual. Some people say you know, "It was right on top of us." Others say, it was a long way away. My own observations at that time because I happened to be on the upper deck when it was on, yes they were landing beside us, behind us and over the top of us, so therefore they were quite close.

What's the feeling like, coming under fire?

It's, you develop an insulated feeling that it's not going to be you, it's going to be someone else. And when you hear

03:00 things going through the air and hitting, you still don't think it's going to be you. You sort of look at your mates around you and think, "Shit, it's going to be one of them," but never you.

And what does it sound like?

It's, you hear the sound, if its shells going past you hear the noise of it going through the air past you. And actually, the explosion of a shell hitting the water is, it can be just a soft 'bang', other ones a very sharp 'crack'.

03:30 And the ones in the air sound like a thunder clap when there's a storm around. So there's all varying sounds from the same short of shell.

And you said you think it's not going to be you, why do you have this feeling?

I think it's an in-built survival thing that we all have, you know you see it happening and for some reason you don't think it's going to be you.

What was being said on board when this was

04:00 happening?

It's, we were going into a known target and when they start to fire back at us naturally the equipment you've got. you lock in straight away where they're coming from. And the ships going about its own self defence, like its increasing speed, you automatically make smoke, which acts as a camouflage where you are and you're trying to lock onto where these artillery pieces are so you can return fire and all this is going on at the same time.

04:30 You're not standing there looking at it and saying, "Oh gee." You're trying to retaliate as fast as you can.

So paint a picture for us, what kinds of things were being called out, or what are you hearing?

At the time you call out, "Incoming fire." At the time you're trying to get range bearing, what type of things are firing at you. Then you hear the blokes shouting orders back through for everything else to activate and where it's coming from. You are trying to

05:00 get numbers of how many artillery pieces are firing at you, if you can see them because if you can see it, you can lock onto it quicker because you take over visual. If their concealed by caves, or inside the vegetation, it's harder to pick them but you can generally pick up the area they're coming from, you're looking for gun flashes or smoke from that area. So there's everyone screaming and, or not screaming, yelling and orders going around to react to it. But it's pretty well controlled chaos, it's not

05:30 irrelevant commands going around the place. It tends to be, if you've got nothing to say, you shut up. That way it cuts down a lot of the communications traffic.

And tell us about this actual occasion, the first occasion, how long did it take and what happened in this event?

We were going into this area, from memory we were trying to shoot at a truck convoy and it was one of those, what they called choke points, where all the

06:00 traffic from the north comes down to the restricted area to try and get across the river. So it's a pretty good area for targets because you know that there's going to be people there. They try and defend it because they don't want you to stop their movements and as we were coming into that area, we were half expecting that we could have fire coming at us, so everyone was at a higher state of readiness. And when it starts you're not so much worrying about the ones you're under fire with, you're then starting to watch what else have they got there that they're going to be bringing

06:30 in too. So you're dealing with one lot of enemy and also looking for where's the second lot coming from. So you haven't got tunnel vision, you tend to be, "Yes we know where you are, where's the next lot coming from?" That's virtually the scenario.

And what happened, how long did this fight go for and what...?

Under the heat of it, it seems like seconds but in reality it must be going for fifteen minutes. And in that fifteen minutes you're manoeuvring and they're

07:00 chasing you across the ocean to try and get to you. Then once you've got their positions, it doesn't take long then to start knocking them out. And their rate of fire drops off really quick. Then you'll come back and saturate the area where they are because you don't know how much you've destroyed. And an indication from that is you'll start seeing 'secondaries' [secondary explosions] and you know that you're hitting their stored ammunition that they've got there. And there'd be general fires in the area so you know what you've been shooting at, you've got.

I was going to ask you, how

07:30 **can you assess what damage is being done on land?**

A lot of it is visual because you'll see if you hit something and it's something that's explosive you'll definitely see the flash and the blast from that, which will be larger than yours because you've set something off. Also, you could call in air spotters at that same time and they'd start giving you instant reports of what you are hitting and what they can see. And you know how hostile it is because if he starts receiving fire

08:00 they are trying to keep him away as well because they know he can put us straight onto them. And that's one of the skills they had, they knew how to get rid of the spotters because they didn't want you to be able to destroy their equipment.

And what would they do, say once you're out of range, to defend themselves from just being hit?

Once you're out of their gun range they tendered to retreat back into caves or back into bunker systems so that your stuff coming in is reduced damage.

08:30 Like on the side of the roads they had pits, they used to drive the trucks straight into those, then you couldn't hit the vehicle with shrapnel, it had to be a direct hit on the truck in the pits. So they had all these fox holes around the place and they utilised a lot of caves and tunnel effects where they could move things out of sight quickly. But on the 'choke points' it was harder for them because they'd have to get to a muster point. There was one place

09:00 there where they had a ferry they had to take the trucks and that, not ammunition but supplies across a river, so that was always a good target to us because they were trapped if they couldn't use the ferry and it was a regular target that we went for, knowing that they had this there. I mean you could sink it and then over a period of twenty four hours they'd have it going again. Not the same thing but they kept replacing it. So they were desperate to keep this

09:30 line of communications and supply open.

And on this first occasion you mentioned some of the defences you were using but did you head back out to sea, what happened?

Yeah, yeah one of the defences you used, is you start laying smoke and increasing speed. Then you turn, not fully away from them because you want your guns to still be able to fire in the area but you go away on a tangent. Then at a certain time when you're not under the direct fire, you'd turn back behind your smoke which doesn't affect your gunnery system,

10:00 then you can still lock on a target and shoot from behind that and come back out the other side of the screen, maybe coming back in, maybe going back out because you don't do a consistent pattern because they'll pick up what you're doing. So you sort of loop back and come back in and attack until you destroy it. But with the system we had you could destroy most targets even if they were firing at you in a very quick period of time because of the rapid firing guns. And the

10:30 technology you had, that you were far superior to what they had, so the advantage was with you.

How long, into this period of arriving in the Vietnam kind of area, had this come?

The first one was within, within a month. I can't remember exact days now, but there used to be a thing, that when you went to a war area, that you had to be there for so many days before you were considered to be in operational service, and we were within that period.

11:00 I know blokes were saying that you know we are now qualified. And just light hearted how you know, in the middle of action, blokes were still passing the comment that, "Ok we don't have to wait thirty days," or whatever it is. "It's happened now." So yeah, within a short period of time.

Well what did the blokes and yourself think about this little war zone rule?

It was like a lot of things that you saw with the military and government about procedures and protocol, you used

11:30 to shake your head and think, "Oh well that's how they do things." Personally I used to feel it was stupid because if you were within gun range, you could have been shot at at any second but they had this system that you had to be there so many days and you used go bit strange but that's how they did it.

And how exactly, you said if you were shot at or how did it work?

If you came under enemy fire, from the moment you come under enemy fire you were qualified operational service. And up to that, if you didn't come under

12:00 enemy fire, it was so many days that you had to be in a war zone before you were deemed 'operational'.

Well what's the definition of coming under enemy fire, like how close does the fire have to come to you?

It's got to be close enough so there's no doubt about what it's directed at. So on the ship, shrapnel hitting the ship or a shell actually hitting the ship, they'd deem that under fire. If it was what they'd deem, being too far away to be considered you're a target, then they'd say you're not under fire. It

12:30 was a bit of a strange rule of engagement, it had to be so close to be classified, if it was outside that it was someone else they must have been shooting at.

What if their fire just missed you, how far away does?

If it just missed you, they could say that there was enemy firing but not necessarily at you. So you'd see it sometimes and they'd say, "No it's not us, it must be someone else." And you looked around and there was no-one else there but you, but the words come down that it wasn't you,

13:00 so you used to smile and say, "Fair enough." But it's just how they did it.

Who makes the decision?

There's got to be a decision, I think made back with the Defence Department of Australia, or maybe even universal. I don't know, of what's deemed to be under fire or what's deemed to be in the area, and I don't know the facts of what they use for that, so it's hard to say.

And how did this policy affect the men?

13:30 It's, I think we used to just smile about it and think you know, just another one of those bureaucrat procedures and just get on with it.

I mean does it affect pay or anything?

No it doesn't, you don't get any extra pay for being under fire, you don't get anything else. The only thing you got out of it was, "Thank Christ it's not hitting us," and that's about all you got out of it. And when they do the stats [statistics] at the end of the conflict they turn around and say you know, "You came under fire 'X' amount of times," and that's about the only time you smile

14:00 and go, a lot of other times that they haven't acknowledged, so there's nothing you can do about it.

Does it affect morale at all?

I don't think so. I think it used to in some ways boost morale because typical of Australians I think being cynics and that, turn around and go, "It doesn't apply, it's not us," and they'd make some sort of a joke about it. The same as when you used to see small arms fire because they couldn't get to you a lot of the times, you'd see trace and that drifting

- 14:30 all over the place and you used to laugh about that and turn around and just call it 'bugs in the sky' or something like that. "But it couldn't be at us. No it's definitely not at us." You knew in honesty that they were shooting towards you but the distance was too far, so it wasn't getting anywhere near you.

So tell us after this occasion what kind of operations was the ship becoming involved with?

We were involved with

- 15:00 still looking at choke points and we were also trying to reduce the amount of supplies going south. And what they used to do then is when the landside got choked off, they'd look at using seaborne craft and then you'd start to see an increase in waterborne logistic craft coming down. Now what you had to watch then is, they were using aircraft from the north but they never used to come too far because there was so
- 15:30 much anti-aircraft equipment around that they'd sort of look for a window of opportunity and if that window was shut, then the aircraft would go away. Then you'd know about known missile sites and of those days, the missiles weren't like today, they'd be quite a lot of ground preparation to where they were using the missiles and you were aware of those areas. And the times we did see missiles ashore, they weren't very effective. Myself, I've seen a couple
- 16:00 light up and they'd go up in the sky but they had no guidance system, so they were very erratic. They either crash back on land, or self destruct, so they weren't causing the problem in my time there. In later years they were more effective but in the early times. You know you were sort of concerned about them but once you saw the guidance systems not working you went, "It's not going to come near us." And you'd come or become very calculating, watching what's happening and knowing if it's a concern to you or not. As soon as you seen
- 16:30 operational erratics, you used to cancel them out if it didn't come towards you because you'd start to understand the burn time of the missiles, the glide time it had, once the rockets went out and if it was too far away, you'd know very early not to worry about it. Then the waterborne, they used to try and come between you and the coast or go out a bit and try and come around you but we had good radar coverage so you used to detect targets that way. And a lot of times with
- 17:00 the waterborne they'd be under protection of shore batteries and when you'd come near them they'd come back underneath the shore batteries for protection, so you used to sort of, take those targets out quite quickly, so that they didn't draw you into their fire.

And what do they look like these waterborne craft?

It's, everyone else sort of talks about junks and if you think of Chinese style junk, they were very few and far between. Most of them are small

- 17:30 motorised boats. Up to sixty to seventy feet in length. Freight type boats, so they could carry a fair bit of weight. And you'd see a few with sails on it and if there were sails on it, then it was a combination then, of a motor and a sail to transport it, they weren't real big freighters or anything like that. Different times you came across 'lighters', the same as you have here in harbours with transporting freight, and they normally had a 'tug' on them or they'd have two small boats trying to manoeuvre them
- 18:00 along. Again you didn't waste time in identifying what they were and take them out.

What were the rules of engagement with them?

With them, we had 'no-go areas' on the coast and the 'friendlies' [Allied shipping] were sort of told, I don't know if it was within the hour before they went out fishing and that, the no-go areas. So they never had a chance to pass that information along to the North Vietnamese. So there were designated areas where you'd see fishing boats in a

- 18:30 designated area, they were in a safe zone, so you left them alone. And if they were just out of it, you'd interrogate the sea, if there was just navigation errors. But anything way out of that was deemed fair play.

And how could it be assured that they were definitely enemy craft?

You couldn't. And the situation in, if you had an ideal situation where you could go in and interrogate you could, but they were always trying to get within sight of their own

- 19:00 protection, with shore batteries and that. So that period of interrogation was quite limited and quite restrictive. You may communicate with the Americans and say, "Should there be boats in this area?" "No," and therefore it was deemed hostile. And same as we'd be going to the target areas and you'd realise that the boats are set at certain distances and as soon as you went past that stage, they'd open

fire at you from the shore batteries. So you knew they were using the boats as ranging ships.

19:30 And that was no hesitation then to sink them because they're being used as a marker.

How would they go down like what, describe it for me?

It depends what they're carrying some, because your first shell used to be normally an 'air burster' over top and that way you reduce anyone shooting rockets at you or heavy artillery that they may have concealed. So generally your first shots were an air burst over the top.

20:00 Then you'd fire into it with high explosives and if they weren't carrying anything that could explode it was generally just a grey flash. And if they were 'buoyant' you may have to put several rounds into it to destroy it. But if they were carrying fuel or ammunition there was generally a grey flash and nothing else but they tend to disappear rather quickly.

What kind of weapons could be carried on board?

On those ones they could have artillery pieces, the same as

20:30 they use ashore. They wouldn't have large missile launches because of the size of the boat and the components required for it. They were known to tow mines behind them on long ropes. And one of the tricks that used to be is they'd cut across in front of you hoping that your ship would pick up the rope then you'd pull the mine onto the side of you. So one of the procedures, if you saw a boat cut across in front of you, you never went behind him you'd turn. If you could see him you knew very well what was

21:00 going on, if you were up close because they wouldn't be just there smiling at you, they'd be trying to attack you as well. And those sort of boats didn't last long. Fishing boats, it wasn't hard because most of the fishing boats were under twenty foot in length. You could tell if they carrying because two men in it they were near sinking, if they had any cargo on board they'd be under the water, so they couldn't carry too much. It was the bigger boats you had to watch more.

What kind of things could

21:30 **they be carrying as cargo?**

Everything they needed for war. From ammunition, fuel, food, clothing, troops anything that's required. So there was never I think, any fixed cargo, it was always things that were required from day to day.

What kind of things could you see floating in the water say after a hit?

Generally after a hit you may have like wooden boxes still floating around. Sometimes canvas like

22:00 from sails would be floating around. Tins if they'd been carrying food type tins would be floating around. Naturally timber, oil slick if they'd carrying fuels or oils, you'd see that around. Then, generally evidence of what they'd been carrying with them, not all of it disappears.

And what about any survivors?

Normally when you're using navy stuff it's very seldom that you saw anyone alive after it. And in my time I never saw

22:30 anyone alive after a conflict. It was everyone was killed and the boats were destroyed. So yeah that never came into it.

What was the policy if there were people in the water?

There was no policy as such, but it never happened. There were always bodies but no survivors, just from what you were using.

Would you ever collect the bodies from the water?

No,

23:00 no.

Or anything else?

No. We never took anything for evidence. We never collected any bodies. What you'd do is, you'd give the patrol boats, the American patrol boats, you'd give them positions of where, what was left there and let them know it was there and if they came and looked at it they did, but not around us normally. And I'd say in hindsight they never even came out to check. The only thing you saw them doing, is sometimes if it seemed unusual the way

23:30 the fishing boats were operating, you'd come in and you'd call out the patrol boats. And they'd come through and they'd go all through the fishing crew, checking IDs [identification] and making sure who's there and not there. And that's about the only time you had any closer contact. But most, even with that, you just reported through and rely on the smaller craft because you didn't want a destroyer being taken out by one of these boats. So you gave it to the smaller size boats to come out and check.

What was some of the

24:00 unusual behaviour of the fishing boats?

He, instead of having his fishing nets over the back there'd be three or four people on it just with hand lines fishing and trying to follow what the other boats were doing, trying to blend in with them. Sometimes it was different shaped boats to the ones, because all villages boats tend to look the same and the same sort of paint on them. And you get something different from up the coast, maybe slightly different in shape, different colour, so they can be a bit obvious that there is an

24:30 unusual one there. Sometimes 'legit' [legitimate] but other times it was pretty accurate when you spotted an unusual shape. And if there was a big ship in amongst the junks and that, you'd know straight away that there was a misfit because they'd do things like that. If they were trying to move something big down, they'd try and hang around with the fishing fleet and you'd interrogate straight away.

And how would the message be put out there that these were no-go zones?

It's a continual

25:00 update. As you were moving up the coast or down the coast you were getting continuous data about craft movement on the water, aircraft movement, land movements. So you had the same on the land, if you'd seen anything in certain areas you'd know to deem it as friendly, or to deem it as the enemy. Because there are times when you'd come around a headland or something like that and you'd come across people on a beach and if it's no-go you know straight away it's North Vietnamese and therefore it's deemed to be a hostile area.

25:30 Another time you know, it's a friendly fishing village and you come in and you leave them alone because it's now what you're looking for. So the data's flowing all the time.

And how would the local people know that, definitely know that they couldn't go to a certain area?

I don't know the specifics on that, we just believe that the local officials in that area would sort of give them the last minute information before they went in their boats, so that they couldn't transfer to anyone ashore and say, "This is a safe area," or, "This

26:00 is a no-go area." So they must need some procedure where they could control them and say, "This is the only area you can go to." Other ones you would pick up from time to time would be what we used to call 'Jesus Christ boats' because when you looked at them they looked like a man standing on the water but it was a little half circular round boat that the little local fisherman used to use. And the first time you saw them it just looked like a man standing on the water. They never really concerned us much because it was just a local peasant

26:30 fishing, so he wasn't a real problem. But again if you saw him in an area that you come under fire you'd start to take a closer note because he could be a marker for what they were doing. But most of the time they never caused a problem. You saw them and they were fishing but you didn't even worry if they were outside the designated area because who's going to worry about one fisherman, and so you never worried too much about him.

So were there occasions where you did leave ships alone which were in no-go zones?

27:00 There was, if you found one in a no-go and it didn't look like it was an actual cargo carrying one or an issue to you, what you'd do is you'd lock onto it and you'd get one of the patrol boats to come and check him out or you may get an aircraft to come over and check it and they had various means of checking them out. If it was deemed hostile then, well you weren't there so you didn't know what happened then. But there were times when there were genuine fishermen just out of their position

27:30 but it depended on the size boat and what they were doing.

Was there any, ever any conflict amongst any of the men about possibly hitting innocent fishermen or?

After you have come under fire and even though the ship hasn't been hit by small arms, you become pretty hardened to it and you realise that both sides are out to play for real, you as well as them. So those

28:00 conflicts didn't arise as much. You thought about it but it wasn't like a real heartfelt reaction to it, hey because you've come under fire at unusual times, so you just had to take it, you know don't hesitate. Because if you hesitate they are going to take you out if they could. Things like that you really couldn't dwell on it.

Would any of the men talk about it at all?

Oh you used

28:30 to. You know there were times where you'd pass comments and you'd say you know, we were lucky we

reacted quick because what happened when we hit it knowing that it was loaded or other things that have happened. And other times you'd say, "Oh the poor bastards," because you didn't know if they really had anything or not. So yeah you still spoke about it. And yet I think you had compassion knowing that not everyone you saw was an enemy. And the worst part about it, they weren't in military vehicles or military colours and

29:00 such, so you couldn't make that clear distinction. So from that stage it was an unusual war where you were an enemy if you were innocent. There was no way of identifying the difference.

I was going to ask is that a real difficulty about Vietnam that kind of unseen enemy attack?

It was at the first, or early in the peace, you used to sort of have those thoughts about going you know. 'who's who' but after a while once you

29:30 realised it didn't matter if it was child, woman or man they were all going to have a go at you. And they all meant the one thing, that they were trying to kill you, that became easier to handle it because you realised that anyone of them was going to pull the trigger on you. So yeah, you didn't stop and ponder that in the end. At the beginning you used to but not towards the end of it, you didn't even stop to think.

Were there occasions where you came into direct contact with

30:00 **the women or children attacking?**

Did and you could tell, mainly there was one area where they used to have women on the artillery pieces and the reason you knew it was the women because when you fired back the never used to stop. You could tell the difference if you were firing towards men or women. And we knew they were women in this area because it was one of the artillery branches that the North Vietnamese had and they were proud of them. You knew straight away

30:30 and once you started to shoot into them, they never backed off and you knew that was the women. Where most of the blokes would sort of head for cover and withdraw their artillery pieces, the women didn't, they'd keep shooting, so you knew from that side of it. Children's side it's hard to say, you really couldn't distinguish with them. But yeah you knew the difference between the men and the women when they were shooting at you.

Why do you think the women kept going?

I've heard many

31:00 stories and I can't just put this exactly onto that, is they tend to be more aggressive when they are threatened and their loved ones are in danger and I think that's one of the things that came out in that conflict as well. They certainly didn't back off.

Were there any specific tactics that the gunnery used to break down bunker systems or caves?

Yeah with the

31:30 modern artillery pieces, I think it would be the same with the army ones and that, there's a way that you can make normal projectile armour piercing. So if you knew you were going into a bunker complex or caves you'd make your shells armour piercing which meant it was a delayed, when it hit, it delayed so many microseconds before it went off. And in practice that would make the shell penetrate before it went off. And it was quite common to make them armour piercing just by changing the settings

32:00 on the gun. And with the modern guns you didn't have to manually do it, it was just the way you hit a select button and it would set the mechanism as it was going up into the gun.

Describe that for us, what is that actual ...?

On the nose cap of the projectile it's like a crude mechanism or a clock mechanism and behind that you've got rods that hit detonators. And if you're going to make it armour piercing by turning the nose cap you disable the nose fuse but

32:30 you enable the base fuse in it. And that just gives you enough time for the shell to penetrate deep. And just by a setting on the nose by hitting that and turning it, it takes from nose contact to base contact. So it's just a fraction of change.

So how would the decision to do this be made, like what?

Knowing what your target is, what you're going in to. You see when you're first going into a target if its troops you'd be using air bursts which does the maximum damage. Then if their in trenches, bunkers then

33:00 you mix them up with high effect and armour piercing shells. So therefore you're hitting the surface and exploding and its going into the ground and exploding. And that's why we used to be able to collapse so much bunkers between bunkers because the shells were going inside or deep into the ground before it went off. So with the mixture, and you'd know about that just from where your target is and you worked your mixture of explosive out, how you were going to do it. And that was quite common to do it that way.

I'm interested

33:30 **to know, navy people, how you get a picture for these targets on land, like how is that picture created?**

I suppose you've got to have an imaginative mind that it wasn't hard because a lot of times you can see targets in close, so you could see what you were hitting. And the same target is just then moved inland, so it's not hard to picture from what you're shooting at here if it's inland. You can imagine and understand its doing the same sort of damage.

34:00 One of the things that it was hard to destroy is anything that's built out of stones, stones stacked on top of one another because when the shock of a projectile was hitting that, there was so much give around each stone that it doesn't blow it apart. And you found by hitting anything made out of stone was harder to destroy. Things like reinforced concrete were dead simple because of the stresses of how they build reinforced. And a couple of shells would totally destroy a bridge but if it was an old stone built bridge you could

34:30 plug away at it all day and you would virtually knock it stone by stone out of it. So there was a difference in the physical structure of what you hit, how it would be destroyed.

When you say you'd get visuals, how close would you get to the shore there?

The closest I've been, is where the guns firing below dead level in a depression into the embankment. And from the when the barrel recoiled from firing you could hear the shells sucking in the mud before its hit the target,

35:00 so that's quite close.

Can you guess the metres or?

In metres, I'd say within a thousand metres, I mean within a thousand yards, no not yards a thousand feet. So that's the closest because the guns, anything closer than that being so big they're not arming before they get to the targets, it's generally about a thousand feet before they activate. And it's closest they do, you hear the noise of it hitting the mud before it actually goes

35:30 bang, so yeah it's close enough.

And what kind of visual equipment did you use?

On the ship going back to pure binocular type things you had what they call battle binoculars and they were quite powerful. They could really zero in, like if your say, say five thousand yards off the coast, you could zero into a person on the beach and see in detail what you're looking

36:00 at, that's how powerful they were. The same type of binoculars we had were you had night vision in them as well and in those days they didn't talk about night vision like they talk about it now but it was as good as what they are showing now on that. Then you had the naked eye. Then you had basic binoculars. So yeah most things, if you could see them by eye, you had big enough or powerful enough binoculars to zoom them right up to see what's what.

36:30 And same the same as your shore codes, you could read the 'sign on the front of a shop' as the saying goes, so that was never a problem.

And tell us about the convenient kind of structure of Vietnam, like how was it broken up into zones and where you'd go?

Vietnam was virtually into five areas and it started from the DMZ which was one, then it went into the different high numbers, it went down, one, two, three, four, five and I think it was six, right at the bottom near Cambodia.

37:00 And the, I don't know if they worked it out in kilometres each zone or topographically. I'm not sure how they worked it out. They used to tell you the zones but being on a boat the zones didn't mean much to you because we had the mobility to move up and down, so that was never a real issue to you. You'd hear them from different, say you're in 'one core' or 'five core', they'd be saying where you and then you'd say, "Big deal." It didn't sort of affect us too much

37:30 on that zoning.

Well what was the use of the breaking it up into zones?

Mainly for military on land I think, so they could quickly identify if someone said they were in Bien Hoa area or zone or zone one area or zone five, people knew what part of the country they were looking at. The North of the DMZ they didn't have any zones for that that was just North Vietnam. That was all a southern thing and I think it was mainly from practical applications and people could quickly identify where someone was talking about.

38:00 **And where, were you spending your time in any particular zones?**

When we first went to North Vietnam, we were normally around the DMC or DMZ and Way and down to Da Nang, that was pretty well consistent there in the early pieces. We moved up into North Vietnam up into an area called Vinh, which was a big area and we concentrated on that area a fair bit when we were

38:30 doing 'Sea Dragon'. And North Vietnam was very much controlled by politics, sometimes they were having peace talks and that, so Sea Dragon would get stopped and then you'd go back to just doing land bombardments. And that sort of ebbed and flowed too when they let you up there, or not up there. And it was more political than military. And after about half way through our deployment there, we moved further south until

39:00 close to when the deployment was finished there, or actually we were operating down near Vung Tau and the bottom end of the Vietnam.

And tell us about how the US, how it was, the command structure with the US in Australia?

Well to make it work we had to come under the command of the American Naval and the Yank's loved command

39:30 quadrants. But what used to happen if you were sort of on the gun line, or operation 'Sea Dragon' there'd be a command for that. And that command would control say up to twenty ships. And they would work out the strategy of where you're going to be situated up and down the coast. Over the top of that, you'd have the overall military layout of command, then sort of fingers off that, you'd have the marine command and you'd have the army command and the.

40:00 airforce command. And this overall command then would control you, if you were going into there, if you needed support from an aircraft or troops, they could co-ordinate the whole lot. And it was just like a big chess game, they used to operate so that there was coverage for every, or as much as they could for every area. Us as Australians, had to sort of forget the Australian command and just follow the American command and what they did then to make it

40:30 a lot fairer, they also put the Australia captains in command of a section that you are going in. So the captain of our ship or our ship would be in command of say up to twenty ships. Normally not that many but it could have been up to twenty ships. So you'd be commanding the whole coastal area for that and for so many yards or kilometres ashore that would be your whole format. And that used to rotate from time to time.

We'll just pause there even though there's a couple more

41:00 **questions on that.**

Tape 6

00:40 When we moved down near Vung Tau there was a stage that we got a call to go to an unspecified area and as we were sailing down you were looking at the maps we had, and everyone started to look and think this is odd. We went down to the bottom end of Vietnam and we came up into an area of Cambodia. And when

01:00 we said, "Where are we going?" There was no official confirmation of where we were going. We moved into an area after dark, engaged some selected targets there that they had, and disappeared before sunrise. And about the nearest statement we got to that is that we weren't there, it didn't happen. And everyone's going, "Oh." And we never ever found out the reason we went down there. We came back up into the area just south of Vung Tau and we operated there

01:30 for a few days after that but we never ever found out why we went into Cambodia.

What were these targets in Cambodia?

Don't know. They were just given co-ordinates for. I mean we could make assumptions about what it would have been but we were never told.

And was the spotter like who you spoke to in Cambodia?

There was no spotter in Cambodia that was all pre-arranged and we had no communications with anyone ashore. We just moved into the area, opened

02:00 up on a couple of selected areas and once we finished what we were doing there, we just pulled back out and went back out to sea and back around the coast we went. So there was some operation that they wanted to destroy something or take some area out for some reason and it happened.

What was the general sort of whispers among the crew about this sort of behaviour?

You can't really take the whispers amongst the crews because you'd hear stories from, invading Russia,

02:30 to invading America, so gossip at the time was just gossip because no-one really knew what we were doing and why we were doing it. And it used to sort of an intrigue for me. I used to think, even up until recently you know, "I wonder what it was." And I met one of the chaps that was over there with me at the time and I asked him if he recalled that time and he said, "Yes." And I said, "What was the target?" He said, "The same as you, I don't know." But it was sort of heartening to know that it wasn't just my imagination, it was definitely something we did.

Well

03:00 **what does it feel like to be, I guess kept in the dark that way on board your ship?**

It was quite common on a naval ship that things happened and you worked on a 'need to know basis'. If you didn't need to know, you weren't told about it. So yeah, it wasn't that unusual for something like that to happen. So yeah, you just took it as part of what you were doing, as it was required and it was done.

But does that sort of secrecy do anything to erode your faith

03:30 **in?**

No, because you knew it happened from all other countries as well, outside of Vietnam. Like around Australia, when we used to pick up Australian ships around our own country, you knew it was quite common for navies of the world to go for a little cruise and have a look around. So yeah, it didn't surprise you that much and it didn't erode your confidence in what you were doing. It was just a known fact that these things went on.

04:00 **And was Cambodia the only?**

No, once when we were up in North Vietnam. There was a stage where we were going to attack Hai Phong Harbour which was the main harbour for Hanoi. And we went out to sea and we were coming back in and we were getting closer and closer, or getting ready to offload everything we had, from missiles through to artillery stuff, when we got an order. Well a call came down not to attack because the harbour had British and German freighters in there

04:30 and so we had to turn around. And you sort of thought then, you thought, "Oh well this is great, we're fighting a war for the 'west', as the saying goes and here's British and German freighters in there supplying equipment." So we went back and we were back down near Vin. And at a later date, I'm not sure when, we went back up there but we never got within 'coooo' of the place because when we came within radar range, they had so much radar pointing at us, it was stupid to even try and go in. So we just had to back off and

05:00 go back down south. So Hanoi and Hai Phong were too well defended for us to go in there and do anything. Then we just then concentrated back on the coastal areas. There was one stage there where Da Nang was coming under attack from missile systems and they called us in, so we went in after dark and just played covert, watching what was going on. Then we worked out where these missile launches were

05:30 and we engaged and took out the missile sites. And the Americans had been trying for ages to get this lot.

How did you work out where they were?

Because you never had any lights on the ship and that when you went and no noise and no communications, so for people that were there at this site, didn't even know we existed. And they were quite happy having a go at the American airbase there, not realising that they were under observation.

And when you say you went into Da Nang, is that a harbour?

A harbour, yeah.

Can you

06:00 **describe the harbour?**

It's like coming into any harbour on land or around Australia, but on the left hand side when you were going in, there was a high sort of a peak, I'd say headland. Behind you on the other side of the bay was a high mountain. As you came into the harbour proper you could see Da Nang, the city, down to the south from there. And just normal commercial buildings like jetties,

06:30 sheds, you could see the aircraft operating from the airstrip behind there. Around near this large mountain you could see helicopters in the area strafing different targets that were of concern to them. And after dark you could, they were sending up, up in the hill there, they were firing up flares all the time trying to suppress movement of the Vietnamese. So where we were, we were just sitting there watching what was going on. And once we saw them light up

07:00 one missile, we attacked the area. And we knew we were right on target because they had major secondaries, so that would have been other rockets they had there, plus whatever ammunition equipment they had there.

Secondaries?

Secondary explosions from when your shells are hitting something. And you knew from what the flashes you were seeing, that we were definitely hitting their stuff. Then the next day we moved away from the area, that was before first light and the Americans had

07:30 more ammunition for us there. And instead of us going to sea they said, "Oh we'll load you up in harbour." And that was pretty scary because we were within range of where we did this damage the night before. So here we are loading the ship up with ammunition right in front of these, where the North Vietnamese would have still been if they were still operational. And we hung around that day just storing up and after dark, we bolted from where we were. And just after we left there the Americans reported that the area that

08:00 we were in had come under attack from the North Vietnamese but we had already gone by that stage. So we caused a fair bit of damage and they definitely wanted to try and get us.

And you talked with Kiernan [interviewer] about the dangers from sort of, possible North Vietnamese on boats and things like that. Was there any other ways that they would attack ships?

They had, this is a way to think of it, they had high speed attack craft, which was similar to

08:30 Second World War type patrol boats and they could run up and down the coast and they moved pretty fast. And we encountered a couple of them but they were too far away for us to attack. We picked them up on radar and they were fast moving and before we got within range of them, they had turned around and they had gone back up north, back into their own river systems and that's where they were sort of kept. So we never actually saw them, only from radar and knowing what they were. They had

09:00 aircraft there, they had Russian-supplied MiGs [Mikoyan-Gurevich 21, medium range fighter]. And most of them you'd pick them up on radar and they were out of range, then you couldn't do anything about them because they wouldn't come in close enough for our systems to attack. And I'd say their land radar, plus the aircraft radar, would have known that we were locked onto them and they would have been just feeling you out. And knowing that it was too dangerous wouldn't even try to come near you. So you'd see them on radar at a distance but never close.

09:30 **And what about use of divers and?**

Divers. At one stage when we were down at Vung Tau, just south of there, we were firing at bunkers that were causing problems to, I think the Australians at Vung Tau plus the Americans there they were copping artillery fire and mortar fire from this area of the river but every time they attacked it, they couldn't get the enemy in there. So we went in and we came up in the river and we were firing what they

10:00 say is 'suppression' because if your guns are horizontal, it was depressed, if it was close to the embankments where the bunkers were and we had a helicopter that was a spotter. And the Vietnamese were using heavy calibre machines guns, to try and shoot the chopper down while we were shooting into the bunkers. So they knew, if they took the helicopter down, we would be blind. So they didn't worry too much about us, knowing that they couldn't do any damage but they were trying to get it. And myself and another bloke was on the front of the ship, we were armed with

10:30 SLR rifles, [Self Loading Rifle] and if we saw divers we were to try and take them out. In the meantime this great big heavy machine gun, was spraying stuff everywhere. And you kept looking at yourself behind the bits of metal, how close you could squeeze yourself into the steel so it wouldn't get to you. But they just concentrated on the helicopter trying to get it and the helicopter kept going higher. And in the end we took out, where the machine gun was and poured a fair bit into these bunker installations.

11:00 While this was going on, they'd put a diver into the water and he happened to come up along side of us to get his last directions because the water was quite murky and one of the sailors who happened to be looking straight where he was. And on the upper deck we used to have what we used to call ready use lockers and then they'd have grenades and various stuff that you could retaliate with, he grabbed a grenade and dropped it over the side. And we never saw the diver again so we only can assume that the

11:30 concussion would have stunned the diver and the water's fast flowing. And we had to move away from there because you didn't know if you had a mine on you or not. We moved away and put our own divers in and they went underneath the ship to check that there were no mines on us. And we moved back to roughly where we were, but not to the same spot and yeah we couldn't find anyone in the water or anything like that.

And why was it that during this time you were there with a rifle?

Well on your

12:00 ship you never, you weren't stuck in the one spot all of the time, you'd work certain parts of the ship. And if you weren't on, working that part and they needed extra hands, you just went to help out where they needed someone. And as far as being on the rifle, I just happened to be off ship, what I was working on, so therefore I was a spare hand. So you got your weapons and that, and went up there to play 'lookout' and try and protect it from divers at the time.

What was this sort of more

12:30 **direct watch like?**

How do you mean direct?

That had there been a diver you would have had to?

Oh yeah, if there was someone definitely there, or if they came out in boats trying to attack you, yeah you would have had to engage straight away. The same as if you saw a diver in the water you wouldn't have hesitated because not only did we have the rifles we had, they're a little bit different to a grenade they're more of a plastic explosive, and they had more effect than a

13:00 grenade does. You had them there as well, with you, so if you were there and you didn't hit him with your rifle shot, you would have dropped your grenades in the water which would have been quite effective. So yeah, it was one hundred per cent 'on'.

And how is this search for mines conducted?

On a ship you have, normally you have two qualified divers and their ones that do complete

13:30 clearance diving type training. And you have ships crew divers, which are just trained on how to look at the bottoms of ships. So once you move into a safer water the qualified divers plus the ships divers go over and they conduct a search from the front of the ship right to the back of the ship. And they cover the total bottom of the ship looking for anything like limpid mines or any other type of mine they can put on a ship. So they do a full clearance underneath, right back up to water level to make sure there is nothing there.

14:00 **Was there a routine check of the ship for mines?**

Yeah. You do it in peace time as well. It's a standard routine with naval ships. If you go into some foreign harbour or something like that, they will put divers down to check the bottom of the ship at infrequent times. And it depends on where you are, with how frequent they go down but mainly for their own training, every opportunity they get, they go down and do a search. And in Garden Island at the time it was

14:30 virtually everyday, you'd see divers in the water and most nights because it was just part of their ongoing training. And they still do it as part of navy life.

And you mentioned that you'd be there with the rifles. Did you have any sort of practice while sort of at sea, of practicing?

Yeah your training goes right back to your recruit stage where you're starting to use

15:00 small arms. And when you go to sea it's an ongoing thing, where you're taught to use the bigger things like the machine guns and hand held weapons and explosives and that's an ongoing refresher thing too. It's not that you haven't touched a gun for ages and all of a sudden, you've got to use one, you're quite current with the use of weapons. Also we had to be current because if anyone, like boarding party, or anyone tries to raid the ship, you've got to be confident in

15:30 using the equipment. So yeah, your use was up to anyone else.

And around Vietnam what's the general sort of coast like and what's the ocean like around?

It's, in close you get the colours that you get here, where you get the greeny coloured sandy beaches to the darker blues. There are some areas of the coast that are quite flat, nearly like delta type land. And there's

16:00 other where you have hills right down onto the beach. Other areas that looked flat right back to the foot hills. That's varying like any land mass. There are some areas that look quite scenic and you think, you know they're fighting a war here but it's a real holiday spot. And you could see that and you used to just look at that and think, "Oh what a waste," because it just looked so peaceful, but yeah no different to any other country really.

And in general how far

16:30 **back from the coast would you sit?**

Normally we sat at around about, I think around about, between five and ten thousand yards. That was a common area to sit and I think the main reason for that, you could take targets in close or further inland and that was a pretty common range to sit at.

And the way the ocean behaved around the coast, was there any sort of common storms or particular surprises?

You used to get

17:00 storms. In my time there we didn't get cyclones but it is an area that suffers from cyclones. We 'copped' some rough seas and that's seasonal you know, sometimes its dead flat, other days it will look like a

millpond and the next time you think, "What the hell are we doing here?" So it does change from hour to hour and day to day. On average though, it wasn't dead calm it was a slight swell.

17:30 Yeah it wasn't too bad.

And was there any particular ocean life around that was?

You could see a lot of flying fish were around. And also from time to time you'd spot dolphins but not all the time, but you'd see them around. Water, or sea birds, you'd see turns and gulls around but not a great percentage of it. Yeah I think

18:00 you see more bird life down here than you did up there but from time to time you'd see them. You know on the coast you'd see a bit.

And was there any particular wrecks or anything around the?

Most of the, most of the wrecks got totally blown up and I'd say, if it was on beaches, the locals used to scavenge everything of it. And for them being a wharf, I think anything with steel on it got taken rather quickly. The only one that stands

18:30 out of note was down at Vung Tau, there was a big freighter there up on the rocks. And when you first looked at it, it looked like it was just beached with the nose on the sand but when you got up closer it was rammed in pretty hard. And apparently that one had been mined and he just put full speed on and ran it straight up on the beach before it sank. And that was the most complete one I saw and it was there for a while but the smaller ones up and down the coast didn't last long. They stripped them down rather quickly.

And what sort of

19:00 **interaction would you have up and down the coast with any other ships, allied ships in the area?**

Allied ships, because you're running the gun line as such, you'd be in constant communication with the ships within say a fifty kilometre radius of you, so you'd know what targets they're engaging. And if they come under fire or anything like that, that spreads rather quickly because sometimes you have to race in to help support another ship, if he's under attack. So you're right in tune with what was going on

19:30 with any ship movement. Any freighters as such, would get challenged because you wouldn't know where it was going, or what sort of freight it's got on, but most of that was carried out by the Americans way before us because if they got in that close, there was a serious problem, they've got past the defence systems. But yeah you'd still challenge them in case they had slipped past. But normally the big stuff we never had a problem with, it was always the smaller type craft that you had to watch.

And what sort of

20:00 **relationship did you feel like you had with the other Australian forces in Vietnam?**

It was a little bit remote because we really didn't have anything to do with the Australians ashore. It was nearly all Americans or South Koreans that we had, that we were sort of in contact with. There was only one time down near Vung Tau where we had the Australian Army and we came in fire of support of them. And I think they made a comment at the time, it was the first time since I think, the Second World War

20:30 that the Australians had actually supported Australians. So most of it was Koreans or American. Sometimes the South Vietnamese but not a great deal it was nearly always, if it was South Vietnamese it would still have American support, like spotters and that that would be under control of them.

And on the Hobart we've talked about the twelve hours on, twelve hours off sort of thing and the different bits of work that you had to do in your

21:00 **twelve hours off. What sort of things would you do in any sort of down time for relaxation or?**

Well relaxation as such was non-existent on the gun line because your twelve hours off entailed your own housekeeping, like looking after where you lived, eating, showers, trying to sleep. Then if another, if you had to resupply with ammunition or fuel, you'd have to be up on the decks to help with that. Then you'd have the storing issues where everything that you just got on the ship had to be stored away. So you're twelve hours 'off' might be two hours' sleep.

21:30 Then if you come into any encounter where they required the full crew, like at an 'action stations', forget the sleep, you had to be there. So twelve hours off as such weren't twelve hours off, it was everything else had to happen then. And if there was maintenance you had to do, there was no time restriction on maintenance, if you went off doing one job, straight on to maintenance you'd have to go. And it's just how a ship is.

How about just sort of general,

22:00 **I mean before you went to bed or just after you'd eaten dinner or anything like that, was there anything that you'd do with any of the other blokes on the ship or?**

The big thing you used to try and do is like if you come off watch, your meal times would change so they could change the watches when you had meals and you'd tend to want to just go and sit on upper deck for a while because sort of sit in the fresh air for a while. And it didn't matter what action was going on, if the ship was shooting or anything like that it meant nothing to you because it was happening all the time and it didn't really worry you about the guns

22:30 going 'bang', it was just a moment in fresh air. And you may catch up on letters home or any mail that you had you may catch up on that. Then if you were down inside the ship you might be a bit of small talk about something that's happened through the day or through the watch. Then you never wasted time, you tried to get to sleep as quick as you could because you didn't know how long you could sleep for. So your social time was pretty, virtually you never changed over a period. Within half an hour of coming off

23:00 watch, if you could you'd try to have your head down, so there wasn't much chit chat. Most of your chit chat happened when you were on watch with the blokes around you, that was the main thing.

And what sort of a relationship developed between you and the other blokes in the gun line?

At the time you don't think there's a bonding or relationship there but you were at a stage where you totally had a trust with the other people you worked with. It didn't matter what branch they were from because you all had to work as one team.

23:30 But as the years go on and there is something about that relationship that's strange. That sort of, you meet people now, after you know like say thirty five years plus, and there's no difference in the relationship you had with them when they were on the ship, there's times meant nothing. So yeah it's like instant bonding when you meet those people again. You don't have to try and establish a relationship again.

And yet did you

24:00 **have anyone that you were particularly close to on the ship at the time?**

I had a chap that came through boot camp with me. He happened to be on the same ship with me and he, I'd say, would still be my closest mate today. But we can go twelve months and not even speak to one another and when you do meet or speak on the phone, it's like you've only just turned around. So that's one of those relationships that's weird, time doesn't weary it, it's just there. The other people you don't

24:30 see them and don't think of them but when you do meet them it's like you haven't been apart. And they're the same, it's like one of those strange bondings, I don't know how to describe it, it's there.

On a ship where you are working so much and didn't have that sort of relaxation time did you ever feel lonely?

I don't think you had time to be lonely. For the amount of work you were doing and the intensity of it, there was no

25:00 times where you could sort of withdraw and say, "I'm bored," "I'm lonely," or, "The world's shit." You never had a time for, to let that to happen. You were too active for, that never sort of surfaced I don't think.

Do you think that being active all the time for that long takes its toll on you?

Oh it does. You'd look at photos of blokes before they went and look at them when they come back and the boys had turned into men in that short period, you know and you're going, "Shit." The same as happened to me you know.

25:30 And you don't notice at the time and you don't realise, it's only when you see the photo before you went and the photo when you come back that you realise that there's a definite change.

Can you sort of explain how you think that change comes about?

It's got to be a combination of the intense work that you're doing and the thing with the battle type of it, the stress that you don't understand at the time, living with that

26:00 from day to day, even though you make light of it at the time. Yeah, I think it's just that type of stress, its constant, it doesn't knock off at four o'clock and come back at eight o'clock the next day, it's there. And you don't just realise yourself what you're living through. It's only later on, or when you look at photos and you see the difference in people. And you realise yeah, there is something there that you can't put a finger on and say exactly what's caused it.

Do other people comment?

26:30 About that aging effect? You do and I see it more with the blokes of my age now. When they're in a group you can really see old men out of blokes that are not old men. You know the aging hasn't gone away, they still seem to have accelerated their aging effect from that period. And you look at them in a group and you can see the ones from that era and say

27:00 you shouldn't look that old, but they do. And you can look at comparable aged blokes and there's a marked difference in them, don't ask me why.

And you may have talked about this a bit before, but how long did you spend at a time on the gun line?

On the gun line normal time was about thirty days, twenty eight to thirty days. And I think we actually went forty odd days continuous at one stage. That was when a lot of things

27:30 were happening and North were trying to push South more and they just couldn't afford for any of them to go off the line. So they needed everything, they needed there to repel them at that time. So you just worked through until you could get off. Then you'd sort of, you'd have they'd say your on, well not R and R [Rest and Recreation], you'd say you're off the line and you'd go to somewhere like Subic Bay or Taiwan as a break. And you may be off the line for a week or two weeks, but in that actual time off you'd be doing compulsory maintenance on the

28:00 ship. Repairing things, setting things back up, servicing the equipment they're using. When you get to somewhere like Subic, you may get there on Friday afternoon. So you'd get Friday night off, you may have to work Saturday, then you get Sunday off and you leave Monday. So that was your break period on that. If you went to somewhere like Taiwan we went to, we got in there and they had to change the barrels on the guns so you were still working even though you were long there. I think I ended up with a day off the first

28:30 time there. Then we went to Taiwan and I ended up with a couple days off. So you were actually away from the ship sort of a pretty reduced time.

And what sort of things would you do when you got to go into?

Being a good Australian you had a magnet looking for the pubs, strange. One that had the best music and best yahoos, that's where you went to. So yeah, you'd find a club or, more bars over there than hotels we know of, so it would be more like a bar

29:00 with non-stop music or something like that, we tendered to go there. Then if that was one day, you really wouldn't look around the place. If it was two days, the next day you would have sort of exhausted yourself that night, the next day you'd start looking at the shopping and look around the place a little bit. Then find another bar and blow the last little bit of money you have and go back to the ship. And that was sort of a regular type of routine, as far as what you did and didn't do.

And how were the bars set up?

Sleazy

29:30 dives really. They were designed purely to take the money off servicemen that had short time leave, you know. You'd go in there you'd have, nearly always in that time, they had live bands, and they virtually used to ape the current American music sort of thing. Pretty smoky little divey places. Generally after about an hour or something like that, you had to get out of the place because you're eyes used to burn too much because of the smoking and that in there. But you'd walk out of that and find another place down the road and walk back into it again,

30:00 so you didn't learn your lesson about the first one.

And what sort of songs were popular at the time that bands were playing?

There's a lot of songs that were sort of around at the time. 'The Doors' songs were quite popular. Ones that sort of jump to mind are sort of some of the likes of, 'The House of the Rising Sun', that style were quite popular. Diana Ross and the Supremes were sort of pretty 'in' at the moment

30:30 and theirs were quite popular. Nearly the current ones of the day that you had at that time, what was popular this week, was not next week, so they never sort of stayed with you. Some of the long term ones that are still around now, were the ones that sort of stuck it out. You know we used to tend to listen to Radio Hanoi, even though we weren't supposed to because it was propaganda radio but we loved it because it was full of current music. And you ignored the propaganda

31:00 bit that was in it but they had all the modern music. And you kept getting told you were not to listen to Radio Hanoi and as soon as they said that, you'd be trying to tune in to find it, you know.

And how were programs on Radio Hanoi structured?

It was structured to play with the minds of the troops, about thinking of home and they used to do the common things you know, "Do you realise you're best mate Billy's going out with your girlfriend?" you know and they'd have names of people and all that. And even with us on the ship at certain times, they'd even have names of the blokes on the ship

31:30 you know. And the different ranks on the ships, they'd say how much you were worth dead or alive if they caught you and play mind games like that.

How much were you worth?

Oh I was worth a fortune, I think I was worth fifty dollars. Yeah it just sort of, the value used to go up and down on everyone depending on what was happening at the time. If things were a bit quiet, the value would drop down, if you were doing a lot of damage the price would go up. And that used to be

quite a humorous

32:00 aside. You'd hear that and work out how much different ratings are worth. And that's one of the reasons I think why they didn't want you to listen to it, because it could play with peoples minds about, if anything happened to the ship and you had to get ashore and of what they were going to do with you, yeah so. But it never worried you as a young bloke really, you just used to think yeah, good music.

And what did the presenters sound like?

They were English trained Chinese. So the voices were sort of high pitched.

32:30 The pronunciation was a bit crude. But yeah they got the message across.

Were they male or female?

Mostly female. You'd have male ones but mostly it was females.

Were there any nicknames for the female ones?

Just Hanoi Rose, that was about it. There was no real specific nickname to it. There'd be different derogative type comments would be mentioned every now and again when

33:00 she'd sort of say who it was on the radio but yeah, there wasn't one that stuck constantly or anything like that.

And do you remember any particular songs that they used to play, that stand out to you?

There was one that they found out, which was one of our battle cry which was, 'Ghost Riders in the Sky' and every now and again they'd play that, not regularly but it would pop up. And it used to sort of cheer everyone up they'd say, "Hey," you know, because somehow they found out it was our battle

33:30 cry.

How does that one go?

It's the 'Ghost Riders in the Sky'. It's pretty involved, it's phantom cowboys and it's just been adopted by the ship, as the ships battle cry you know. You mainly used to play it when you came up alongside another ship for resupply and that. And especially the Americans, because we had a rebel flag plus 'Ghost Riders in the Sky' and we used to play that and fly the flag when we came up alongside the Yanks.

What at the lyrics like to

34:00 **'Ghost Riders in the Sky'?**

I'm not even going to try.

You don't remember?

I'm not even going to try, no.

And you mentioned the 'Green Ghost' became the nickname. Tell me about when you heard that on the radio, what did they say in relation to the ship?

They'd say where you were and a lot of times if you came under fire from shore batteries, it didn't take long for them to say that our glorious soldiers have destroyed the HMAS Hobart or the 'Green Ghost' they'd say that. And you'd go,

34:30 "Hang on, we're still floating." So yeah they were pretty good with the propaganda, knowing where you were. And another time, you might just be somewhere up the coast and they'd say, "This song is dedicated to the boys of the 'Green Ghost' who is now off Cape Lae." And you happen to be there and you'd go. You know they had a pretty good intelligence system, so they knew where you were.

And do you think it actually did an opposite and boosted moral?

It really balanced out

35:00 because sometimes like the song, I just said the blokes would yahoo about, the ones that heard it, not everyone would hear it. And the other times when they were saying how much you were worth and you'd go up here cheer, down there you'd go, "Ooh." And overall it was nearly the same as listening to a current radio station here. You'd hear something of interest to you and other times you'd take no notice of it.

And would you ever listen to any of the other radio in the area?

You didn't really have, you had American broadcasting but that was

35:30 worse propaganda. I think it was just a natural 'Aussie-Yank' sort of thing where you'd, "Oh Christ, bloody Yanks again." So you tendered to not listen to it so much because they were mainly catering for the Americans army there. So all the information was about different divisions that were, where they

were based in Vietnam and all the personal songs and cheerio's from family and that to people specific to the Americans. So you tendered not to listen too much to that one.

And what sort of American propaganda would

36:00 **they broadcast?**

Oh what a great job they're doing, how great they are, how fantastic America is. Just the one eyed opinion that the Yanks do.

And what affect did this have on the Aussies?

Just made us more cynical I suppose, from the American way of doing things. Because you'd listen to it and just think, "Oh it's crap." Then you'd hear the stupid way they'd carry on, about different things from what you saw, how they were working was totally different from what they were saying on the radio. So you were just a little bit cynical

36:30 about it.

And how would the American radio broadcast destruction?

The best comparison is that show that was on, Good Morning Vietnam. Very close to how the Yanks used to carry on. So yeah you'd listen to that one and it was much the same comparison. And they had like Armed Forces Vietnam and they had that Good Morning... one and they had a couple of other original ones. But it all went down the same format.

37:00 You did listen to it but it wasn't as good as the North Vietnamese one because the music was better.

And how exactly was this North Vietnamese one broadcast on a specific?

Frequency? Yeah. There were some areas you couldn't pick it up, like when you were north of the DMZ you could pick it up quite well of course, it was within their broadcasting range.

37:30 Again, because you had so much electronic equipment, it was quite easy, you were supposed to be doing something and you just tune that one in as well. Yeah it wasn't hard to pick up. Even the small radios, if you were off and you happened to be on an upper deck, your portable radio, you could tune it in and you would pick it up.

What would happen if a higher officer heard you listening to it?

They used to listen a bit themselves. It was just like one of those things, "Hey, turn it off." If you had enough brains, if someone was around and you were worried

38:00 about it, you'd just turn it down. I mean you never had it blearing but you wouldn't have it so anyone could hear it twenty feet away, it was just soft.

Would you ever listen to it for updates for where the other Australians were?

No, no, you never used to worry about it though. It was just, in one way it was like listening to a comedy show because some of the things they used to mix up. So you'd get a bit of a laugh out of it.

38:30 Cheap way of getting a bit of a laugh, I suppose.

Were there any other kinds of propaganda from?

No, we never really copped anything like leaflets or anything like that. I mean I know from our side they were pretty active in dropping leaflets and that off. And we never quite suffered from that, it was just mainly the radio side. And apart from that you would only get the

39:00 ones if you were somewhere like Subic Bay and the American papers there would have something that's happening at Hanoi, or Ho Chi Min's made a statement in Paris, you'd hear that stuff. But normally when you're at sea you never had any effects from it. So yeah, you really didn't suffer too much.

How closely did you follow things like the news of what was happening in the world, or the war?

Didn't really. You sort of, you'd hear

39:30 things and you sort of might have pricked your ear up about something. At the time when we were there one of the Kennedy's died or was assassinated or something and you sort of pricked your ears up to see what that was, but the day to day events around the world, didn't really encroach on what you were doing because it wasn't relevant to where you were. You tendered not to worry too much about it. I suppose it's a bit like today, unless you hear of a bombing somewhere, you don't take much notice of the world news in general. It's only if there's a disaster

40:00 somewhere unfortunately, that we listen to it and that would have been the same there, if it wasn't relevant to what you were doing you didn't get too excited.

We'll just pause there because it's the end of the tape.

Tape 7

00:37 **Ok Graham I'm interested in hearing your whole account of the story about planes attacking you. We'll start up with saying where you were and what you were doing before it came?**

Right, at this time we come under attack from the aircraft where, of a place called Cape Lae and near there, that's one of the choke points, I spoke to you earlier on about,

01:00 where the North used to come down. Off the coast there was an island called Tiger Island and we got a call to say that there was a heavy helicopter had been transporting stuff across from the mainland across to Tiger Island. So we raced across to try and intercept what was going but we were too late and when we got there the helicopter had brought back into a cave installation, so it was pointless trying to even bombard. And what we were doing is we were sitting outside of, I assume their gun range

01:30 because we knew, if they heavy artillery there they would come under attack, so we were just sitting outside that. And we'd been sitting there from just before dark, at this stage I was working up in the missile control system, so we were closely watching land activity for aircraft and anything else that which might be around, plus waterborne, in case they try and put a raid on us. Around about just roughly midnight to one o'clock, I got relieved by another chap and you do your sectors and

02:00 warning about what's happening and from there you go down and have your lunch, oh sorry dinner at that time of night, then had a shower and just got to bed. And around about three o'clock or a bit after three, you heard a massive explosion on the ship. As you woke up and the 'action stations' had sounded at the same time. And naturally we were trying to get ready, then you were chucking on your gear to go to action stations, a missile came through the back of the ship and it had taken out all the

02:30 compartments behind our mess deck. And the nose of the missile penetrated through into the mess deck and all the air in that area just ignited from the blast. And you continued on the 'action station'. And as you were running down the main passage way from where the first missile hit there was still fire and damage there. There was a great gaping hole in the deck down to the next level and I hesitate and some 'hero' gave me a push on the back, which made me jump over the gap. And at this time

03:00 I tend to recall there was a blast behind me but I don't know enough about it. I just saw people falling down at this stage and stuff flying around and I continued on up to my action stations, which was on the missile control system. And when I got there all our radar systems were shot and we couldn't see the aircraft, or we couldn't get our system to work because the effect of the missile attack had destroyed all that. And

03:30 directly after the second missile, we got hit by the third one, nearly in the same place as the first missile so our weaponry stuff was pretty redundant. So we couldn't do much at this stage but we could hear all the damage coming through over the headsets about you know fires in different areas and damage. The aircraft were still trying to attack us and the front gun screamed out, "What bearing is he?" And he slung the gun around by hand and they loaded the gun by hand and they fired three to five shells

04:00 in that general direction of the plane and when he saw the gun shooting at him he peeled off and went back over the coast. And the bloke that relieved me at midnight or just after midnight, I asked him what had happened and he said that they had picked up an aircraft coming across the coast, it came straight across Tiger Island and it wasn't showing any identification and turned straight onto us and opened fire with missiles as soon as he turned. And at that stage we assumed it was North Vietnamese. And he said after the

04:30 attack when he lost the radar it went back over the north coast, so believing that it was still the North Vietnamese aircraft that attacked us. We got support from the Americans then, they came and put like a shadow around us while we could move away from the coastal area and then we started to assess our damage. We covered the blokes that were killed and the blokes that were injured; we were organising evacuation choppers to take them off and the bodies were taken off.

05:00 Then we had to clean up what was left of the ship and keep it operating. And at this stage we were still deemed to be an operational warship, so we had to get the guns going again which we did. Some of the radar system they couldn't use because the damage was too extensive, we couldn't get the power through. Then they said, "We can't continue, we have to get repaired." So we left the gun line and headed towards Subic Bay. And on the way there we were picking up bits and pieces of the missiles

05:30 that hit us and they found American markings on these bits and pieces and they said, "Oh it was definitely an American aircraft that hit us." And we were still under the belief that it was North Vietnamese type aircraft. By the time we got to Subic Bay we were told officially that it was American US phantoms that attacked us. And that's been the official version up to this day, that is was Americans attacked us by mistake. But at the same time there were several other ships that got attacked

06:00 by aircraft in the general area and until now you never heard what American aircrafts they were, or where they came from. But we were just been told officially that they were American and that's all we could go on at the time.

What's your view?

Knowing the bloke that was on the missile system and knowing at the time where we were, it was a strong feeling that it was North Vietnamese. And the fact that they fired American missiles,

06:30 to me, doesn't mean a great thing, a great deal because they were experts at improvising the American equipment to use themselves. I tried to do a bit of research myself of what aircraft were operational at that time and where they were operating from and you can't find anything out about it, it was just a vague statement that it was an American aircraft. And from that, I still have that belief myself, that it was North Vietnamese but I've got no facts to back that. And there's nothing

07:00 coming out of the military system to say it was definitely American, apart from just that verbal statement that it was American.

Why do you think they would say this if?

When you look at the type of war we were fighting, the last thing the Americans would want to show, is that their new beautiful military had been penetrated by their Vietnamese aircraft or weapon systems. So on that strength it gave them opportunity to

07:30 deny it was the North Vietnamese and turn around and say it was themselves. At the time we got repaired totally by the Americans, everything was done and I don't think it cost the Australian Government anything. I think the Americans patted us on the head and said, "Go back." And nothing was done about it, nothing was said. There wasn't even any Australian naval enquiry about the damage to the ship or anything. It was all controlled by the Americans from repair to back on the operational.

08:00 **Is it perhaps maybe worse for them to say they did it?**

No, I think at the time they virtually controlled the media and the world. And I think it was easier for them, I'm not sure, but I think it was easier for them to turn around and say, "Ok yeah, we've stuffed up, it's gone," then the propaganda can't continue. If they acknowledge that the North Vietnamese had shot the missiles at us

08:30 then it would have flowed on, for you may as well say years, people saying, "How did you let it happen? Why did it happen? Didn't you know it was going to happen? Didn't you know they had this capability?" So I think it was simpler for them to turn around and go, "It was us." But I don't know the hundred per cent facts on it, it was just, from what I was told at the time and from where we were and what we were sort of controlling, it seemed highly suspicious that it was American.

Was there something that made you suspicious in the way you were told by the?

09:00 It seemed too quick that the 'controlled statement' we got that it was American aircraft that did it, it seemed too, too quick because any other encounters we'd had, the intelligence side seemed very slow before they confirmed facts. But this time it happened in no time, that they stated that it was definitely Americans. So it smelt of a cover on it. If it is or it isn't, I don't really know.

09:30 **Was there something in their body language or anything like this that gave something suspicious away?**

Not from us because you're dealing with your own people. I mean you can only operate on what's told over communications and that. So yeah, you couldn't tell anything from them that there was a cover up. There was one eyewitness that is not relevant any more because he had an accident, he's got no memory any more and he was stating at the time when this came out he said it was crap because he'd visually

10:00 saw the aircraft and he said that as far as he was concerned it was a MiG. But we've got no facts to go with that visual observation at the time, so we really don't know.

Was there any talk amongst the men about this?

Oh much the same as this. The disbelief that it was American, to possibility that it could have been a MiG and the possibilities about it being a 'Phantom' and everyone's going, "Yeah it could have been that but maybe it wasn't." And they'd start looking at where we were

10:30 and going, "Why would a plane come out here and attack us?" And the thing that seems odd, the statements state at the time that there were unusual weather patterns at the time, it was giving ghosting on radar screens and it was hard to identify targets and all that. You know it just didn't gel. They seemed to be putting out random stories there to make it confusing about actually what happened and normally they'd never put things like that out, they'd say, "Yes this happened,"

11:00 or, "No it didn't." But this time they started to put all these weird scenario's over. And for other ships to get attacked at the time, and with us they used the version that we were attacked because they believed we were low flying helicopters. I mean this is a destroyer that is over three hundred feet long, sitting in the water. It can't look like a helicopter but that's what was said.

What kind of affect does this have on men's moral?

11:30 The moral, it goes back further than that. I think you become a bit cynic about, cynical about what you hear as facts and not facts and that was just another case of, ok the stories have been told again. And it

sort of relates to that you weren't there, you didn't see it sort of thing and you just go, "Oh yeah, ok." And in your own mind and your mates' minds at the time, you know something different but you've got no way of proving it's different, so you've just got to put up with it. I don't think it lowered your moral or anything like that. I think you just went,

12:00 system had, it had work again.

When you were talking about this with your mates on board, would you have to be careful not to talk about it?

Not really. You could openly talk about that, but where was it going to go? There was no media on the ship, there was no way for you to release it to anyone else, or like modern days you could put your hand up and say, "Hey that's not true," and there's avenues for people to recheck on it but in those days the military controlled

12:30 everything that the media did, so who's going to say that it's true what you're saying, or it's false what you're saying.

What about those kind of higher in rank, would they discourage any talk or?

The biggest thing they did at the time is, they stopped people taking photos within the ship of how much damage was done. And that was the biggest thing they did, they sort of became pretty paranoid about photos being taken and people with

13:00 cameras. They were pretty sensitive at different parts of the ship if they saw someone with a camera, wanting to know what they were doing or not doing. And that was about the biggest censorship you saw. On the outside they released some official photos of the damage on the outside, that doesn't show much at all, it was the stuff inside they've controlled. And no doubt archives have got the photos somewhere but they wouldn't let sailors walk around taking photos.

Was there anything you noticed in those kind of higher ranks,

13:30 **like the commanders, the skipper anything that they were doing or saying or anything in their mannerisms which was unusual?**

No nothing out of the ordinary because as a bunch we were all there in the same event. Whatever feelings they had they were controlled by protocol, what they could say and not say. And you didn't really hear any change out of any of these people in command except for the captain of the ship, just before he died, I was at a meeting and

14:00 he was sort of shaking his head about things that weren't released and should have been, but he didn't go into specifics. He was sort of someone that was looking back in hindsight saying a lot of things were kept out of the information, that should have been in information for people to see in the future, so he was aware of a lot of things that weren't released.

Well yeah, what about the men and various different men on board in the

14:30 **succeeding years, has there been talk about this amongst yourselves?**

There has been and it's nearly what I've said now because people, how do you prove the event? You know there's time on their side. Records, what records are kept are kept under the Secrets Act. You've got nothing to go on but the waffle of blokes really. So yeah, you can't release it because there's nothing to release. If you had something at the time

15:00 of the event, even the communications side of it, if you had that recorded you could turn around and say, "Ok well here's the tape on that or here's the photos of that." You'd have physical proof but no-one's got that.

Did you have any kind of conflict in your mind as a serviceman when say the truth is possibly used this way?

It's again it goes back further than just then. That's how the navy does a lot of things where they instil that,

15:30 that training into you, that if it doesn't involve you, it's got nothing to do with you, if we say you haven't seen it, you haven't seen it. And it's a bit of conditioning that yeah, if you see things and that's as far as it goes. They've got pretty good knack of doing it and you've just got to look at the modern conflicts. You hear about what the airforce is doing and what they army is doing but you virtually hear nothing about what the navy does because they can control what goes out. So yeah, you'll never fully know.

16:00 **Why is the navy particularly good at this and not the other services?**

Well because you're a mobile force and you don't require land as much. When you are ashore in harbours and that, they control the harbour area so they can control the media and they can control the media at sea because you can't run around a war ship recording everything that happens, so it's easy for them to control the events, to suit whatever way you don't want to see them.

Did any

16:30 **modern events that came up with the navy in this kind of similar kind of secrecy, open this up for you?**

Oh there's a few things that I have an inner smirk to myself about. You hear little things that happen, and one was with the boat people. When they said you know, there was women and children in the water or something like that and the navy was leaving them and they were saying, "Oh we weren't there." And you smile to yourself knowing that they'd always, you'd love to be there to really know what the facts

17:00 were because for them to say they know so much and then to turn around and say they weren't there you know, they were involved somewhere. The things like the early Iraq conflicts where they'd turn around and say, "Oh all we were doing is interrogating ships moving up and down." And you think nothing of that, until you see something like the number of shells fired. I'm talking about big stuff not small stuff. And you turn around, "Well what were they firing that at?" And they're the sort of things that give a ship away.

17:30 You could expect a few rounds fired for practice but not the quantity that they're firing and they don't say what their targets are, and you go, "Yeah, they haven't changed." So yeah it hasn't really changed.

Does this leave the navy open to being used politically?

It could but it's such a large object to use politically that it's easy to track ships of any navy around the world. It doesn't matter if they're navy or merchant

18:00 it's, so for a political side it's very hard to use in covert. Where they become effective in covert, is if there's a military conflict and you use them in that area, then because they've got the ability they can move them up and down, they can drop people off, they can pick people up, they can do intelligence gathering, they've got all that capacity and not really telling anyone what they're doing. The old story, you come in 'after dark' and disappear 'before sunrise', you don't know they've been there.

18:30 You wouldn't even have the 'footprints on the beach' as the saying goes. So it's very hard, it's very easy for them to be used and very hard at the same time because you need them in conflict, within conflicts they're very effective. Peace time, too many people would ask questions, what's a war ship doing around a peaceful country, inside their territorial waters?

And back to the story of these events can you describe for me, you were sleeping,

19:00 **what are the sounds?**

The first, when it hit in the middle it sounded like we'd been hit by shore battery. The shells, it sounded like shells exploding on the ship, so you got a horrific, not just a bang, it was one of those ripping, tearing sort of explosions knowing it was a solid hit. So you were reacting before you hear action stations. That first hit you were starting to jump out of your bed. It was after that, you were still trying to get your gear on

19:30 because your lights are sort of going on and off and all that, because of the power hit. And when the one came through the back, and when it came through the back and the air just lit up where you were, you didn't wait to put the rest of your gear on, you just hightailed for your action stations. Myself, I had trousers on, boots and no socks. I didn't even have my lifejacket, you just went. And when you got to your action stations the bloke that was there, you're saying to him if we are going

20:00 into the water because at this time you didn't know if the ship was sinking or not. You were sort of saying, "I'm with you because I haven't got my lifejacket." And that was, I can remember that bit doing the brief. And the next thing you were doing was find out what part of Vietnam you were in and knowing you were in the same place, knowing that the coast was hostile, so you couldn't go to shore if the ship did sink, you had to sort of stay away from that. And they were the sort of things you were quickly doing, assessing out. When the explosion or when the

20:30 missile came through the back of the ship, you didn't hear the noise it was too intense. You saw but you couldn't hear because it just went past that threshold of you. You could hear afterwards secondary sort of noises but at that time you couldn't hear anything, it just went past your noise sounds level. And when you were going to action stations, you could hear all the physical noise of things like shorting out on fire and the blokes yelling out to try and control areas where they were

21:00 and everyone just trying to get where they had to go on the ship to be effective.

Did the ship move and were you knocked over or what?

The only time, it didn't to me at the time it didn't move but then again you're moving so you don't know how much it was moving. But by the time I got to my action stations the ship was leaning over because it was still turning at high speed, doing defensive manoeuvres to try and shake off this aircraft that was having a go at us. So it was leaning over a fair

21:30 bit and at that stage you didn't know if it was leaning over because it had been hit, or on the power of avoiding something. So it was hard to say at that instance why it was leaning. But as time went on you realised it was turning under speed and the vibrations you could feel through it, was just the high power of the propellers going flat out. So it was travelling under power. And you still didn't know until the

reports started to come through, that they stemmed different things and fires, that you realised the ship was going to be saved,

- 22:00 up until then you didn't know. And your training had you not to worry about that, as long as your section was doing what it had to do and you knew someone else was doing their area.

And when you said you saw the missile hit or the effect of it, what exactly did you see?

When it came through the back, at the time you didn't see just that the, like the dust particles in the air ignited and the whole mess deck that you were in was like a, like a

- 22:30 clear red flash when all the air particles ignited and that was just from the effects of the missile coming in the back. And that didn't last that long, it sort of ignited and just sort of died away. Then it was intense smoke and everything else. You weren't conscious of seeing anything except where you had to try and get, when you got in the main passageway, it was full of smoke from where the first one hit and then you could see all the electrical cables shorting out on the steel. The fire underneath and that but not a major
- 23:00 fire, there was a fire there just from bits and pieces. And as I said, some 'hero' pushed me in the back and he jumped across this gap. Then once you got past that you started to go again, then there was some sort of explosion behind me and you saw blokes falling over and bits and pieces going. But you didn't fall over and by then you passed them and you didn't wait any, you just kept going. Because you knew you had to get to where you were most effective. And you didn't really hear that one
- 23:30 behind, the noise from the engine, it was just like a pressure effect. Yeah so the noises you heard then in the ship were mainly machinery moving the ship around, that you heard. It was only once we had the protection by other ships, that you sort of had a normal state, then people, then you could start to reassessing the damage and who was hurt and who wasn't hurt and doing your counts that way. Because some of the first reports we were getting it sounded like there was
- 24:00 lots of people killed or trapped and all that because the bloke reporting it, he couldn't see through smoke and fire to what he was looking at, to know what was on the other side, so he would have been just going on experience, there should have been ten blokes behind there or twenty blokes behind there. So he was reporting that they're gone, and in actual fact they weren't they just couldn't get there. So it takes a while to get true numbers. Then when the numbers start to get changed blokes that couldn't get to their action stations were then going to a secondary station and saying I'm here and they were ticking off the names on that.
- 24:30 Then they could go and update it and say, well these blokes are here and that's how you did your head count. Blokes knew they had to report, if they weren't where they should be, then they had to report, so you knew who you had and who you didn't have.

Was there any panic on board?

I'd say it was controlled chaos for a period of time. And the reason I say it was controlled is because everyone knew what they had to do, the chaos of what was happening around you.

- 25:00 You had to sort of fight through that, to get to where you had to go. And you know after that period, not panic as such it was looking at scenarios. If we haven't got that can we use this? If we can't use that what else can we use? And we were looking at all the options of what you still had available to still be effective on the ship. So you know there was chaos but it was pretty well controlled.

What did you think was going to happen at the time?

The first reaction, because experience what had happened in the back mess deck,

- 25:30 and plus in the middle of the ship, I thought we were severely damaged and the ship was going to sink. And so when you got up to your station and all your radars and that were out you were going, "Ok we've lost all that stuff." And really, all you could then do was wait until you were required somewhere else, or if it kept going wait for the order to bail out from the ship. And that's the stage you were at, you didn't know if it was definitely going to go or survive.

What was that like, that

- 26:00 **feeling?**

As I said before, you made sure if it was your mate had the lifejacket, I was with him and that was about the only concern you made and you knew you had to keep away from the coast. Knowing that the American ships in the area would have more than likely, got to you before the North Vietnamese did, you weren't too worried about them getting to you, you were more aware that the Yanks were the ones that were going to pick you up. As long as you got away from the ship when it went over, that was about the only thing you thought of.

- 26:30 **Why?**

You know when ships go down, the inrush of water people can't get past that. If you're inside it's harder to get out because all the internal compartments are water tight, locked up. If you get to a water tight

door, I mean when it's going down there's no worries because you're trying to get out. But in reality you know the time involved and I was lucky because where my action station was, I was well and truly about the water tight level so it wasn't a real problem.

- 27:00 You just virtually had to wait for the 'nod' that it was going. Or if no-one gave the nod, leave it to a certain stage and go ok she's definitely gone, time to hop off.

How far do you think, well were you told you'd have to go to get away from that sucking in effect?

You weren't told specifics like that, you just, your own knowledge of ships and if screws are working how they can suck anything along the sides into the screws. If it was going down

- 27:30 that sucking effect wouldn't have been a real concern. You would have sort of with your lifejacket on you would have virtually just jumped feet first into the water then just swam away from it. And the same thing, you would have been looking if there were oil fires in the water, you'd go to the other side of the ship. Basic things like that, but as far as being sucked under I don't think you were greatly concerned about that. If you're still in the ship it would be a different story but not if you're on the upper levels, there's not a great chance of being sucked under.

And apart from

- 28:00 **what you're saying and hearing what other things were you sensing?**

A little bit of disbelief that we actually got hit knowing how much we were switched on and on the ball. You were thinking, "How the hell did it happen?" All in the middle of that because everyone that was on duty were more than confident on what they were doing and you were going, "How did it happen?" So that was going through at the time. As much as everything else you were trying to process, why it happened.

- 28:30 **Do you remember any smells?**

Yeah you have the, like from the explosion side, you have that very strong cordite explosive type smell from that. You have that electric ionised smell, from the electrical shorting and all that. Smoke, was just choking smoke from where you had things like, even though it wasn't really rubber but that's sort of dense sort of stuff from that. Then you had that dry burning smell like

- 29:00 something burning on metal, you had that sort of smell there.

And about how long didn't you know that you weren't going down or when did you come to this realisation?

You knew, it's hard to put a time on it but it didn't take long for you to realise that it wasn't going down. I think when you heard the, or sensed the screws going and we'd straightened up and it was still going, I think at that stage we realised, "Well hang on, we've still got power so it can't be that major because it's still pushing us through the water." So it didn't take a great period

- 29:30 of time before you realised, yeah it's still afloat, we're still here. So yeah it didn't take long.

And what about the plane like had it finished its attack or what had happened?

Well when the front turret opened fire on it, it headed back towards Cap Lae. And what poor radar we had left and what the visuals were saying, they said, "Yeah it's headed back over the coast." And by this time you're screaming for support from other ships.

- 30:00 So actually everyone's then, like a buddy system trying to keep whatever is attacking you, away. So that screen was quite quick in responding.

So what ships came to support you?

Every time you went over there, you had two ships. You had what they used to call the gun ship and you had a shot gun behind him which was like his back up gun. So when we got attacked our shot gun came in to try and help protect us. And no doubt he would have had the aircraft on his radar but range again

- 30:30 he would have been too far, to actually get him with his guns because he was not right on top of us. And he would have been able to see what the aircraft was doing at that time but range again he wasn't close enough to be effective with the guns. And I don't know if the ship, the other ship had the capability to fire missiles because not every American ship could fire missiles. We had the capability because we had missiles as well as guns and a lot of the American destroyers was pure gun destroyers they never had missiles.

- 31:00 So I can't remember now if he had the capability or not.

And you said they created a shadow, what does that mean exactly?

It's like an umbrella you put over like the injured one and it's like sport where the rest of the players protect that player, until he can get help. You do the same like with military, or with ships or aircraft, even aircraft now, you have other planes flying around as protection, the ships are doing the same thing.

And so

31:30 you moved out, tell us about what kind of actions were taken, what the process was once you?

Ok, we're still fully closed up at action stations and we're assessing that ok, we're still a fighting force and the American commanders are saying you know, "Can you continue on your duties." And that's when they turned around and said, "No we're damaged too bad, we've got to pull off the gun line." And with that we had a protection with the ships. They didn't follow us out but they were between us and the land and we went outside

32:00 coastal range. And at that time we were also then doing a critical assessment of the damage on the ship. As I said you know, the blokes that were killed you were recovering them and the wounded, treating those and organising evacuation helicopters to come and pick up your wounded because there were more than the doctor on board could handle. And that's why you were moving away from the range. And when you move outside the gun range, then the people like myself, that was closed up in an area that is redundant, then you become

32:30 work parties, you're going down and seeing where you can be used to make the ship more secure than it was. And most of the people really, once we got well and truly away from the coast we were all working parties then.

Can you tell us what you saw of men being killed and wounded?

There was a chap killed directly behind me in the passage way, he got killed when the third missile hit. Another chap got killed in the first blast, he was

33:00 on lookout up on the upper deck. So both of those were killed by blast and we had what seven blokes wounded to varying degrees of needing urgent hospital treatment to minor treatment. The ones that were walking around and still able to do things, even though they might have had a busted arm or something like that, they could do that. There was one chap in the first blast, he got hit in the side by a

33:30 piece of white hot metal and it took like a shark bite out of the side of him and he was standing there saying to the other blokes, "I've have been hit." They were saying, "Shut up keep doing your job." So he kept working because the white hot metal had cauterised him as it went through. It was only afterwards and they went, "Oh Christ, he's been hit," that they realised how serious it was but at the time they just ignored his complaints of being hit. The other blokes, one bloke got hit in the shoulder and to this day I think

34:00 he's still got the shrapnel in there because I remember at the time, they were saying, to get it out they had to actually lift his shoulder off because it's was in the layer between the shoulder blade and the back of his ribs and they left it there. Then there was just minor cuts and grazing and things like that. One bloke had his ear ripped off and they sewed that back on, on the ship before they took him off for more intense treatment ashore. One bloke I think

34:30 his arm got shattered, various things like that.

How bad was the scene of where the men had died?

I can show you the photos there after. There was a fair bit of damage and destruction you can see there at the time, quite intense damage. And you just wondered about the other blokes around there, how they managed to survive when you see what's there, you just can't believe that blokes went through it and still never got hit. It's just amazing to think that everyone was there and it just got selected

35:00 numbers.

Were you close at all to the blokes that were killed?

You were close in the way, with one of the chaps that was killed, that he lived in the same mess deck as you and you knew him as far as a crew member but you never went ashore with him or anything like that, he was a working friend mainly, that was it. The chief that got killed, you only knew him as, like from another section you didn't know him personally or anything like that. So I didn't know much about him but

35:30 the young one I did, yeah.

And you mentioned that one of them got hit from behind you, did you see this happening at all at the time or?

No because you're inside where you sleep and it was just when it came, the explosion came through the wall that it lit up there. So up to that stage you really didn't hear it, it was so intense when it hit, you saw but you didn't hear, it was just outside that range.

And what affect did this attack and the deaths have on the

36:00 moral and he feeling on board?

In some ways I think it bonded us in a way. I don't know, something like a 'survivors bonding' where you

virtually survive what was thrown at you and you're still here, so you had that common bonding with that. And I see it in later years, where if you go to a reunion the people out of that trip, bond totally different to the other people on the same, or that went on different trips.

- 36:30 There was something there, I don't know how you would describe the bonding, but you can see it with them, there is just something there.

Where there any services or anything held?

In Subic when we got there they, the Americans, gave like a church service on the ship for the blokes that were killed and wounded. Then we had like a speech from the Australian captain in conjunction with that. They were about the main two

- 37:00 services we had at the time. But you couldn't really hang around because we had so much work to do. That was cutting out the damaged stuff, replacing it, getting it working again. So it was like, "Ok that's happened, now get it fixed." There was no lull in between.

Tell us about the journey from where you were to Subic Bay and the arrival at Subic Bay, what happened?

When we left the gun line proper we had to hand over some of the documentation that the ships carried to a relief ship. And when this

- 37:30 relief ship came they didn't want it, to see the damage to where we'd been hit. So they made that ship come on the port side of us, so they couldn't see how damaged we were, mainly for the moral of the people on the ship going over there. And they came alongside and we transferred documentation that was required and intelligence data. Then we continued cleaning up and patching as much as we could the exterior appearance of the ship, so that it didn't look as bad as it was, so you were doing cosmetic work between
- 38:00 there. And when you got into Subic, really from the outside appearance, it didn't look too bad. You could still see the physical damage but you wouldn't know how severe it was inside. And the damage inside was even controlled to who they were letting see, once we got there, it was only the key personnel that had to work in areas, saw the actual damage in areas. But again being American they had tonnes of resources as far as repairing us. They had Filipino
- 38:30 crews there with American experts and they were working around the clock, cutting sections out of the ship and putting new sections in. The same sort of repair in Australia would have taken two years and I think they knocked it over in four weeks, just because they had the resources to do it.

How bad did it look before you did do the initial repairs?

On the outside it looked like, virtually like bomb damage. On the inside because we had

- 39:00 fires there, you had burnt areas, you had damaged areas, ripped up floors, ripped up walls. Yeah so you had that type of damage and it was only when they start to cut all the damaged stuff out. And you were coming back by the hour and amazed how fast they were cutting stuff out and replacing it because you never seen work like that in Australia. It was just so fast.

And were you all working on it at the same time?

Yeah. We had to work as well. We were doing, in the areas that we worked in, we were doing maintenance there

- 39:30 and helping there and there were certain things that were still sort of, pretty well classified and secret areas. So you were virtually there with supervisors making sure they didn't take covers off things that you didn't want them to see.

We'll just pause there.

Tape 8

- 00:37 **So tell me in a bit more detail about how the Americans worked, from your observation on the ship?**

When they were doing the repair they were extremely efficient and professional with it. And what demonstrated that, they had resources to machinery, they had resources to workshops, supply wasn't a bother to them. So when

- 01:00 you compared it to Australians, where you were always waiting for things to turn up, they had it at their feet and they just knew how to use it. So from that side, it was a real surprise to see them working, not that they were actually doing the physical work, the Filipinos were doing that, under the direction of the Americans. Yeah very efficient, very professional in the work they were doing.

And did you get to spend a bit more time with Americans at this stage?

You didn't, apart from the work

01:30 people, you didn't really spend much time with them. Like if you went ashore, you would go into the illicit American men's clubs, they'd have drinks and something to eat there. And that time when you couldn't stay on the ship because they had to repair the section that you lived in, you were virtually very isolated from where you stayed on the base. It was just like a dormitory and you never had much to do with them at all. The Americans that you met were very intrigued about what damage was done to the ship

02:00 but they were like transient sailors, you didn't see much of them, like strangers passing. So it wasn't a great deal of rapport there with them. The ones on the ship, it was very professional and you had so much to do that you really never created a bonding with them, you were sort of, "Yeah ok we're here to do this," and move on.

And tell me about some of the work that they were making you do at the time, general?

What we were doing is, they were doing it to the American standard then we were just changing it

02:30 around how we like things to be. So they were putting it down, how it had to be to their way of doing things, then we were doing the Australian style, "We don't have it like that, we have it like this." But that was detracting from what they were doing, we were just doing the fine tuning to our style of doing things.

What are some examples of that Australian?

With the way they had their things laid out, how they laid consoles and that out, we said, "No we don't want them that way, we have them that way," just for ease of use in

03:00 communications, no we don't have the plugs there, we have them there, just personal preference how you do things.

Did the Americans make any comments about the way they saw the ship?

They were amazed that everyone that they dealt with had such a wide range of knowledge about the total ship. They were used to that way where one person looked after one little area and when they met the Australians on board, with the Australians, nearly everyone they dealt with had a wide range of knowledge about every section of the ship. And when they were doing things they'd say, no we'd say, "No you can't do it like that

03:30 because of what's further down the track." And they were amazed to see that level of knowledge that we had.

And in general, we've spoken about this a little bit, but in general the way the Americans worked in Vietnam, what was your opinion about them?

I found that they were poorly trained and that they were very, very, poorly managed. You didn't really know what they were going to do next. They were like a

04:00 bunch of kids out on a picnic. The training didn't seem to be intense enough and they never had enough training put into the person at the 'pointy end', how he could operate. He relied on someone behind him telling him what to do, if that person wasn't there they didn't know what to do and they just went stupid. So to us where our training was a higher level, it was a real frustration and concern to you because these

04:30 people you were dealing with, were incompetent and it used to come out in their work and when they were under pressure, they never had a clue as to what they were going to do. Their equipment was excellent, their technology excellent, it was just unfortunate the training of the individual soldier was lacking.

And how about the way that the Americans approached, I guess tactics or?

They worked on a 'saturation style'. If they could

05:00 go in somewhere and totally blanket an area with artillery, bombard them with ordinance, it didn't matter what, to them that was an effective encounter, they could do a 'blanket' effect. If you took them back from that and said they had to be decisive and precise on what they were doing, they couldn't function on that level. Their training was more 'mass destruction' than fine.

And how about around Subic

05:30 **Bay or in Taiwan or anywhere, did you have any interaction with Americans on leave?**

No in Subic Bay we didn't because we were there on a full operational side. In Taiwan, we met them in Kaohsiung because we were tied up, we were along side an American ship there, that had to supply us with equipment. And you had something like organised sport day, like play soccer or a bit of combined football. And even then you were sort of, it was like any sports you'd go and you'd have sports and a

06:00 few drinks afterwards and a barbecue type thing, but that was about it. There was no real like 'buddy buddy' type relationship. Some of the blokes you might have talked to a bit more than you talked to the other ones and that, but nothing long lasting.

And Subic Bay, in terms of it being such a huge base at the time, a naval base. What were your observations of how the locals,

06:30 **I guess lives were affected by the base being there?**

The locals were really, you could see that where the base was the whole village life around the town there depended on the Americans for money, for employment and virtually for livelihood. And in turn the American machine, being so big, it was virtually walking over the top of the locals and the locals just had to put up with it. And you could see that just from the way the structure was.

07:00 The town, the Americans one hundred per cent controlled. Anything that was happening in the town, was controlled by the Americans. Even the local Police were controlled by the Americans. So it was like a very big heavy handed, controlled by the Americans. But when you saw the massive size of the Americans, I don't think it would have mattered what country it was in the world, the same thing would have happened. But there, it was quite evident, because the people you saw were more village

07:30 type people and all of a sudden they have got this modern technology right in the middle of them and a monster that they didn't know how to handle.

You mentioned some things like bars and things like that before. What sort of level of that sort of infrastructure was built up around the base?

In Subic Bay the township was, which was Olongapo City it was virtually purely bars. The main street was, it was either bars or you couldn't call them restaurants they were like

08:00 eatery places, but the standard of construction was very basic, their standard of hygiene non existent. So yeah, it was very basic Shanty Town type construction and it just survived on supplying 'grog' to the Yanks, food and 'grog' to the Yank troops coming through.

And how about things like brothels and stuff like that, were they evident?

Oh that was rife, yeah. That was, that was virtually every bar, was a bar and brothel, that's how they were, it was just a fact.

And

08:30 **would they be set up with call girls?**

They were set up with call girls which were controlled by the Americans, as far as the hygiene side. They all had to have work permits and they had to have medical checks and all that, to make sure that they could work, they weren't infected with venereal diseases but again that was fully controlled by the Americans.

And would on your ship, would there be briefings about the dangers to do with it?

The biggest briefing you had was mainly to deal with

09:00 drugs because it was at the era where drugs started to come into like the Americans services, with Vietnam. So when we were there you'd get a great lecture about, "This is the current drug, this is the current slang for the drugs, this is what the drugs look like, this is what it will do to you and here's photos of bodies." The choice was there. So they didn't hesitate showing you. So if anyone came up trying to sell you stuff, you knew straight away what they had in their hand, it was quite obvious. And yeah, you were pretty well informed about what was around.

Did anyone

09:30 **every try and sell you drugs?**

There was, because they were dealing with Americans, it was nearly as bad as, "Do you want a smoke?" It was that rife, yeah.

Americans would try and sell you the drugs?

Americans or the locals, mainly, more the locals than the Americans, but at different times the Yanks would say, "Do you want something?" And you know they would have a handful of something that they just bought from the local or something like that. And yeah it was quite common to see it.

And what kind of drugs were common at the time?

Speed, LSD [Hallucinogen] was quite common.

10:00 There were some various acid type drugs floating around. Marijuana at the time was the new 'you beaut' tobacco that was floating around as well. And they had some other stuff there, now I can't even think of the names of it, apart from the basic 'uppers' and 'downers' that they were talking about, but yeah the Yanks had some weird cocktails.

And what was your opinion on this kind of drug use?

From after seeing the photos they showed you

- 10:30 and after seeing, from the reports they were giving about the drugs and what they were doing to you, you knew straight away you'd be stupid to touch it. And it worked with me because I'm going, "You'd have to be stupid," because they were doing the full format to the body there, with the photos you know and from that side of it you went, "Oh Christ, I'm not going to touch that." And why would you, when there was grog and spirits there but yeah, it was just something that they were quite
- 11:00 worried about with the Americans because there was so much of it floating around.

And before you went to Vietnam did you drink much?

No, I'd say I would have been a very light or infrequent drinker but it certainly changed over there. Oh not so much in Vietnam but when you had shore leave and that.

What do you think made it change?

The pressures and the stress of what you're doing. And you know you were sort of, you were 'ramped'

- 11:30 up that much from what you were doing, that there was no relief from it and I think the alcohol side of it was something that was to sort of deaden it at the time. It was easy to get sort of, not there but it was easy when you were on leave to get 'grog', so that was the easy avenue to sort of, I don't know, to take it away or something. It's hard to say but yeah, it was just one thing that was there that
- 12:00 helped you at the time and that's what you did.

Did this sort of alcohol as a release, or a relief, follow you back from Vietnam?

Yeah it did. And it stayed there for a while and you used to think nothing about the high consumption that you had because you were still physically fit and it never knocked you around and it was at a certain stage where you turned around and thought, "This is not normal." Because to go to a party, if you didn't have a slab under your

- 12:30 arm, you weren't having a drink, and yeah you know, you'd knock over a slab, no worries. And that's when the warning bells sort of went off and said, "No, that's not normal." Then you sort of had to make a conscious effort then, just to get back off and wake up to yourself.

And how did excess drinking affect your behaviour or affect you?

I was pretty placid,

- 13:00 so it never really affected, I wasn't aggressive or loud or anything about it like that. It was just like the next day you'd think, "Oh I'm not going to do that again," until you went and did it again. But yeah I don't think I was sort of obnoxious, or a problem with anyone else it was just something you did.

What sort of things do you think within the navy maybe encouraged this culture?

It

- 13:30 I think, I can't talk about current, I don't know, but at the time it was sort of a known avenue to go and have a few drinks and the drinks were cheaper in the navy base type set up. So therefore it was there, even though they had guidelines about when you could drink and when you couldn't, but one of the things that used to be quite common is that the bar would be open at lunchtime. I'm not talking about ships, this is land base, the bar would be open at lunchtime and then straight after
- 14:00 knock off time, of an afternoon, the bar would be open and stay open to a certain time at night. And so from that side there was a recognised avenue to go and the grog was always far cheaper there than it was outside at the pub. So yeah, from that side, indirectly it was encouraged because of availability and price.

What are your opinions on that?

I got no real strong opinion about it, I put it down to the individual.

- 14:30 You work out yourself, or you should work out yourself, what you do and don't do. The ones that are excessive on it, I think there's got to be someone, to sort of tap them on the shoulder and say, "Wake up to yourself," because some people haven't got the brains to say, "Back off." Looking at myself at the time, I realise myself that I was drinking too much and backed off, but at the same time, I also saw blokes that were drinking and didn't back off and next minute there was a tap on the shoulder from someone else saying,
- 15:00 "Wake up to yourself." So the sailors tendered to look after one another themselves, not the system that the blokes there did.

In Vietnam were there any certain times or an event after which you drunk more?

Well in Vietnam, we were total alcohol free, you couldn't drink at all there. It wasn't provided and the

type of work we did, you couldn't have anyone that was

15:30 actually drinking. So in Vietnam itself it never happened, as far as alcohol went. But when you went to Subic Bay or Taiwan or Hong Kong, depended where you went, depends how you were at that stage, yeah your first 'hit' used to be pretty heavy. And I think nearly every time, you used to really hit it heavy once you went off. Yeah it wasn't just once, every time you sort of went, you certainly made up for the time you didn't have any.

16:00 **And after your repairs were completed at Subic Bay, where did the Hobart head to after that?**

From there we went straight back to around, way back into an area where we were before. We went back to the same type of area. From there we moved down the coast again, back down around the Vung Tau area and then we came back and overlapped ourselves and went north

16:30 to the 'DMZ' again. So yeah your routine didn't change, you virtually went back into the same areas. Yeah just because you'd been hit once didn't mean you kept away from the place, you went back there.

As the Hobart sailed back towards I guess, the gun line, what was the feeling like?

By the time we went back there, amongst ourselves we turned around and said, "We don't give a stuff if they're showing friendly or

17:00 enemy. If they come within a certain range we're going to open fire. Work out later if they're friendly." So we sort of, in ourselves, had that resolve that irrespective if they're showing friend or foe, if they came within a certain parameter, we're going to go 'bang' first and then say sorry second. That was about the only thing amongst ourselves we were looking at. Fear of going back, you were past the fear stage by then, you understood what you were looking at, you knew what you were

17:30 facing, so there was no apprehension on that. You knew the capability of the ship but yeah you know if it worked, you could work. So there wasn't any real fear on that side, it was just, you sort of had a resolve about it happened once, it wasn't going to happen twice.

Was there any more American interaction with the ship in terms of follow up of repairs or observing your?

They sent the Americans on to us, to see how we did things because they couldn't believe the performance

18:00 we were getting out of the machinery and how accurate we were and so they sent observers on to see how we did things. And even the observers stood there and used to shake their head at how we could do things. And I think it comes to this, the Australian servicemen were in for a longer period, they're better trained from that point of view, plus we used to do multitasking, we didn't just do one job. Until the Americans come on, they couldn't see how one person had so many roles you have to play. So that was

18:30 an eye-opener to them. And I think, if you look at the current American military training, they've made their military more multi-skilled because they're realising they need that type of training. But at my time they used to just find it amazing, that you know one person had so many skills.

And what were these observers like?

In themselves

19:00 they were very self-confident type people. They were selected for a job, to go and find out how you do things so they weren't meek and mild, they were quite confident about themselves and when they were asking you questions, they were quite skilled in what they were asking. Even though they were technical in certain areas because they'd brought various people over, it was only when you stopped and getting down to the 'nitty gritty' of how things worked that you could see they were like little boys, they were amazed that you could do this sort of stuff.

19:30 Yeah they just didn't dream or have any lateral thinking about, why can't you do it differently? They were told it had to be done one way and I think it's the old Australian idea where, "Oh why do we have to do it that way for?" "Why can't we do it this way?" Which was showing through, compared to the Americans and yeah I think for them it was a big eye-opener.

And towards the end of your time in Vietnam, what were your feelings

20:00 **like about coming home?**

You weren't like you see on movies and all that, you know twenty one days to go, ten days to go and all that. It didn't really mean a great deal to you because it depended on the relief ship that was coming to relieve you being on time. So you couldn't clearly turn around and say, "Five days to go," or, "Ten days to go." You just knew that in a certain period of time you'd be going home, so you weren't doing the countdown as such. It's

20:30 only when it was getting down and you knew another ship was there, you were thinking, "Oh how much longer is it?" That's when you're only looking in hours, not in days because from ships it's so, the

variables are so much that if a ships on time then you're on time. If it's a week late you're going to be there for another week. So you didn't really count the days as such, you just thought ok, it's getting near to going back but when you weren't sure.

So tell me about when you heard the news that you

21:00 **were?**

Well it's not so much the news that we were, you just on your daily orders it says, at tomorrow at say ten o'clock, we're leaving the gun line and proceeding to Subic Bay. Once in Subic Bay we're doing a transfer with the Perth. And that's when you know it's finished. And right up until that ten o'clock break away, you're still working, there's no 'oh we'll have a bit of a bludge now', you kept shooting up until the time to go.

21:30 **And tell me about the handover that you did with the Perth?**

Well when they come in, you're doing the confidential documentation that goes between the captain and the captain of the ship relieving you. From my side of it when we were handing over to the Perth you were just giving the run down of what to look for and the technical problems with the equipment you use, the type of errors you're going to pick up and the how the communications have changed from when they were first over there, to when we were there.

22:00 This is how they do it now, they don't do it that way, so it's just a technical changeover. And you don't spend hours doing it, it's just a quick run through.

Did you have any kind of personal tips that you gave anyone?

I don't recall them as such now. It was just pure technical pointers, you know, "This all happened when that happens, ignore that, this you do this." And yeah it was just basic technical stuff. And another tip is, stay here don't go there, you know but that wasn't

22:30 going to happen. But yeah there was no other real great deal, it was all professional and technical sort of stuff.

Did anyone from the Perth ask about the missiles?

They were curious, naturally we would have been, if it was another ship to us you know and they were looking at the outside trying to work out where the damage was and couldn't see it and as you're saying to them, you know it's all repaired, so it was hard for them to see.

Did you tell them what it was like, what it was?

Not really, you never had the time to sort of go through

23:00 that side of it. And the blokes you were working with on the change over, you just had too much data to do, to that talking about that event sort of, was like virtually nearly the same ratio as saying, "G'day." Yeah you got hit, yeah and that was about it. It was the same with them you know anyone in those situations you don't spend hours talking about it, it was just yeah, it's a fact and leave it at that.

How curious are you about what had been reported, say in Australian media

23:30 **about the?**

You just shook your head and thought 'media waffle' you know. They sort of got a little bit of information and expanded on that and you sort of smiled a little bit and left it at that because you knew even before that, that the media was a little bit vague in facts and big on stories, so that hadn't changed.

And tell me what it was like to arrive back in

24:00 **Australia?**

When I arrived back in Australia there was the anti-Vietnam protest going on. It didn't really bother me and the biggest thing I thought was, "Thank Christ I'm home," being home back in Australia and I didn't care what they were protesting about. The things with baby killers and all that on slogans, I just thought, "Yeah but I'm back here." So from that side of it

24:30 it didn't greatly worry me.

Why didn't it worry you?

Because I was bloody home, you know it was better here, than it was over there,, so I didn't care what they were saying.

Did seeing protests make you think at all about it?

You looked at it and thought how informed or ill-informed are they? But apart from that you never got with, or I never got angry with them or get agitated with them. Yeah if they want to stand out in the rain and protest let them, it didn't worry me.

25:00 I was just relieved that you were back.

And when you got home what sort of leave time did you have?

At that time I had no leave time because the percentage of ship that was going on leave, went and I was still one of the ones that stayed on the ship, so I never got leave straight away. Then you were doing normal work on the ship until that first lot of blokes came back and then you got leave after that. So it would have been about, nearly two months after I got home before you got actual leave.

And what was it like

25:30 **after having been on the gun line to be just?**

It was, it was hard in the way that you were still keyed up to, where you still had the potential to act as a service bloke in a war conflict and you were back in a civilian environment and you knew you had the capabilities to react in a blink. And it sort of concerned you because you used to worry about things like pub fights or

26:00 something like that but it wasn't just a drunken brawl, you could have reacted another way. So that was conscious in your mind. Another thing that was conscious was my weapons and things like that, where you still had the capability to go 'bang' and process the legal side of it later because from the training you had, reaction was quicker than processing, so that stayed with you for a while. And you had to sort of be aware of not being

26:30 around with guns because in those days virtually every house still had weapons at home and things like that, before the 'gun lobby' sort of stuff went. So it wasn't unusual that people had rifles at home or things like that, or in their cars. I'm showing my age now.

And when you did get to go home on leave, what was it like to see your family again?

I'd seen them when the ship came in. They came down for when we got home then, so you'd seen them at that time.

27:00 And really by the time you got home-home they, that excitement had seem to come back from being away for a while, it was virtually, "Oh yeah you're back," sort of thing. It wasn't any of that 'digger coming home', 'flag waving stuff', it was just, "Oh yeah you're here." And I suppose as a young bloke that was in the past by that stage and you were too busy wanting to do things at home and having all your money at last.

What's it like having a week or so at home after having been

27:30 **on a ship for so long, is it hard to settle?**

Generally the first couple of days are because you're still got, if it's a sea going ship, you've still got that movement inside, where you still feel the ship when you lay down and you can still feel it. Then the noise in your head from where there's always constant communications and all that, it takes a bit for that to sort of slightly go away. So the first couple of days are wasted, you think you're still on a ship. And it's only after that, that you sort of start to settle down to like a home routine.

28:00 **And after the Hobart where did you?**

Where did I get posted to? I left the Hobart and went to HMAS Albatross which was down near Jervis Bay. And I went onto their weapon section and their bomb range section and what we were doing there was training up the ships that were going back to Vietnam. We were doing the airforce training for the aircraft, doing bombing attacks and cannon attacks. And we were doing the helicopter crews,

28:30 showing them how to attack targets from helicopters out in the water so they understood different ways of doing things. And again you were going away from the old style of doing attacks to the modern style of doing them. So you were doing the full evaluation of the crews, showing them how to do things. And even when the ships were coming down to do bombardments, you were doing the change of targets quicker. You know it's not the old pattern you're firing at one thing then stop and talk about it. You get them to change the target in the

29:00 middle of shoots. You'd cancel their bombardments and reactivate it in seconds and all this stuff and try to create the scenarios of over there. And as far as putting them onto targets they were accelerating all that time, so by the time they left doing that, they were quite proficient in the types of target commands they'd get from the Americans.

What sort of targets did you have them firing at?

We had physical targets on the ground that they could shoot at.

29:30 The main reason you had physical targets was it was easier for you to look at and judge ranges from it. You never actually got them to hit the target because they'd destroy it on you. And every time you got them to fire at a target, you had a fixed offset from that point and that was just a reference point. You had things like buses, just for visual target, you had earth mounds, just different patterns on the ground so they could chop and change. And when you looked at it yourself with

30:00 your equipment, you could look at your reference point and do the offsets from that. So from the sea

they couldn't see anything but dust and smoke so they didn't really know what they were shooting at.

What was the experience like being an instructor?

Very confident at it because you were living, over there night and day, so turning around and coming back here and giving out, what you had was second nature. You didn't even have to look at note books or manuals or anything, it was there.

30:30 And at the stage, I went to a ship and we had the new group of gunnery officers coming through. And you were doing the full evaluation on them and you know they're normally the ones that tell you what to do but because of our skill level we were taking them through their routine about how things are done and doing evaluations on them. Just because you had so much experience from over there and again, you didn't have to refer to manuals

31:00 it was all in your head. So it was a big training for them that you had all that knowledge.

And as the war with Vietnam was progressing, how closely did you follow?

I followed it with interest because I realised when I was over there that we had the technology to complete the war in a very short time. What we weren't using and they didn't use is

31:30 the political avenue of the war. They kept playing the political game, if they'd backed off and said, "Ok it's a 'kill' military conflict," it would have been over in a short period of time. But the worst part about it, it was a war that was controlled by politics and that's why it dragged on and dragged on and there was never any outcome of it. Because one on one, of any of the engagements that you look at, the Americans and the allies, that being us and Korea and a couple of the others places, you virtually never lost a battle. But you lost the political

32:00 war and that was quite obvious.

What was behind your decision to leave the navy?

Going back to when I first joined and I went into the gunnery side of it, I wanted to be in an electrical field and on the gunnery side the electric field that I selected wasn't pure electrics electronics. It was seamanship come electrical field and I felt or I'd had an interest towards electrics, electronics. And

32:30 I couldn't go anywhere in the navy because they wouldn't change branches at the time. So I looked outside navy and I looked at a company that was supplying a lot of our weaponry stuff on the Hobart. Got in touch with them and they said yeah they're prepared to take me on. So then I had to do the procedures of getting a letter from them, showing that they'll take me on, plus better money and I applied to the navy for a discharge and put these facts down. And they couldn't better what was happening outside, so they let me out before my

33:00 time. And I went to this company and I stayed with them I think, twenty years before I actually left them but in that period, I'd moved all around Australia working for them. In the early peace I was working on the building construction side doing all electrical control systems and building management systems. And that was pure electronics. And that's where I wanted to go when I was in the navy, so I actually had to leave the navy to do it.

33:30 **And what was your reaction to hearing about the fall of Saigon?**

Didn't greatly concern me because I knew it was going to happen and at that stage virtually all the Americans and allies were out of there. It was virtually a South Vietnamese conflict at that stage even though there was a lot of American like people there and British and Australian like people there, but they were working for a lot of private enterprises at the time.

34:00 So I, at the time it didn't greatly concern me, I knew it was going to happen once you start to reduce your military power there, it was just a process of collapse. And as you've seen from history you know there were more western reporters in the place I think, then American troops. The only troops that were around I think, were in the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] building and in the [US] Embassy, which is standard in peace time. So there was, I think the biggest part about the collapse is the South

34:30 American, or South Vietnamese that were working for the Americans and us as well, when we moved, or walked out of there, those types of people got left behind. And knowing how communism works they would have been the first target for retaliations. And that's why I think they were all trying to flee the country and fly out the best way they could, boats and all that stuff. So yeah I felt that it was going to happen as soon as the Yanks backed out of the place, that communism would come down

35:00 and take retribution on the ones they were fighting, and it was very much how it happened.

And when you left the navy and you were essentially back in civilian life, did things from your time in Vietnam stay with you?

They do and in the earlier times I think you have youth on your side and it doesn't encroach on you

35:30 as much. They're there and there's things that would trigger it and it can be like the instant. There would be a different sound, different smell or different light reaction thing and it can trigger it. And as

you get older some of the things that happen tend to stay with you. Some of the minor things tend to filter out and they're not there any more. But yeah some of the things can be still there as though it only happened now, it stays with you and I don't think you can

36:00 do anything about it. The strategies you try and you know what it is, but it's still there.

What sort of things cause longer lasting problems for you?

Some of the events that happened some of the conflicts you had jump into your mind for no reason at all. They're there somehow and every now and again they pop out and just let you know they're still around.

And how does that affect your everyday life?

It can

36:30 cause intrusion, if you're doing something and it pops in then and it will throw what you are doing because that flashback will interfere with how you are at the time and you can become moody about it or withdrawn. And you just have an outburst when you shouldn't and someone will you know think, "What's up you?" And so those sort of things happen there. And the other ones that mostly come up are generally at night time and things like that, there the ones that sort of pop out of nowhere.

37:00 And yeah you've just got to live with it.

What's the affect at night?

Oh you'll wake up, bolt upright, it's so clear. Something may happen outside, or some smell you don't know about, or something will flash in your mind. And one hundred per cent you're there. I won't say you sort of fly out of bed as such, but you bolt upright out of bed you know. Yeah those sort of things happen. 'Burnt out digger syndrome' I think they call it.

37:30 **And when you look back at your time in Vietnam what do you think the main things that, or your time in the navy in general, what do you think the main things are that they have taught you?**

With the training and that, you had an in-built discipline that stays with you until this day. But also it gave you a tenacity with what work you were doing

38:00 to how to stick with it and complete what you're doing and that stays with you as well. And a little thing about time as such, you don't even realise it now but someone says you've got to be somewhere at eight o'clock, you'll tend to be there five minutes before eight, it's just one of those weird little things that pop up. It's a fact, it's there.

And what would you say is your best memory of those years?

There's

38:30 so many, you can't say of the years, there's so many little pockets that pop up and it's a place and event, you can remember some little thing, it could be down at Garden Island, it could be down at Cerberus, it could be in the middle of the ocean, just day to day little things that pop up. And I think as human beings we have this knack that we tend to remember the good things and forget the bad ones. In reality, some of the time at sea, was totally boring and a 'pain in the neck' but you can remember some funny little event that happened.

39:00 Yeah so it's mixed all in, there's no time specific time period, it's mixed all in where there's some good little windows and some bad windows. Yeah I think life's like that as well.

What do you think is your worst experience?

The things you put up with now, the recalls from Vietnam, various parts of there, not the whole Vietnam conflict, but various things that flash back at you, is the worst thing because you can't get rid of that. So yeah I'd say

39:30 that would be the worst period.

And when you look back at that entire time, and we're coming to the end of this tape, do you have anything thing sort of that you'd like to say to sum up, or any final words?

The main thing to sum up on that is everything is covered on the tape as much as I recall of it, is that at least it's there for someone else to look at in the future. And I've been one for years, say when you see old people from the First and Second World War and you say someone should record this and here it is me, recording some of my

40:00 memories and I think from that side, it's a good thing to do. Before I started I'm going, "I'm not too sure," but by doing it, it's something. Someone may get some interest out of it down the line, you never know.

I think so. Thank you.

