

Australians at War Film Archive

Ian McConnochie - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 4th May 2004

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1969>

Tape 1

- 00:44 My name's Ian McConnochie and I was born in Portsmouth in October 1931. Grew up there. Went to school
- 01:00 there. Went to Portsmouth Grammar school eventually. Initially I went to normal primary school in the immediate area to where I lived. Then during the Second World War, I was just eight years old when that was declared,
- 01:30 we continued to live in the place the whole time, but on occasion I was evacuated into the country as a result of my mother's occupation as an ambulance driver. She had to take that up after my father was lost in a submarine in the Mediterranean in
- 02:00 1941. So we lived at the same address right through until I joined the navy in April '49. Then my mother and my sister migrated to Australia in 1950.
- 02:30 I was allowed to transfer to the Australian Navy without a break in service. In October 1950 HMAS Sydney was in Portsmouth at the time and I just finished with the Royal Navy one day and went on board Sydney and signed on for twelve
- 03:00 years there, then set sail for Australia. Arrived in Australia in December 1950. Served in a number of, I stayed in the Sydney until '52 because we went to Korea in '51. Then I was
- 03:30 posted ashore in '52 to HMAS Penguin. I did a year or so there, then went to HMAS Kuttabul. Then I went to HMAS Anzac and we did a year on the Far East Strategic Reserve during the
- 04:00 communist worries up there in the sense of Malaya waters and Singapore. I came back from there, I went to the HMAS Tobruk for about six months, and then to
- 04:30 HMAS Albatross, the air station in Nowra. I was there for twelve months or so. Then off to HMAS Rushcutter, which then was the diving school in Sydney. While I was there I qualified as what was called a compressed air diver. These were all meant to
- 05:00 be clearance divers and were limited to diving to a depth of 66 feet and only using compressed air. So I qualified in diving in May '58. From Rushcutter I went to HMAS Melbourne. We were in the Far East there for a few months. Was there altogether in the ship for about
- 05:30 18 months. Then I forget where I went. I went to Albatross then.
- 06:00 No, correction, I went to Nirimba, the apprentice training school. From there I went to HMAS Cerberus. During my time down there I qualified for promotion to officer rank
- 06:30 and was in February '63 promoted to acting sub-lieutenant in the Supply branch. Then I went to the Melbourne where I was personnel officer and captain secretary. From the Melbourne I went to HMAS Harman,
- 07:00 the communications establishment in Canberra. Again I was captain secretary there for about 18 months. Then I went to HMAS Tarangau in Manus Island for two years. I was secretary to the Naval officer in charge of Papua New Guinea.
- 07:30 Then from there I went to the navy office in Canberra. I was secretary to the Director of Manning and Training, and also assistant secretary to the Director General of Training. Throughout the previous few years I'd been agitating to transfer from the Supply branch into the Seaman branch so that I could
- 08:00 become a clearance diving officer, or become a clearance diver, more important. Eventually I wore them down and I was allowed to undertake the mine warfare and clearance diver officer course, which I did

at HMAS Penguin in April 1969. I finished the course in December

08:30 '69 and then went to HMAS Sydney in order to get two roles, to get a watch-keeping certificate as I was now in the Seaman branch, and also in the capacity as clearance diving officer to fulfil that role as the ship was doing trips to Vietnam and back with troops.

09:00 So I did that for a year. Then I went to Penguin again. No, sorry, I went to HMAS Watson where I was in charge of the

09:30 explosive ordnance disposal training over there. Then during that time I was promoted to lieutenant commander and I was posted to United States for a two and a half year exchange service, on completion

10:00 of which I came back to HMAS Penguin where I was the second-in-command of the diving school and also responsible for all clearance diving courses that were being undertaken. Plus I was designated the course officer for the mine warfare clearance diving officers' course, one of 77;

10:30 there was only ever one a year that were going through or were about to go through. On completion of that I was posted to fleet headquarters on the staff of the fleet officer command in the fleet as the fleet mine warfare clearance diving officer. I did that

11:00 for about 18 months and decided I'd had enough. I left the navy in January 1980. I carried on diving as a commercial diver, not employed by anyone in particular, but just independently working for different diving companies on underwater ship husbandry in

11:30 Sydney Harbour, and I also did a lot of small businesses, my own, operating in Pittwater, because I lived in Newport then, just maintaining the hulls of yachts and any sort of odd jobs. Eventually I gave that away after two or three years.

12:00 I did a bit of insurance investigative work for about a year. Then we went to the far North Coast to try our hand with a bit of farming. That's where we went to North Tumbulghum, ran an orchard up there for about seven years, then moved

12:30 back down to the Central Coast here and retired out of the workforce and lived at Wamberal then, initially. More recently, four years ago, I came here to Glenning Valley. I'm sure I've missed a few things there.

13:00 **What are your early memories from childhood?**

I would say of going to school, initially. I can remember going to day one of primary school, I suppose I was five or six or something like that, and not being particularly impressed with that.

13:30 Then I suppose more recent to that my memories would have been the start of the Second World War. It was September '39 so I was about a month short of my eighth birthday, so I didn't really comprehend what was happening.

14:00 I remember I was told there was a likelihood of invasion and that they might come by sea or they might come by air. I thought that air sounded pretty cool, that'd be my preferred option. Fortunately that didn't happen. We got pretty, as all kids

14:30 at that age, pretty immune to what went on in the wartime Blitz and air raids. We had an air raid shelter dug in our backyard. It comprised of digging a big hole in the ground and putting curved aluminium sheeting over the top of it and back filling with dirt over that. It wasn't

15:00 a raging success because it'd fill up with water when it rained. So they built a brick one with a big concrete slab on top of it in place of that, which we were supposed to go to every time there was an air raid, but in the winter you tended to not go out there. We'd sleep under the stairs. There was a sort of a cavity

15:30 where we used to hang coats and stuff like that. We'd just sleep under there because it was the part of houses that tended to be remaining if a house took a hit from a bomb. There were all sorts of activities around the area, bomb hits, but fortunately we didn't get any.

16:00 As kids, when we got up in the morning we used to go out in the streets and collect shrapnel that was left over from shells, or bomb splinters, and see who could get the biggest and best collection. So it became just part of your daily life, really.

At school, what were your precautions? What was your

16:30 **air raid drill?**

I don't recall any particular one. All the windows were done up with tape to stop glass splinters, as with the windows at home. When we went to school we had to carry a gasmask in a little cardboard box. But

17:00 there were large air raid shelters built in the playgrounds at schools. If there was a raid during the day when you were at school then you'd be mustered out of the class room and into the shelters until the all-

clear went.

How many sisters did you have?

One.

What do you remember of your dad?

I don't really

17:30 remember anything about him. He was just sort of shadowy memories, I suppose, because when he was killed in May '41 I was nine and a half. He'd spent an awful lot of time away on the China station.

18:00 So I don't really have any memories of him at all.

Were you living as a family on the naval base in Portsmouth?

No, we were in our own home. To my knowledge there were no married quarters on base there.

What games did you play?

18:30 I think most of our games were directed to the war experiences going on around us. There were rocket batteries up the end of the road on a vacant lot. We'd go up there and play around them. After a raid we'd go and check out bomb

19:00 craters and stuff like that. Real interesting stuff for kids. I know we did find a Nissan hut that had ammunition stored in it. I decided to shuffle them into my collection of shrapnel and stuff. It was the real thing. So I collected a couple of

19:30 like .5 tracer shells out of the storeroom there. My mother would have had a fit if she found out what she was dusting. Later on we took them up to the Scout Hall and

20:00 took the head off the shell and emptied out the powder and decided that we'd put the shell case in a vice. A friend and I decided we'd get rid of the percussion cap by, I held a big nail on the cap and he hit with a hammer, which it went up, but it went up the nail and into my hand.

20:30 So I decided to keep that quiet from Mum, which I managed to do for a couple of days until it all festered up. They were the sort of games we used to play.

How did rationing affect you?

Being a kid, as long as there was food on the table,

21:00 which there always was, I wasn't all that fussed about it. I know the choices of food were pretty limited. There was really no fruit to speak of other than stuff that was grown in England. We didn't see bananas or anything like that.

21:30 We used to, something the dietician would be horrified at now was bread with dripping on it, a bit of salt on that. Good for the cholesterol.

Some of your childhood was spent living in other people's houses.

Yeah.

Where did you go?

One place I remember was in Bournemouth. I wasn't treated very well there. I have the suspicion subsequently that people who took evacuees were probably making a quid out of the government.

22:30 They weren't doing it out of the goodness of their heart or anything like that. Particular place I went to in Bournemouth they had a son, probably around my age. I can't remember any other kids. I wasn't allowed in the house until it got dark. It didn't matter whether it was rain or whatever, which in England it rains quite frequently.

23:00 They were very anti-. I wound up getting pneumonia while I was there. My mother came up from Portsmouth and took me home.

How did you adjust to the coming and going?

23:30 I think I adjusted all right. I got sent off to a boarding school for about six or nine months at one time at a place called Kingham in Oxfordshire. It was one of these self-contained places. They had their own gardens and everything

24:00 was maintained by the kids that were there. It was a pretty hard life there. We got given a pair of corduroy shorts that were lined and no underwear, and a grey shirt which became a thicker, hairier

24:30 grey shirt in the winter. And a pair of boots. Looking back on it, it's the sort of thing you think about

kids who were in Borstal or something like that. We had to maintain the dormitories we slept in. We had to polish them up, we had to make our beds a particular way. When you went to bed you had to roll your shirt up and that inside your shorts and you were given a belt that had an S buckle on it. That had to go around the bundle of clothes, tie it together and that went at the foot of your bed on the

25:30 floor in between your boots. So those were the sorts of things I remember.

What did you see of air raids in Portsmouth?

Quite a bit.

Describe that.

I remember seeing a dogfight. They were pretty close over our house on one occasion. A Spitfire and an ME109, I think. The German plane got shot down and we saw the guy parachute out. The wreckage landed not close by, but about a mile away I suppose. We often had air raids during the day,

26:30 but they did tend to be more at night. It was just a continuing thing.

Did you ever consider as a child going into the air force?

No. I didn't. A very good friend of mine at that time and me used to

27:00 go sailing. He had a little sailing dinghy. We used to go up Portsea Creek. He was always dead keen on the air force and did eventually join and became an RAF [Royal Air Force] test pilot. He came out to Australia and had to eject out of a

27:30 Mirage. They operated from down in Victoria. I was at HMAS Harman at the time and I got a ride in an air force aircraft to go down to see him in hospital down there. So he achieved his ambition then. I've never had any ambitions to be in the air force.

28:00 Your family had a great naval tradition. What stories did you hear about that?

The only stories, my mother's father, I heard stories about him. He died before I was born so I never had any firsthand stories.

28:30 He had been, as a regular he spent about seven years on board the Royal Yacht, the Victoria and Albert. He used to assist King Edward VII up and down companionways on the ship. He got a silver watch

29:00 when he left the navy, from the King. From the other side of the family, as a small child I didn't know my other grandfather. He also was in the navy. I never heard any stories from him. Over the last few years I've got interested in genealogy and I've

29:30 found out much more about them in my research. I've got all their service documents and all that sort of thing.

To what extent was the navy in your blood?

I don't know if it was in my blood or not, but I was always interested in joining

30:00 the navy. I think it was always expected that I would. I didn't really have any control over what I joined the navy as. My mother and the fellow that was to become my stepfather, Tom, they got together and decided the

30:30 best thing for me would be to join as a writer in the Supply branch.

What did you think of their decision?

I just accepted it and got on with it. I think in those days there was a tendency more for kids to do as they were told than there seems to be now.

31:00 How did the British Government look after your mother when your father died?

Eventually she got a pension, but it wouldn't have been very much. I don't know what it was. That's why she had to go out and get a job more or less straight away, because there was no income.

31:30 What do you remember of the work that she did?

She was an ambulance driver. I never saw her at work. I remember her being away a lot and I was at home on my own a lot. My sister is about five years younger than me. I really can't remember who was caring for her

32:00 at the time, because she certainly wasn't at home with me.

What do you remember about the end of the war?

The end of the war, which for us was VE [Victory in Europe] Day in May, that was huge celebrations.

32:30 I remember going in with a few friends to Guildhall Square in Portsmouth. A huge bonfire had been built there and it was so big that it melted the trolley wires that went across the top of it. Just celebrations everywhere.

33:00 **What shape was Portsmouth in by the end of the war?**

It was pretty badly knocked about. There tended to be not a lot of rebuilding going on. Mostly wherever there was bomb damage it was cleaned up. If there was

33:30 a hole in the block of houses it stayed a hole; it was just cleaned up in terms of the rubble and so on. It was quite a bit of damage.

What do you remember about visiting navy guys from the Commonwealth? Did you have anything to do with them?

No, not

34:00 during the war. I didn't have anything to do with anybody.

Did you ever go down to the sea and watch what they were up to?

My friend and I used to sail out of Portsea Creek and we would sail down into the harbour, sail around the ships, keep tabs on them.

34:30 **What was your relationship like with your stepfather?**

Good. He was a really nice guy. He was a submariner too, or had been. I think that's why they decided to come to Australia, because he had been in Sydney during the war. He was in the 4th Submarine Flotilla, I think, which was based down at Balmoral.

35:00 I think he motivated my mother to emigrate.

How did your life change after the Second World War?

Probably greater variety of food.

35:30 We had fruit and that sort of thing. Rationing still went on for a couple of years after the war. All in all I don't suppose my lifestyle would have changed all that much.

How old were you when your mum and stepfather decided to move to Australia?

I was,

36:00 it was in the early '50s, so I was, when I joined the Sydney and transferred from the RN [Royal Navy] to the RAN [Royal Australian Navy], it was three weeks after my nineteenth birthday.

Did they leave before you?

Yeah. They left on a passenger ship from Tilbury Docks in London. The

36:30 SS Mooltan.

Was it your plan initially to follow them out there?

No, it wasn't. I was told they were going and that the best thing for me was to make an application to transfer so that I could come out to Australia. So I just went along with it.

37:00 Once again, doing what I'm told.

As a student, what did you enjoy most?

Academic subjects. I liked English and I liked art. They were the only two things I ever did any good at, I suppose, in terms of

37:30 qualification. I wasn't a very good student at all. I took a bit of flak at school from teachers and everybody because initially my family name was Isaac. There was a lot of anti-Jewish feeling during the Second World War. I took

38:00 a fair bit of flak from teachers and kids about the name, so it wasn't a really happy time at school. That's what prompted my mother eventually to change her name to McConnochie, which was my father's mother's maiden name.

Tell me more about the anti-Semitic feeling.

38:30 I don't know why it was present. As a kid I don't know why it was present, but it was. I think Jewish people seemed to be able to circumvent the rationing system. They were always supposed to have better clothes than everybody else. I

- 39:00 think it was a tall poppy syndrome. It got quite nasty. I would be called “Esau and Jacob” and stuff like that by teachers, which is not what you’d expect. On one occasion, because I didn’t answer, I got the blackboard duster thrown at me. So I wound up on the wrong side because I
- 39:30 flung it right back. So there you go.
- How did you handle the bullying?**
- I suppose I just had to go with it. Got in quite a few fights about it. They don’t resolve anything.
- How old were you when your name was changed to McConnochie?**
- 40:00 13 and a half.
- How did that improve things for you?**
- I suppose it did improve things, but not immediately, not until my surroundings changed and I went somewhere fresh where I was called McConnochie.
- 40:30 Nothing much changed.
- Did you change schools a lot growing up?**
- I changed about three times in the high school situation.
- What academic qualification did you leave school with?**
- It was called a School Certificate then. I got a credit in English and a credit in
- 41:00 Art and nothing else. So I really didn’t get my School Certificate. I subsequently, in the navy, got a higher educational qualification.

Tape 2

- 00:33 **What boat was your father lost on?**
- It was a submarine called the Undaunted. She was on her first patrol, based in Malta, a patrol which was supposed to monitor the entrance to the harbour at Tripoli, monitor shipping there. She failed to return from it.
- 01:00 **So your father’s body was never recovered?**
- No.
- How did that affect you?**
- For a long time he was posted as missing because they really didn’t know what had happened. There was a lot of conjecture. Subsequently we found out that she’d been sunk by an Italian patrol boat,
- 01:30 been depth charged by the Pegaso. At the time I suppose we used to live in hope. He was posted missing, so he might have got away and was having trouble getting back sort of thing. You can invent all sorts of things in your mind as a kid.
- Living in a naval town there would have been other families in**
- 02:00 **similar positions to yours.**
- Undoubtedly. We lived just outside of the Portsmouth CBD [central business district] in a place called Cosham. I don’t recall anybody in the close vicinity being in the same situation.
- The fact that your father had been lost in service**
- 02:30 **to the country and the fact that you weren’t Jewish didn’t save you from bullying?**
- None at all.
- What was your early training in the navy?**
- As a writer? First of all we went to a place called HMS Royal Arthur, which was
- 03:00 the sort of basic boot camp, six or eight weeks. From there went to HMS Ceres, which was the training for a writer, somebody in the Supply and Secretariat branch. After coming out of that I was posted to HMS Victory,
- 03:30 supposedly qualified to write.

How did you feel about being in the writers' branch?

I think I'd always wanted to be in the Seaman branch, that had some diversity. Their discussions I'm sure were well-intentioned and were probably based on

04:00 my stepfather's experience in the navy himself. What he saw was a writer having a more cushy existence. That was what he thought he wanted for me. So I just bowed to it.

What was your first job in the Royal Navy?

After training? I was employed in the

04:30 pay office in HMS Victory, which is a naval dockyard establishment. I don't know what the hell I did, really. Not a great deal. I was monitored, more than anything, that I wasn't making any major foul-ups.

How did you take to navy life?

Quite well, I believe. I

05:00 guess because of my upbringing I was quite used to a disciplined existence, so the navy wasn't too much different, so it didn't really fuss me at all.

How long were you in the Royal Navy?

Only 18 months.

05:30 **Were you at Victory the whole time?**

No, I wasn't, I went from Victory to HMS Dolphin, which was a submarine base just the other side of Portsmouth Harbour. I was in the pay office there.

06:00 I was then posted back to Victory, but only because I had the chance to be discharged and transferred into the Australian Navy.

How easy was that application to make?

I had to go before the Flag Office Submarines as a requestman and explain why I wanted to

06:30 transfer. I think I had to produce evidence of the fact that my mother had in fact gone to Australia. Because of my age I was still deemed to be a minor, so that persuaded them to OK the transfer.

Were you daunted by swearing allegiance to an entirely other country?

That's the odd thing about it:

07:00 you were swearing allegiance to the same person at that time. No, I don't think that ever came into my head.

At what point did you join the Sydney?

I joined her in Portsmouth on the 25th of October

07:30 in 1950. She had been in British waters for some weeks and one of her functions while she was over there was to pick up aircraft for the newly-to-be-formed 21st Carrier Air Group. She was getting Fireflies and

08:00 another aircraft. She'd done that, I think, and was in Portsmouth. So I was discharged the one day, went aboard, signed on and sailed on the 25th of October.

What was it like being the new Pom[Englishman] on board the Sydney?

Not very good. There were other

08:30 blokes who had been recruited into the RAN while the ship was over there, because of the growth of the fleet air arm at that point. It had only been formed in 1949, '48-'49, they were short on a lot of technical fleet air arm expertise, so

09:00 people who had been in the RN were signed on as well. So I wasn't the only one on board, but I was the only one in my mess, which was the writers' mess. It looked like starting all over again, actually, the normal "Pom-bashing"

09:30 and keeping money under the soap and all that sort of thing.

They gave you a hard time on the way over?

Initially, yeah. But it tapered off after a while.

What did they tell you about Australia?

My parents?

Your mess mates.

Most of my knowledge was gained from just listening to their

10:00 conversations. So I really had no concept of what it was like. I couldn't see that it would be.... It would have to be better. Positive thinking.

What was your job aboard the Sydney?

I was in the pay office there, too. I was a

10:30 ledger keeper.

How does a pay office work aboard a vessel?

It was a different system to the Royal Navy so I was sort of on-the-job learning. In those times we worked a ledger system and there were sections. Might be an A-G section

11:00 of ledgers in the pay office. They were literally big ledgers. You wrote them up every three months. Each section was kept in duplicate, so there was a fair ledger keeper and a rough ledger keeper. The fair one, at the end of the three months, got wrapped up and sent off to the Director of Navy Accountant in Melbourne.

11:30 Everybody's name was there with their details. Their income depending on what rank rate they were. The number of allotments that were levied from their pay and where they went and what the next fortnightly rate they were to be paid was, that went in the column

12:00 for the pay day. On the pay day the rough ledger was taken up, in the case of the Sydney, taken up on the flight deck, and the ship's company mustered up there and lined up and called out their number, came forward, took off their hat and were given their pay. The master-at-arms would be

12:30 standing there and if he thought their hair was too long that was his opportunity to tell them about that.

Were you carrying a lot of cash around?

Yes, quite a bit, but in the ship the majority of the currency circulates within the ship in that there's nowhere for anyone to go. So

13:00 it tends to go back into the coffers via the canteen or something like that.

What do you do with money aboard a ship in the middle of an ocean?

That's about it. You go to the canteen.

The money comes back to the navy anyway.

Comes back, yeah.

13:30 **How did you at that point compare the two navies?**

I thought that the RAN was more relaxed, particularly between the ranks in the lower deck, between leading hands and able seamen, POs [petty officers], and

14:00 generally the discipline was a little more relaxed. The clothing was very much improved on the Royal Navy stuff. I couldn't wait to change my uniform into some lighter weight blues and so on. The foot-thick serge is not really comfortable.

You found the

14:30 **RAN uniform better because it was more modern and lightweight?**

Yeah, better quality.

Was this your first posting at sea?

Yes.

How did you take to sea life?

Quite all right. Not seasick, if that's what you mean.

The Sydney was a large ship.

Yeah, relatively large, but it would still move around in

15:00 the sea.

What port did you first arrive in Australia?

At Fremantle.

What were your impressions?

We came alongside at Outer Harbour, I think it was, and thought, "Well, it's a wide, brown country all right," because I couldn't see anything. Miles and miles of nothing.

15:30 We dutifully went ashore and found a pub down the road and I had my first Australian beer.

What did you think of the accent around you?

I think what was noticeable to me was that the accent seemed to remain

16:00 the same irrespective of where the person was from, whereas you go 20 miles in England and there's a totally different dialect or language, pretty well. That was probably the predominant feature that I noticed.

Tell us about arriving in Sydney.

We came alongside the fitting-out wharf at Garden Island.

16:30 My mother was on the wharf and my stepfather. I don't think my sister was there, she was probably at school. Normal reunion thing. They were negotiating to buy a house at that

17:00 time at North Curl Curl. They were living in a boarding house in North Sydney.

What were your impressions when you came in the harbour?

It was really great because a ship like the Sydney, for entering the harbour the lower deck was cleared and you muster on the

17:30 flight deck in your designated spot, so you have a good view. It was very impressive.

You didn't mind leaving Portsmouth for Sydney?

When I saw it, no. I was a bit concerned when I was leaving Portsmouth.

What did you know at that point of the Korean War?

18:00 Other than the fact that there was a war, not a great deal. I knew about it before I left England.

Did you assume you'd be going up there?

No, I didn't. After the ship settled into routine back in Sydney a lot of people were posted off the ship

18:30 and others came on. I never got a posting, so I thought, "That's all right with me." I was quite happy to stay on this ship to consolidate. Then we found we were going to Korea, but that was later in the next year, August '51.

Had you encountered Aussie girls in Sydney?

19:00 Yeah, I did, but not at that time. I met my wife in Sydney.

What did you think of people in Sydney?

I don't know that I deliberately thought about anybody at all. Everyone seemed pretty relaxed and friendly.

19:30 **Were you sleeping aboard the ship?**

I was sleeping aboard.

How were your mum and step-dad settling into life in Australia?

They seemed to be doing all right. They were both organising jobs at that stage. They had only been there a couple of months.

August 1951

20:00 **you departed for Korea. What route did you take up there?**

We would have gone first of all down to Jarvis Bay for the carrier air group to fly on. Then

20:30 I think we went north via Brisbane, from memory. At that point I wasn't particularly involved in ship movements or anything like that.

You went to Kure in Japan?

Yeah, that was the first place we went.

21:00 **What were your experiences there?**

I'm not sure, no, it wasn't Kure, it was when we went somewhere else in Japan. Kure was a funny sort of place. We went alongside there and

21:30 we got leave and the means of transport up to the town of Kure was one of these three-wheeled taxi things, which was just a structure built around a motorbike, two wheels on the back and one on the front. I think they were driven by ex-Kamikaze[suicide]

22:00 pilots. Appalling roads up to Kure, potholes and everything. We get up there and that was also the headquarters of the BCOF, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. They had a wet canteen there and there were also lots of bars around town that we checked out.

22:30 There were lots of fights going on in these bars.

Between who?

Australians and French Canadians, they were the worst performers. They got something under the belt and they'd go bananas, those fellows. And Kiwis [New Zealanders], of course.

Were the Aussies fighting the Kiwis

23:00 **or teaming up with them?**

I can't remember, really.

Maybe it depended on the night.

Everything depended on the night. Yeah. I think you're right.

Did you see any of Kure's ladies of the night?

See any of them? You couldn't avoid them, really. Used to get all sorts of lectures.

23:30 Before going ashore you had to go down and see a movie after which you'd tend to switch over the other side every time you saw a female.

What precautions were they advising you to take?

Abstinence. That was the major precaution.

What condition were the Japanese people in?

24:00 They seemed to be in fairly good condition. I haven't seen beggars on the streets or anything like that that I can recall. They were all reasonably friendly.

At that point, what evidence was there left of war damage?

There was

24:30 a bit of damage around the dockyard in Kure. Other than Hiroshima I didn't see any evidence of damage like you would have seen in Portsmouth.

25:00 **Where did the ship go from Kure? What was its station in Korea?**

It wasn't a permanent station. We would go from one side of Korea to the other, west coast to east coast. We spent a lot of time on the west coast and around Inch'on.

25:30 On one occasion we did go up to, we went well north on the eastern side up on level with Vladivostok. I know it was as cold as hell, to the point of ice forming down the ship's side, the hull.

How did you cope with that climate in your new lightweight uniform?

26:00 Everybody was cold as hell because nobody had any particular, unless you were working on the flight deck you didn't get any warm clothing other than what you had yourself. We had heaters in the mess and in the pay office. Occasionally they would manage to get something

26:30 through the ventilation system. As the ship had been refitted to cope with tropical situations the first thing they do was to send it up to Korea. It wasn't really fitted out well.

What missions were Sydney undertaking off the Korean coast?

27:00 They were all airborne missions in support of the army on shore. They were bombarding trains, tunnels, whatever. That was the main function of it, as I understood it.

Was the Sydney quite a distance off the coast?

Yeah. Very rarely saw the coast. When you did it was just

27:30 low down on the horizon.

Did you have any expectation of attack?

No.

Where was your action station?

My action station was in one of the magazines. I was on 7 Deck right up forward.

Magazine for what weapon?

It was a general magazine. It had bombs

28:00 and rockets. It wasn't a place that I went to during an action, but it was somewhere I had to go to when aircraft needed more munitions brought up.

You were involved in transporting those munitions on a regular basis?

Fairly regularly, yeah, but only to the point of getting them out

28:30 of their racks and onto their hoist and sending them up. Any normal action station for drills or if it was seen that the ship might come under attack, my requirement was to go to the damage control headquarters where I'd be a messenger or something like that.

29:00 **Were you worried about mines?**

No. I suppose ignorance is bliss.

Is there a pecking order amongst the different branches on a ship like the Sydney, as far as status?

I would say that's probably true throughout the service,

29:30 cooks and stewards and miscellaneous people not being super high on the totem pole.

Where is the writer branch?

The Supply and Secretariat is stores, writers, stewards, cooks.

You were at the bottom of the pecking order?

Probably just above the cooks.

30:00 **Did that bother you at the time?**

Not really.

Who were at the top of the totem pole?

A lot of this totem pole is seen from the eye of the beholder, I suppose. The aircrew people would see themselves at the top because that was the main function of the ship. Seaman branch, because they're

30:30 driving it.

What interaction did you have with aircrew?

On a personal basis not very much at all. Everybody's in separate mess decks throughout the ship. Being in the pay office you had interaction with people who were coming in to change an allotment or any sort of pay query.

31:00 You would see people when you went ashore.

On a large vessel, how much do you get to see different parts of the ship?

You can go where you like. The option was there.

But in practice?

You move around the ship. Although you're in a mess deck the

31:30 feeding system is a cafeteria one, so everybody goes to the main cafeteria to eat three times a day. You could just go wherever you like, gun sponsons, flight deck, as long as there's no firing taking place.

That's off-limits in that case?

During flying operations, yes.

32:00 **What aircraft were on board the Sydney?**

Fireflies and Sea Furies.

Did you experience tropical weather?

Storms, yeah. It wasn't all that tropical, but while we were in,

32:30 we were in Yokosuka, I think, in Japan and a hurricane, or typhoon actually, came up and we had to put to sea in a hurry to ride it out. We were riding that for about three days, I suppose.

Was that a nauseous time?

Some people

33:00 were sick, I'm sure, but the galley closed down and they couldn't do any cooking for a couple of days. We were on sandwiches. It was a very uncomfortable time, that's for sure. We lost a couple of aircraft over the side.

Just rolled off?

33:30 Yeah, tore away from their tie-down. We lost a couple into the gun sponson. What else damage the ship took, structurally I don't think there was any damage.

Generally, what were your living conditions like on the Sydney?

Not very good.

34:00 We slept in hammocks in the mess, which is very close quarters. Some people slept on the cushions on top of the lockers. We were fortunate, the writers, we were able to obtain a canvas stretcher and quite a few of us slept down in the pay office

34:30 on stretchers.

Why?

Because it eased the load, as far as crowding in the mess.

So there was no problem in sleeping where you wanted to?

No. In fact, in hot weather, you could sleep, as long as you weren't blocking gangways or any emergency,

35:00 you could sleep pretty much anywhere.

What was the leadership like on the Sydney? We'll start with the chief petty officers in your area.

They were, in their attitudes you mean?

Attitudes, their quality.

Fine, yeah. The chief writer

35:30 was a sort of father figure, I suppose. He was a very reasonable sort of a bloke. Give you guidance. Not super-discipline type of guidance, but helpful guidance. The petty officer was the same.

36:00 **What about your officers?**

Our officers, there was a supply commander who was in charge of the branch who was in a small office alongside the pay office. There was a commissioned writer officer in there with him. They were fine.

Did you ever get into trouble for anything?

36:30 In the pay department?

Just any scrapes, I guess.

No, I didn't. Nothing in the ship. I got into a fight ashore one time.

37:00 I'm trying to remember just when it was. It was in a pub down in Broadway in Sydney. The barman was intent on closing the pub. I think it might have been a six o'clock deal. We were

37:30 playing a game of darts. He said, "All right, you can finish your game of darts." He threw out what I had left in my glass and I took exception to that. Somebody, a civilian who was in the bar, who I didn't know or had nothing to do with, decided to interfere on this barman's behalf, so I got stuck into

38:00 him, in the process of which his coat got torn and I ended up in a police cell charged with malicious damage to one coat. Turned out we picked the wrong pub because they were all journos [journalists].

What effect did that have on you as far as navy discipline?

38:30 Because I was absent for a complete day I was given what's called "a day civil power". That went on my service record and it was theoretically an extra day I had to make up at the end of my time.

How long were you in Korea?

Only about six-seven months.

39:00 **What did you know of the progress of the war while you were up there?**

Not a great deal. The information chain wasn't all that good. We'd get a bulletin put on the noticeboard as far as what was happening and who'd done what to who and so on. Occasionally you'd get

39:30 an update by the commander or the captain over the loudspeaker system. About the most notable time was when one of the aircraft got shot down north of the Han River, one of the Fireflies. The RAN didn't have

40:00 helicopters then. We had an American helicopter temporarily attached to the ship for plane guard duty when they were landing and taking off. This had to be dispatched to try and recover the aircrew.

40:30 This he managed to do, but it was quite fraught in that it was running out of light and fuel and just managed to get these guys in time.

Tape 3

00:32 **What kind of shape were the rest of the crew in when they got back?**

They were taken to the sickbay and checked out. As far as I know they weren't injured in any way. I think they survived the crash pretty well.

What did they tell about their experience?

They didn't,

01:00 not that I was ever aware of. The major story from our point of view was the fact that this American helicopter had gone in after them and the pilot was a chief warrant officer in the US Navy.

01:30 His aircrew men, it was a totally unarmed helicopter, so they gave them an Owen gun and apparently put it to good use because the North Koreans were advancing quite rapidly upon them when they were in the process of getting the guys on board.

02:00 They shot out a few of them, I think.

Did they land on water?

No, on land.

What did you think about communism?

I don't think I had any thought about them at all. No, I don't think I had any thoughts about it at all, just

02:30 seemed to be the bad news story, the bad guys, so therefore had to be stopped. I didn't have too many thoughts about anything like that. I just feel that at that point in time I was a very small cog in a large piece of machinery. That's why

03:00 not many of us at that level were privy to the thought process of the government or what was going on in the ship or anything else. Just be there and make up the numbers.

What about Queen and Country?

King and Country then.

Where were your loyalties in terms of

03:30 **Britain or Australia?**

I don't think I made any conscious comparative loyalties. I think I adjusted to the fact that I was in the Australian Navy. A little later, a couple of years later, after I got

04:00 married, I applied for citizenship as an Australian. I was deterred from doing so, oddly enough, quite the opposite to what goes on today. "You're born in England. You don't have to do this." So I persisted with it anyway and

04:30 they gave me a certificate through the mail. I didn't attend any ceremony or anything like that. Said, "If you want to carry on with this crazy idea, then OK."

How did you celebrate Christmas in Korea?

On Christmas Day I can't remember whether we were actually at sea or not.

05:00 We were well looked after, in that we had food parcels sent up from organisations in Australia. Everybody got a Red Cross parcel. A packet of cigarettes and bits and pieces. We were well catered for.

What was your social life like?

05:30 On the ship? We had a movie shown every now and then. Socially you'd read or play cards, that sort of thing.

Who were your mates? Were you slightly distanced from the main crew?

06:00 We were all part of the crew, but I guess you developed your friends amongst your working mates in those sorts of situations. In the writer branch we were fortunate in that we could escape to the pay office. OK,

06:30 we were in our own company, but at least we had that space to go to and we could play cards there or do whatever there. A lot of us tended to catch up with a bit of work. At the end of every quarter when you had to rewrite the ledger, that was something that was done in your off time anyway.

What did that involve?

07:00 Rewriting the entire ledger ready for the next three month period in terms of in the left hand side were names and details and allotments and that sort of thing and the pay rate.

How cold was it when you were there?

Very cold.

07:30 Inside the ship was not particularly warm. You'd always have to be fairly well rugged up.

Were you superstitious?

I don't think so.

Did you notice other men on board?

Walking under ladders and stuff?

08:00 No, I don't think so. I don't recall anybody else doing so.

Did you learn any Japanese?

No.

Did any of the guys?

Not as a language. You might have, I don't know, "thank you" or "please" or something like that. But no conscious attempt

08:30 to learn it.

You returned to Australia in 1952?

'52, yes.

What did you do when you got back?

My mother and Tom had already moved into a house up in North Curl Curl,

09:00 so I went out there. I can't remember anything specific that we did. Just met guys downtown, I suppose.

What was Curl Curl like?

It was good.

09:30 We had unmade roads in those days. There was always a bit of work to be done on drainage gutters and things out the front for when it did rain. Spent a bit of time down the beach there. A vastly different place now.

How so?

It's built up so much.

10:00 It's a long time since I've been out there. Like everything. If the population grows, so do the houses. Used to have a dump down there. The creek went out into Curl Curl Lagoon and behind that, that was eventually filled in, and behind that

10:30 was the Chinese gardens where we'd go and get veggies.[vegetables] I think that's long gone down there, probably houses all over it.

What was the beach culture like?

Just normal beach culture, I suppose. Surf club.

How involved were you in that?

I wasn't, because I was always up and away.

11:00 How long till you were posted to Balmoral after you returned?

In the navy, when you're posted somewhere you leave one day and you go there. The next day you're there, unless you happen to be posted to leave for a fortnight and then to join the new ship or establishment on completion of the leave.

11:30 I can't remember what was the case with the Sydney. I was probably sent on leave and was probably to report on finish of leave to Penguin. So I was in the captain's office down there, the service certificate office, looking after all the records for everybody in the establishment.

What did that involve?

12:00 In those days, everybody had a service record and it was a question of maintaining those records. All the various things that happened to people had to be recorded in the documents. Also getting records ready for,

12:30 once a week there's what's called a captain's requestment and the captain's defaulters. So if people request anything and they had to come before the captain to do so these documents had to be updated so the captain got those in front of him when the person comes before him. Similarly with defaulters, people who have got into strife.

13:00 Where you living while you were there?

I was living at home, at Curl Curl.

What were your comrades like?

Good. I had a good circle of friends there. That's where I met my wife, too. She had a

13:30 job down at Middle Head or she had just left the job there. A job was advertised in the pay office at Penguin and she applied for it. She came down, she had to be interviewed by

14:00 the captain's secretary who I think interviewed all civilian employees, potential employees. That was where I first met her because I showed her up to where the captain's secretary's office was. She got the job and then worked in the pay office which was

14:30 higher up in another building, higher up within HMAS Penguin.

What was the navy's view of relationships within the navy?

They probably weren't too happy about uniform relationships. I don't recall that anybody

15:00 was unduly, I didn't really have a relationship at that point in time, we just went out together a couple of times. She used to come, a few of us would go into town for a beer in the afternoon and she'd come along.

15:30 Then gradually we got to go out together. I don't think anybody was fussed if they even knew about it.

After your time on board the ship in Korea, how did you adjust to an office job again?

I was still in an office job; it was just that one's not floating and the other one is. That's really

16:00 the only difference. There was really no adjustment to make. A lot more freedom, of course. I didn't see any great adjustment.

What kind of security clearance did your wife have to have as a civilian?

At that point I don't think she had to have any great security

16:30 clearance. She was working in the pay office doing accounts work, actually. Penguin was never a high security area.

When were you married?

We were married in October '53.

17:00 When did you do your extra schooling in the navy?

When I decided to go for promotion, one of the requirements was to have what's called an HET,

17:30 Higher Educational Test or Certificate. So I studied for that and then passed it.

How was that arranged? Were you taught by navy people?

No, I just saw the Instructor Officer and got the syllabus for it. I had

18:00 access to any books that I might have needed. Then it was over to me to do the study.

When did you do lose your British accent?

I don't know, probably a gradual thing. I'm not sure that I ever had much of an accent anyway. In subsequent experiences people

18:30 that I've come across that have come from southern England, I don't think there's a particularly marked accent, compared to Midland or Geordies from Newcastle or Irish or whatever. I think in a way a lot of it is osmosis anyway. You're not

19:00 mixing with anyone that's talking like a Pom, so you tend to pick up whatever you're around all the time. I think it's probably a self-imposed peer pressure not to stand out, having taken a lot of flak most of my life one way or another, being

19:30 a supposed Jew or now being one of the great unwashed Poms. I thought, "The less I do to bring attention to myself the better off I'll be."

When were you drafted to the Anzac?

20:00 It was in '55. I'd gone from Penguin to Kuttabul and from Kuttabul to Anzac in '55.

How long did you spend at Kuttabul?

About 18 months. I was the captain's secretary there.

What work did that involve?

Looking after the

20:30 administrative side of things in the captain's office. Correspondence, overall the service certificate, the sailors' records, that's about it.

What was your relationship with the captain like?

It was very much

21:00 he's the captain and I'm the.... He was, it might sound a bigger deal than what it was, he was an acting commander and I was a leading writer. So normally you'd expect a captain to be of a higher rank and his secretary to be an officer, and that is usually the case, but the situation at Kuttabul was

21:30 such that it was the administration of the dockyard, which was all looked after by itself. So it didn't call for high-priced help.

Did you move with him to the Anzac?

No. He stayed there in Kuttabul and

22:00 I went to the Anzac. I'd been promoted then, I think. No, I was promoted, I can't remember now. Somewhere along the way I got promoted to PO, anyway. When I went to Anzac it was as a PO writer. I was in charge of the pay office there. Not that that was a vast establishment

22:30 on a destroyer.

Where was it located on the ship?

On the ship it was located in a little caboose above the torpedo tubes.

Describe the office.

It was approached from one side, you went on a ladder or a metal gangway across to a gun sponson,

23:00 a 40-60 gun platform. The torpedo tubes were down below. The office was a steel box, really. The pay office was one end and the supply office was at the other end. It was only a very small compartment,

23:30 the crew on the pay section on one end and the crew on the captain's side of things on the other end.

Did you have windows?

Yeah, two scuttles.

What kind of protection was there in the office to stop papers flying around?

24:00 What do you mean? Getting blown around?

With the movement of the ship.

Nothing.

Did you find that things got misplaced?

At sea you had to make sure that everything was controlled.

How badly did you suffer from seasickness?

I didn't.

24:30 **What were your living quarters like on the Anzac?**

POs' mess, I was in the after POs' mess. It was a fairly spacious mess. Again, hammocks, and the people used to tend to sleep on the upper deck if the weather was right or on the

25:00 locker cushions. I mostly slept on a canvas stretcher in the pay office.

Were you the only person to sleep there?

Yes. There wasn't room for anything else. I had to juggle myself on the stretcher because that occupied most of the deck space.

Why did you choose to do that?

I had my own bedroom.

25:30 **What was your battle station?**

What the hell was it? I can't remember what it was. I think it was down in the mess,

26:00 in a damage control situation.

Damage control being what?

Damage control headquarters, it co-ordinated any damage that was suffered throughout the ship and determined who would go where and what

26:30 facilities would be sent to various areas of damage. We never got into that situation, so I really.... Strange, that, because I can't remember my actual damage control station there.

Where did you

27:00 **land first when you went north?**

Singapore.

What were your first impressions of Singapore?

We went alongside of the dockyard, which involved you go through Singapore Harbour and then it's quite a long transit up the river,

27:30 past Changi, around into the dockyards. It takes quite a while. It was quite interesting scenery. The dockyard itself was just another dockyard.

What was the interesting scenery?

Just the fishing, the houses

28:00 right into the water and the fish traps that were built out from the shore into the water.

What could you see of Changi?

Nothing of the jail.

But it was pointed out to you?

Yeah.

Did you go ashore in Singapore?

Yeah,

28:30 the closest bars, and that was at Sembawang, or you could get a taxi and go into Singapore proper. At that time it was a pretty dirty, smelly place. These days it's fantastically clean. Once Lee Kuan Yew [Singapore's first Prime Minister] got his hands on

29:00 things he really cleaned it up. There's a bridge over the river there where it empties out into the harbour. The amount of stuff floating in there just was unbelievable. Filth. Dead animals, buffalos, I'm sure all their drainage used to empty out into it too.

What was the stench like?

29:30 Terrible. Really bad. Used to be a bit of a game to try and take a breath one side and still have it when you got to the other side.

Did you have anything to do with the locals in Singapore?

No. Plenty of shopping. That was about the only

30:00 involvement with locals, I suppose, Change Alley, bartering with people.

What did you buy?

Just trinkets and stuff like that. Tried to accrue a few

30:30 toys and things. We had a daughter at that stage. Pat was pregnant with our second child. Turned out she must have got pregnant the day before we left.

How regularly were you in contact with your family?

Only by

31:00 mail. No telephones or voice mail or e-mail or any of these present-day facilities. No, we didn't have any contact other than mail.

When did you move off to Malaya?

31:30 The ship was there briefly and then went up to Hong Kong. For the twelve months we were up there we would go from Singapore, Hong Kong, sometimes we'd be in Japan. Mainly we were patrolling both sides

32:00 of the Malayan Peninsula because that was the primary function for the Far East Strategic Reserve, was to monitor any communist aggression in the Malay Peninsula; and protection of Singapore, which also involved

32:30 occasionally, we only did it once, bombarding terrorist or communist positions on the mainland.

Describe that.

Bombardment? Really noisy. Didn't take place,

33:00 time-wise it didn't take too long. We had 4.5 inch guns on the Anzac, it had two forward and one aft. To say it was a very noisy experience....

33:30 I think we vacated the pay office on that occasion and went to the mess deck simply because we were closed up, at action stations during that.

How far away were you from the coast while you were doing this?

Fairly close. The range of the guns would have been about ten miles, 15 miles, so

34:00 we would be in that sort of distance.

Did you receive any fire in return?

No.

What could you see of the scenery?

In a normal day, not very much at all. The patrolling was not a close inshore type thing.

34:30 It's mainly in support of anything that was needed onshore such as a bombardment or to counter anything that was trying to come south in boats and small craft. But we didn't spend a lot of time cruising up close inshore, so I couldn't tell you

35:00 anything much about what the mainland looked like.

At the time, what was your daily routine like?

Be up about 6:30, I suppose. Shower and down for a meal. Get up to the office at about half past seven, quarter to eight.

35:30 Stand easy was usually 20 past ten. Go down the mess, have a cup of coffee and back up in the office till ten to twelve. Lunch hour till one. Then same routine till about ten to four.

Did you have a section of the ship that you were

36:00 **responsible for cleaning?**

No.

Who did you report to?

My immediate boss was the supply officer, Lieutenant Commander George Streeter. A small ship. It was pretty much relaxed

36:30 in your day-to-day activities. No one was breathing down your neck, shouting orders and all that sort of stuff.

In your training, had you had a lot of orders shouted?

Yeah, I guess so.

How did you respond to that?

In drill and that sort of thing?

Personally.

37:00 It didn't worry me.

What was the food like on these patrols in Malaya?

It wasn't too bad. Fairly limited because the amount of storage space for freezing stuff was fairly limited,

37:30 and for green vegetables. But all in all it wasn't too bad, although on one occasion we did run out of pretty well everything. For some reason, we would get supplied at sea by tanker, but for some reason we hadn't got supplied and we went for about a week on

38:00 variations of rice dishes. I've been crazy about rice ever since.

How often were you back in port during these patrols?

I think they were probably two to three weeks, as far as I can remember. Might have been a month,

38:30 no longer.

How long would shore leave be for?

It could range anything from days to weeks. On one occasion we were in Hong Kong and they had to do a refit, which involved us going into dry dock in Hong Kong dockyard. We were

39:00 there for quite a few weeks. That wasn't all that good, pretty uncomfortable.

Why was that?

It was stinking hot, especially so in the dry dock, so we lived ashore in barrack accommodation.

39:30 A couple of us, there had to be someone on the ship and a couple of us offered to stay down there.

How did you pass the time in dry dock in Hong Kong?

Wandering around Hong Kong. Doing a bit of shopping, just sightseeing and going to the movies,

40:00 go swimming, go to trips out to the new territories.

Did you travel as a group or on your own?

We travelled with mess mates, work mates.

Once you came out of dry dock were you back doing the same thing?

Yeah.

Do you remember the route that

40:30 **you took? Was it the same route?**

No, it was either west coast or east coast. Just up and down, as far as I recall.

What would you do in the evening when your working day had finished?

Sometimes we'd run a movie.

41:00 We'd get a beer issue occasionally, a can of beer. Play cards. Write letters.

What card games did you play?

You can tell I wasn't an avid

41:30 card player, I can't think of it. I'll think of it shortly.

Tape 4

00:33 **At what point did you leave Anzac?**

I left her back in Sydney, would have been October '66. I went across to Tobruk in '66.

Same job and position?

Same job exactly. I can't remember why it was,

01:00 I think we were going into refit coming back from up top and they were down a PO and I was drafted across. I think that's the reason I was going there. I was there six months.

Was Tobruk going north again?

I'm not sure where she was going. She may have been going up top, but

01:30 I think she was just down a PO. There's only one, anyway, and I suspect that's what it may have been.

Were you satisfied at that point with your job in the navy?

I was reasonably satisfied. I think I was satisfied.

02:00 It was a little later that I started to hanker for something else, get away from the heavy biros for a while.

It is essentially an accounting position.

02:30 **Why did you choose to do it in the navy?**

The account-type thing?

Working in payroll.

It goes back to the decision that was made for me when I joined the navy. So once I was in it

03:00 you can't just chop and change. It's just the way it goes.

Where was Tobruk while you were on board?

In Australian waters. I don't recall any, she might have been alongside a lot of the time.

03:30 There wouldn't have been anywhere much.

How was your wife coping?

While I was away on Anzac she had a pretty rough time of it with the second pregnancy.

04:00 She was pretty sick. No attempt on my part to get any compassionate leave to assist her was successful. Nobody wanted to know about that sort of thing in those days. They did send out

04:30 somebody from the navy welfare people to see her, but they were again not particularly helpful. They sent out a Roman Catholic chaplain, which must have been especially selected because they knew that we were Church of England. That didn't go

05:00 over too well, anyway. Why the navy in those days insisted on equating Roman Catholic chaplains with domestic problems I'll never know, because they never had any firsthand experience themselves.

They could have sent a rabbi.

They could. Should have stayed as Isaac.

05:30 **She did it tough.**

She did it tough, she did. Because of the war service on Korea we had got ourselves a house in Lakemba under the War Service Homes

06:00 thing. We didn't have much equity in it. So we lived at Lakemba and my mother was at home over at North Curl Curl. They used to come over regularly and give a bit of a hand. By and large

06:30 she was on her own with two young kids. When she was sick herself it was particularly hard.

Where did you go to from Tobruk?

From Tobruk I went to Albatross, where I think I was in the pay office again.

07:00 **That meant moving out of Sydney?**

We stayed in our, I used to commute initially, on a weekend basis, down to Albatross. I eventually got a married quarter down there. So we rented the place in Sydney and lived in the married quarter.

07:30 That didn't work out in the long run in terms of the rent and the place got knocked around a lot. Someone, the person who was renting it, took off to the British Solomons, out of our jurisdiction anyway, and didn't pay the rent.

08:00 **Was Albatross a good change for you and your family?**

It wasn't too bad. The married quarters was good. We had a fairly good social life down there. While I was down there I got interested in diving and I applied to

08:30 do this compressed air diving course up in Sydney, which I did. A three-week course.

What had you known about diving beforehand?

Nothing really. Nothing at all. I just had this sudden interest. I don't know that I thought about what, I don't know.

One day you just decided to be into diving?

I don't know that it was

09:00 one day, but it was an interest that developed. It may even have harked back to when I was in the Anzac and a couple of clearance divers came on board to give a demonstration of

09:30 diving activity. Not that there was much of a demonstration: the guy goes under water and that's the last you see until he comes to the surface. Nevertheless, the fellow that did come on board that day is probably one of my two, three best friends today.

Describe that first training course.

10:00 It was in May and it was quite cold. And there was no such thing as wetsuits in those days so all we dived in was in blue overalls, and they put on a sweater underneath, which sort of

10:30 did a little bit towards trapping warm air close to your body. It was very basic work, in that you were taught free ascents - you get trapped and your gear gets caught, how to get up doing breathing out all the way.

11:00 Various tasks underwater, finding objects underwater, very basic stuff. Just getting used to the medium.

What was the equipment like?

It was mostly surface supply breathing apparatus, so you had your, the air was on the boat and you were attached to a hose on a harness.

11:30 There was a self-contained set, a CABA set, Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus, which we also dived in. The same sort of face mask as used with the others, just that your air was coming from off your back instead of from down the pipe.

12:00 **How well-developed was that equipment in those days?**

It was still pretty much in its infancy. Heavy steel cylinders. The regulators weren't all that crash hot. But it was serviceable gear,

12:30 never had any dramas with it.

What was the course designed to qualify you for?

It was to supplement clearance divers who were fairly thin on the ground in those days, in terms of when they were to be spread over ships. It was

13:00 to relieve them from having to do the mundane, everyday tasks. If it was an inlet blocked on a ship then a compressed air diver could do it. If something was lost over the side, as long as it wasn't deeper than 66 feet, then a compressed air diver could do it. Also, they were to provide the nucleus

13:30 of a search scheme for a ship's hull to a situation called an Operation Awkward, where the divers were linked together and do a search progressively along the ship's hull to look for limpets [mines] or anything like that.

What is the difference between a clearance diver and a ship's diver?

The ship's diver is

- 14:00 only qualified to dive to 66 feet anyway. He can only dive on air, he can't use oxygen or mixture gases. He has no training in ordnance at all, so he's not competent to do anything related to disposal.
- 14:30 **A clearance diver is more to do with ordnance disposal?**
- Yeah. Ordnance disposal and mine disposal. Demolitions is also the clearance diver area.
- Underwater only?**
- No, surface as well.
- A clearance diver is offensive and defensive?**
- Yeah.
- A ship's diver just does any ordinary**
- 15:00 **other job aboard the ship?**
- Yes, at need; he's called on to do whatever diving there is. He was required to exercise so much per month to keep the qualification up.
- After the course you went back to Albatross?**
- Yeah.
- 15:30 The course was done at Rushcutter which is a shore establishment. Then I returned to my normal duties at Albatross.
- At that stage, had you fallen in love with diving?**
- Yes, very much so.
- Was there an outlet for that at Albatross?**
- We didn't, there were a couple of guys down there that hadn't done the diving course, but
- 16:00 they, a couple of PO air fitters actually, they developed their own regulator for use with a compressed air cylinder. Because I was the qualified one I got called on to test drive it, so we went down to the river in Nowra and gave it a run.
- 16:30 They tried it in the ditching pool in Albatross first, in the swimming pool. Then I tried it down in the river and put it to good use. Someone lost a centre board over the same boat and I managed find that for them. That was about the only diving I did down there.
- 17:00 **Was it easy for you as a writer to get on the ship's diving course?**
- Yeah, it was open to all branches.
- How long were you at Albatross?**
- Probably 18 months, then I was posted to the diving school at Rushcutter. Not in any diving capacity; I was there as the
- 17:30 billeting PO, because the housing roster for the Sydney area was run from a little office in there.
- What did that work involve?**
- Just maintain the roster of people who had applied for housing in the Sydney area,
- 18:00 just monitoring the housing itself. I worked for a civilian. She was a welfare officer, actually, so she did welfare work in Sydney, which tended to merge in with housing as well in a lot of instances.
- 18:30 It was a pretty nothing sort of job, but I was right on the spot in slow times to go out and do a bit of diving. I had a good "in", I made a lot of mates in the clearance diving branch there, got a lot of unofficial clearance diving under my belt, in oxygen apparatus
- 19:00 and mixed. Really got the bug.
- Things weren't that controlled about who got to do what?**
- No. Well, generally I think they were, but it was the fact that
- 19:30 in Rushcutter I was part of the ship's company and everybody knew my interest in the diving school there, they were amenable to me participating every now and then.
- What gas mixtures were you using?**
- They used 60-40, which is 60 O₂ [60 per cent oxygen] and 40 nitrogen,

20:00 40-60 reversed and 32.5-67.5, and the different mixtures depend on the depth at which the equipment was to be used. The deepest depth of 180 feet in those days for the equipment was the 37.5 O² mix.

What's the rationale behind the

20:30 **different blends at different depths?**

You try and maintain, you want a breathing medium where the oxygen is not going to become toxic. In a pure O² set you can't dive below 30 feet, because at that depth the O² in the system becomes poisonous,

21:00 so you need to introduce nitrogen to thin it down. Then you've got to balance it, because too much nitrogen at depth you get narcosis, also more than narcosis. So it's never a balance between the two.

21:30 Different depths.

How deep did you go recreationally?

At Rushcutter? I wouldn't have gone more than about 80 feet, 100 feet.

Was diving a riskier venture in those days?

I don't think it was, although

22:00 the number of accidents that we did incur throughout the navy would dictate otherwise, I suppose. I suppose on reflection it was a riskier thing.

You said there were accidents: at this time

22:30 **when you were at Rushcutters?**

No. There weren't any while I was there.

From the billeting office at Rushcutters, what was your next draft?

From Rushcutter I went to the HMAS Melbourne,

23:00 the [aircraft]carrier. I was in the pay office on the Melbourne.

Were you doing ship's diving?

Yes, I was. Because I was a ship's diver I was automatically in the diving set-up. Diving

23:30 whenever we could to keep in date.

What were the jobs you were doing around the hull of the Melbourne?

We would quite frequently clean the propellers, rudder and do what's called a poker gauge test on each prop [propeller], which is a measurement of wear in the bearing,

24:00 or what it rotates on. Would try and repair, like filing any dings that were in the props to avoid cavitation. Cleaning inlets, recovering lost stores

24:30 and exercising the half-necklace searches.

How do you clean the prop and the rudder?

With wire scrubbers - not so much the rudder, but the props were phosphor bronze - and they were with wire scrubbers.

25:00 **Like underwater scullery work?**

Exactly.

Is it scary diving underneath such a big vessel?

I didn't find it so. Some people do, I know.

What about the fear that somebody would start the props running?

No, that's well catered for in that

25:30 the ship flies the diving flags, for starters, and there was orders in the engine room and everywhere else: instant death if you do, to whoever does it, I mean. Something like the Sydney, starting the engines was not quite like a car. In fact, you can on occasion

26:00 dive when she comes to a stop, comes alongside after a period of time, the engines or the props have to be put into a cooling down mode where they are rotated. I don't know what the number or revolutions is, but it's very slow. On occasions you can be required to dive like that.

What sort of stores

26:30 **might you need to recover?**

Anything that has been dropped from the gangway when it's being carried on, the ship was being stowed, or someone was working over the side scraping paint and something's been dropped over the side. The generic word "stores" is for anything that's been dropped over the side and they want it back.

27:00 **They wouldn't send a diver down just to get a paintbrush or something?**

No. But large equipment, gas cylinders tend to fall in every now and then. When we were in the Brisbane River one time, we were in the Sydney, the army decided to help us by unloading some of the stuff onto barges and to take it across

27:30 to where we were going. The guy driving the work boat that was pushing the barge across drove it into the wharf at the other side. So the barge stopped and the truck that was loaded kept going. So then we had the job of recovering the truck from the Brisbane River. Those were some of the

28:00 stores that they tend to want to get back.

Is the bottom of the harbour around the wharf rubbished?

Yeah, it is, masses of wire and all sorts of stuff.

Poses a hazard to a diver?

Yeah, you've got to be careful, but generally in close proximity to the ship it's clear.

28:30 **Do any treasure hunting at the end of the wharf?**

No.

What does a necklace search involve?

On a ship the size of an aircraft carrier you don't do a full necklace, which is from waterline to waterline, because one of the rules for compressed air divers is that they don't

29:00 swim past the keel. So half a necklace search is carried out. There might be four divers from waterline to keel, four-five divers. They're linked together by a bodyline from a strap on the arm and they're launched by the PO in charge from the boat at the

29:30 bow, and they gradually, they've got the swim line between them, but it's monitored by a surface swimmer in the water. The whole thing progressively moves along that half section of the hull of

30:00 the ship checking that there's no limpet mine or improvised explosive devices been put in an inlet or exhaust valve, port or anywhere, searching the hull for anything that shouldn't be there.

You have one diver just below the surface?

Yeah.

Another diver a little bit below him?

Yeah.

And they just maintain their

30:30 **depth as they move along?**

Yeah, depth, and they stay up close to the hull, obviously, and they just keep in line.

For a smaller vessel?

You do the full breadth.

Was it done regularly in friendly waters?

No. It's done in an exercise situation in friendly waters and

31:00 it's exercised in order to maintain expertise amongst the divers themselves.

Where was Melbourne when you were on her?

We were in Australian waters and we did take a trip up north. We were

31:30 in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Indonesia.

What was the purpose of that voyage?

I think during that time it was during the Indonesian Confrontation. Although we

32:00 didn't get any leave, but we went into Jakarta. A flag-showing thing as much as anything.

Was Melbourne doing flying operations in the Indonesian Confrontation?

She was always doing flying operations.

32:30 I can't recall what they were at that particular time.

In Indonesia were you worried about sub-surface attacks?

Yeah, you're always more concerned in less friendly waters.

33:00 Trying to remember whether we took any special precautions in Indonesia. I think we would have done a hull search for sure. In fact we did in Singapore.

Was Singapore considered unfriendly?

Well, there was always a possibility.

33:30 **Was this when you felt the writer branch was not the place for you any more?**

Probably was. I'd made a couple of applications, I made an application while I was in the Melbourne to change over. It was rejected on the grounds that

34:00 I couldn't be spared from the branch due to complement numbers. So I tried again and a little while later, I forget where I was, by this time I was a chief writer when

34:30 I tried and they didn't give me the same story. They said, "Yes, you can transfer, but you'll have to go back to an ordinary seaman and blah, blah, blah." With a house, mortgage and two young kids that was out of the question.

35:00 **They made you an offer you had to refuse, basically?**

Yeah. I suspect that was their thinking. I thought, "Well, officers are always able to be spared for anything. So I'll become an officer." So I worked on getting myself promoted.

How did you feel about

35:30 **the ruling that you couldn't be spared from the writers' branch?**

I really didn't believe it. I think I knew very well that it was just a fobbing off.

You could take it as a compliment.

Yeah.

36:00 I think I was good at my job and I think my record would probably support that statement. I don't know that was enough to be the reason.

What do you think the reason was that they wouldn't put you in seamanship?

Just too difficult. Not done before.

36:30 "Why do we have to depart from the norm?" See, decisions at the Navy Office in those days were made by civilians, they weren't really made by the uniform, the bureaucracy did all the decision making. The bureaucracy signed the letters. An admiral at the Navy Office never signed the correspondence to the captain, it was signed by the secretary to the

37:00 Navy Board.

So once you got into a branch it couldn't be changed?

Yeah, pretty much, unless it was, changes would occur more frequently within the Seaman branch because you had a number of specialisations within the Seaman

37:30 branch where a person could, he might have been a quartermaster gunner, could conceivably be retrained as a torpedo and anti-submarine specialist. It didn't upset the status quo too much.

Why did you have the idea that an officer

38:00 **could always be spared?**

I don't know, really. I just felt that they would make more, they would bend the rules more, be more flexible for an officer than they would for a sailor.

Was getting a commission part of your ladder at this point anyway?

38:30 Yeah, I was a chief. In those days we didn't have warrant officers so I'd gone as far as I could go. So I guess, to be honest, it was in my thinking anyway. But it was a two-pronged thought. So I studied as

39:00 was required, I got the educational qualifications and then I studied the professional side of things. I failed the first attempt. I passed the exam on the first attempt, but I failed the first selection board.

Why?

I don't know. You don't get told why.

39:30 They just grade you and I was graded a B, which means you weren't all that bad, you could come back and have a crack another time. They held these things every year.

How easy was it to apply for a commission from the ranks?

You had to be recommended. I made my feelings known to

40:00 my immediate boss, who was the commodore's secretary at Flinders Naval Depot. He was on-side and gave me the recommendation and enabled me to progress the rest of it.

What questions were the board asking you the first time?

A wide range

40:30 of questions. Because I was a compressed air diver they asked me about the rates of diving pay and what did I think about whether the rate should be increased or not and the accountings of the diving pay, and all this sort of stuff. Also a lot of general knowledge stuff about current affairs.

41:00 **Did you think the B rating was fair?**

I really didn't know, never having had the basis, I didn't have any basis of comparison. I don't know where I stuffed it up; I obviously did.

Tape 5

00:34 **After becoming an officer you were back at the bottom of the pecking order?**

Yes, I was.

What was that like?

I started to wonder what he hell I'd got myself into, as a matter of fact. I think it was probably because I went

01:00 to the Melbourne after I was promoted and the executive officer of the Melbourne was a pretty hard-nosed sort of bloke. Because I was an acting sub-lieutenant I was the equivalent rank as someone who had just come through

01:30 the Naval College. At that rank I'd have been a midshipman, and now I was an acting sub-lieutenant. They're kicked around from pillar to post because they're only 19 or 20 or something like that. I was, in '62 I was 32.

02:00 He treated me the same way. Didn't go over too well. He was just a rude, nasty sort of guy on a bit of a power kick. So that caused me to think, "What the hell have I got myself into?" Fortunately I didn't have to deal with him all that much. As the executive officer he was also president

02:30 of the wardroom mess. He would be pretty abrupt and rude in most situations. And on the upper deck, if you're too close to a guardrail he abused me for leaning on the guardrail. Funny sort of a guy.

Did you have run-ins with him?

No, only that sort of thing.

03:00 If someone's a three ring commander and you're an acting sub-lieutenant you don't tend to have run-ins.

How long were you working with him?

I wasn't working with him. He was the executive officer of the ship and I was the personnel officer on the ship

03:30 working in the captain's office, and I was also assisting the captain's secretary. In fact I took over both jobs ultimately because the captain's secretary was posted out of the ship, funnily enough to transfer to seaman, because he was going

04:00 submarine.

How much diving did you do at this point?

At this point it was a lot less. I couldn't get away as readily because I was pretty busy with the requirements of the captain. But I was able to get away and dive nevertheless.

04:30 **Did you see much marine life, diving?**

Not a great deal. In a dockyard situation there'd not a great deal of marine life that you can see anyway, because it's usually pretty crappy water.

You weren't worried about being bitten by sharks?

No.

05:00 **Was it after the Melbourne that you went to the ACT [Australian Capital Territory]?**

Yes, to HMAS Harman, the communication depot. I went there as captain's secretary there.

No water around, how was life different?

05:30 You're doing the same sort of job. It was a pleasant social life in the wardroom there. We were in the married quarters on the base there. Canberra in those days, I don't know what it's like now, but it was very much a country town. It was quite enjoyable.

Having more time with your family,

06:00 **what did you do socially?**

We used to take the kids up to the snow, drive up there. We'd go on picnics. We went on picnics where there's whole new suburbs now. Involve them in mess

06:30 activities, parties in the mess, general social activities.

What was your relationship like with the captain at HMAS Harman?

Good.

How long were you in the ACT for?

Probably two years.

07:00 **What were your daily duties?**

As the captain's secretary you're responsible for all correspondence and administration in the establishment. Looking after his requirements,

07:30 dealing with correspondence, drafting letters, all that sort of thing.

Did you deal with his personal affairs?

No. You probably were like a personal assistant, in a way, except that it's strictly on the

08:00 naval side of thing. Any personal affairs these guys had they'd take care of themselves.

What did you think when he asked you to go with him to Manus Island?

I was, I suppose, a bit chuffed about that, the fact that he would want to maintain the sort of

08:30 type of working relationship. I suppose it was a chance for us as a family to broaden our horizons, go to New Guinea.

What did you know about what life would be like for you before you left?

In New Guinea? Didn't have any direct knowledge. I'd

09:00 passed through Manus Island in ships before. I knew that it obviously was a remote place, only about 60 miles from the Equator. You were in a small European community. That much

09:30 I knew.

How did you move there as a family?

By air. We flew from Sydney to Port Moresby by Super Constellation[airliner]. Then

10:00 we immediately transferred to the territory-preferred airline at the time which was the DC3, which is somewhat different to the Super Connie. In fact, my eldest daughter was convinced the aircraft was on fire because as we climbed to go over the Owen Stanleys

10:30 the difference in temperature from outside to inside caused a lot of fog coming through the air vents and she reckoned we were going to crash and burn any minute. We got over to Lae where we overnighted and took another DC3 from Lae up to Manus.

11:00 **What was your housing situation in Manus Island?**

It was good. They were new houses. They were way up on stilts, they were louvred from ceiling to floor, flywired. Had a little boy

11:30 house close to them. There was a laundry underneath, the cement pad underneath with a laundry in it. No, the accommodation was very good.

Where were your girls at school?

They went to school on the base. There was a little

12:00 school there that just catered for the indigenous kids in the immediate vicinity and children of Australians that were posted there. For Linda, she was the eldest, after the first twelve months she became high school age and she had to

12:30 do correspondence at home.

How did she handle that adjustment?

She handled it very well. And it was a good system. Blackfriars I think was the correspondence college. It was very good. She must have had a pretty good teacher up the other end because she seemed to

13:00 develop a bit of a rapport with this person all by correspondence. Never clapped eyes on her.

Did you do a bomb and mine disposal course on Manus Island?

No, I didn't do a course while I was there. One of the additional jobs that I had was because I was a

13:30 qualified compressed air diver and there was a POCD [Petty Officer Clearance Diver] up there. Anyway I was made the diving officer and, although I wasn't qualified to conduct demolitions on my own, the PO clearance diver, who was

14:00 at Manus, he was; so I was able to go with him and we would undertake demolitions of unexploded ordnance because he had the qualifications.

What was that like?

It was great.

Where did you go?

Occasionally there would be stuff

14:30 reported in the jungle having been found by a native and we would go and dispose of it. Or sometimes on an outlying island, the same sort of thing. There was a quarry on the island that was used to crush the rock to create

15:00 gravel and stuff for the roads within the base. We'd go to that quarry and do some blasting there. So I got plenty of hands-on experience while I was up there of handling explosives.

What other extra duties did you have?

I was the charge books officer, which is all the confidential books

15:30 and ciphers for decoding classified information, I was responsible for all of that and the accounting of it. I think I was the resettlement officer, although I don't recall anyone needing to be resettled up there.

16:00 That was about it, I think.

What kind of confidential information was there in those books?

There's levels of security in everything. I don't know how to explain it. Books about the communication facility

16:30 were all classified. The type of equipment was classified. The means of transmitting information was classified. The machines for declassifying and classifying signals that were to be sent through the ether were all classified and had to be accounted for.

How much did you have to do with the locals?

17:00 The native locals? Reasonable amount. We had a houseboy who lived in the little boy house alongside the place, he had a Mary [local woman] and so we mixed

17:30 with them. We had a guy that'd come in and slash the grass with his version of a mower, I suppose. There was a compound where the boys lived.

18:00 They were the workforce around the base. So you're in contact with the local indigenous people all the time, really, wherever you went.

How did it come about that you left Manus Island?

It was a two-year posting, so at the end of two years

18:30 you go.

Were you still pushing to get into clearance diving?

I was still very interested and wanted to do so, but I wasn't writing more letters or anything like that.

How many hours of diving did you need to keep your licence?

I think it was 90 minutes underwater each month.

19:00 **You went back to Canberra again?**

Yeah.

What did you do then?

I was the secretary to the Director of Manning and Training, who was a captain, I think. I was also the assistant secretary to the Director General of Training.

19:30 Fairly uninteresting job. Pushing paper.

It was here that you....

I knew the guy that I was working for reasonably well. I kept pressuring him about doing

20:00 something for me. He said that he would have a talk to the Second Naval Member, who was their admiral. I pressured him enough that he wanted to get me off his back. So I eventually got the approval to make the change, subject to me passing the

20:30 course, which was a nine-month course.

Where was the course?

At Penguin. The diving school by now, we're in 1968-69, was in HMAS Penguin.

Did your family move back with you?

Yeah, from Tarangau, yeah. They had to move back.

21:00 So we had a house in Griffith in the ACT. They were based there. The girls were at school and Pat had got a job in a travel agent in Manuka.

21:30 **What did you do in the clearance diving course?**

A lot of running and jumping and running more and jumping more. They put you under a lot of, try and over-extend you so that you can find out, not your breaking point, but

22:00 know what it's like to be under pressure. Late hours, lots of no sleep and just diving, diving, diving.

Where did you dive?

Around Pittwater and around the Penguin area. Over in Balls Head Bay at

22:30 Waverton. Mainly in Pittwater, where there is quite a bit of deep, muddy water.

Describe some of your training exercises.

We would lay jackstay searches, which is,

23:00 I don't want to get too involved in trying to explain jackstays to you. Searches in deep and muddy water where two of you are dragging a line through the water. One's going one way on the seabed and you're

23:30 along a parallel line. When you snag something you tie your line off and you go in and investigate what it is. It's teaching you to find objects on the seabed and also the system of locating mines on the seabed. There were plenty of exercises of that nature. Also

24:00 of oxygen swimming in pairs at night, daytime and at night, oxygen swimming. And swimming, not swimming, but diving in boots

24:30 along a jackstay.

For what reason would you need to dive in boots?

In order to stay on the job. You don't want to be lifting up off the bottom all the time. If you're working on something you're better suited to be able to stand there if you're working a mine or something of that nature.

25:00 **Working on a mine, do you mean defusing a mine?**

Yeah. Or you might be trying to identify it.

How comfortable were the working conditions?

Not always very comfortable. We had wetsuits and we had dry suits.

25:30 A dry suit is a one-piece thing that is a very slightly two-way stretch, rubberised twill, and you get into it through the neck and fight your way into the rest of it. And rubber cuffs. Then you put on a neck ring,

26:00 which, the rubber neck of the thing is put over the neck ring and then you put a neck seal over that, which is actually sitting around the neck, and a clamp that clamps the whole thing around your neck ring.

How much head movement did you have room for with that on?

Your head is free. You're free in the suit, your hands and head are free.

26:30 **Did you wear insulation?**

You wear like a one-piece tracksuit as an undergarment.

Anything on your head?

The dry suit comes with a hood that takes the place of the

27:00 neck seal and it's sealed in. Or for convenience's sake you tend to work in a wetsuit hood instead.

How advanced was your equipment?

It was for that time state of the art.

How big was the tank you were carrying?

27:30 It wasn't a tank. We were then still in compressed air, in an oxygen re-breather, which is on your chest. The twin bottles are very small, they're just under the counter-lung on your chest, so you've got nothing on your back.

How does the oxygen re-breather work?

28:00 You've got a CO² absorbent that builds into the counter-lung. You've got a regulator that determines the amount of flow of oxygen from your gas cylinder, which is usually at about 1.5 litres a minute. It goes in your counter-lung, you breathe from that and your exhaled breath goes through

28:30 the CO² absorbent back into the lung. The life of the absorbent was about 90 minutes or so.

Did you always work with the same partner during the sweeping exercises?

No. We're still talking about the course, aren't we? No, you'd always be with somebody

29:00 different.

How many people on the course?

We started off with six, I think it was, and three of us finished.

What academic homework did you have to do?

Mainly in the

29:30 calculation of the formulas for gas flows at given depths and gas mixtures, calculating what proportion of what gas you would need at different depths. Most of the stuff was in the diving manual.

What were your instructors like?

30:00 The officer in charge of it, he's the guy that came on board Anzac to give the demonstration years ago. He was my instructor on the course and today he's one of my two or three best friends. We knew each other very well before the course.

30:30 The chief who was in charge of the course, I still know him, but his actions towards us on the course didn't endear him to me or to any of us, actually. He was a bit over

31:00 the top. Other than that, nothing.

Over the top in a bullying way?

Yeah. I think his attitudes were possibly acceptable if he was dealing with a class

31:30 of young sailors, but he was not. He was dealing with a class of officers who were thinking people and would have responded a lot easier to explanation of the enquiries rather than jumping up and down on the spot. That was a personality problem for him, I think.

32:00 What other situations were you training in on the course?

We went to infiltration exercise. We paddled canoes one night from Pittwater, right up Pittwater, right up around to Brooklyn to evade

32:30 somebody that was looking out for us. Brooklyn's just under the Hawkesbury Bridge. Much to the chagrin of the chief we got past him, he wasn't very pleased about that. It was along, tiring slog. On another occasion we got put on Scotland Island in

33:00 just overalls and fins and had to make our way to some place in Greenacre. So good old Scotland Island we had to swim off, and then we had to make our way from there to Greenacre, which we did.

Had you heard of the Krait [World War II]raids in Singapore Harbour?

33:30 Yeah. Familiar with all that sort of stuff.

When did you learn how to deal with limpet mines?

During the course.

What were you taught of handling a limpet mine situation?

On locating it you were taught to mark it

34:00 and then report what you found. There were two different teachings, depending on who you were. If I was being taught this as a compressed air diver then I'd be taught to mark it, resurface and tell my supervisor what I'd found. Then the clearance diver

34:30 side of things would take over. As a clearance diver, if I found it, then I would have a lot better idea of what things were about, but nevertheless I still have to mark it and report what was there. Then we'd make a decision on how to go about it.

35:00 Did you ever use live mines?

In exercise situations, no. You'd have them rigged up so that you could get a thunder flash bang or a small light maybe, flashing light to indicate

35:30 that you hadn't quite got there.

What did you most like about what you were learning on the course?

I think I enjoyed the O² swims, the free swimming, they were good. And I enjoyed the OD [ordnance disposal] and demolition.

36:00 Especially being able to use your expertise to cut into a bomb tray without exploding it.

How do you do that?

With difficulty. It was a small strip of plastic explosive you detonate at one end and far enough away from where you know

36:30 the primer in the bomb is. Do it far enough away so it cuts the outer casing and exposes the explosive inside without it detonating. Or we have little charges that are like a small jam tin, point focal charges, a reverse shape

37:00 inside. You pack this with plastic explosive, detonate it and it's sitting on prongs above where you want it to go into the bomb. When it explodes the slug that forms penetrates the bomb and again without detonating the content. The idea is to

37:30 break it open so that you can then burn the explosive content without the whole thing going up. This is to use when you might find a bomb in a built-up area where it's too dangerous to move, but it can't be exploded where it is because it'll bring buildings down.

38:00 So you try and do this to burn it out, but there's no guarantees with it.

High pressure stuff.

The physical property of the explosive is such that you never know whether it's going to go while you're burning off or not.

Where did you do this kind of training?

At Marangaroo. It's an army demolition

38:30 range outside of Lithgow. Actually, a girl I was talking to from Orange, it's on the road to Orange.

Did you ever have to do that sort of thing underwater?

Yeah. But you can try and low order underwater, but you're not

39:00 going to burn out underwater.

During the Lithgow part of the course, were you learning from army guys?

No, we were being taught by our own instructors. Their technique is quite different to ours. Not totally different, but their requirements are different to ours.

Do navy

39:30 **clearance divers mostly work alone?**

No, we work in groups, but it depends on the job that you're doing. If you've got a mine or bomb to dispose of you don't get the whole team encircle it. It's right on top of it. If it has to be done then one person does it.

40:00 **Did you have a series of exams to sit at the end of the course?**

Yeah, and throughout.

A mixture of practical and written?

Yeah.

How did you go?

I must have done all right. I passed.

The three who didn't finish the course, what happened?

40:30 I think they fell out, as I recall, through the diving phase. The pace and the discomfort and the late hours and the general physicality of everything they decided wasn't their cup of tea.

Why were the late hours the way they were in training?

41:00 You're being driven to extend, extend, extend, to get yourself into an appreciation of what it's like to work under pressure and without sleep. It's a simulation of what you might be required to do, so you've got to know whether or not you can do it.

Tape 6

00:33 **What personality makes a good person for fiddling around with explosives?**

I don't know, I would say somebody who's focused on what they're doing. Obviously someone with

01:00 an interest in how things work, especially that aspect of it, although it doesn't really come into it now, I suppose, but it certainly did with the guys that really were the fathers of EOD [explosive ordnance disposal], as we know it today. People like Goss in the UK who was working on all mines that were dropped in England,

01:30 they didn't have a book, they were writing it as they went. So that aspect comes into it. Generally just an interest in the entire subject, I think.

You'd have to be methodical?

Yeah, that's right.

02:00 **Have you experienced people being new and very careful, then experienced and good at it and then too experienced and blasé?**

No, I haven't. Certainly in training the emphasis is, initially, you'd think overboard on

02:30 the safety aspect. I remember somebody, one of the instructors, when I was doing the EOD phases up at Marangaroo, he used to go bananas if somebody stepped over the cortex, cortex being the high explosive cord that links the charges that you

03:00 might have linked up together. The explosive goes at 1,500 feet per second. It needs detonation. You can trip on it, you can walk on it, it's not going to detonate. Certainly you treat it with respect, but in the practical situation I never saw anybody that walked

03:30 200 meters to go around to avoid stepping over the cortex. So that sort of thing, if you want to call that "familiarity", I suppose so. I think there's a practical phase after the initial instruction.

You're talking practicality rather than recklessness.

Yeah. Certainly not reckless.

How did you come

04:00 **to be in the Vietnam War?**

After I finished my MCDO [Minewarfare Clearance Diving Officer] course, because I was new to the Seaman branch, having been transferred to it on completion of the course, it was necessary that I go to sea to get a watch-keeping certificate to take command of a ship at sea on the bridge.

04:30 These are things that a seaman under normal circumstances would do way back in his career. So that was the main reason for me going on the Sydney. The secondary role that I conveniently played for the navy was that, because of my qualification and because of the ship's role going to Vietnam,

05:00 it was a troop-carrying ship and equipment, because I was an MCDO I could fill that bill as well.

What had you known about the Vietnam War before you got there?

I think I was fairly au fait with what was happening. Friends in the branch had been up there with

05:30 diving teams. We had a constant team presence on the ground throughout the war, a six-man team. They rotated six months.

The Sydney was mainly in a ferrying role?

Yes, as a troop carrier.

What was it like

06:00 **having army guys on board ship?**

It wasn't too bad. They certainly didn't affect me at all. I think the fellows that were closer involved in their messing facilities and that sort of thing were probably more involved with it than I ever was. We had army guys in the

06:30 wardroom mess. They were quite all right, depending which way they were going, going up or on their way back. Appeared to me they changed a bit.

What troops were you carrying? Infantry mainly?

Yeah, I think so. Yeah, would be mainly. It was a regimental

07:00 sort of turnaround. I don't know much about army at all, whether each regiment has a sprinkling of engineers and other qualifications, I don't know.

Did you have a political view on the Vietnam War at the time?

I don't think I had a viewpoint. I think

07:30 I felt that we were doing the right thing in being there, in supporting a nation that wanted to be on its own.

Where did the Sydney berth in Vietnam?

She never berthed. She was always anchored in Vung Tau, in the harbour.

08:00 **What was that place like?**

I never went ashore there. Nobody on the ship ever went ashore. Only ever there for 48 hours maximum. If we had to be there a second day then we would sail at night on the first day and come back in the morning.

What diving duties did you have

08:30 **when she was in harbour?**

We were there to ensure as much as we could that no enemy swimmers planted any limpet mines or any other sort of device that interfered with the ship. To that end we had the ship's cutters.... I'll go back a bit, very strong

09:00 current coming out to the river there, it runs at about five or six knots, very hard to swim, almost

impossible to swim against so you'd know there was no chance that somebody on an island down there would swim in a straight line to the ship's side. He never would make it. It would always have to be up-current. So we had the ship's boat

09:30 tow obstructors, which were barbed wire, pointy objects and everything else in figures of eight, well up ahead of the ship and we would dive on the anchor cable, checking it because they would drift stuff down, snag the cable and the current would bring the devices to the ship's side. Or they would just

10:00 come down in rubbish. All sorts of rubbish pouring in the river, greenery that washed off the beach in a flood situation or rubbish, especially from merchant ships further up. So that was a perfect hidey-hole for any swimmer. Because of the strength of the tide,

10:30 or the current, we were never able to attempt any half-necklace searches, that wouldn't be on, so we concentrated on the main areas of the cable and the props and rudder areas at about 30 minute intervals.

Every 30 minutes divers would be in the water?

Yeah. We also might go away

11:00 in a rubber ducky [dinghy] and check out rubbish that was coming down and put a few shots in it to make sure, that sort of stuff. We had sentries around the ships with scare charges, which were a pound and a quarter blocks of CET [explosive] rigged up as a hand grenade

11:30 with a five-second fuse. On a regular basis as directed they could throw those into the water, not right alongside the ship, but about 20 feet out.

What was the purpose of that?

Deterrence, that's all. You'd have to land one on some one to do any damage, might do their eardrums, but

12:00 a bit further away. That was the general procedure. We didn't have any problems while I was there.

Must have been unpleasant water to be diving in.

Yeah, very murky stuff. A lot of rubbish flowing through it as well. The dives weren't all that lengthy. Had to try

12:30 and judge the outflow as well to get a, you never got slack water, but to get it as minimal as possible.

How did you enter the water?

We entered the water from the diving boat, which is a rubber inflatable dinghy.

You'd go down a gangway to that?

We'd go down a

13:00 boom off the stern off the ship into the diving boat and then drive the boat to where we'd want to enter the water with a cable if that was the case, or if it was the props then we'd probably go from the boom.

Describe the obstructors.

Barbed wire is

13:30 barbed wire. The obstructors themselves were heavy blocks of metal, I don't know what, about say six, eight inches across, circular; and out of the leading edge that was being towed forward was steel spikes welded all around the circumference. That was about it.

14:00 It'd certainly make a mess of you if you got tangled up in it.

Could you swim over or under it?

You've got these on a bar or rod or something and wire entangled through it. The visibility is zero and they can vary the depth of the thing so

14:30 no-one's going to see it coming.

They'd be towed upstream at random?

Ahead of the ship at a given distance and they would just do a figure of eight.

Did they ever catch anybody like that?

No.

You were only in harbour

15:00 **during daylight?**

We'd go in at first light and leave around sunset and just cruise up and down outside.

How many divers were on board?

Clearance divers, there were about five, and we had about

15:30 eight or ten compressed air divers.

You'd work out a shift?

Mainly we used the clearance divers all the time there, for expertise as much as anything, but also because of the war footing that we were on, it's hard to get anybody out of a normal department as far as a compressed air diver.

16:00 **Sometimes you were doing patrols of rubbish in a floatable....?**

Yeah, randomly.

How did you decide what warranted looking at?

We'd look at pretty well everything if there looked to be a lot of stuff coming down, go and check it all out. They would lay under the water, just breathing through a piece of bamboo stuck up through the rubbish.

16:30 So what seemed to be innocuous wasn't necessarily so.

Where had they experienced the devices that snagged an anchor cable?

In Vietnam. That was one of the responsibilities of the shore boat team, to search all ships. They found these.

Was there any threat

17:00 **from surface craft?**

No, I don't think so.

Was there an exclusion zone?

There was an exclusion zone, yeah. No fishing permitted within it. It's a pretty militarised area generally and I don't think there was ever

17:30 any danger, not of our patrol craft; if there was anything then I would suspect it'd be a fishing boat, something disguised as that. I've never heard of any.

How many trips did you make with the Sydney to Vietnam?

Only made two.

As a clearance diver, what do you do while the ship's at sea?

Watch-keeping.

18:00 **Did you have a watch-keeping certificate?**

Yeah, well, I was in the process of getting it, so I was keeping watch under supervision of the navigator, who was in charge of that sort of thing. About halfway through the trip I got the certificate.

What does keeping watch involve?

Your responsible for the ship during your watch, reporting anything that's unusual to the

18:30 navigator and captain, following the track that's designated on the chart and making the appropriate observations.

Can it be dull at times?

It can be if you're in open sea.

Were you aware of Sydney being escorted by submarines?

No,

19:00 I wasn't. She was always escorted by surface destroyers.

I spoke to a guy the other week that was underneath you the whole time. I wondered if you knew it was there.

Oh. It may well be that the captain knew, but certainly the rank

19:30 and file weren't aware of it.

Was Sydney a happy ship?

Yeah, I think so. I was quite happy there. The first captain and commander were very good. I never

20:00 had any problems there.

As an officer, where did you fit in the leadership of the clearance divers?

I was in charge of them. There was no one senior to me in the Clearance Diving branch.

Were you in charge of divers that had more experience than you?

Yeah.

How did that go down?

I never had any problems with it. We were a very

20:30 tight-knit branch. You have to rely on people both ways. As a consequence our discipline on the surface is pretty relaxed. I wouldn't think that anyone was ever anti-me because of a perceived

21:00 lack of experience. I certainly wasn't aware of it if they were.

A writer was down on the status rank in the navy. Where do clearance divers fit?

I think we're considerably further up. I think other branches out of jealousy often refer to the

21:30 "bloody bubbies" doing this and doing that and getting extra rations. I think that's mainly a jealousy thing.

Did you get extra rations?

Only in certain situations. If we were working anywhere we'd take our lunch with us, so I suppose we did tend to

22:00 do fairly well.

What about pay?

As an officer I was on the same pay as anybody else. I did get diving pay. I'm trying to think what it was. The sailors,

22:30 at that time they ran a system called the group pay system. Depending on what group you were in determined what pay you got.

In your two visits to Vung Tau, did you have to stay overnight?

Yes, we did on one occasion, the second occasion. The captain was going to

23:00 stay at the anchorage and the ship's responsibility is his, but I felt that it was my responsibility from the diving point of view to advise him, so I wrote him a couple of pages of why he shouldn't and so we sailed.

You were a fairly junior

23:30 **officer telling the captain of an aircraft carrier what to do?**

I wasn't telling him. Advice.

It had to be in written form?

No, it didn't have to be. I'd already told him verbally that I didn't think it was a great idea. I said, "I'll set it all out for you," so I did. I quoted from various scientific publications

24:00 and proffered research and all this sort of stuff.

Research into what?

Studies of a person swimming against a tide of x knots, where he would wind up and all this sort of thing.

Had ships been lost or damaged in Vung Tau?

Yes, not RAN ships, but yes,

24:30 two American ships I think altogether. One was alongside that was attacked. I don't think they were totally lost, but they certainly sustained damage.

An aircraft carrier is expensive to fix, I suppose.

Yeah. Especially when you've only got one. Well, it wasn't actually an aircraft carrier any more, but

nevertheless,

25:00 same size.

In Vung Tau, was there a sense of purpose?

Yeah, definitely.

Was there a tension on board?

I think there was, yeah, a bit of a tension, because you just never knew what or wherever anything was going to happen.

25:30 **How did you and your team perform?**

I think we performed well. Had there been anything there we'd have performed well, too.

From your posting on the Sydney your career went deeper into clearance diving.

26:00 **What was that?**

I went from there to HMAS Waterhen, which was the base for Clearance Diving Team 1, which was the premier team, I suppose, the operational team of the RAN at that time. I went there as second-in-command.

What did that team consist of?

26:30 There were twelve members of the team, including the CO [commanding officer] and myself. Occasionally when we went to New Guinea we'd get a medic [doctor], or sick berth attendant as they were called then, who was also qualified in underwater medicine, we'd get him seconded to us, so we'd be a 13 man team

27:00 then.

By underwater medicine you mean pressure?

Yeah, anything related to accidents underwater, embolisms and anything at all. In the event he wound up treating tropical ulcers and stuff like that.

What was the role of Clearance Diving Team 1?

The general role was to

27:30 carry out clearance diving operations on the Australian stations.

How was it different from clearance diving on board a vessel?

On a ship they're responsible for anything pertaining to the ship, and they stay there. The team can

28:00 be sent anywhere on the Australian stations. They're also responsible for all ordnance disposals and demolitions from the low water to the high water mark and improvised explosive devices, anything of that nature, found on naval establishments throughout Australia.

28:30 **Did you also have special operations commando training?**

Yeah, I did, but it's not specifically related to Team 1, because I was going there or anything like that. I did do a course

29:00 of special operations at Swan Island in Victoria. It was outside the purview of any of the three services, it was run by another organisation. That's probably all I should say.

Was that some sort of secondment?

I was just sent there for a six-week course.

29:30 **It had nothing to do with CDT1?**

No, it didn't. It had more to do with the fact that I was a clearance diving officer. Occasionally people in the branch, and indeed other branches throughout the navy that were seen as likely to need the training by virtue of their employment,

30:00 were put through the course.

That was in case those skills were needed in another operation that might not have been the RAN's responsibility?

Yes.

What exercises did CDT1

30:30 **do while you were there?**

Actual exercises, simulation stuff?

What were you training to do and who were you doing it with?

We participated in mine-hunting exercises

31:00 or landing exercises, where the element of beach clearance is partially undertaken by a clearance diving team. First there's reconnaissance and then there's clearance of a safe channel into the anchorage and that sort of thing. Hunting mines in those areas. We exercised doing that.

31:30 We did that down at Jarvis Bay a couple of times. We used an optical mine hunting system down there as a trial, which is a towed sled with a diver on board. Not a raging success, but.

By optical you mean he was using his eyes?

32:00 Mark 1.0, eyeball, yeah. So the immediate thing you realise is that the water has to be of sufficient clarity to see anything. And the joystick control, you have to be pretty careful, particularly if it's murky, because otherwise you're diving into the bottom.

32:30 That aside it was a system that we exercised; and we also participated in mine countermeasure exercises with other countries, up in Malaysia, we operated in one up there, and also in the Philippines, we operated with the Yanks up there.

33:00 **What were your impressions of the Americans?**

We were way ahead of them. Their mine-hunting techniques, they'd let the whole thing slide since the Second World War and they really didn't have a great deal of expertise any more. And their diving capability

33:30 was very restricted, in that in this case, in the Philippines a few of the aerial mines that were dropped in the American search area they couldn't dive on because they were a bit deeper than what they were allowed to dive to. Our lightweight jackstay system, which we inherited

34:00 and improved upon from the British Navy, it's a really good system. In fact the Yanks called us in; in the Gulf War that was used extensively, and the fellows that went there trained the Yanks in the use of it because they were so impressed with it.

What is a jackstay system?

34:30 A jackstay is a piece of cordage. In this case we're talking about a very light nylon line that's got weights on it every few meters and a buoy at each end. It can be laid very quickly, in that the line is on a big wheel in the dinghy.

35:00 There's a metal chute on which you've got the lead cruciform weights and as the line pays out one guy in the boat is clipping on the weights as the line goes overboard, so you can lay half a kilometre or more in a matter of a couple of minutes. You

35:30 do it on the leads, on the bearings that you've been told you want for your search area. You do one parallel to that, maybe 50 meters away. Then you've got a diver going down each one with a swim line between them and they just progress along till they snag something.

What do you mean by snag?

Catch up

36:00 on something.

It's a way of doing an underwater grid search?

Yeah.

And not missing anything.

Not missing anything in between.

The Americans didn't have that method?

No.

How would they look for something?

I've no idea.

Swim down and look?

I really don't know. At that point I didn't

- 36:30 know. I still don't know how they would search a general area other than with underwater sonar in their mine-hunting boats. In the exercise situation they never dropped anything unless it had a pinger on it. Then they would go in search of contact over the side of the dinghy. But to search for the unknown,
- 37:00 I really don't know how they'd go about it even to this day.
- It seems from their part it was an overuse of technology.**
- Yeah.
- Compared to a primitive system.**
- Yeah, relatively primitive, but fast in the laying, and effective.
- What**
- 37:30 **scenarios were you training on other than clearing a beach for a landing?**
- A lot of EOD training. We would go out to Marangaroo for that and re-familiarise everybody with the different types of
- 38:00 ordnance that might be found prior to a deployment to New Guinea and practise the case entry methods that I mentioned earlier, that sort of thing. Plus demolitions, trial and error demolitions.
- Did you work in conjunction with other Australian services?**
- No, didn't.
- 38:30 **What was the point of going up to New Guinea on a regular basis?**
- It was a combination of continual clearance of the World War II ordnance which was around the place and I'm sure still is today, and aid to civil authorities in the shape of giving them better access to wharves
- 39:00 by blowing coral reefs making a channel. That type of work. Assisting where we could.
- You were in New Guinea in the early '70s?**
- When I was first there as a writer I was there.
- I meant when you were there with CDT1.**
- That first trip there was '71.
- After 25 years, what**
- 39:30 **state were the munitions in underwater or wet on the beach?**
- Regularly wet. On the beach, a lot of rusting on the outer casings of mines. If something had been submerged all the time you'd get rust holes through the stuff.
- Was the explosive still inside them?**
- Yeah.
- 40:00 **Had it deteriorated?**
- No, that stuff doesn't deteriorate. Over a million years, maybe.
- Does it get less stable?**
- It gets less stable, yes, it does, especially when you bring it out of the water and sit it in the blazing tropical sun for a while.
- What sort of munitions would you come across?**
- On that first trip in '71
- 40:30 we didn't come across it, it had been found previously. It was one of the reasons for us going to New Guinea to clear this bomb dump in Madang.
- They were aerial bombs?**
- Yeah, all aerial bombs. They range from about 250 to 1,000 pounds, I suppose.
- 41:00 They went from about 20 feet down a very deep slope to 200-plus feet.

00:35 **In April 1974 you became a lieutenant commander. What's involved in that?**

There's nothing involved in it, other than having sufficient seniority. Because I'd come up from the lower deck, the sailor organisation

01:00 into the officer rank, it's a different set-up to college officers in terms of promotion, it's a lot slower. So I had to be a lieutenant for nine years before they would even look at me. I just happened to get promoted on the nine years as a lieutenant.

01:30 So that's all. Nothing's involved other than doing the right thing, I guess, and getting reasonable reports on your way through. And vacancies, of course, that they had vacancies.

How did your posting to South Carolina come about?

Just happened.

Were you working in the American Navy?

02:00 I was on exchange to the US [United States] Navy and they sent a guy over to the RAN in terms of numbers to take my place. Not in Team 1 or anything like that, but to fill a permanent naval forces billet in the RAN. I did the same thing in their outfit.

What were your first impressions of the US Navy?

02:30 I'd been exposed to them a bit over the years. Very different to our outfit. Very laid back. Don't want for anything. Quite a different system in the stores field. If I wanted something in the RAN I'd have to

03:00 make a case for it, I'd have to reason, make a case. I'd then have to put in a form in triplicate and I'd have to wait and then get knocked back and then I'd have to re-argue and so on. In the US Navy they literally go shopping like

03:30 in Coles [supermarkets] or Woollies [Woolworth's general stores]. They have a thing called Servmart, which is an equivalent to Woollies or whatever, and it's all military stuff. Each command has got a budget and they'll send their PO down to the Servmart with his trolley

04:00 and he'll get all the stationery requirements, and if they want something they go down and shop and buy for it.

How did the standard of training compare to yours?

I think their EOD training, I wouldn't have thought that at all. Their diving training, they

04:30 have so many different types of divers. They have salvage divers and deep sea divers and EOD divers, so their EOD diver is trained to dive, but he will never be required to do salvage work or anything else, only diving related to ordnance disposal. So it's a bit hard to make a direct comparison.

05:00 They're not quite as restrictive in the conduct of the divers as we are, in that they allow a lot more free diving than what we ever do - free diving being the guy's totally free; he hasn't got a float marking his position to the surface and he's not buddied up to another swimmer.

05:30 We tend to put two guys in together so that one can look after the other.

Was the American system with more divers more or less efficient than the Australia?

For a navy their size it possibly was more efficient to them, but we're

06:00 small change compared to their outfit, really. I guess it works for them. I can't see the necessity would ever arise for the RAN to go the same way.

What was the base you were living on like?

It was great. Very nice. We lived in

06:30 a married quarter on-base. We had access to the commissary and medical, dental, everybody's very friendly. In that part of the world, Charleston, the Southern people really are very nice people.

What was the

07:00 **coast like? It seems to be battered by....**

Storms, yeah. Anything that comes from the east lands in South or North Carolina. It's pretty flat country, too; consequently it does a lot of damage. We didn't get any while we were there.

What operations

07:30 **were you involved in?**

The first six months I was there I undertook their fleet mine warfare training course, which was a

graduate course for their officers. I undertook it so that I got familiar with their procedures. After I finished that I taught

08:00 mine warfare at their school there on the base. I was teaching Americans mainly. Occasionally other nationalities would join in with the class, depending on the deal the Yanks had with them.

Which nationalities?

I think they were

08:30 Puerto Rican, Indian, not really sure.

As an Australian, what questions were you asked about where you came from?

At least the American military are reasonable well-informed about Australia. They don't envisage kangaroos tripping down Pitt Street and stuff

09:00 like that, like a lot of people do. The major thing that I encountered was being congratulated on the way I spoke. Eventually it worked out that they thought I was Austrian instead of Australian. There really are some thick ones about.

09:30 What parts of the world did you work in with the US Navy?

I worked in Scotland. We went over to Scotland in a, we took all the airborne mine countermeasure helicopters in a huge C5 Galaxy. They're three stories high, this thing, and they fold the wings from these

10:00 helicopters and push them in. The crew, or the passengers rather, you literally climb three storeys of vertical ladder to get into the passenger compartment, which is a little pod immediately in front of the tailplane on the C5. It's just a monstrous thing.

10:30 We flew the whole lot, all the equipment, everything, over to a place called Machrihanish in Scotland, unloaded it all and proceeded to participate in a mine countermeasure exercise in the Clyde. My role in that was with the EOD detachment.

11:00 We spent a lot of time driving around Scotland in a jeep setting up beacons all along the side and at the end of the loch so that the helicopters could take fixes and bearings so they knew exactly where they were when they were carrying out their search patterns within the river.

11:30 Some airborne-dropped mine simulators had been included in the exercise, and we were there to recover them because they didn't want the Brits to have them.

What about the Philippines and Puerto Rico?

It was while I was in the USN [United States Navy],

12:00 yeah, went over there. I worked quite a bit with the - this is after I'd left the school, the training centre - after the first year I was sent over to the staff of the commander of Mine Warfare Command and was put on his staff. He was a good bloke.

12:30 I got on well with him. I'd been working with the SEAL [Sea, Air and Land] and the UDT [Underwater Demolition Teams] community both up on Norfolk and over in San Diego. We were trying to adapt the use of their underwater swimmer delivery vehicles as a means

13:00 of mine-hunting. So I worked with them in trying to develop tactics on doing just this. Then we went down to Puerto Rico and laid a dummy minefield and tried to put them into practice. This was

13:30 an indication of how on-side this admiral was, because the very existence at that time of swimmer delivery vehicles was top secret, "NOFOR", as they called it, you may have seen the term used in papers recently. It means no foreign dissemination. In fact we had the situation over this

14:00 subject of me as one of his staff officers writing letters to his signature that were stamped "Secret, NOFOR". We got a bit of a kick out of that.

What's a swimmer delivery vehicle?

It's a large cigar. It's got aircraft

14:30 controls, stubby little wings, it's got a compressed air bank that when the swimmers get into it and before it submerges, it's what they call a BIB [built-in breather] system. You take your compressed air connection, plug it into the system and you're breathing from the delivery vehicle then. It also has

15:00 obstacle avoidance sonar. It's from that the whole thing is navigated. So it could drive down any given course and come back exactly to the spot where it started from, given the expertise of the coxswain, of course. It certainly was practised and done many times.

15:30 We were looking at using that system to hunt mines. Whether or not they ever went on with them I don't

know. The other trip I did with them while I was over there was before that one, actually. I went over to Egypt and they'd been asked

16:00 to go over and sweep a minefield off Damietta, just around the corner from Alexandria. There were a lot of Russian-made mines that had been given to the Arabs, I think, they'd planted them and now they didn't know how to get them back. I think this

16:30 was during the 6 Year War or 6 Day War, one of many. We went over there and endeavoured to sweep for them using the airborne mine countermeasure helicopters. Because the particular mines were influence mines, would

17:00 only detonate in response to either a magnetic, acoustic noise or magnetic variation. So the helicopters towing the sleds would put down those simulations that you wanted to create down the cable to the sled and drag it up and down.

17:30 The theory is that if there's anything there it'll be activated by it. This never did work, so they laid the same simulated device with a small charge on it and carried out the procedure. When it went over it activated, so it was proven that the system was OK, but the general

18:00 consensus was that, because of the length of time they had been there being used, the battery life had drained and dried out so they were inert, to all intents and purposes. However, the explosion is not. So some day if somebody drags one up and belts it with a hammer he might get the desired effect.

What was it like working for long periods without

18:30 **women in your life?**

Boring.

In the evenings, did you talk about families, or did you keep it separate from working life?

Families would come into conversations. Not totally separate, no.

19:00 **How did you get back from America to Australia?**

Qantas.

Did you have problems resettling in Australia?

Not resettling, but I really did get quite frustrated at my

19:30 inability to get the equipment that I wanted. I couldn't rocket down to the Servmart to get it. So that was a bugbear. I was asked not long after I got back, actually, to address some exalted gathering of officers or someone about my experiences, in the front row were a

20:00 couple of admirals, and at this time I was in Penguin as 2IC [second-in-command] of the dive school there. The chair I was in was falling to pieces, the arms were dropping off, it was held together with gaffer tape type stuff and I was really pissed off about this. I must have been

20:30 because I introduced it into my lecture saying that, "If I'd been in the USN still I could have gone down the Servmart and chucked one of these in my trolley and brought it back right away." That really amused the admiral down the front. He thought that was the funniest thing he'd ever heard. He was a nice bloke. I wound up working for him.

Did you work with the Navy SEALs in America?

21:00 Only in connection with what I was telling you about, the swimmer delivery vehicles. That was with the SEALs down in Puerto Rico.

How did you find their standards of training?

I don't know. They weren't training as such while I was there, we were just doing a job. They did much the same as we did: big run every morning, push-ups and all that sort of stuff, keep themselves

21:30 fit. Very loud they are. If they're any good, they'll tell you.

Did you have run-ins with them?

No.

What was your new posting in Australia?

22:00 It was at Penguin as 2IC of the diving school. As such I was responsible for all courses that were being undertaken in the clearance diving, or all courses in the diving school. I was also the course officer specifically designated for the

22:30 Mine Warfare Clearance Diving Officers' course.

How many courses were you in charge of?

Overall charge. There was a number of compressed air diver courses. They were pretty much continuous, three weeks, and then another one and another one. AB [able seaman] clearance diving courses were, I think we did two

23:00 a year; and an advanced CD course, which was the POs' course, and we had one a year.

Did you miss the hands-on nature of the job previous to that?

Not all that much, no, because there was still a bit of hands-on with it. My idea of supervising is not to sit back at the desk, I go out on the boat with a class

23:30 and have a swim with a young fellow if he looked to be a particularly nervous type. I remember on one occasion the School of Underwater Medicine, although they were quite good, they also upset us a bit. The life of the CO₂ absorbent,

24:00 at one point in time they had down to something like 45 minutes, which was stupid in my opinion. But because this was hammered into these young kids you could see them looking at their watches waiting for someone to flake out after 43 minutes. One guy was particularly, he came up after 45 minutes and said he

24:30 didn't feel very well and that he thought he was getting CO₂ poisoning. He had a headache. So I put on his set and I got back in the water with it and I swam for another 45 minutes and came out without any effects at all. I did it not to belittle him, but to show him that it was all BS [bullshit].

25:00 You can't be worrying about whether the life of your CO₂ absorbent is approaching its end or not, you rely on the people on the surface who are controlling your dive to tell you when to come up, and they'll do that. That's what I mean. I wouldn't sit back in the office, I'd rather be out in the boat watching how things are progressing out there.

What were the students most nervous about, apart from the

25:30 **CO₂ absorbent?**

That was probably the major thing, I think. They may have had some worries about, in night swims in particular, about oxygen poisoning, which you could get if you went too deep. Generally it's probably the

26:00 CO₂absorbent problem.

What did you find the most satisfying about teaching?

Didn't find anything satisfying about teaching. It's not my thing. Rather be doing it. So I didn't relish the instructor thing. Fortunately for me, I guess most of the hands-on instructing is done

26:30 by the PO in charge of the course. OK, I'm the overall course officer, but there's a POCD and he's got a leading seaman CD. He runs the nuts and bolts of the course.

What paperwork did you have to do in conjunction with the courses?

27:00 You can maintain a log of their progress. Navy was introducing a new training system at that time; it was flooded with forms. I didn't think much of it.

What was your success rate like?

That

27:30 officers' course, we started with four and only lost one, one or two. Four finished. I must have started with six.

That was a good strike rate?

Pretty good. With the able seaman clearance divers it

28:00 wasn't uncommon to lose about 70%.

Did you ever regret your choices of what you got into in the navy?

Changing from one branch to the other? No, I never regretted that, not at all.

28:30 I probably would have progressed further in the navy had I stayed in the Supply section branch, I think. But job satisfaction's the thing.

Why did you leave?

After I left the school I became the Fleet Mine Warfare Clearance Diving Officer on the staff

- 29:00 of the FOCAF, Flag Officer Command HMA [Her Majesty's Australian] Fleet. That is literally staff work, you're shuffling paper all day long relative to clearance diving branch, writing reports. I stuck it out for 18 months and my
- 29:30 immediate boss was a commodore, chief of staff. He was a real mongrel. Nothing I did was right, he just talked down to me the whole time. I'd been told my next job on leaving there would be as the first lieutenant on a shore establishment somewhere
- 30:00 in charge of parks and gardens or something. "Paint that green, paint that white," type of job. So I thought, "Well, that's it. Not for me." So I put in my resignation.

How was that received by the RAN?

It was received with regret by the admiral at FOCAF at the time.

- 30:30 The guy under him, his name escapes me, they tried to talk me out of it. I was adamant. As far as the way it was received at the Navy Office, they couldn't have cared less. They made it as
- 31:00 difficult for me as possible because I'd asked to go out in the October and they said, "No, you did an exchange duty with the USN and therefore you have a repayment of service to do in the RAN and that's not up yet. You've got to go till January."
- 31:30 My argument was that the basis that they were putting this on was the navy order that was introduced after I came back from the States. They agreed that was the case, but they applied it retrospectively nevertheless just to give me the S-H-1-T. There you go. End of a career.

How did you feel when you left?

- 32:00 I was pretty sad.

How was it, adjusting to civvy street?

Terrible. Absolutely terrible. Especially, I suppose, in the diving industry, that I decided was the only thing I knew anything about or wanted to be involved in. I went into that and was a diver for hire in various diving companies.

- 32:30 Their methodology was - after a couple of years I thought, "That's not for me." It was too gung-ho and careless and really no safety at all. One mob nearly killed me out of Sydney Heads diving on, before they built the sewerage outflows from North Head,
- 33:00 one of the drilling rigs had dropped some gear out there. It was marked and it was in about 270 feet of water, which was pretty much just over the breathing limit of compressed air.
- 33:30 They put me down out there to put a line on this gear and there was quite a slop [choppy sea] running, the sea state wasn't good. Of course everybody said, "Why didn't you tell them you weren't going to do it?" I'd had enough flung at me about, "Fancy navy divers think they know everything, blah, blah,"
- 34:00 I just went along. I nearly crashed out on the bottom. So I fortunately managed to make it back out.

What made you finally decide to leave the diving game altogether?

That was close to it. That time I'd just had my 50th birthday and I thought, "I've got this far, I may as well give it a go."

- 34:30 Then I went into insurance investigation. This guy wanted somebody to chase around with a camera all these people out in the western suburbs who reckoned they had crook backs and couldn't work and were dragging down megabucks from the insurance company. Was running around in my van
- 35:00 photographing them digging the yard and all this sort of thing. Did that for about a year, I suppose.

Seems a colourful job.

Yeah. It's just amazing what you see out there, though.

Like what?

You know, how blatant people are. Luigi

- 35:30 reckons he's at death's door and there he is mowing the lawn with vigour and lifting this and doing that. I followed some woman out to the airport one day and I'd been told what flight she was on and she was another one that couldn't work and walk without a cane, couldn't do anything.
- 36:00 I went into the, nowadays you couldn't do it because of all the gates and things you've got to go through, but I knew which gate she was headed for and I got there ahead of her and made out I was photographing the inside of the airport, and she came stomping up the steps there with a big case in each hand.

Do you know what happened to these?

No.

36:30 I understand that they don't ever show the film. It's used by the insurance company as a backup. They'll say, "We have you on film, Mrs Jones, doing XYZ." That's when they usually say, "OK, fair cop," I guess.

Did they ever know you were photographing them?

No.

37:00 Made quite sure of that. Some of them are pretty desperate people. I think they would have taken the law into their own hands, had they known. I gave that away and for a while I was doing consultancy work in explosive ordnance disposal. I worked

37:30 for a company down in Canberra called Milsearch. They were looking to get contracts all around the place to clear areas like St Mary's before it passed over to the public to build flats all over them. I went up to Saipan and did a job up there for them.

38:00 They were going to dredge the channel into Saipan and there were all sorts of buildings around the wharf area they wanted because that had been very much a hot spot in the Second World War, they wanted to make sure there wasn't any ordnance there. I went up there and surveyed the channel and tried to survey the actual harbour, but

38:30 couldn't do much there. One man couldn't do it.

How did you adjust to being back as a full-time family member?

All right, I think.

Was it a big lifestyle change for you, not being in the navy?

Yeah, it was. It was hard to adjust to, without being

39:00 able to put my finger on it. I suppose attitudes. It was just different.

Did you remain in touch with your navy pals?

Yes, very much so. I'm currently the president of the Clearance Diving Association and if nothing else we all get together on Anzac Day.

What do you do?

39:30 We march and have our annual general meeting. Then we have a couple of beers.

Did you drink rum in the navy?

No. RAN never had rum. I was considered under-age in the Royal Navy to draw a tot.

How soon after you left the navy did you get involved in Anzac Day?

40:00 Only a couple of years, I suppose.

After you'd finished serving or after you'd served in Vietnam?

No, after I'd left the navy.

Is that generally how it works? A serving member wouldn't march?

No, serving members march. We have a very large contingent, about 300,

40:30 and probably 250 of them or 200 are serving.

What's the bond like between serving members and ex-service personnel?

Very good - I mean, at the senior level, because they're the only guys that we really know, don't know the younger kids - but they are a good quality bloke.

What do you know about their standard of training now?

41:00 I think it's just as good, possibly better. There's been no drop in standards and I think that's proven now by the performance of our guys in Iraq and in the Gulf War.

Tape 8

00:34 **How would you deal with the large explosive ordnance you found around New Guinea?**

Large quantities, yeah. In Madang, in the bomb dump there we dragged out, I think it was about 72 tons

01:00 of bombs.

How do you handle a 1,000-pound bomb underwater?

It's not easy, as you can imagine, particularly when it tended to be encrusted in coral growth. None of these things, bear in mind, were fused. They were explosive-loaded, but they didn't have a fuse tail or nose or anything like that,

01:30 so it was relatively safe to handle them. The only thing being after they got to the surface. We had access mattocks and that sort of thing to break away the coral and pinch bars to lever them out. We made a lot of rope strops, two-eyes,

02:00 or a piece of rope with an eye at each end. We'd just work these things over the bomb. Then we'd get the hook down from the winch on the recovery boat above, hook it on and stand back and they would winch it to the surface where it would be dragged on board. That's where we kept

02:30 them. As the boat got loaded up we transferred them to that boat, so it was the MV Sea Lark, and it was a locally-hired thing with a native crew, we then transferred the bombs onto the motor water lighter, which belonged to the navy at Tarangau. Kept it hosed down all the time because they did have holes in them

03:00 where the explosives would be exuding through. With the heat up there they dry up pretty quickly and would only take a rub to detonate, or could. So we just kept that up until such time as we'd got the lot, as far as we could see. Then we did a survey dive to

03:30 about 240 feet. We saw a couple of small bombs down there, still with the strops that had got around them which had got away down the slope in the process. The slope's about like that [demonstrates angle]. So we decided to leave them there. Then everything else was taken out to about the 300-fathom line

04:00 and dumped over the side. You certainly wouldn't try to detonate anything there. We'd have wiped out half of Madang had we done so.

At 300 fathoms they weren't a further hindrance?

No, because OK, they trawl pretty deep now, but not up in those waters I don't think. I'm guessing at the depth

04:30 but there are some very, very deep waters up there. Certainly no-one's going to be diving in them.

Would you have to explode devices in situ?

Yeah. We mostly did that because the best thing is if you don't have to handle it, why bother, because something's misfired. You don't know

05:00 whether the firing pins are up, so you know nothing of what's going on inside. So it's best to blow them in place, particularly if it's safe to do so. Occasionally you have to bite the bullet. In one case we had a 1,000-pounder that was in the middle of a village,

05:30 just outside the village. We couldn't have blown it there, we'd have removed the village for sure. The case entry techniques that I mentioned earlier are not guaranteed, by any means, on old ordnance that's been hanging about like it has and, having been dropped through the air, it is very unstable anyway. So I wouldn't

06:00 attempt anything on a bomb like that. So we just got everybody around it and carried it through the village and out into the lagoon and worked it to the bottom of the lagoon. We slung it under the dinghy and floated it out till we were

06:30 in the deepest part and lowered it to the bottom there. We waited for high water, I forget how much water we had over it, and we high ordered it there. Nothing got damaged and the village got a heap of fish.

What about removing other underwater obstacles?

07:00 We did a lot of that all over the territory, widening channels to enable the boats to get into the little wharves. These were very important things. It wasn't a relaxation thing, that they needed to get in and out

07:30 in their fishing boats or anything; it was a matter of shipping out the copra from the plantation in the area, so therefore they needed to get their copra boats in and out safely. Also the administration trawlers needed to be able to get in. So we did that all over the territory. Did that at Manus Island.

08:00 There was a passage there anyway called Loni Passage. It was a shortcut between Los Negros and the big island, Manus Island. It was a perfect way into Seadler Harbour for the natives and their

- 08:30 boats, small craft, and the admin trawlers. But they could only get so far through. Once they got through the main passage to go out to the southern islands they had to negotiate a lot of coral reef. There was a bit of a likely passage through it that we worked on. We used anti-
- 09:00 submarine mortars as demolition charges. We made very successfully a channel right through there so a work boat, anything could get through there. The tidal current continued to keep it open because it kept it free of silt.

What poundage is an anti-submarine mortar?

- 09:30 Crikey. Probably about 300 pounds.

There must have been a lot of damage to marine life.

Yeah, there would have been, but it comes back.

You wouldn't get away with those things today.

No, you probably wouldn't. But

- 10:00 I don't know, I think it's right that there is an emphasis on keeping us all green [environmentally-conscious] and comfy and everything, but I do think that on occasions we go overboard about it. The lengths to which we go every time there's a small spill of diesel from a ship. The harbour gets shut down, we've got booms everywhere. I think back

- 10:30 to the Second World War when tons and tons of tankers were being sunk and the oil was going everywhere. Everything's OK now.

Any work clearing wrecks from the Second World War?

No, haven't done any work on that.

Did you dive recreationally on any?

We dived

- 11:00 half-recreationally, I suppose, on one in Rabaul. It was a favourite one called the Hakkai Maru, that was a big one and it was in good water. But I don't think it'd be there now after the volcanos of a few years ago. Totally silted over.

Where did that porthole come from in the back?

That came from the Hakkai Maru. No, it didn't;

- 11:30 HMAS Terka which was the job in Madang that we did in conjunction with the bomb dump. We went from one to the other depending on visibility. The Terka was an old minesweeper. You could tell how old it was because it was coal-driven. She was at a moorings

- 12:00 somewhere in the early part of the Second World War. She bunkered. She was full of coal and everybody apparently had gone ashore to the movies, and when they came back - no ship. It had sunk. I don't know quite how because it didn't turn turtle or anything, it was sitting perfectly upright. They asked us

- 12:30 to get rid of it because it was in the way of where they wanted oil tankers to come in and be able to discharge their cargo, so we lowered it using explosives. I've got the scuttle from it as a memento.

It'd be messy exploding something that's filled with

- 13:00 **coal and coal dust.**

Yeah, and it's sitting in a heap of mud. Once we'd shot that was it for the day. We'd go away back to the bomb dump and carry on work there while it cleared up.

When you were training in the mine and EOD

- 13:30 **work, did you have to learn the inner workings of all the different Allied and enemy types of mines?**

Yeah. But no-one's expected to be word perfect on each one or anything like that. There's a principle involved which is true to all of them,

- 14:00 pretty well, and variations are made to that; or there's always a possibility that somebody will be going for the guy that's going to try and delouse it by putting a booby trap behind at a certain stage in the proceedings. So that's something you can't actually train for.

- 14:30 That's what people like the ones I mention in England during the war, they were the ones that, Goss and that other guy, they wrote the manual. There are certain principles involved and procedures to follow in all mines and you just follow those procedures step by step. You don't get impatient.

How

15:00 **could you train people for unknown types of devices and booby-trapping of devices?**

You can place what's called an F77, which is just a little puff, this, you can rig it into the mine, or you can rig a light or a bell or anything that

15:30 you wanted to, wire it into the system, so somebody who's not followed procedure, they'll know.

Did you compete with each other in that sort of thing?

I suppose we did do to a degree, on courses and refresher courses, yeah.

Try to catch each other out?

Yeah.

But not with real charges.

No.

Did you do any work on the

16:00 **Great Barrier Reef?**

Disposal work? Yeah, I was up there a few times. Mostly buoyant mines that had been washed up onto the Reef and found by spear fishermen and something like that, who fortunately left them alone. On one I was able to use,

16:30 well, I had to use a sort of case entry system because it wasn't particularly rusted, and the explosive charge is in a square box right inside the mine and the mine is really a buoyancy chamber for the charge. I couldn't get in to lay a counter-mine charge on that and so,

17:00 I'd been taken out there by a patrol boat from Cairns, and I went back and got hold of the chef and got all this Alfoil and made up a charge to circle the top cover plate of the mine and blew that off. That enabled me to get into the actual mine and place the counter-mine charge on it.

17:30 Then it went.

What was the Alfoil for?

To hold the explosive, keep it together, because it was in the water.

How stable is the explosive you use for counter-mining?

It's very stable. It was plastic explosive, PE4. It's still the stuff being used today. It's probably a few grades

18:00 better now.

How would you detonate that?

With a detonator. You have to use a detonator, you can't beat it. So you insert a, what we would do was again a safety factor to avoid having, when you're handling the stuff, to avoid having the detonator actually in the stuff that is going to get a bang. You put

18:30 a knot in a piece of cortex, firmly put that in the charge and do everything else that you need to do, you might be linking up a dozen charges, so everything is still perfectly safe, and you bring it all together and then you put a detonator in that lot. So you only use one detonator to shoot any number of charges.

19:00 **So the detonator is detonating the cortex?**

Yeah.

In Britain, did you have contact with the SBS [Special Boat Service] over there?

None at all.

How have you seen the clearance diving job change over they years you were involved in it, in both methods and equipment?

19:30 I didn't see any change in methods. Equipment, we got a new mixed gas set when I was in CDT1 actually, so that was before I went to the States. That was the Drager set, FGT1A. It was very good, but it was worn on the

20:00 back and wasn't really designed for swimming, and it wasn't very good for swimming because you were then dragging your breath through your body, virtually, which makes it difficult.

These days clearance diving is viewed as the more sexy elements of the navy. How do you

20:30 **feel about that?**

I don't know. Sexy, I don't know about that.

It's often glamorised.

I suppose, yeah. It's certainly got a lot more media coverage as a result, I guess, of the Gulf and Iraq.

21:00 I think it's a good thing that the coverage has been there because it's got the branch out into the public area a lot more whereas it was always behind-the-scenes work. Even now, although we're classed as Special Forces, we never make a mention, or very rarely. It's always the SAS [Special Air Service]. They do everything. Not knocking them in any way, shape or form, but

21:30 they're the ones that get the mention.

Is that good or bad, as far as people's opinions of themselves?

Opinions of themselves, yes, I think their opinions of themselves probably would remain unchanged, anyway.

What do you think

22:00 **about the greater uptake of females in the navy?**

I don't have a problem with females in the navy at all. But, having said that, I'm glad that this change occurred after I'd left the navy because it's a cultural change, whereas the

22:30 young fellows today are joining, and have done for a few years, they join the navy and women join the navy and carry out the same sort of tasks, share the same showers and all this sort of thing. That's the norm to them. I think the difficulty in the introduction of it was probably because

23:00 when it occurred there were a number of crusties [old-fashioned people] in the navy that weren't used to this and the ships, especially the ships that they trialled it on, were extremely bad examples on which to try and integrate male and female. The ability to give them separate toilets and showers in some of the smaller ships, Swan I think was one of them,

23:30 bloody ridiculous. How could you do it?

From an architecture point of view?

Yeah. But I've got quite a few friends who are serving and commanding ships. One of the guys who got promoted to rear admiral this week I had on course in 1977 and he's

24:00 commanded a couple of ships and he'd never had any problems. It's all in the attitude that goes downwards from the captain, I think, in a seagoing situation. You're always going to have the odd problem, I suppose. That's human nature. I don't think you'll ever get rid of it. Like footballers.

Are there other things

24:30 **we haven't covered today that you'd want to talk about?**

I can't imagine there could be anything.

There's nothing left?

I don't think so. Other than going over trying to recount every operation in New Guinea and....

The operations in New Guinea we talked about were fairly representative of what you were doing?

Yes, exactly.

25:00 **You said off-camera that you've had a problem with skin cancer. Is that fairly endemic from the time when you were in the navy and nobody cared?**

Probably was, yes.

There was no attempt made to cover up?

No, not at all. No advice to do that, either.

25:30 I suppose common sense would tell you. Maybe we didn't have enough common sense. Then again, if skin cancer isn't talked about every day of the week like it is now, you don't think to yourself, "Crikey, that might be me." It's undoubtedly due to my service I'd say. Plus perhaps I'm prone to those sorts of things.

26:00 **Being a pasty Pom.**

Yes, that's right.

How do you feel about the increased popularity in attending Anzac Day in recent years?

I think it's fantastic, really do, to see so many young people there, and the number of young people going to Gallipoli, too. I think it's great.

Have you been back to Vietnam?

No, I haven't.

26:30 **If you were to leave a message about what you think serving your country is about, what would you say to people in future generations?**

You can't do anything better. If people don't step up and do that, where are we going to be?

INTERVIEW ENDS