Australians at War Film Archive

Paul Gilmour-Walsh - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:40 Yes. Quite simple, my life's really in three phases. The first one was school. I was born in Manly. Up to the age of thirteen. Then I joined the navy. And went from the navy from the age of thirteen. In 1954 until 1990. Span of about thirty-eight years.

01:00 After the navy it was in retirement life. I think I've probably worked twice as hard. And I schooled in Sydney at Saint Ignatius College was the last school there. I left in 1953 to join the navy as a thirteen year old. We spent four years down at the Royal Australian Naval College down in at HMAS Cerberus, the old Flinders Naval Depot in the Western Port, Victoria. That took me up to 1957.

01:30 1958, I went across to England to the Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth and spent eighteen months there training. Then we came back, there was a group of us, we came back to Australia in 1959 and joined the fleet. The first eighteen months, 1959 to 1961 I was on the HMAS Melbourne, the aircraft carrier. Great ship and twelve thousand people on board that and I reckon I just about knew everyone's name. Because I was the

02:00 beer officer. You'd issue the beer every odd night to all these troops. It was great. Sailors, I should say. And then 1961 I went to HMAS Kimbla, the little boom defence vessel which was a trial ship for the RAN [Royal Australian Navy] and we operated off the east coast of Australia. Then left that in 1962 to go to HMAS Watson where I did a little D's course, a direction officer's course.

02:30 Left Watson in April '63 to join HMAS Vendetta where I spent three years in Vendetta, went up the Far East three times in that three years. Sadly, we had the Voyager in '64. We were just coming back from the Far East when that ploughed in, it caused a bit of a change around in our programs. Not as bad as the poor people on it, the Voyager. Then '66 I left Vendetta – probably – I

03:00 got married in Hong Kong. My first wife, she flew up there to get married and we got married in Hong Kong. Bit of a lair I guess. And then '66 I left Vendetta and went to HMAS Service to recruit training school for eighteen months and about August '67 I think it was, we went to England. I went to England to do what they call the long navigation course at HMS Dryad in Hampshire.

03:30 And then in late '68, or early '68 I think it was actually I finished that course and then went to – I was on the navigation staff at Dryad and then went to sea with the Royal Navy on an old ship, a World War II ship. Open bridges and everything and it was a maintenance ship and we took it out to Singapore. Like going back to sending tea to China, sending me back to Singapore.

04:00 I was on that until 1970, took the ship back to England and then flew back to Australia and joined HMAS Yarra. Another Far East trip. Spent eighteen months on that till the end of '70 I think it was. Then went back to HMAS Stuart, went back to the Far East again and left Stuart I think it was '72. Miserable ship that was. Hated it. Then I went back to

04:30 HMAS Watson in charge of the navigation training for two years till '74. Then joined HMAS Stalwart, the Australian maintenance ship and left that in '76 to go to HMAS Vendetta again as the executive officer and finished that in '78 when I was – I hadn't been a very good boy. It didn't look like I was going to get promoted or anything. Then I stuck at an engineering job

05:00 in Garden Island dockyard from '78 to '79 and basically my career was finished. However I did volunteer to go to Papua New Guinea. Career looked up again. Got promoted up there and was in PNG from '79 to '81. 1980 I was sent across as the defence attaché during the coconut war in Vanuatu. Jimmy Stephens was tossed in jail and so on. Interesting

05:30 little stoush that one. It was 1981 I left PNG [Papua New Guinea], came back to Australia. And went to the joint services staff college in Canberra for six months and then spent two years in 'fantasy land' there in Canberra doing defence co-operation. I directed defence co-operation which was not getting on with other services, it was our aid projects with the regions – South Pacific, Singapore, Malaysia and

06:00 out as far as Kuwait and so on in the Gulf and up as far as Bangladesh as well. Left there in ’83 I think it was and went to HMAS Cerberus as the commander of the depot, 2IC [Second in Command] there and one of the best jobs I ever had. Great. Two thousand people in that depot. Magnificent time. Left there in ’86 to go back to Papua New Guinea. I went back

06:30 late ’86 to become the head of the Australian defence staff and defence attaché and stayed there till 1990. Then I came home and I’d had enough. There was nothing left for me to do. Then resigned, transferred to the RAN Reserve and came up here to paradise and I’m working twice as hard. Heavily involved in the community.

07:00 You don’t want to know all about that do you?

Absolutely.

Oh right, okay. Became president here for the local RSL [Returned and Services League] for seven years. It was just going down the drain. We fixed that up. Little sub branch it is. And I suddenly realised about – I’m a slow learner – 1999 that there’s all these support benefits available for people who were suffering, or families affected from their service

07:30 experiences. And I’m very keen on making sure that people get access to all these – those that need it. Also very keen on the environment. I’m the president of the Blayney District Green Hills Fund which is an environmental organisation which is trying to stop unplanned urbanisation which is a constant battle with some of these damn councils. Basically I’m a member of the show society. I thought I better get local, get to

08:00 know some of the locals and join the establishment and so I’m president, I do all the allocation of the trade spaces at the Blayney Show. Been doing that for ten years. And I did go back a couple of occasions, three occasions, to do reserve time with the navy. Did a study in about ’95 – ’96 I think it was – a study into cookery training for the defence force. What’s a navigator know about cookery? Well, he’s unbiased, not like all you bloody cooks.

08:30 And so we did that and that was all implemented. Consolidated all the training into one place and did and I did another study which I enjoyed thoroughly. It was looking at gunnery training for the RAN which was great. HMAS Brisbane’s just been towed into Brisbane to be scrapped and dropped on the seabed, well that was one of the last ships I went onboard. Off the coast, thirty miles off the coast of Jervis Bay. We were soaking wet when we got on board that day because it was so rough.

09:00 Anyway that’s just about it in a nutshell. Anything else you want?

That’s fantastic. What about family and children?

Oh yes. Yeah I’ve got three kids. Both from my first marriage. They live, boy in Katoomba and the daughter in Melbourne and the eldest daughter in Canberra. The two girls have done very well – university, they’ve got all these damn qualifications. The boy wouldn’t go to university

09:30 ‘cause his mother wanted him to. Simple as that. I’ve got two grandkids. Going back a step I’m one of four kids. I’m the eldest. My father – I was the firstborn in what, 1940, and my father didn’t see me until he came back from a prisoner of war camp in 1943. I got some beaut photos there. And then

10:00 my two sisters and brother were born after World War II and my brother got caught up in the Vietnam raffle [conscription lottery] and ended up going to Vietnam. Buggered his back building shithouses he told me, and was medivac-ed out. So we’ve had a long association with the defence force. I got divorced in ’79 –

10:30 sorry, ’76 when I joined Vendetta the second time. And that was a pretty traumatic experience. Probably the worst experience I’ve ever had. Our kids were about three, four and five. And they went across to Jakarta with my first wife’s newly found boyfriend. And he was in the navy too. But they went across to Jakarta there and I was in Singapore and flew down to Jakarta to see the kids. Pretty hair raising.

11:00 Then I got married to Helen. Very happily married. Very argumentative and all the rest of it. In ’78 I think it was. Yeah. ’78. And moved up to Queensland in ’79 and never looked back.

Fantastic, Paul, that’s a great story. Thank you very much. So just to go back to the early days of your childhood, can you tell us a little bit more about what you remember about growing up in Rose Bay?

Sure. The first recollection of growing up

11:30 was at the age of three or three and a bit. December 13th, 1943 when my father came back. I wondered who this strange man was. My mother was sitting on the knee of this strange man. And that was evening. I was sitting under the table – had one big bedroom and my Mum had a table and chairs in there and I was sitting underneath that wondering who this strange man was. I can remember that from the first time. I can also remember the screaming

12:00 turks screaming with joy when they went past our flat at Rose Bay. This must have been on VE [Victory in Europe] Day, no VP [Victory in the Pacific] Day I guess, all coming from Watsons Bay where they’d been unloaded. Great time. I remember that. I don’t remember any of the hard times. The Catalinas

taking off. Sunderland flying, boat flying. I swore at times they were going to hit our house as they took off from Rose Bay.

12:30 They're some very vivid memories. Then I went to school at Campion Hall, the prep school for Riverview up there on Point Piper. Then decided about the age of ten I'm going to join the navy. My father perhaps influenced me a bit. He said, "Don't join the army." I think he was probably caught up in the glamour of the uniform and so on. He reckoned they looked far better. Anyway that was it. So I joined the navy. Thank God I did. Because the family was a mess. The whole family was a mess. Partly as a result of World War II. My father was

13:00 never the same.

Can you tell us a little bit about your father's experiences in World War II?

Yeah. He joined up. I can't tell you much because he never spoke about it. But what I've learnt – I've learnt more about him at his funeral about six, seven years ago when I spoke to another one of his colleagues who had been in the adjacent platoon which was captured on Crete. Anyway he joined the army and went across to Egypt

13:30 and trained at the officers' school there and became a young officer. Then they were bundled off to Crete and that was the end of that. He was captured and taken off to jail – or to the prisoner of war camps – and he never spoke about it. I think this is partly one of the problems too. He never spoke about it. He wasn't allowed to speak about it. Mum wouldn't let him. From what I can gather. The family only lasted until about '55 I think it was. They split up.

When you say his war experiences had that

14:00 **impact on your family, how did it actually affect your family? In what way was his experience affecting you all?**

I think when he came back settling down into life was fairly difficult. He couldn't do that. He tried a variety of jobs – estate agents, accountants and finally we got a house out at Clareville on the Pittwater side of Avalon.

14:30 That was about '52 I think. Went and paid three thousand two hundred and seventy pounds for it if you're really interested. My memory's all right sometimes. But they only lasted a year there. I joined the navy from there. And then they went up to Cairns. That's when the marriage all split up. He just couldn't settle. I think that was the main thing. And he

15:00 had been traumatised. Under today's guidelines he would have been a TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated pensioner]. But he was – no assistance at all. They didn't know how to access a lot of this stuff, a lot of the benefits available. And this is probably why I'm more intent on making sure people do access the benefits available because they need them. I think that played a big part in the – we never had any money. My younger sister is –

15:30 what can you, what's it, she's a psychiatric case. Lives in Sydney. By herself. It's a long-term effect and people don't realise what people went through.

I've just got to ask you, what do you remember as you were growing up about your father and his character and demeanour having had that experience?

He was a

16:00 very proud man and always dressed immaculately. But he just couldn't hold down jobs. Travelling salesman, travelling estate agent, the whole damn lot. Because Mum always wanted us to have the best. It was ludicrous that I went to Riverview, the prep school, because it cost too much damn money. We didn't have the money. He was only getting eight pound a week and the school fees were about twenty pounds a term or some such thing so –

16:30 from memory – and it was stupid to put this strain on the family. I guess I was spoilt. I was lucky. Because my brothers and sisters didn't. They went off to public schools and so on. That broke Mum's heart. But what happened in the end with my younger sister who was twelve years behind – this is part of her downfall too, I think, was that she went to a private school and Mum didn't have the money. It was just stupid because the poor girl couldn't participate in all the

17:00 activities which were needed. So it's not an easy one to work out. Father, he was very proud. Liked to get on the stage and perform and he did that in about 1949, 1950, some play in Sydney town. But I don't – I remember him – I used to go and see him regularly. When I say regularly, every one or two years over the intervening years after the family split in 1955. Wherever I was, I'd perhaps pop in and see him.

17:30 He spent his last years in Narrabeen War Veterans' Homes in Sydney. Couldn't do anything. Terrible quality of life. I mean, the home was all right, but to see this person just bedridden was awful. He didn't maintain much association with any of us. It was too much for him at times. When my sister was sick he tried to help but couldn't. Just had to pack it up.

18:00 So that's my early – he was very proud of me, very proud of most of us I think. But he was very proud of what we – perhaps I was getting to somewhere that he couldn't or wouldn't. I think he probably a bit of a snob in a way. Perhaps I am too.

So he just couldn't settle down. Were there any other obvious signs about the affects of his experience?

Oh yes. He was very nervous and shell-shocked. You could see

18:30 it. But we didn't realise what it was at the time. But now when you look back on it you can see it. And he'd get very crook He also – we were driving to school one day – this is when I was going to Riverview from Avalon in the car. And the car skidded at Narrabeen and we ran into the front of a parked truck on the other side of the road which was the local Italian bloody green grocer's truck. Okay. I hopped in the bus and went back home.

19:00 He went off to work. But he didn't make work. He got trapped in the pub somewhere. Absolute right off. In Sydney. And one of his ex-army mates bumped into him in town and brought him home that night. He was off the deep end then reliving some of his war experiences. I've never forgotten that. It happens. From time to time he would go off on the deep end. I don't know

19:30 enough about – he might have had a medical problem, I just don't know enough about it. But certainly the war affected him.

Did you ever ask him directly about his experiences?

No. I didn't. He didn't volunteer the information. I didn't ask him. Because I didn't know anything about it. War was something different. Didn't belong to me. I guess there's a change now in our society where you find people starting to be more interested in it, interested

20:00 in what happened. I think that's important. Find out all the history.

What about your mother, what sort of person was she?

Mum was a very hardworking person. Again, perhaps a bit of a snob. She always wanted us to go to the best schools and everything else and of course she didn't have the money, she couldn't do a lot of the things she wanted to do. But really she didn't have much of a life and she died in –

20:30 she got cancer before we went to PNG the first time in 1979. She got cancer just before we went in March '79. So we flew back in about what was it, August '79, just to see what was happening. The doc told me she was on the way out. And I said, "Well, can she come to PNG?" And he said, "No." Then he said, "What, to die?" And I said, "Yeah." And

21:00 this was great. I say great. She came up to PNG in a wheelchair and sat in our house there which overlooked the whole of the South Pacific. We had a house right on the hill, Paga Hill, and looked right out over the lagoon at Port Moresby and it was beaut. And she loved the water so that last month of her life was great. But that was the first time she'd ever been overseas. And when you – she always wanted the best for her kids and having the youngest

21:30 daughter crook was a blow. The brother we got, he went ape after he came back from Vietnam. So we had a fairly rocky road I guess. A lot of people worse off than us too.

Oh, but that was a bit rough for you though wasn't it? You were growing up in those post war years. What do you remember about Sydney at that time

22:00 **and how it changed? You remember a little bit of the war itself?**

No. The only little bit I remember is the planes taking off as I mentioned there. Because I was only three to five, five when the war finished. We used to live in this big old house, flat, top floor of a two storey block in Rose Bay and my mother was the eldest of five kids.

22:30 Four of them were girls. Of course they had all the American troops around and the house used to boom with entertainment and so on and Christmas time was magnificent. You'd have thirty, forty people there. It was a great time. That's really all I remember. They were happy days.

So the American troops came?

Yeah. We had Captain Malone I think he was. I can remember that name and

23:00 one of my aunties was very much – what can one say, a bit of a tomboy and she certainly brought a bit of life to the house and my second auntie who's still alive – or second child, second to my mother – she lives in Brisbane now. But she's in a nursing home and terrible to see. But she married a bloke from

23:30 World War II. She met him when he was in Concord Repat [Repatriation] Hospital I think it was, married, and that lasted for about five years and that was it. Wild Irishman. Died of TB [tuberculosis] in '64.

So as a little boy what did you think about these American troops?

It didn't worry me. See, I didn't know enough about it. Goodness me, it was only about – because people would come and we were very hospitable. My grandmother, oh she was a real tyrant but

24:00 she brought that family out from England via Rio De Janeiro in a ship and then to New Zealand, finally settled in Australia. She did that in about 1930. So it was quite an incredible story, her bringing everyone to Australia. She was the black sheep of her family. She was only about five foot in height. But by gosh, she was a matriarch. And she liked to see people come. There was nothing

24:30 outward bad went on or anything like that. It was just a fun time.

And you said you vaguely remember VP Day?

I think it was VP Day. It had to be somewhere around that period. I can still picture the red double decker bus going past our windows. You looked down on New South Head Road there. I can just remember the troops cheering and waving and glad to be home.

25:00 It was a magnificent feeling. Then I think I went to the Anzac Day march just after that. Must have been probably '45, might have been '46, and I've never forgotten the row upon row of troops marching down William Street I think it was – yeah, the top end of William Street. The Sydney side end of William Street. An incredible sight. That was the only Anzac Day I've ever really attended in the city. Except at Port Moresby and until this year

25:30 when I went down to Brisbane with the navy.

Did your father attend Anzac Day marches?

Not very often, no. As far as I recall he was in that one in the city of Sydney. I don't think he ever participated. He was a member of the RSL, but he didn't participate much in anything really. It was sad I guess.

So he was in that one that you remember, so what do you remember about him?

Oh yes. No. I can't

26:00 even picture him. I just remember going with Mum and we stood there with the thousands watching it. But I can only just one little.

You were only a little boy.

Yeah. Only a little shot. That's all I can remember.

So as you grew up, what do you remember about Sydney and what it was like then and how it changed?

Sydney was the city. You went to town on a tram. To the dentist. This is another snobby part of my Mum

26:30 and so on. We used to go to the Macquarie Street dentist where all the professionals hung out and the prices they charged were equally as high. Instead of going to the local people. But we'd go into town I suppose I don't know once a month or something. And it was a special occasion. Remember it was only a five and a half day week then. Everything closed at midday Saturday. Basically that was town but

27:00 you stayed back at Rose Bay and played around with your life.

What sort of things did you do for entertainment?

You go to the flicks on Saturday. Firstly the matinees came in – the morning shows – you go there. Then they changed them to the afternoons and you'd go along there. Because we were only about three doors from the Wintergarden Theatre at Rose Bay. We'd go there on a Saturday afternoon and watch all the movies, Don Winslow, Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rogers and all those.

27:30 Dreadful when a love movie came on. We'd all go to sleep. But it was fun. We'd play Cowboys and Indians outside with the other kids. We never had any problems doing anything. When my kids used to ask me could they do something you automatically tend to say no, but then you had to ask yourself what were you doing at that age. And you find that you had a hell of a lot of responsibility. I used to look after my baby sister from the age of ten.

28:00 For the day. When Mum'd go into town or something on those odd times. Ten or eleven. And thought nothing of it. No problems. For heaven's sake, I joined the navy at thirteen. I'd toured a lot of Europe by the age of – I had my eighteenth birthday in Calais after a four thousand miles drive around Europe. But you'd have kittens now if your kids wanted to do that at that age. Thought nothing of it. Simple.

28:30 **How did you enjoy school?**

I liked Camden Hill, the prep school, that was good. It only lasted for six years, that school, on a beautiful spot in Point Piper. I loved that. But going to Riverview was hard yakka because you had to travel. I had to travel an hour and a half to and an hour and a half from school each day. Leave home at twenty past six bus and you wouldn't get to school until quarter to nine in the morning.

29:00 I found that very hard. And you couldn't participate in the footy team. I loved footy. But joining the navy was great. I just loved it. Because I could do all the things I wanted to do.

Can you describe Riverview, the type of school it was?

Riverview. One of the GPS [Greater Public Schools] schools in Sydney. Catholic school run by the Jesuits. It was a big old building there. A fortress type building and the classrooms were cold and freezing. I used to have a desk which had the old French master, who was a Jesuit's initials carved in it.

29:30 He was eighty-two at that stage. Hopeless teacher. I didn't realise 'aui' was 'annui' for the next year. But Riverview, it was a big school. You were a little cog in a big machine. Where as, being at the prep school, you were a big cog in a little machine. It was different. I didn't like – I used to come first in the class at Campion Hall. Get into Riverview, the best I could ever do was seven I think and that was not good enough. I had failed

30:00 as far as I was concerned. When I got to the navy it was a bit different again.

What did you particularly like doing at school?

I liked the footy. Rugby. I always wanted to row, but I never got into the rowing. Of course I was travelling all the time to and from school. I couldn't do all the sport I wanted. I didn't think I had a problem with academics. It wasn't until I got in the navy I found I did.

And when did you first find you had an interest in water related

30:30 **activities?**

I used to sail a lot at Avalon. I learnt my sailing at Avalon on the VJs and that was 1950, '51. And my father did a lot of painting too. In fact, I've got a painting on the wall the back room there of the yachts at Point Piper. And Rose Bay Harbour. He used to take keen interest in those yachts in the Sydney to Hobart and I remember they were moored, used to be anchored off the end of Point Piper, Claude Ploughman

31:00 they had on board in those days. And it was great just to follow the races and so on and we also followed the Head of the River, the rowing and things. It was – life was simple.

What did you like about sailing?

I just loved it. It was great. And I still love it. I haven't sailed for a little while now unfortunately. Ocean racing's the best. I was in the small boats in those days and of course when I went into the navy that was – I did very well in sailing in the naval college.

31:30 Then I jumped into the yacht racing. And I loved the yacht racing. I did my first – I've only done one Sydney Hobart race and I did that in 1960. We came last through the Heads and last all the way down. Never saw another competitor until we got to Hobart. But ocean racing's the best because you've got everything there. You've got teamwork, you've got skill, you've got a tremendous challenge and you've got the elements. It's a great feeling, feeling the wind. If you can.

32:00 **But do you remember as a boy what it was that attracted you to sailing?**

No. I just liked it. I liked it. We'd go out there and sail at Avalon Sailing Club. I was one of the inaugural members of the little club there when it first formed. Now it's a huge thing, I think. Sailed for Clareville. But I walked down to Clareville Beach every Sunday to try and get a sail on the chance that someone might want a crew. Be an hour walk down to the beach and take a sandwich with you and see if you could get a sail.

32:30 That's the way one learnt. None of this gimme business.

And as you were growing up, what do you remember about your concept of war?

It was all part of life as far as I was concerned. And getting into the navy, you didn't think of it as war. It was just your job. The more you got out there it really came a case of

33:00 preventing – you were a force to prevent war. We work hard, it's harder to work at keeping peace than it is to cause war, I think you'll find. But we just enjoyed it. We were only – when we were in the SEATO [South East Asia Treaty Organisation] force – Strategic Reserve Force there for quite a few years it was I guess you might say one big holiday in a way. You're up there. But you're always on call when the confrontation came. Sure

33:30 you patrol those straits – Singapore Straits and so on and you didn't think of it as war. You just thought of it as "We're not going to come second," and that's the way you were trained. You were trained to the nth degree to make sure you didn't come second. It was unthinkable. We never thought we'd lose. But you didn't think of it as war. I mean, the navy's different. You're not there trooping through the mud and sitting in a trench and so on. It's a lot different.

34:00 **But before you actually joined the navy and you were a boy and you were in those post war years when people had come back from the war including your father and you would have seen people who had obvious injuries and so forth from the war – how ... As you were growing**

up before you joined the navy when you saw the sort of post war results I guess or I don't know what you observed of that, but what did you think about war then as a boy?

I didn't think.

34:30 You're just growing with it and when you look at the results all I saw was a family – because we all lived together, grandmother, grandfather and everything in this house in Rose Bay. And the arguments which used to go on – grandmother being a matriarch and so on, it was a fun time, but it was also a difficult time. But you didn't know any better. And you saw these young girls, my aunties and so on, getting married and they're trying to set off in the way of life and then it slowly started to come out

35:00 when you realised that people they had married, there was something wrong with them. Well, they were badly affected. But everyone was in the same boat, so you didn't realise I guess. I mean, Korea came up in 1950. With the way communications were and the media – didn't seem to worry you. And I remember – oh dearie me, it was in 1970 –

35:30 yeah, '69/'70, when Menzies announced that we were going to Vietnam. I cheered and my Grandmother, she killed me just about. "You stupid fool!" Cause she'd lost brothers in World War I. It was then I really started to think about it as something we should try and avoid. But I can't answer your question any more than that.

You've answered it. That's right. You've answered it. It's your experience

36:00 **that I'm after. So you never really had any direct conversations with anyone who had actually taken part in World War II or World War I?**

No. Not that I recall.

So how did you come to actually join the navy so early? Can you tell us that?

Yeah. I still remember it. My father had sown the seeds I guess and it was about 1950, '51,

36:30 might have been '52 – I was a prefect at Campion Hall and there's three of us standing out there in front of the afternoon assembly. I can still remember standing beside the little garden there and we all agreed, made a pact we were going to join the navy. I was the only one that did. The others are probably rich bloody barristers and things now. But I never thought I was not going to get in. It's as simple as that. We went off

37:00 to – we were living at Avalon when I applied and that was in 1953 and we had the education exam at Sydney Boys' High School there near the cricket ground. About eight hundred of us went. Eight hundred people applied to join. They took thirty-nine when I joined the navy so it was – but sitting at that high school doing the education exam, some of the stuff we had in the curriculum

37:30 I'd never done so I had to study up quickly at home before that. But one of the blokes I was sitting next to, he got in as well. He died. I went to his funeral two weeks ago in Melbourne. Russell Glen. But it was – anyway we joined the navy.

Why did you want to join the navy?

I just wanted to I guess and I was probably steered, but also with the way the family was – I

38:00 had to get out otherwise it would have been – I was taking some strain off them by getting my education done for nothing and so on. I saw it that way. But I didn't think of anything else I guess. Probably about the age of ten or eleven I never thought of anything else. I remember somebody talking about law. Said, "That's a dry subject,

38:30 you wouldn't want to do that." So I wouldn't want to be a lawyer. And on and on it went. Because there weren't many other jobs when you look at it in those days. And you're also going in for a career. You're only going to do one job for life. Not like the kids now. They think they're going to do three or four or five before they end their working life as such.

What do you remember about the test you had to do?

Oh what, don't remember much. I think there was a bit of English and I've never been good at English.

39:00 Probably a bit of maths. Just a basic test.

But you were one of relatively few who got selected. So what did you think when you got selected?

Yeah. Well I didn't think. It was just going to happen. It was one of those things. You didn't think you wouldn't. I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't got selected. But yeah I think after the eight hundred it was whittled down to about four hundred after educational tests. Some of those other bastards must have been dumb.

39:30 Then we had the medicals. The medicals were pretty thorough. I was so embarrassed about telling my father I had to pee in a bottle. I couldn't believe you did such things. Really, doctor felt everywhere else. Goodness me. We were a very prude family too. And this was hard to come to terms with a lot of things

40:00 which are every day to other people. Anyway the news came through in December ’53 that I was joining the navy. My father sent me a telegram. I think I was staying with my grandmother at that time and I was watching The Cruel Sea at the local movie house when it came through. And here’s the telegram. “Cadet Midshipman Paul. Congratulations. Dad.” And that was it. So went off to join the navy in

40:30 January 24th I think it was ’54. Thirty-nine of us rocked up to the Naval College at Cerberus.

Tape 2

00:30 **So when you did get selected and join up what did you think the navy would be like? What were your expectations?**

The day before I was going down to Melbourne I went ‘round to a house that was just near us at Avalon where there was a Commando – Bryn Mussared – he was an engineer. We asked and he just gave us a few pointers. He said, “Oh you get belted over the backside with a gym shoe.” I thought, “Oh shit.”

01:00 I had no expectations. Anyway we got there and we all got down to there on – I think we went by train on Sunday night and got there on Monday and it was about a hundred and five degrees in Melbourne. God, it was hot. We got in about eleven o’clock in the morning on the old Spirit of Progress and then we didn’t catch the bus down to the college until about four o’clock in the afternoon.

01:30 The only place we could get any respite from the heat was to sit in the war memorial there in Melbourne. That was the first time I’ve ever been, I think it was probably the last time I’ve ever been into it. We just sat on the floor in there perspiring. Anyway we got carted down to the naval college and oh, all shit hit and then we wondered what the hell had happened. In fact, it was a Friday that we went down and we were there for the weekend.

02:00 Start at the weekend. I remember us all being huddled into the live in accommodation. I’ve got a photo of it actually, or a drawing of it, the old naval college we lived in. The main block was two storeys on either side and the junior year was the top storey, on both sides in fact and you had the senior year underneath. And we used to do fagging and everything for these buggers and they’d belt you over the ass with a gym shoe for a hell of a lot of things. It’s all been quite well documented in Tony Barber’s books.

02:30 Anyway we were all huddled into the room at the end. We used to have six or eight people in the cubicle, a small room, which was only about as big as this which is about nine by twelve – no, nine feet by twelve feet. You’d have double bunks and everything. My bunk, I had a top bunk and gosh! It was about that high. Struggle to climb into it.

03:00 Anyway, we never had a minute to ourselves. It was pretty well seven days a week. Sport every day. In later years, about year three or four, you used to get a Sunday afternoon off or something. It was a bit different then. We relaxed.

So what were you doing seven days a week?

Okay. Normal school work. We matriculated down there, the Victorian Leaving Certificate or whatever they call, matriculation certificate. Did their curriculum. Then

03:30 you’d have all you naval subjects tossed into it. And you were just as fit as a mallee bull. You did every sport that came. You did compulsory boxing, compulsory swimming. Swimming was – you had to go into the swimming. You had to put your name down for three events. Now there were a couple of blokes, they were Kiwis actually come to the college, they couldn’t swim. They were hopeless. Two of them put themselves down for diving.

04:00 Course that’d be – they’d get that out of the road and they’d be right. Well unfortunately only six people put their names down for diving so they were in the finals and oh to see these poor kids doing belly floppers. They were hopeless. In front of all the hoi polloi too. And any function on, any sporting activity, we used to have to carry the big settees out. These are huge settees. Twice as big as that. They were heavy leather ones. You’d carry them out to the cricket when the cricket teams played. The first time I ever came across a –

04:30 I think it was the twenty-niners. Test players would come down and play the College 11 and they put a few of their players in and it was a great day watching all these cricketers. But we had to carry out settees, the same as swimming. And carrying these bloody settees over to the swimming pool – your arms always pulled out of your sockets, because we’re only little kids.

Who sat on them?

The officers and their ladies.

05:00 Not us. The VIPs [Very Important Persons]. But look, it was tough at the naval college but it was good and that’s where I really got into my sailing. I was hopeless at cricket, things like that, so I’d sail in the summer. Rugby in the winter. Play Aussie Rules as well. First introduction to Aussie Rules and I love

that too. But your whole curriculum, your

05:30 spare time was taken up. Four years at the college. In our fourth year we learnt dancing. Well, Helen's (my wife) still going to all the difference dance shops to find a pound of rhythm, to buy it. But we were hopeless. We'd go up to the Toorak Ladies College which was at Frankston on a Wednesday in the middle of winter to learn how to dance. And goodness me! We'd go in our best bib and tucker.

06:00 You would have played football that afternoon. You'd have no skin on your knees. Trousers are sticking to your knees in the bus. And you'd go up to the Toorak Ladies College, all these young virgins and so on and you'd do an hour and a half of pushing each other around the floor and then a cup of cocoa and come back again and that was it. Consequently you'd find that most defence people are not very good at dancing. Worse still, the following years, when the college moved up to Jervis Bay,

06:30 they had no girls around. They learnt with chairs.

So that was the fourth year. So you were about what?

I was seventeen. Yeah. We passed out of naval college in 1957. We were the last term to pass out of there and then the college moved to Jervis Bay.

So you were seventeen when you were having these dancing lessons.

Yeah.

So you must have been interested in girls by then.

Nuh. Didn't have time

07:00 for them. And for heaven's sake, a girl was something different. You never had it. You didn't worry about it. You didn't know anything. Our sex education was non-existent. So that was it. I guess it wasn't till about twenty when I took the first plunge.

And they didn't teach you anything about sex education?

No. I think the medical officer came in one day and drew a vagina on the board and that was it. That was the end of it.

07:30 Didn't know.

So the girls in the ladies college were no attraction for you?

No. Football's far better. Dreadful when the end of term ball came up. We didn't have one at the naval college, it was the next year over in Dartmouth. You'd have to try and find a girl to take. Oh dearie me, what a struggle.

So then staying with the first naval college in Melbourne,

08:00 **what did you enjoy most about that time?**

The team work. Thirty-nine of us joined and we're like brothers. We had our first reunion after twenty years in Sydney and we have one at regular intervals since then and the last one was in March this year over in Margaret River, the south of Perth. And we're just like brothers. One bloke'll give a yell and you all go flocking to help him. It's unreal, the relationship. I guess that was part of it.

08:30 We bonded together so much there in '54. We still have guys going to the reunions now who only lasted six weeks. It's so indelibly imprinted into them, this bonding and teamwork.

How did that happen? How were those bonds formed?

Basically we were at the age of thirteen we'd been hit by something which was horrendous I guess. You're getting your backside belted for –

09:00 I think I got about seventy or eighty strikes with a gym shoe in the first three months. But the leaders of our team got about two hundred, three hundred. But as I say, Tony Barber's got it in his book there. So you lived in fear as well. That really helped to bond you. I mean, by today's standards the way we were treated you'd be court case after court case, I think.

09:30 **Can you give us some examples? I know you've mentioned Tony Barber's book, but forget about that because we don't know about that. Can you tell us about what you experienced there in terms of that sort of discipline?**

Okay. A normal day. Wakey, wakey at half past six I think it was. In the summer months you had to go off and do something before breakfast I think it was. Half past six, into the bathroom.

10:00 The duty bath bloke on call had to get up early and fill up all these basins with warm water. And you'd go in there and throw the water over you and then you'd go and have a cold shower after that and then you'd have to stand by your chest of drawers where all your clothes were perfectly folded and you'd have what was called a quick shift. You had to get fully dressed in two and a quarter minutes. And if you didn't you'd get six over the backside. It was quite a –

10:30 when you're outside – if you remember, you had to run everywhere, and if you ran across in front of someone who was more senior to you, you had to ask permission to cross his bows. And if you didn't do that you'd get bloody six over the ass by one of them. Fairly horrendous. Even in the dining hall if you spilt something on the dining cloth you got put in the corner and you had to sit on the – I've forgotten what they called it – a special little table

11:00 where you got no extra food or anything. Pretty horrendous when that happened. But it was a tough life. I remember once – I used to love rugby. I played a lot of rugby and I was putting the ball in the scrum and the referee was one of the officers there and he penalised me and I thought, "This is pretty crook." But anyway. Next day he calls me across to him

11:30 and says, "Don't you cheat at rugby again," and I didn't know what he was talking about. But that was it. Nothing, as I say, everything was together. They succeeded I think in bonding us together and teamwork is half the navy. You've got a decent ship, pulling together, it's great. I guess in a way we started off very early doing it. Now, the normal day. You'd get up, you'd have breakfast, you'd go somewhere, and then you'd be in the classroom

12:00 by half past eight. You'd have divisions beforehand as a rule where you're shoes weren't polished properly that'd be another six over the ass. The lanyards, we wore these little white lanyards, if there was a spot of dirt on that, bang, again, same thing. It was off into the classroom. That was a bit of a respite because we had civilian masters. They wondered what the hell was happening as they see the little boys come in. So you go through to morning tea. You run up to the

12:30 mess again and have a big cup of milk and one of those rock cakes and some of them were like rocks and then you'd go back to class. Lunchtime you run again up to lunch. Scoff your lunch off and then back to class at one o'clock or something and three o'clock, three thirty'd come and back up to the blocks into the footy gear or whatever it was and then go and do your sport. And then be dinner at half past six or something.

13:00 That was a bit of a relaxing time, the sporting side before dinner. And then you had dinner and then after that you'd have to clean up your area and you had rounds. Officer'd come through and do rounds again. If anything was out of place you get six over the ass. And at nine thirty – you have prep somewhere in that period – it was lights out. All these times you were going to get belted over the ass you'd line up near the bathroom and you'd get your bloody six before

13:30 lights out. And that was it. So you'd be quivering in your bunk in case you were going to get caught for something in the end. That happened. That was a normal day. Saturdays it was you'd have education till midday and then Saturday afternoon sports. Saturday evening it was the pictures over in the depot. The depot cinema, which was just the old drill hall. And the cadets would all run over

14:00 there in a squad. Fall in and run over and sit down the back in the drill hall there on the old tuber chairs, they'd sit down the back and smoke cigarettes if they could. But I never went to the pictures because it was a very pleasant night back at the college. You could have long showers, hot showers, and everything and just relax and I found that quite good. Sunday again, it was divisions every Sunday. You'd get up. Being a Catholic I used to nip off to church at seven o'clock in the morning. That was good.

14:30 Because we come back, have breakfast and then we'd go to an hour divisions and then we'd have an hour's peace while all these Protestants and everyone marched off to compulsory church. We were a bit different, being Catholics and it was very pleasing. That was basically your normal week. And halfway through midterm you'd have a midterm break. You'd get sent off somewhere to camp or whatever it was. Then it was normal school holidays, normal school terms and every twelve weeks you'd have three weeks holiday.

15:00 **Did you get to see your family during holidays?**

Oh yeah, we'd go back home. So that was all right. The Western Australians didn't. They could only go home once a year I think it was. They had to stay in Melbourne.

Did you miss your family?

No. Never had time to think about it. It was – our life had been pretty distorted, the family, before. But didn't miss it at all. I guess that's why we're so, a bit hard or blasé now about things.

15:30 I mean, my kids are close enough to me, five hundred miles away. Doesn't worry me. And I guess there wasn't all that much warmth in our family either, not the loving warmth, because everything always seemed to be on tenter hooks and going into the navy was really no different to what I'd experienced at home in a way. I didn't get a belting over the arse.

16:00 It was just a full on life, and I enjoyed it.

So in those circumstances the boys became, I guess, good friends quickly.

Oh yeah.

How were individual friends formed?

We were divided up in port and starboard watch, you lived on either side of the building. The top storey of the building. And so there was your first division. So you had twenty who were a bit closer to you than the other twenty. Port watch

16:30 were always the goodies. The starboard watch, we were the roughies. Then you'd have a further division for sports and so on. You'd be divided into four teams, groups, named after parts of the ship. And you'd be part of that right through the college. So your group would become smaller. And I suppose the education side, the scholastic

17:00 side, a couple of friendships might have been developed there because some of the goody goodies or whatever they were. But mostly it was the people who played sport where you'd find your friends. My closest blokes are friends now are Peter O'Lachlan who got kicked out in '57 just before the final. He became a top journo in AP [Associated Press] and he lived down in

17:30 the Hunter. But we're very strong friends. And we come across from time to time in different parts of the world, different wars and whatever.

During those college years as friends what did you do together when you had the opportunity to?

Oh look you'd go up on leave on the last Friday of term you'd get up at six o'clock and have hard boiled eggs for brekkie and then you'd run off to the Crib Point Railway Station off on the Crib Point Flyer at about eight o'clock in the morning.

18:00 You'd have your civvies in your little handbag there and you'd change before you got to the first station. This was second year, first year you still went in uniform. Get up to Melbourne and you'd be in Melbourne by about ten o'clock in the morning and then you'd go off to the pub. This is thirteen, fourteen. You go up to the bar. They had a rail there, you could see over the top of the bar. This is true. Or go and have lunch in the silver grill,

18:30 the Australia was the place, and you'd have your brandy crusters and things like that. And then the Spirit didn't leave until six o'clock at night from Spencer Street. So you might go and see a movie or something. Some people were in a hell of a mess by the time they got to the train, but everyone was under seventeen. You'd always hop into the booze whenever you could. It was just a part of life.

19:00 Booze and football. Except for the odd academics. It was all part of life, it was the normal way of life. Hasn't probably changed that much now.

So at the age of thirteen you were being served alcohol in pubs?

Yeah. Thirteen, yeah. I remember I was crook on the first leave. I had a bad knee. A bad leg. And I wasn't sure whether I was going on leave. Anyway I went up in the ambulance and I joined with

19:30 the sister at the college or something, the matron, she joined some of these young lads – senior boys. They were fifteen, sixteen, in the silver grill and I can remember having a brandy cruster at the age of thirteen in the silver grill. And then in the latter years you might go up when you play footy in Melbourne there, the bus wouldn't be leaving until nine or ten o'clock at night. We'd go off to the bar. You'd be

20:00 in uniform. Never thought anything of it.

So the senior boys, were they encouraging the younger boys to drink?

When you got out of the confines of the college everyone was normal. It was only pretty well when you were in the college itself if you had this incredible structure. But when you got out it was different. Because you were all playing in the same football team or something. You all had to rely upon each other.

20:30 It was – that was one of the reasons why it was good to be in the sporting team. You had this other freedom.

Was there an expectation that everybody would drink?

Oh yeah, smoke too. Even my mother, she gave me some cigarettes to take on the train, Christmas '55 or something so I wouldn't feel left out. It was a different life. And of course no-one worried about you smoking and boozing in those days. It was all part

21:00 of the game and I was a cadet captain in the naval college there in the last year, like a prefect, and we got given a silver cigarette case at the end of the year by the Governor General. Encouraging you to smoke.

Different world, eh?

It was.

So with regards to alcohol, were the officers in the school and the people in charge, were they aware of the young blokes drinking?

This is only drinking on leave.

21:30 **I know. But would they have been aware?**

Of course they – you're mad if you didn't. You expect these people to do these things. You expect it now. And it's all part of growing up. Even when we left the naval college in '57 we went to sea on the HMAS Swan, the little World War II corvette or something. We toured around Australia. We only,

22:00 boy scouts' leave most of the time. Six o'clock at night or something, seven o'clock perhaps, eight o'clock. But people would go ashore illegally and the officers knew this. But it was part of your education. If they got caught, fine, you'd cop it. But if you're smart enough not to get caught – okay. Because we came under the wings of the sailors and the sailors were training us. And it was great. And you were learning –

22:30 you were living exactly the same as a sailor in your hammock and everything, scrubbing the decks and everything. Wooden decks too. Holy stain. Bit hard on the fingers at time. But you were part of another team. But the officers would be fully aware. If you didn't do it you'd probably be in trouble because you weren't experiencing life. And as I said, we were trained to the nth. You had to be.

23:00 But on my navigation course later on in England we got taken to places you could never take a ship. You had to do it just to show that you could do it. And put the pressure on yourself. They'll put the pressure on you see and try and break you. But you had to do it.

So was there any particular officer or instructor in that naval college in Melbourne who you particularly admired?

23:30 Yeah. Probably R.J. Robinson. He was the captain of the Melbourne with head Voyager. He was the actual commander of the college at the time and he was a very impressive person. The others, nice blokes. Run of the mill. Couple of ratbags. No-one I guess stood out.

How do you think those four years at that college changed you?

They made me more

24:00 independent. I came out a little know-it-all. I knew everything at the age of eighteen. I guess that's the same now. But you were very confident yourself because you're flying across to England at the age of seventeen, and a half, thought nothing of it. Touring the continent just before my eighteenth birthday. Thought nothing of it. It was just part of life. You were going to do it. And it wasn't a worry.

24:30 In a way we developed earlier than you might say people develop now. But we were still very insular, very narrow, very narrow minded. You don't realise how narrow you were until you come into the civilian life now. The other thing I think – without sounding blasé about it – when we were selected to join it we were probably out of the top twenty-five per cent IQ [Intelligence Quotient] in Australia.

25:00 Now the whole navy, they're out of the top fifty per cent. The army's probably much the same. Shouldn't say that. But when you're looking at that, you're trained, you work together, teamwork, using your intellect and so on. And you come into civilian life and oh gosh what a transformation. I think I reckon I met the other fifty per cent of the lowest IQ most of the time. But a lot of them never had training

25:30 as such. Think a different way. I'm not saying this is wrong, but it's hard to adjust. I've just lost my track of thought here.

That's all right. What do you think was the most significant thing that you learnt in that four years?

Oh. Teamwork, friendship, I guess that's probably the most significant thing.

26:00 I guess how fortunate I was because I was doing things which I'd have never done if I'd have stayed at home. I think that's all.

One thing I didn't ask you earlier, you mentioned that your father was quite happy about your joining, what about your mother? Was she happy when you were selected to go to the navy?

I think like all Mums, little boy going off. But it was just another step in life. Of course she was worried. I've never forgot when I flew to England there in

26:30 April '58 she came to Mascot to see me off and we were flying over in the old Super Constellation. That was another story in itself. We all had to arrive. You used to book in at the Qantas place which was at Wynyard Square and right next door was Fowlers' Hotel. So we all got there, this twenty or thirty of us or whatever it was

27:00 and we were only allowed so much weight in baggage. And so some kids had their bags all arrive with them in London, others had nothing for another week or so. And then we nipped off to the pub and had a big pint, our last pint of beer, swallowed that down, into the bus out to the airport. But I remember Mum was out the airport to see us. You're even regimented then. Mum was there with a few other crowds I remember all being nervous about her little boy going. I just about knew everything then. I was seventeen.

27:30 **Can you tell us about, did you have a graduation ceremony from that first naval college?**

Yeah. We had a big parade. It was done on the main depot parade ground. A couple of days before we had the full dress rehearsal. We formed a guard passing out here. Got photos of it somewhere. But we had a mess dinner. It's our introduction to officer life. The ward room officers in the

28:00 depot traditionally had the young midshipman of the passing out year to dinner. So we thought this was great. Mess dinner. So we get invited to this mess dinner and you have your glass of sherry and a glass of port or whatever it was. But next day we had the full dress rehearsal which was our farewell to the depot people and we marched on and we were feeling a bit tired. And we marched on and our first order – carrying rifles and so on.

28:30 Our first order of arms there was only one noise when the thirty butts hit together. It deteriorated after that I might add, but the big sigh that went up from the fifteen hundred people watching the sailors. So that was the passing out, dress rehearsal and the passing out parade and that was held on the same parade ground. Sir William Slim, the Governor General came down. Then we had the presentations. That's where I got my cigarette case.

29:00 Then the new cinema which had just been built. Then I think there was tea and cakes after that and then we shot through. I got a photo of a couple of blokes there on that final day with my mother and the two blokes. Both of them didn't make it, the other two. Peter, one of my best friends, and David Monk who was never found since. Since about 1960.

That must have been disappointing for you when they didn't make it?

29:30 In a way, yeah, but see, we were selfish little buggers. You were just grateful for getting through yourself. Some of us only just scraped through. Yeah. It is disappointing, but that's just a fact of life. Don't cry over spilt milk I guess.

What were your thoughts on that day that you had got through?

Disappointed in a way because, see, the family was a broken family and everyone else had their Mums and Dads there.

30:00 I only had Mum. When I say only had Mum, Mum was there. And it was reflected in the society at the time. I mean, here was this single woman and she didn't get the same treatment as the others did. She was a one out. I felt poor about that. I might have been imagining it. I don't think so.

So you parents had divorced by

30:30 **that time?**

No. They never divorced.

Oh. They separated.

They separated. That's it. They were both Catholics. Never linked up with anyone else again.

And at the point that they separated, how did that affect you?

Badly. 1955, that was. The naval college was divided into two areas. You had the main college and what they call the annexe which is old World War II bloody huts. Geez they were cold. And you were there in your second and third years. First and fourth years at the main college.

31:00 And I've never forgotten racing up after lunch. About a mile. You'd run flat out there in the squad and get there and you'd pick up the mail. Here's a letter from Mum. "It is with grief in my heart that I write this letter." I've never forgotten that. I bloody near cried. I actually got through lunch and had to race off and cry. It affected me a lot. God knows how much it affected the other brothers and sisters.

31:30 But it was. You didn't know what to do. Even as bad as it was it was still a unit. But that was that. But they never linked up with anyone else right the through. My father had a friend in later years but it was just a close friend, that was all. He would have been about sixty when that happened.

So you went on to Dartmouth. Can you tell us about that?

Yes.

32:00 We flew over in the Super Connie [Constellation] and it's an interesting flight across because we broke down in Darwin and we had to spend the night in Darwin. Then we had to land in Bahrain. We went Singapore – Singapore Airfield. You couldn't believe Singapore Airfield today from what it was then. It was just you hopped onto the tarmac. There was a little control tower and that and you ate in the restaurant there and it was just all one small building.

32:30 We left there on that night. This is the second night, yeah. We flew overnight and we stopped at – it's incredible this and you can remember it. We stopped at Ceylon some time in the night and then we had breakfast up at Karachi. I think we might have landed at Bombay and then breakfast in Karachi at the Blue Bird

33:00 hostel, or whatever they had. So we had breakfast there and into the plane again and we're heading for Cairo. We couldn't make Cairo cause they had strong headwinds so we dropped off at Bahrain. We get there about four o'clock in the afternoon and we're going to have to spend the night in Bahrain. Something else had gone wrong with the aircraft. So we did this. Mind you, we'd drunk the plane dry as we left.

33:30 We get to Bahrain and some have got no change of clothes because our luggage didn't come with us and the normal thirty-six hour flight took us three, four days. Bahrain and we didn't get to the hotel until about eleven o'clock at night because that's when they decided we were going to stay the night and the beds weren't made or anything. But it was a big experience there because it was the first time I'd really come into contact with other people. The Arabs. Bloody Arabs. And there was a couple of well dressed Arabs there

34:00 and we were talking to them. They were taking the mickey out of us because they knew a damn sight more about life than we did and it was fascinating. I've never forgotten that. A worthwhile experience because we weren't as good as we thought we were.

Did you sense that was what was happening then?

I realised it, yeah. They knew a lot more than we did. We thought we knew everything. That really hit me between the eyes. Anyway we get to London at about

34:30 two o'clock in the morning, bloody freezing. I think we went to Cairo too. The armed guards, seeing the armed guards at the airport. That was a frightening experience because you see another part of the world again. Get to London and then hop into the fine lights of London and Down Under Club and so on. Rolf Harris used to play there. Remember Rolf Harris? He's still alive. And good friends with us all.

35:00 Then off to Dartmouth which was down in Devon. About a four hour drive I suppose. Two, three hundred miles away. And the Britannia Naval College. Great place. Huge. But see coming from the small naval college in Australia where we only had a hundred kids you've got about five, six, seven hundred at Britannia. And we're all divided up in to – I think there were

35:30 five different divisions and we were all split up. Bloody division I was in they were hopeless at sport. But we had Ceylonese, Pakistanis, there were Nigerians there at one stage. It was a good group of people and then you had the Poms. They filled three categories. There were those who were the toffs, la-de-da and so on.

36:00 There were those that wished they could be and they were real arseholes and then there was the normal people and they were great. We mostly got on with the normal people.

How did your uniform change? What had you worn as a naval cadet?

Same uniform. I've got photos there.

Can you describe it for us?

Yeah. It's a normal, a blue uniform. It's just the navy blue

36:30 uniform, suit coat, trousers, black shoes, cap. That's why you had ears, to keep our caps out of our eyes. You had gold buttons on the front and you had a little lapel badge to show you were a cadet midshipman and then when you became a midshipman you had a bit white lapel. And then when you became an officer you had the stripes and it was the same uniform all the way.

Do you remember when you first put that uniform on?

I do. Very distinctly. We

37:00 only about a month after we joined we had those uniforms and it was Sunday. We were going to Sunday division in our brand new uniforms, they'd come back from the tailor. We had shirts with the hard collars, detachable collars in those days. Peter and myself were going off to church to mass and we were up at six o'clock to get our things on so we could get to church by half past seven or whatever it was.

37:30 The team were up. Twenty of them. Because we were the first people into uniform and they were helping us out. As it was the ties – you couldn't pull the tie up into the collar and get that right. Hopeless mess. But that was the first time. I've never forgotten that. Then went to church, came back and went to division. Officers are looking at me. Talking about my collar. I wondered what was wrong. And I'd been given one of those rounded collars from the old naval stores which had gone out in the 1930s, 1920s and you

38:00 see them in old movies. Other blokes had the pointed collars. Today's collars. But anyway that's the first time we put the uniform on.

Do you remember how you felt when you first put that uniform on?

Very proud. Still do. When we march through Brisbane on Anzac Day, that same feeling. Great. Always very proud of that uniform.

Did you feel transformed in some ways?

Yeah.

38:30 You're part of a team. You're in something. That's important I think – to be part of something.

It must have been amazing as a seventeen year old to be flying across to Europe. That was a big thing to do back then.

Never thought any different. It was part of the cycle. You were expected to go. You went. When we got to Dartmouth, we got there in April '58, and you had a normal school term and it was

39:00 the Poms' summer holidays so we had seven weeks off. "God, what are we going to do in seven weeks?" So you went and bought a car. Three of us bought a 1936 Austin and we just drove four thousand miles around Europe, camping all the way. And it was great. Went to France, Germany, Holland,

39:30 Austria, Switzerland, Italy. You thought nothing of it. Couple of good experiences on that.

Think you better tell us.

I was sort of the caterer. I was the youngest in the three of us. Wally and Honk were the other two. We bought some tinned food and everything just to

40:00 get us through the early part.

Tape 3

00:30 **In Europe, and you're telling us the story of travelling around.**

Yes. Well the first two weeks or so it rained all the time and we went from up through France up into Holland and we basically was very uncomfortable. Hit Hamburg and we've got some good photos there of Hamburg with the submarine pens which had bombed it during the war. Hamburg was a hell of a mess and this was in 1958 –

01:00 a long time. Anyway we were camping out every night and eating into our meagre supplies, our standby rations which we did, but we were coming down from Hamburg and we stopped off one night to sleep at the Möhne Dam. The Dam Busters' dam. On the banks of that. And it was peeing with rain. And the other two had lilos, I just slept on the ground.

01:30 It really came down, buckets and I thought, "I'll hop in the car." I did and a couple of minutes later the other bloke hops in the car and we said, "Well what about Wally?" He said, "I'll volunteer to get out in the rain," and goes to try and find Wally. Couldn't find him. Wally had floated down in his lilo into the dam. Just on the edge of the dam. Anyway we dragged Wally back from that and hopped in the car and miserable, soaking wet and we started off the next day going along the Rhine and we stopped

02:00 at place called – I've forgotten the name of it – that was the first night we hopped into accommodation because we had to dry out everything. Just drove straight through Cologne. And you could smell the cologne there in the air. But we didn't ever stop there we were so cold and miserable. But then it too a turn for the better. The weather got a lot better. We went in through Switzerland and through Austria. Had a car crash

02:30 in Austria. We were heading up this Grossglockner Pass, the pass between Austria and Italy. We were doing ten mile an hour flat out and this old car in front of us stalled and we just ran into the back of it and we were built just like a Sherman tank and all his bumper bars fell off. We couldn't understand the language. The police were there sorting it all out and we just stood in the background and took photos and enjoyed the scenery. But then we went down to Italy

03:00 and enjoyed that. We didn't go down towards Lorraine, we just stayed in the top parts. Genoa, Venice and so on. Imagine being able to see Venice at the age of seventeen, then along the Riviera. We slept one night on the beach at Nice, just beside the car and during the night these roving nomads or whatever they were came and pitched up big tent –

03:30 the whole family, multiple family, extended family was there and I've never forgotten seeing these people beside you. You wake up in the morning and you look out the car and you see them all. Anyway that was Nice. Monte Carlo we went round and then up to Paris. We went to Paris. There was a special place where we booked to stay and Sebastopol, I think it was, on the south bank or the left bank. And we didn't get into Paris until about eleven o'clock at night so we

04:00 thought – well we didn't know where we were going so we stopped. We slept on the banks of the Seine under a bridge, the three of us. You couldn't do that these days, but we did it. Pulled up on the main road there. Anyway next day we went off to old madame, whatever her place was, and dossed down and we then had two or three days in Paris. Great. I got the poster over there on the wall somewhere around here of the Moulin Rouge. And we went in the Moulin Rouge. "Where do you want to sit?"

04:30 “Down the front please.” “Down there you can only drink cognac.” “What about the next row back?” “Champagne.” “Well what about the back?” “Soft drinks.” “How much are soft drinks?” “Fifteen shillings.” Now fifteen shillings for a glass of chaff is a lot. But we watched the Moulin Rouge and I got this beaut poster and I fondly remember that. And off we went.

What do you remember of the show that they put on?

05:00 It was just a show. Just like it is, oh have a look at the poster. That’s what it was.

For those that can’t see the poster can you describe what you remember seeing?

Yeah. Just the girls on the stage lifting up their legs. Simple as that. High kicking. I believe in the olden days they didn’t have pants on. Not in these more modern days, in the fifties. It was part of the experience of life, going to these things. As simple as that.

05:30 You done it. I guess you’d ticked another box.

How did you get money to travel around like that?

We used to get paid. We’d get paid. We were well off. Normally defence blokes are well off. It’s only when you get married that things turn to custard. But we – I’ve forgotten how much we got – ten pound a month, ten pound a week. I can’t remember. Ten pound a week I think. But you’d save it and you’d

06:00 be right. Things weren’t all that expensive. I think the car cost us seventy pound, or thirty five pounds, something like that. But you all pulled together for it. But money wasn’t a problem. You’re always broke but it came in and it went out like it does now.

So you didn’t have much time for girls in the early days of your cadetship, but by this time you’d started to get pretty interested?

Nuh.

06:30 A couple of blokes, mucked around. We weren’t overly fussed. We were still pretty busy. Still studying a lot and you still had your football. Rugby was a big sport over there and we Australians weren’t all that crash hot to their standard. I think we only had one of our blokes got into the first fifteen, the

07:00 Dartmouth first fifteen, but there was another – they used to have a second fifteen I think, but they had a team called the Floaters. The Floaters is the name of a pub just below the college in Dartmouth and appropriately this team trained on beer and we’d go and get all the good matches, some of the club matches and we’d go off and have a great time. You’d travel for three, four hours sometimes. And you’d play these matches with these

07:30 club sides who loved the game as much as you did, and the fun after it. But you’d play and some of these grounds’d be as muddy as hell and wet and everything. And you’d come off and you had the big community bath. Just a big about twelve foot square tub in the ground and you’d all hop into that and wash yourself. And if you’re last in then you’re just tubbing in the mud. It was best to feign an injury just before fulltime

08:00 to get the clean water. But we had all – I mean Dartmouth, there weren’t all that many birds in Dartmouth and what were there one could say could be quite well used.

Were there brothels there?

In Dartmouth, no, not as far as I know.

What about travelling around Europe, did you see brothels?

No. We didn’t look for them. They would have been there, you can find them. But

08:30 in London, they were the days when it was thirty bob in the back of a cab. You’d get a girl in the back of a cab and – I didn’t but some of my colleagues did. And the cab’d drive around, the old London taxi and that was – that doesn’t happen now I don’t think.

And they’d just be on the side of the street?

Yeah. They had their own cab and away they’d go. I think it was thirty bob

09:00 a throw.

What was one of the first things you did at Dartmouth?

We were into this big scene. We spent four terms there. First basically it was all academic and a lot more naval, military subjects. And you played your sport as well. Sport was a very big part in it. I never forgot we lived in the –

09:30 divided up into five divisions and again wakey wakey about half past six and you’d go down and have to do some PT [Physical Training]. Then we’d all race back to the bathroom. Well we always knew where the Poms hid their money. It was underneath the soap. No-one used the bathroom. Their wash was lick and wipe the eyebrows. Simple as that. Different way of life.

You mean no-one'd have a shower?

No.

10:00 About five Australians per division and we were the only ones having a shower.

Why do you think that was?

This is just tradition. This is the way they live. They never – when I served in a Royal Navy ship a little later on, there was a bath on board this ship and I was in a cabin next door to the second in command who had been to Australia, he served with the RAN too.

10:30 But one night we were bringing the ship out to Singapore from England and he said, "Oh Paul, Saturday tonight. Are you going to use the bathroom?" "I'll have the normal shower, Dick." "Oh, I think I might have a bath." And that was his first. There was only two of us used this bathroom. That was his first wash other than tops and tails in his wash basin in his cabin. It was a different way of life.

So did the Pommies smell?

No. You never hopped on the train

11:00 in the middle of summer in the tube and expect to feel well.

It's understandable though, we've got a lot more heat.

Yeah. And we waste our water. Won't get onto that subject now. No. It's just a different way of life. But how did we feel in Dartmouth? We were cogs in the big

11:30 machine and we always seemed to get ourselves into trouble. The Australians are more prone to get themselves into trouble. Mess dinners. Four hundred people at the big mess dinners. It'd be nothing to find the crockery being thrown. Bloody hell, some of them were fearsome. And after the dinners you went to what was called the Gun Room which was where the bar was and you probably played footy and

12:00 best rugby and everything. I've never forgotten, one of my mates, Wally, who went around Europe with us, the big rugby scrum collapsed and there were legs and arms everywhere and everybody pulled themselves off the floor and here was Wally on the bottom and his uniform trousers had been ripped from the crotch right down to his ankles. He'd been smoking a cigar. Well that was flattened on his face with a nice little burn.

12:30 Wally wasn't particularly happy, particularly when the bar manager squirted him up his crotch with soda water. I've never forgotten that. Anyway that was Wally. Another time an ice cream machine was installed in the hallowed corridors of the building. And the Poms didn't like this so after one mess dinner they picked this bloody ice cream machine up and they took it outside and huge ramps there and they threw it over and busted it. They didn't get into trouble.

13:00 But Australians, any time we did anything wrong we got into bad trouble.

What sort of punishment would they dole out?

You'd get some extra drill. An hour or two with a rifle or something marching up and down a parade ground. Or you might get stoppage of leave and that was not good. You only had leave – oh yeah, you had leave most nights I think. But you ha to be in by a certain time. And weekends you'd get in at midnight.

And did you ever get stoppage of leave?

13:30 Not a goody goody like me. In fact I might have got once. I can't remember.

So you were saying before that there were three or four terms and the first one was most academic.

No. They were all academic. Basically it's like a university and you get all the exams at the end. Eighteen subjects or something. But the terms – there's sea time involved

14:00 in a lot. First term you just went out a couple of nights in the local school's ships off Plymouth and Dartmouth. Gee, they were the most unpleasant experiences. Wet and cold. Hated it. Then you went into the main Dartmouth training squadron which used to tour. That was on the last term, term three. Yeah I think it was the last term.

14:30 Yeah. And we flew down to Malta to join the Dartmouth training squadron. We went all round the Mediterranean back to England. Tremendous time. But I've never forgotten our first day at sea out of Malta. Rough as guts. And we used to do all the job on training, anti submarine this time. We had a submarine down there. And our boys would be, our class, would be manning the equipment in the ship in the sonar control room.

15:00 Have you ever seen a white Pakistani? I have. This particular day old Willy Khan, he was in there and he got seasick and he turned white and oh dear me it was not a pretty sight. But it was so rough we packed the exercise up and went back to the harbour. That's pretty rough. But we went to Malta, then we went

to – and we did all navigation training and so on. Always on the go. We slept

15:30 in hammocks. We went to Naples. Bus ride to Rome was something. We all arrived there not in good health. We stopped off at the winery on the way. Got some good photos of people swimming in the Trevi Fountain.

So how many people would go on those exercises?

The Dartmouth training, you had three ships and you'd have your whole class. We had about a hundred, hundred

16:00 and twenty in our class I think it was. Oh it's less than that. Yeah. We'd have about thirty or forty midshipmen on these ships. The ship I was on was the oldest one, Roebuck, and we seemed to have a bigger contingent of Australians than the others. Rough old ship though. Good fun.

Can you describe the ship for us?

Yeah. The ship was, it was the same as our

16:30 Q Class frigates that we had in the sixties. Queenborough and Quickmatch. Same ship, same type. And where you lived, our mess deck where we ate and slept was down aft. And simple there. We all crammed in and we – you'd sleep in hammocks one above the other. Little story there.

17:00 When we joined the squadron in Dartmouth – this was another trip, you get two trips. We joined her in Dartmouth and of course we had leave and people went to the nearest pub and stoked up and one of the boys got a bit weary. He managed to climb into his hammock. Unfortunately halfway through the night his waterworks worked.

17:30 Underneath him was a Pakistani, fast asleep. Khalid it was. And he wasn't real pleased when he got wakened with this drip drip. But he was even more displeased when he was told our colleague had eaten a pork pie that night. We were unkind people. The way it operated though with the food in those days,

18:00 you'd go up to the galley and you'd pick a meal up and you'd take it down to your, you could climb down a ladder into your mess. That was it. It was pretty rough conditions by today's standards. Didn't worry us.

What was the food like?

Food was all right. Never had us fading away. Generally the food was good. I normally enjoyed the food and there was always plenty of it.

Initially did you get seasick?

Yes. Yes we did.

18:30 But you'd get over it. Mostly. There's about two per cent that don't. A lot of it's psychological. We were going across to a skiing holiday in Dartmouth. Winter came up, Christmas time and we all went to Austria. We hopped on the ferry at Dover. It was again as rough as guts and we went down to the bar normally. We were eighteen then.

19:00 And we asked them why they were closing the bar and they said, "We're in Calais." "Oh, we didn't realised we'd sailed." There was a lot of rocking, but so, we didn't realise. We were happy as Larry and none of us were crook. Nine tenths of the passengers were over the side all the way. We didn't think about it. I always reckon it's partly psychological. If you got an ulcer or something it can be not too good.

19:30 I still get sick from time to time. But once you get used to it, nah.

So how long did it take you to get over it initially?

When I joined the Swan there in Sydney and then we had this three months of training before we went to England we sailed out of the heads and we used to paint and do everything and I had to paint this damn metal wheel about that big and it took me all morning to do it and I was spewing and everything.

20:00 I got into bad trouble from a hard petty officer who told me I was too slow. Three or four days I got, but coming back, just before we left, three months later it took me half an hour to do the same job. And that's just a how your seats fitted in. Just an example. You get used to it.

And so what were some of the more exciting adventures you had from Dartmouth?

20:30 You really recall your leaves. There was the skiing holiday, there was the trip round Europe and then I hopped on a train by myself went right up to Firth there up on the north east corner of Scotland. I found that interesting even though it was by myself. I met up with some of the tribe in Edinburgh and we had a few beers. But no it was good. What else?

Did you hear many

21:00 **stories of World War II and what the navy had been doing?**

No. I n fact I found over the years in all our training we were very poor on military history. And certainly in the Australian navy. But English, Dartmouth was a bit different. We did have our war history, yeah. And it was divided. Some of us did the Pacific Wars. And we saw Victory At Sea.

21:30 Remember Victory At Sea? They're selling them again now. But we were pretty pleased because we go down to watch a video or a tape or whatever it was and it was the Victory At Sea series, and it was our education. But it was not much. I think army are a lot different. They seem to have more of their history.

So the guys training you though had they been in World War II?

Yeah. They all would have. Because around '58 most of them would have been. Even when I got back to England later on in

22:00 '68 for the nav [navigation] course it was different. They had different concepts. I mean, the enemy, our enemy was just an enemy. A possible enemy. They didn't talk like that. They said, "The Russians." It was as simple as that. They had their enemy and they spoke as a totally different way they operated.

From Australia?

Mm. The whole thing. Just going down the English Channel

22:30 it's wall to wall ships. Quite extraordinary. Ships'd be passing two hundred yards away. And they were the days when the 'Royal' meant something. A ship would call you up and "Permission to pass down your starboard side." We're going flat out at ten knots and this huge liner'd steam past. But that was the way things were.

Why did they ask permission?

Because you were a Royal Naval ship.

23:00 The navy ruled the waves. Britain ruled the waves. That was the way they operated. Little traditions.

You'd already been doing four years training in Australia. How much more did you need to learn?

It was basically like tertiary education. And you're getting more and more into the naval subjects. We were the second last crowd out of

23:30 the thirteen year olds and then they went up to fifteen and they reduced the training by about a year. But you just can't – you've still go to cover a lot of it.

What was emerging as your favourite area?

I think I guess I was going to become a qualified navigator. Because I thought the navigator was the kingpin. He had the best access to the captain.

24:00 What I didn't realise, if you didn't get on with your captain you were in just as much trouble.

It's worse.

No I always had the inkling to navigate.

Were there many other guys that had that?

Out of my term there was only one, two, three navigators out of twenty. We all sub specialised in due course. After that we then came back to Australia then some time in the sixties we sub specialised.

24:30 Whether it be anti submarine warfare, gunnery or navigation or communications.

Had the navigation techniques changed from World War II techniques?

No. Not really. There were a few better radio aids. But if you were on the ocean passages you still used your sextant. Sextants have been in for a long time. It's only in recent years now with the satellite navigation systems that you don't use them any more.

25:00 **So can you describe that then, using that?**

The sextant? Is shaped a bit like a triangle and it's got a movable arm on it and you've got a system of mirrors where you look at the horizon through a clear mirror, the clear glass, and then you take the angle of the star or the sun which is

25:30 reflected in the actual mirror which is a part of this glass and you just line that up with the horizon and take the exact time and that's the angle and by a system of calculations you can work out where you are. You've got to take three sights. You'd do that in about – I used to when I was really flat out and on the ball I could do seven stars in about twenty minutes from whoa to go, the time you took to work them out and

26:00 plotted them. In the early days it'd probably take three hours. But I was still using sextant navigation in ocean navigation in the last ship when I was the XO [Executive Officer] in the Vendetta in '97. I was still using the sextant. It's only in the recent years with the satellite navigation that the sextant's gone out the door.

So

26:30 **what else were you learning about navigation then?**

One of the keys to navigation is planning. And you do all your chart work and you plan your passages and you work it all out beforehand. You did more and more of that and then when you went to sea you put it into practice. You were learning from here to the skinner. Actually when I went back to train in navigation we had the special ship, the Elspeth. Again it was like the Q class,

27:00 Quiberon and Queensborough that we had. We were picked up in Portsmouth and we went round the western side of England up through Scotland and where there was a difficult place you went and you just went on and on continually twenty-four hours a day swapping navigators.

27:30 And we went up to Scarpa Flow where the grand fleet was sunk in World War I I think it was. And we had to using sextants plot our way round to find the wrecks of the ships. You do that using horizontal sextant angles.

So they'd give you some kind of point to use the sextant?

You'd have a map and instead of measuring the angle between

28:00 the star and the horizon you were measuring the angle between two points.

On the map.

Yeah. And you take that angle and then put it on the map and that a way of determining your position. Very accurate way. I did that later on off Australia when I ran the trial ship.

And did you get much opportunity at Dartmouth to do navigation exercises – real ones?

Only when we went to sea. You did it in the classroom. That's the same as Watson's Bay. HMAS Watson; you do it in the classroom but

28:30 then you put it into practice and you go out to sea and do it. That's different. You can't make mistakes then.

And did you?

Oh no, we never made mistakes. Course you did! But you learnt as a navigator you triple check everything. You've got to.

It's a really important position.

I thought it was. I enjoyed it. But you were always on the go. You were always under pressure. Not like some of the other branches. I mean supply officers, they –

29:00 eight to four job for them. We're on twenty-four hours. But that was choice and I enjoyed it.

Yeah. There would be a lot at stake getting the right co-ordinates I would imagine?

No. You sort it all out.

What were some of the popular areas that guys were angling for?

Specialisation? You had the – in the seaman branch – communications was I think popular.

29:30 Navigation I think was quite popular.

What was the communications set up at that point?

Communications – all your radio equipment and stuff. The old naval ships were very sophisticated with their equipment. They could talk to – you had to be. You could get messages around in a minute from anywhere in the world and reply or a bit longer than that, but not much. I think there was on classification or

30:00 flash classification I think it was I think it was about five minutes you expect a reply from anywhere around the world. And it was a good system. We were always well advanced, the Australians. And the ship I was in the Royal Navy, the old Berry Head we had an antiquated World War II communication system. We came down through the south Atlantic and we lost communications with everyone for about twenty-four hours.

30:30 It was so antiquated. That was a great experience actually. But there's so much in the navigation – I don't know. Where are we going from now?

Were there any accidents in training at Dartmouth?

No. Not that I recall. We went and fired the gun on the shore base out to sea, no, no problems there.

31:00 I don't recall any. Only accidents with people coming home from leave and crashing their cars. Happened to one of my friends. No. Aches and minor cuts and grazes.

What were the major accidents that would happen in training in the navy?

Probably when you're on the ships and you're mucking around with ropes and wires.

31:30 Even sea boats. You used to drop the boats over the side on a system of pulleys. That would – there was more chance of getting something happening there. Very few accidents happened.

Do you remember any incidents where you were in quite rough weather in that training time where people would go overboard?

No. I'm just trying to think of whether we ever had anyone go overboard while I was at sea.

32:00 I spent quite a few years at sea. No. Yes, sorry. Once. It was on the Melbourne. The boys, the sailors were in the sea boat and something went wrong and it upended and they fell into the water. That's the only time I ever recall seeing anyone in the water by accident. I've seen people jump in. We had a – this is going into 1970 now.

32:30 '70. Yeah, we were in the Far East on the Yarra and we'd been given a missile by Commander Far East Fleet Staff when we arrived on the station and this was about seven months later and we still haven't fired this damn missile. We're in the Singapore exercise area just prior to going into Singapore to say bye bye and then heading south. We had this

33:00 balloon we were going to fire. There was no targets around. So a big met balloon about that big. We blew it up and put the helium into it and didn't put enough helium in and it went straight up and into the water. So we had the recovery way was a swimmer, the swimmer at the watch. And so we stopped just short of the balloon and the swimmer dived in and off he went and suddenly he turned round and he's almost running across the top of the water with a sea snake behind him.

33:30 We had a rifleman always on standby and so the rifleman fired one shot and gets the snake behind the head and the captain – quite straight-laced bloke – "Righto. You've got the snake. Now get the balloon." Course the rifleman's as proud as anything. He's just shot the snake, so he goes pop! and knocks the balloon out. The two hundred and fifty people on the ship's company watching

34:00 all this wet themselves with laughter and the captain he was fuming. Anyway we get into Singapore the next day and the captain comes back. He goes up to see the fleet staff and he come back and he started at "I won't relate the whole story," and the fleet gunnery officer collapsed behind the desk with laughter and he suddenly realised there might have been a funny side to this. But so he still had this missile.

34:30 We wanted to – so we said, "We'll fire it on the way south, coming through the Sunda Straits south of Indonesia we'll fire at another balloon." We bought some more balloons. And we couldn't get approval to fire it and we were told by the authorities in Australia, commander of the Australian fleet to return the missile. Well the property owners up there sent back a signal to them, "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Approve their firing area." That happened. That was 1970 or maybe '71.

35:00 Yeah. '71. How did we get on to missiles?

We'll still probably go back to Dartmouth. We'll come to some of that. We'll probably travel all over the place and that's fine too.

That's okay.

Were there any other significant experiences you can remember from Dartmouth?

Yeah. The first time we went to sea in these dirty little ships, Acute and Jewel were the name of them.

35:30 They were piddly little things.

When you say piddly little thing, how big, how would you describe them/

Probably a hundred and fifty feet. They were like our smaller minesweepers in World War II. A hundred and fifty, two hundred foot's quite big by some standards. But they used to move around and oh dear me it was

36:00 wet and cold – dropping the sea boat. You'd have to drop the sea boat – raining – you'd row somewhere. Come back. Hook onto the boat's falls and then you'd have to climb out of the sea boat up the ropes. And when you had a black oilskin on which was wet – oh it was cold. It wasn't an easy task.

36:30 They were unpleasant experiences. Standing on the bridge when it was raining and cold and water trickling down your neck. It's not a nice thing. I remember some of those. But there were some good times too. Going into when we were in the Dartmouth squadron coming back from the Mediterranean that time we were flown down we – what did we do? I think we went into Lisbon. Yeah. Went into Lisbon.

37:00 And there were some German ships in there and they weren't very well paid. This is only thirteen, fourteen years after the war. And I think they got well looked after by some of the ladies in some of the disreputable places and for a good price too apparently. How did I get onto that? I'm not quite sure. That was just, we went into

37:30 Lisbon.

You were saying some of the pleasant experiences.

Yeah. I suppose you go through – but just seeing the statue there of – there's a big statue there of the Lord or someone there. I've just forgotten now. But it's a beautiful place.

Did you celebrate any birthdays around that time? In Dartmouth?

What? My birthdays? I have one every year. Yeah.

Significant ones?

Crikey.

38:00 Eighteenth birthday. This is in Calais. We'd just come out of Paris and got to Calais. We went into the restaurant, it was a sort of – the shop associated with the movie house there and they sell beer at these things. So we sat there till about two o'clock in the morning. Then we went off and slept on the ground somewhere. Then we

38:30 sailed next day on the cross Channel ferry where we didn't feel very well. That was the eighteenth birthday. I think, yeah, the eighteenth birthday, '59. Nineteenth birthday was in Bombay when we came back from England. On the ship that came under Stratheden. We didn't fly back. But that was pleasant. But yeah I can remember. Twenty-first birthday, I can remember that.

39:00 **We'll get to that in a minute.**

Okay.

What about Christmases in Dartmouth?

See, it was skiing. We were only there for one Christmas so we went over skiing. That was fine.

And how long would you get off for Christmas?

Be about three weeks, two weeks, normal school holidays, whatever. Three weeks I think. We'd go to some ski resort.

You were still pretty young. What did you miss about home in that eighteen months?

Didn't miss a thing. Say didn't miss a thing. I suppose we always became more ocker than we were in Australia,

39:30 there's no doubt about that. I think your peas and your meat pies and the smell of the gum tips and little things like that. Yeah. But you were always very proud to be Australian.

How did the RN [Royal Navy] treat the RAN?

What I mentioned before about the three different groups – the snobbish group,

40:00 the hoi polloi or the snobs, they probably just tolerated us. But the other group are the good guys – fine. Got on. Plus you've got to remember we had those links with England. It's not all that long ago. I mean it was only 1967 we changed from the Royal Navy's white ensign to our own. We used to carry their flag

40:30 on our ships. Extraordinary. Then there was the other group of the Englishmen that wouldn't give two bob for us anyway. They didn't like us.

Tape 4

00:30 **So what happened after Dartmouth?**

We came back from England on the Stratheden. Took us five weeks to get back. Then had a little bit of leave and that was about September '59. Then I went to join the Melbourne, young sub lieutenant. Spent eighteen months on the Melbourne basically doing what's called a Bridge Watch Keeping Certificate. During that time went up to the

01:00 Far East twice, part of the SEATO force. It was interesting. I enjoyed Melbourne. It was a good introduction to the navy. Twelve hundred people on board, with a fleet air army embarked or aircraft embarked and I just about knew everyone.

How did they treat you when you first went aboard?

No problem. You're just a young officer. The young sub lieutenants were only one rung above the midshipman which is the lowest form of naval life. And you had to get on and

01:30 do your bits and pieces. You're still learning. You're getting that experience and you had to get the ocean navigation certificate. This is the seamen. Engineers had to get the engineer and watching keeping certificates and stuff. You did this all with the sextant basically so they could end up relying upon you. You did that. Then you finally got your watch keeping certificate so you were allowed to drive the ship basically.

02:00 **Did some of the other guys that had followed you through training come onto the Melbourne?**

Yeah. We had probably about seven of us. Six of us I think we had. We all lived in one little cabin. We got all the rubbish jobs and so on. But it's a big ship, a lot of people.

Can you describe the Melbourne for us?

It was a World War II type carrier built for Arctic conditions. Very limited

02:30 cool areas. In the tropics you had – it was divided into I don't know how many mess decks. They were bunks, not hammocks this time. There were cabins for the officers, little cabins. There were a couple of bigger ones where some of the troops slept. You had your cafeteria type eating. You didn't eat in the mess decks any more.

03:00 You all went to the cafeteria. That was for sailors. The chiefs and petty officers, they would have their own messes. The warrant officers have their own mess. That was, what can I say about it? So old carrier went about twenty odd knots. It was very uncomfortable in the tropics. You'd

03:30 go and sleep on the flight deck. Everyone'd have their little stretchers and invariably about two o'clock in the morning you'd pass through showers and you'd see everyone running off with their stretchers, tripping over some of the rest who had camped where they could near aircraft. Others had their special spots below the upper deck but out in the open air and one was underneath the ventilation fan from the galley because it was a bit cooler.

04:00 **Was there a fight over that position?**

Senior bloke'd get that one. You think it was done democratically? Melbourne was a hard ship to keep clean, like a rabbit warren here and there.

Were you excited to get attached to a ship?

Yeah. It was all part of the training. I didn't really want to go to Melbourne. I preferred to go to one of the racing car type ships,

04:30 the destroyers or something. But in retrospect it was better to go to Melbourne because you got to know certain things that paid dividends in later life.

So what sort of things was the Melbourne doing at that stage?

Well basically the Melbourne would go up the Far East every year. Three or four month trip. And exercise and sit with the other navies. One big exercise we had, I think it was Jet in 1960.

05:00 It was held off Ceylon, Trincomalee. Two groups came together one afternoon and I was the officer of the watch and we had three aircraft carriers and about fifty or sixty ships. It was a fascinating sight all coming together. Nothing like World War II, but that was still a lot.

Can you describe what you could see at that point?

It was very glassy water, calm, very calm afternoon.

05:30 You had the Royal Navy carrier coming in. I can't remember which one. Might have been either Victorious or Eagle. There was probably another one too. A commando carrier, Albion coming in and you just converged on the one spot. They all fell in together and trundled along. It was quite an interesting one. You had the Pakistan navy there as well.

06:00 The Indians.

How do you manoeuvre ships into that close proximity?

They practise. It's all part of your training. It's just like driving racing cars. How do you drive a racing car? You learn to do it. You're trained to do it. Same thing with these.

And can you tell us some of the techniques they use?

They basically it's using radar range, range finding instruments, your compass and

06:30 your own compass bearings and so on. It's just perhaps a bit too difficult to explain on this but it's just the normal way seamen operate. You do all your exercises, chase your submarine, get attacked by

aircraft and you do your refuelling where you pull up alongside the sea and a tanker and you'd be somewhere between seventy and a hundred and twenty foot off it, a couple of hours sucking in fuel.

07:00 One of the stories we had on that Melbourne actually. I think we were coming back. 1960 I think it was. We were coming back down the southern coast, east Australian coast and we met up with Vampire and Voyager. It was as rough as guts again. Voyager was alongside; she was connected up to fuel. You could actually see a quarter of the way down underneath its bottom when it

07:30 went through some of the big swells, waves. When you're receiving fuel the normal flag you put up's a big red flag, flag brother. The Voyager put up a white flag with a big breast on it. And the Admiral at the time was Arch Harrington, Admiral Harrington, and he said to his fleet operations officer, "Food, find out what David's flag means, please?"

08:00 Food operations officer was David Hamer who later became a Victorian senator and the David in command of the ship was David Wells who went on to be an Admiral later on. Anyway, the food operations manager came back on after five minutes and said, "Admiral, I have spoken with David and he says it means, suck."

08:30 Anyway they're just some of the odd things that we did. Coming back from Hawaii, this was '72 I think when I was in another ship, Stuart and we were coming back with a Canadian squadron. They had their big Canadian bear, the polar bear was their squadron flag and they gave us one. And we were in company with them.

09:00 We came over the equator and we turned ours upside-down and put some gum boots or something on it. Stupid thing to do because we were in the southern hemisphere. But you play around a lot.

And what were some of the more significant things you remember doing on the Melbourne for that time?

I used to watch keep every day. You'd be on watching – I operated with aircraft in the middle of their air control section. Their fly co [flight control].

09:30 Basically doing a pretty mundane job, but it was fairly significant. Since '59 the exercise started off the east Australian coast and it was night time and we had the first barrier landing where the jet, the Sea Venom, came in and hit the deck too hard and wrecked its hydraulics, didn't catch the wire and just went off and came around again and they hadn't realised the hydraulics weren't working. They had another go and realised that, hey, we've got a problem.

10:00 The normal procedure for this if the hydraulics go is that you put up a big nylon barrier across the whole flight deck and the aircraft just flies into it and stops it. This barrier can get up in about fifty-five seconds. Well fifty-five seconds they got it up but they must have given it an extra hard yank because they broke it. So you've got an aircraft running out of fuel and no barrier. Now there was an emergency barrier

10:30 which they had never practised putting up. They dragged it out and got it up and the plane was on its last run at the ship and if they barrier didn't get up before it got to the ship the pilots would have had to eject. Anyway the emergency barrier went up, the story ended well, the plane came in and was enveloped by the nylon net and the pilot, Barry Orr, a little fella, and his observer,

11:00 Boss Luftwich who was about six foot two hopped out of this little Venom and there waiting for them inside the island was a little plaque with a plane on it and a tube of barrier cream. It was the first ones the Australians had ever done in the Melbourne. So that was a thing I've never forgotten.

The first time a plane had landed on

11:30 **an Australian ship?**

No. It was the first time it had landed on the carrier and utilised the barrier. Normally you just had your six wires and the vestibule hanging down behind them catches one of the six wires and that stretches out and stops the plane. Now this was the hydraulics on the aircraft which had gone. So the rest of the hook wouldn't work.

So you used the barrier.

They put the barrier up. That was the first time they ever used the

12:00 barrier. In anger.

So there must have been a bit of excitement about?

A bit of worry! I mean, here was the pilot, two people in a plane which didn't get up there, if it didn't connect with the barrier would have to eject at night. And people don't like ejecting at night, only in an emergency. This was an emergency, big splash as well.

Where were you when this was all happening?

I was up in the fly co. Flight control.

What could you hear of other people talking about

12:30 **what was happening?**

Wasn't much talk going on. Everyone was trying to get the barrier up. And everyone on the bridge area and the flight control area was bloody …

Was there shouting?

No. They're trained. You only shout when you panic.

It sounds like a panic situation.

It was an emergency situation but it wasn't controlled by panic. Done by teamwork.

13:00 So that was late '59. What else in Melbourne? Beer officer. You'd have a beer.

You were still in training on the Melbourne. What sort of tests were you doing?

I mentioned that bridge watch keeping certificate and ocean navigation certificate. That was basically the main thing. Otherwise you were just performing normal jobs and one of my jobs was doing the beer office which just to put it into perspective, you'd

13:30 issue a hundred crates a day. To a thousand people. One big can they used to drink. That was when they had beer issues. To load the beer in that year when we went up to the Far East we were down in Melbourne and it took all day to load and unload the semi trailers full of beer and you had to put them down five levels

14:00 inside one of the old bomb magazines. When you were issuing and sealing the beer off in the normal beer issue it started at three o'clock in the afternoon and by the time you got the cold ones out of the fridge, restocked the fridge and got them up for an issue at five which would go for half an hour and then there'd be another one at eight o'clock after the last old watchman came off.

14:30 By the time you count all the money and so on it was about three o'clock in the afternoon to about nine to ten o'clock at night. So it was a fairly time consuming exercise.

And I imagine if it didn't go smoothly there'd be a bit of … ?

No it always went smoothly. Because the junior sailors, below petty officers, they would just

15:00 queue up and file past you. You had it set up in the cafeteria. You had a special machine there which would put two holes in each can. I think they had to put their leotard in or whatever it was to show they only getting one can and take the can. I remember once when we had a minor problem with the furnace fuel oil, the black oil, it leaked into the bomb bay where the beer was staying. So you had this black oil

15:30 covering you can. It didn't matter how much you cleaned the can it still had this taste of oil. There was this young sailor who picked up his can and took a swig and he complained to the masters arms. Now the masters arms always stood on the end of the queue after people who come past and he'd pick them up for not having haircuts or whatever it was. This young sailor complained because there was something wrong with his beer. So the master, "Give it here, lad," and he took

16:00 an almighty swig and he said, "There's nothing wrong with that. Drink it." It was vile. What else did we do in the Melbourne there. You'd get into port, in the rugby team, we played in – we went up to Japan and it was a Sunday afternoon we were playing one of the Japanese side. It was a big bowl type

16:30 area and on the hill on the sides they had a big band. I can still picture the tuba player there. Bloody great tuba blasting out noise that sounded like an elephant's fart. And the whole village was there watching this match. We had a very good fullback and he raced across the ground to mark the ball in one instant there and did a somersault after the mark and skidded over the sideline

17:00 into the mud and disappeared. What we didn't realise, the perimeter of the football field there was this big sewerage ditch. So he came out stinking something awful. But after that we were taken off to the local bath house where we washed. But they're little things like that. You always had your time filled in. There was always something to do.

How would a normal day take for you?

17:30 Say you get up in the morning. On the Melbourne we were only keeping daytime watches as a rule. So you'd have four hours on the bridge somewhere between eight o'clock and twenty hundred. Then you'd – there it is, if I was on from eight o'clock till midday and beer officer, there's a full day just on that.

And you did the beer officer every day?

No. Beer was only

18:00 given out when there was no exercises on. On that particular trip, see we had to stock up because we were going to the Far East as well. We were in Singapore we stocked up with Tiger Beer. Tiger Beer's a bit like poison. But anything's cold anything'll do. The fleet operations manager stayed at home and he

said to me, this is before just as we were heading north, “Son, if you ever get into trouble with that beer, let me know.”

18:30 So we’re coming back to Australia and I’ve got one issue too many. Boys weren’t drinking it, the Tiger. And I go and see David Hamer and I said, “Look, sir, I’ve got one issue too many. Can we have an extra issue somewhere?” And we weren’t getting in until sixteen hundred on a Thursday or something and he said, “Yeah. Leave it with me.”

19:00 Two hours later I get called up to the bridge. Here’s the captain of the ship saying the Admiral’s decided to have a beer issue at lunchtime. This is unheard of. “Decided to have a beer issue at lunchtime with all the fleet just before we enter Sydney. Can we do it, subbie?” “Yes, sir, we can.” “Course you could.” So it was always good to have sound communication

19:30 to get things sorted out. So that’s Melbourne. What else did we do on Melbourne? I can’t remember if it was that year or the following year, ’61, we were heading up to Japan. And there was a soothsayer in Kings Cross in Sydney. I’ve forgotten her name. I think it was Rosalind somebody or other. And she’d forecast the Melbourne was going to sink in a typhoon; this was before we sailed. Well here we are heading towards

20:00 Japan and there was a bloody typhoon. And oh gosh had people worried, real worried, just on the strength of this damned soothsayer from Kings Cross. Anyway that was another little thing you didn’t forget. I remember another night there we saw three or four ships coming down in line like a little centipede and they were the army ships we got. The Vernon Sturdee and Clive Steele and so on coming from

20:30 wherever they’d got them. I think they probably got them in Okinawa or somewhere, the Americans. And they were on their delivery voyage back to Sydney; saw all these little ships at the end of the day. Yeah. Life on the Melbourne was good.

What was the worst weather you hit on the Melbourne?

It was in either ’60, I think it was ’60, we were in Hong Kong and a typhoon came. Probably about the same time I’m talking about with Rosalind there.

21:00 We had to sail. Generally the ships sailed as soon as a typhoon came. Typhoon warning’d go up. All the sailors would run for the hills and the ship would sail. So they’d have a week of leave doing those things they liked doing. Anyway we sailed. And we dodged round the typhoon. I remember Queenborough was with us. She was under maintenance in Hong Kong and her whole side had been painted the undercoat which is yellow. Here she is

21:30 out there with the yellow sail. So that was one typhoon. There was another typhoon, cyclone, in the southern hemisphere when we were in the Swan there in ’58. We had to go out from Perth and we had to go out into the ocean to act as the safety ship for the Queen Mother who was returning to England. Christ knows what we could do if the plane crashed.

22:00 But anyway we trundled off and we went right through the centre of a cyclone. It was an eerie experience because we saw the wind coming from different ways, dead flat in the thing and rough on the waves. The cooks couldn’t cook anything. You just had to eat sandwiches. But we got to this designated spot that night when the Queen Mother was meant to fly over and it was piddling with rain and it was cold and everything like that and the captain who was a fairly strait-laced bloke –

22:30 bosuns, the young sailor used to make the announcements. “Pipe the stool,” which is the old bosun’s call. And he stood there in the rain saluting as the plane was meant to be flying overhead. I mean, you couldn’t even hear the plane. Didn’t know how close we were to it. That was carrying it a bit too far.

And did people around him do the same?

Yeah, I guess we did.

23:00 But you’re up on the open bridge, and you’re soaking wet with your raincoats and everything on and we put the cap on, we probably only catch the weather.

And can you describe going through that cyclone a little bit more? What do you do in that situation?

You’re all battened down and you tie your furniture down and you secure it and you can’t work actually. It’s so rough. We just sat there hanging on as best we could eating steak sandwiches or whatever we could.

23:30 It was rough, but I guess the eye of the cyclone was probably oh from memory now about a mile wide. But it was – and you had to battle through this because you had to get there. Normally we’d dodge around the cyclone. But different.

So a call would come through that the weather was on the way?

Yes. You were getting your –

24:00 we had a system in those days where a signal would come out with all the different readings – barometric readings and temperatures and everything – taken from different spots around the world. And normally the navigator's job is to draw up the weather map based on all these reports. You'd know what was going to happen. Have a pretty good idea.

24:30 Actually it was part of the job of the ships – all the ships at sea used to send weather reports in as well to the central base and it would all be transmitted. When I was doing my nav course at Dartmouth in '69, '68 – not at Dartmouth, at Dryad, sorry. The met bloke who took us through our segment of the met course was just

25:00 saying sometimes he'd get these odd reports in from ships and he'd say, "Oh the silly buggers have made a mistake." They did that once and they were a hundred per cent right because this foul weather came in to the silent down Portsmouth way, Southampton way and people were lost at sea or a bad accident happened because they disregarded an odd report. So they were quite valuable, so we'd know where the stuff was normally. Now of course it's totally different because you're always getting satellite

25:30 readouts.

Was that your first experience of a cyclone?

In '57 it was yeah. And then 1960 in the Melbourne. Next time I think I got involved was in 1970 in the Yarra.

So when you were back at the Swan as a young guy, this is early years of getting on the ship, you must have felt pretty terrified?

No. It was all part of it. You didn't. You probably feel more scared now because you know more.

26:00 But in those days it was just part of the game, part of life.

Were you underneath or could you actually see the weather? Is there anything you could see of the weather?

When you came into the eye it was all calm and no rain from memory. There might have been just a few drops. But it was all overcast. But then when you're into the heavy weather, it's rough

26:30 and waves are coming over the ship. I was actually in Vendetta one year and this is when we were heading for Japan in '63 where we got a greenie on the bridge. Straight over the bow. Bloody cold. We were ploughing through it. But other than getting cold and wet you didn't think much about it. The ship was all right.

So describe what a greenie is?

A greenie's the unbroken water.

27:00 You see those big swells and straight through it.

So how high would that have been?

The bridge was I think from memory about fifty-five feet. Something like that.

Huge. So what happened after the Melbourne?

After the Melbourne we came back to Australia and I went to a little boomer fence vessel, the Kimbla and that was good fun because we were doing trials for what

27:30 was called the RAN experimental laboratory. They used to be based down at Rushcutter's Bay. Spent about eighteen months in that ship and we were doing sound trials mainly off Montague Island way down off Bateman's Bay. And off Coffs Harbour. And what we would do, we'd drop these hydrophones over the side on long leads and down to about –

28:00 forgotten now, about two hundred fathom, two hundred feet or something. And a submarine would be somewhere in the distance and it would transit up and down. They were trying to get the noise that subs could make. We did this. You'd go out and probably do it for four weeks on end. And when we used to lay the cable this was where we were using those horizontal sextant angles. You had special charts made

28:30 up with some of the conspicuous points along the coast. And you'd take these position fixers which were actually to about five, six feet or something. But you'd take about three hundred shots a day. It's pretty hard when you're looking into the sun. One year on the Kimbla again we had two trips away from Sydney other than to the exercise areas.

29:00 One was meant to be to Brisbane. We were down at Montague Island and as soon as we headed north in the afternoon a big northerly storm came in. That was strong, really rough. And we were trundling up the coast well out to sea. And we didn't – we were only guessing where we are or dead reckoning. About one o'clock in the morning the wind suddenly stopped and suddenly got very warm for about five minutes and visibility

29:30 cleared. I saw the flash of a light and what it meant was that we were a day behind where we should be because we'd been belted so much and instead of turning left into Brisbane on the Saturday morning as we should have we turned left into Coffs Harbour so we were only halfway up. But that had belted part of the hull and wrecked part of that so it was pretty rough weather. That was – the other time we went down to Melbourne.

30:00 We arrived on a Saturday morning – 11 November, 1961 it would have been. And we got alongside them up the River Yarra. Eleven minutes past eleven. I always remember that. We kept our elevens together. The reason we'd gone down there was because the weapons research establishment in Salisbury in South Australia wanted to conduct an exercise.

30:30 A trial. They had plenty of money obviously because they arrived alongside with a semi trailer full of gear. Well Kimbla was only a hundred and seventy two feet long. The semi trailer was just about as long as the ship and they had all this expensive gear and explosives and everything. We put them on board. Not quite sure how legal it all was, but anyway. We sailed for the experiment in Bass Strait.

31:00 They were proudly boasting that they'd got all this new nylon rope that stretched to four hundred pound and so on. And didn't break. So they dropped the, put the experiment charges on the end of this line in Bass Strait there and had to explode these charges and record it. Well the experiment went haywire because the line stretched so much. They hadn't tested it as far as it would break. And so here's little Kimbla with its

31:30 old antiquated methods and small budget. We had to replace it all for them and conduct the exercise. I'll never forget that one. That was in '62. '61. November '61. But while we were down there also we got in there on Saturday morning and we had a footy match on the Sunday afternoon against one of the local clubs and you get a long refreshment session after the footy.

32:00 The next day we had to go down to Cerberus to play Aussie Rules. Twenty-five people on this little ship. That's all. But we had crackerjack football teams. And we were going to play a team from Cerberus, a navy team. Well anyway we were feeling so dreadful that we had to stop off at the Frankston pub for a quick glass of beer on the way through and then we get down to Cerberus at about half past one in the

32:30 afternoon to be greeted by the commodore and the commander and all the hoi polloi. The padre who was Tiger Lyons – he's still alive, old Monsignor Lyons. And there was a case and they'd had their inter service team out. They were going to give us their inter service team. They thought we were Club Kimbla backed up by some VFL [Victorian Football League] Aussie Rules players. We were HMAS Kimbla – overhung, selecting

33:00 from a total of thirty-five people. I saw Tiger Lyons January last year down in Melbourne at a funeral, one of my colleagues. He reminded me of that story. That was Kimbla, it was great. We used to call it the Mighty K. We were in Central Western Districts had their annual football carnival at the end of the season out at Orange.

33:30 And we decided we'd go out. We hired a navy bus out of our own money. One of our blokes drove it. He was a petty officer engineer – Jasper Warden. He drove the bus and we only had fourteen people on the bus and of course fifteen for the team. Now Voyager was alongside at the same time and there was a young ERA, electric engine room artifice by the name of Knocker White,

34:00 I think it was, yeah. He couldn't get off to join us on the bus but he flew up to Orange to join us the next day. Well we got there Friday night about midnight and we stayed in the pub at Orange. Just trying to think what the pub was. Can't remember. But it was also the home of the Emus, the local football team. Of course they're all in there. We get there. And we're not feeling too, so we play up and get to bed pretty late.

34:30 On Saturday I'm not quite sure what happened, but on Sunday is the knockout competition. And I've never forgotten the five eight of our team, a bloke by the name of Nugget Nolan, again he was a petty officer, stagger in, he races up, he says, "Oh sub," or lieutenant, whatever I was then, "I haven't been to bed. I didn't want to miss the match." He slurred the words. I thought, "Oh great!" He was a good player, but he wasn't too good that day. But anyway

35:00 we went out on the first match, nine o'clock on a Sunday morning and we're playing against I think the Emus and they'd just won the premiership. Anyway Jasper Warden was a forward and he was the bus driver and he went down in a screaming heap not long after it started. His knee was buggered and everything. He'd been plagued with knee trouble. But there was a doctor in the opposing team. And he looked at Jasper and fiddled round and he fixed his knee

35:30 on the spot. Just pushed the right nerve or whatever and Jasper never wore a knee guard after that. It's incredible. Nevertheless we got buggered, well done. So we were out of the competition. But there was an under twenty-one New Zealand team over and their reserves and managers team was some of our fitter blokes and we got right through to the semi final that day. Gee it was a bloody good one. But the finals was down between the Emus and the team from Molong. Gosh, what a dirty match it was. Great match.

36:00 **In what way was it a dirty match?**

They were into each other. They were deadly enemies. Molong had – the breakaway was an Australian rugby union breakaway or ex – Billy Gunther. They were rough.

What position did you play?

I used to play halfback or breakaway. But no it was good. But anyway that was the little Kimbla. All the blokes went; I think everyone was married except about two of us. “Right stay behind, we’re off.”

36:30 And my Mum, she made me a big flag, “The Mighty K.” We had this big silk flag. We loved it. Very proud ship.

Is a smaller crew, easier, a close knit crew?

Can be. Equally it can be bloody awful too. But we did have one thing going for us on most of those ships – if someone wasn’t settling in, they’d get rid of them. So that was a bonus.

Did that ever happen while you were there?

37:00 Once I think. For a variety of reasons. Mightn’t get on, might be critically ill. Whatever.

Did you ever get sick on those few years?

Yeah. Used to – I’d get occasionally on the Kimbla. I was sick on the Melbourne one night. Just an unusual motion coming out of Fremantle.

I mean, did you catch anything.

37:30 Other than seasickness. No. I did get a wog in Hong Kong. I couldn’t move one morning and I spent all day in bed. But that’s probably something I’d eaten the night before. But that’s all I can recall. No we were – very few people did get sick. We were always so damn fit. Fit as mallee bulls running up and down the ladders all the time and the movement of the ship.

How different was your job on the Kimbla compared to

38:00 **the Melbourne?**

Totally different. There was only one, two, captain and 2IC and two other officers and I was one of them. You had to do the ship’s office, that was all the correspondence – gosh! typewriter. You’d be there on the typewriter trying to type and the ship’d roll and the carriage would go the wrong way. Hopeless. And I hated secretarial work, but you had to do it. I used to get into a hell of a mess.

38:30 So that was one of the jobs. Navigator also. So you’d do that.

You were the navigator on that?

Yeah. The junior bloke was the navigator. I joined Kimbla up in Brisbane. Flew up to join it. And the boys – the ship was alongside just near the Storey Bridge underneath the wharf there. Alongside the wharf underneath the Story Bridge. And we sailed on – a couple of interesting stories there, but we sailed on the Monday I think it was

39:00 and the junior officer always had the middle watch, the midnight to four watch on the first day at sea. I was relieving the bloke I was taking over from. Anyway I get up there and there was a problem. Hamish was – it was rough, it was quite rough and again the water used to come through the bow – big horns at the front of it and it’d

39:30 come over the bow and it’d run down the sides of the ship so you had this torrent coming down as a rule and here was Hamish crawling in the water. “What are you doing?” “I’m looking for my teeth.” He’d been seasick. That was just off Brisbane. Reminds me of other stories I won’t tell.

Go on. You can tell us anything.

Tell you anything?

40:00 No. Just about girls of ill fame.

Oh well, tell us. We’ve heard all the girls of ill fame stories.

Tape 5

00:30 **We’re ready to hear these stories of ill repute.**

It’s on one now and then it’s sailors often end up getting themselves into trouble and so on. Some urges have to be satisfied. Six o’clock in the morning on the wharf underneath the Story Bridge. There was a one person, one girl who was accommodating quite a few of them. Two bob a throw. But

01:00 that was what I happened to remember. I wasn’t one of the people.

When was that? What ship were you on?

That was Kimbla. That was 1962.

And how do you know that was happening?

Because the blokes told us. They wouldn't tell lies.

So one girl for several blokes?

Yeah. Good value.

01:30 Anyway.

What about your own experiences in that regard. You were in your early twenties by then. You must have become interested in women by that stage?

Started to, yeah.

When was your ... ?

Hong Kong, 1960.

Can you tell us about that?

Nuh. Just a night. Wine, women and song. That was all. I wasn't very good with the ladies. Because we never mixed with them.

02:00 That is something else. But there were more important things to life than that.

Was that a positive experience in Hong Kong?

Yeah. First time. Always remember. We're all human.

Was that with a girl you met or was that in a brothel?

Yeah. A girl I met.

We don't have a problem with these stories at all.

No.

02:30 A bit of money changed hands. Hong Kong in the bars in Wan Chai generally each ship used to have their own special bars and you'd go back there year after year and you'd see the same girls again, the bar girls, and they were lovely kids. They just had to work. There was no prostitution or anything like that. It was just for every heavy drink they'd get you to buy for them, they'd get so much of the

03:00 sticky greens. But that was some of the nicer side of life.

What was it like when you arrived at port after being at sea for a certain amount of time? How did the men – what would be the first thing you would do?

You'd always send off what some of your requirements were and you'd have your sporting program mapped out and so on and

03:30 you might help some of the schools or disadvantaged kids. There'd normally always be a party held for some of the orphanages when we got into port. Or you might go and paint some of the schools, maintain some of the little schools. That always happened.

In what sort of places did that happen?

Hong Kong. Singapore not so much because you had such a large big defence presence there. Just about anywhere you went there was always

04:00 something. You'd do something like that. This was the peacetime navy, showing the flag, keeping good relationships. So what you do when you get into Hong Kong normally people went off and did a bit of shopping and had a few beers and so on. Young bloods they wanted to go and have a few beers firstly.

04:30 And then you'd settle down. It all depends how long – the worst thing was when you were only in port for one night. It was hopeless because you'd rarely ever accomplish anything. But when you're in port for say a week or ten days it was always good because you'd pace yourself and generally enjoy it. The old saying is that always knew when it was time to leave was when your pocket full of personality ran out.

05:00 But Hong Kong used to be quite special. I think I've been up to Hong Kong about twenty-one times in the ships and you'd normally you'd have a big buy of goods. You'd have someone on board who'd set up shop and he'd take all the orders and he'd get the better prices and you'd have all the stuff'd come down in the last couple of days before you sailed for the final time. You hardly move

05:30 on the ship with all the presents guys had bought. I remember one year the engineer, this was on Vendetta in ’64 – actually he lives at Toowoomba now this bloke. He’s an older bloke. And he bought this nice cane loungeroom suite which he put into the boardroom.

06:00 We didn’t mind. Something more comfortable than the rubbish we had. And all our boardroom chairs were stuck down in the hull or somewhere they could put them. We got alongside in Sydney and it was champagne and everything for the wives come on board. The bloody cook had got some lamingtons for all the kids. Of course, suddenly the engineer saw the kids with the sticky lamingtons in their hands just about to sit on his settee so they were all whisked out very quickly so we had to sit on the floor. Hopeless.

06:30 Now where else were we?

You were talking about stopping in Hong Kong and shopping.

Your time in port would be made up with maintaining the ship of course. And we used to have what they called Jenny or Susie side parties. And they were local lasses who lived in their sampans – junks – and they’d attach themselves to a

07:00 ship and they’d have their ship showing up each year and Jenny or Susie would come along and they would paint your ship side for you and their payment was they would sell all the soft drinks. Boys always need the soft drinks first thing in the morning. They’d have a big tub up on the upper deck there full of ice and they would sell those, but they’d make your ship look spic and span.

07:30 You’d get the engine room cleaned out because the labour was very cheap. I seem to recall the old gunnery, the shells from the guns that we used to fire, you’d find that the shell would be left behind – got one here somewhere. They were all unaccounted for. But for thirty of those you’d get your whole engine room jipped out and painted.

08:00 Not very legal. But you had to get the job done. Far cheaper than getting it done in Australia.

What did they want those for?

I’ve no idea. I mean, metal would be very useful. Don’t ask me. I don’t know. Anything in Hong Kong. Hong Kong was a fascinating place. Macau. In those olden days – I got married in Hong Kong in ’66 –

08:30 they were still the days when they used to ferry the gold from Macau to Honkers [Hong Kong] and so on. It was all slowly coming to an end. But it’s – we used to – sport. Our rugby team was always pretty good and we’d go across to play against a lot of the British units there. They were out on the border between the

09:00 new territories and China. We were playing this British regiment. We had a few beers after the match and then we were coming back I suppose at seven, eight o’clock at night. And we were in the back of a big army truck, the football train, and the bagman. We always had our bagman there. I forget his name. He was quite well dressed. We were still in our footy shorts and things.

09:30 He actually fell off the back of the truck as we were going down Nathan Road. Have you been to Hong Kong, Kowloon? Right. Nathan Road’s the longest road in the world. It’s about five, six miles long through town. Just to give you an example there in 1960 there – I was in the Melbourne – running up Nathan Road at about eleven o’clock at night in the front of the rickshaw with the chief gun instructor, McCosker,

10:00 behind me and we were in tandem and the rickshaw driver was sitting in the rickshaw. But that was up Nathan Road. You could do it. But now you’d have trouble crossing Nathan Road without taking your life into your hands at two o’clock in the morning. Just the incredible increase in population. It’s increased by millions. But anyway this old Bungy Williams, it was, the bagman, he fell out of the back of the truck there and it’s all right, he bounced and we put him back in.

10:30 We get down to the Star Ferry before they had the tunnel, that Star Ferry – what is it? Love Is A Many Splendoured Thing – you ever see that movie? Anyway there’s two storeys on the Star Ferry and there’s the first class where we always went and here we are sitting in our football gear, but not the bagman. That bagman wasn’t allowed up there because – no we must have had some clothes on – because he had all jerseys and everything in the big bag so we put him into tourist class. Most

11:00 disappointing.

From the Kimbla where did you go?

Okay. ’62 I went to Watson in October to do this little operations officers’ course. Little D course, little direction officers’ course which basically was how to run an operations room and we were just getting helicopters into the RAN at that time and it’s also to talk to helicopters when we’re at sea.

11:30 Helicopter integral part of the anti submarine warfare set up. So we – six of us on the course. We finished that in December ’62. One was a New Zealander and he went back to New Zealand another bloke went for the aircraft carrier. I went to Vendetta, the other bloke went to Voyager, one bloke stayed at Watson. So

12:00 I join Vendetta. We do our work up off Jervis Bay. Was in dry dock being refitted when it was down in Melbourne. We do our work up and we go up north and we're in company with another little ship called Quiberon. We get to the Far East. We spend six months in the Far East. On our way up north through just north of Indonesia in – I'm just trying to think of the sea there –

12:30 Banda Straits it was, Banda Sea. We passed Voyager and Vampire coming back. We were relieving them. That was the last time we saw Voyager. Anyway we get up to the Far East – this is with Vendetta and we have a great time in the Far East. She was a crackerjack ship. Did very well indeed.

Can you tell us about Vendetta exactly what sort of ship it was, what its role was?

13:00 Vendetta was a daring class destroyer. I think it was three hundred and sixty feet long. And around about three hundred and twenty people on board. She had twin turrets. Four point five inch turrets and it was a gun ship. And it was one of the post world war generation, World War II generation. Good ship.

13:30 And we just were up there as part of the strategic reserve which was formed after World War II. We used to mostly in those days and this is in the sixties through, there was nothing much on because everything was all right. It was all peace. Late '63 the Indonesian Confrontation started when Sukarno started.

14:00 We then we went up in '64 again, the Vendetta and that's when we were doing all the patrols of the Singapore Straits, Malacca Straits and over in Borneo. To our Borneo. They were all interesting. It's all a bit of a blur now the three trips in Vendetta.

14:30 Some of the stories. When we were over in Tawau ,we'd still try and play football if we could and one day we went off to play footy and we were late getting back. And we were at anchor in daytime and we used to patrol at night. And we were late getting back. Something had gone wrong with the transport. But the funny part of it is, this football match we were probably playing against Indonesians. Didn't matter.

15:00 To get back into the captain who was a pretty impatient fellow, nice bloke, I liked him, Alan Willis, we thought we were going to get hung. "Did you win?" "Yeah." "Great." So off we got and out to patrol. But we would look for other boats, kumpits or whatever you want to call them. We were totally blackened out, dark nights and you'd go up, sidle up to

15:30 the contact and suddenly illuminate it. Imagine the fear in their eyes when they saw this huge warship beside them. We had this particular night we'd pulled alongside this little cumpit and got the crew out and put them on the upper deck up on the midships of the Vendetta. Hands on their heads, guns pointing at them. And they were starting to wriggle around. Our blokes were starting to get a bit impatient. We realised they were sitting on top of the boiler room

16:00 with only their little lap laps [loin cloth] on so they're getting a quite hot backside. But the boarding officer was Peter Sinclair who later became the governor of New South Wales. Young lieutenant commander in those days. It was his first boarding as well. Another little story. But the fear on the poor old crew of the cumpit when we suddenly illuminated. They didn't even know we were there.

Were they Indonesians?

Could have been.

16:30 You had to examine everything. Indonesian, Malays, you didn't know. There were a lot of pirates up there too. Used to run up there from the Philippines. Borneo wasn't far from the Philippines. They had these high speed boats. Never catch them. But we were doing the patrols in the Malacca Straits, in the Singapore Straits. That was – you were working one in two

17:00 close to modified action stations.

What does that mean exactly?

You're all closed up ready to go. You can fire a gun within basically thirty seconds. See you're on patrol and Indonesians have certain capabilities. When we had these patrol boats with these missiles, K-mart type missiles, if you saw something on your radar which shouldn't have been there

17:30 you had to engage. You had literally thirty seconds. They fired, they had a range I think of from twelve to twenty miles. Well it doesn't take long for a missile to cover twelve miles. A minute. That as the sort of tension – when I say tension it was all part of the job – but that was the limits we had to work to.

Were there any particularly tense moments for you?

18:00 No. There was one where I got scared once. We were alongside in Singapore in the naval base, north side of Singapore. Sembawang Dockyard. There was a cry went up one night that divers had been sighted in the water near the ship. And that was quite frightening. Because during the Confrontation – that was in late '63 actually.

18:30 I was scared. Then when was it, after Voyager ploughed in – we came back from that '63 trip. Voyager had ploughed in on the night just before we got into Darwin. Two o'clock in the morning. And we got

into Darwin at eight o'clock and the news came through that Voyager had it. That was a fairly sad occasion.

19:00 Gave it all due respect. We didn't have an official party that night. We just had a wake. I was the duty officer too and I've never forgotten it again. About ten o'clock at night it was. The signalman came in with a signal and it was to our captain, J.P. Stevenson. Great guy. Brilliant bloke. And the signal was telling him to get to Canberra forthwith. Part of the inquiry team. And Duncan

19:30 Stevens who was captain of Voyager who we'd seen six months before as they passed us, he was a mate of his. He was happy to. He left the ship that morning. One o'clock in the morning about three hours after the signal to fly down to Canberra. Anyway we got back, had a quick coat of paint down in the dockyard in Melbourne and turned around and had to go back to the Far East to fill the gap. And we went back

20:00 with Melbourne. The Melbourne had been repaired. And boy oh boy did we push everything to the limit from then on. You would have thought we might ease off a bit. But pushed everything to the limit on refuelling – everything was done real top professional on edge stuff. A bit of refuelling as I mentioned and exercises.

20:30 We get to Singapore and just before we left Sydney, Singapore had seceded from the Federation of Malaya. So what the hell's going to happen? Because they were all one then. After independence which happened in '63 – and I was up there for independence actually – no, first anniversary of independence – '63. We drove up to KL [Kuala Lumpur]. Now '63,

21:00 so '64 Singapore has seceded. All hell's going to break loose. So we get into the naval base at the northern side of Singapore Island in the afternoon. I was duty officer. Gee seems like I've always been duty officer. But the dockyard was closed that night at about oh seven o'clock, nineteen hundred, because of riots in Singapore. And our

21:30 troops start trickling back. And one bloke came back and he got blood all over him. I said, "What happened there?" "Well I was just in a cab and the window was down and suddenly there was a Chinaman beside me without a head." Machete. So the dockyard was closed and no-one could get out. There was a lot of defence people there. Navy people. The fleet being a hundred and fifty, two hundred ships around.

22:00 We got the lights on and we were tied up in the Singapore stores basin outside a fleet auxiliary ship called Reliant and the duty officer for Reliant came on board just to find out what we knew about things. Now we were a very smart ship, Vendetta, and very polite too. Anyone who walked into our boardroom everyone'd stand up. Make the new bloke feel welcome. We did this.

22:30 Nature of habit. He was quite surprised. And I saw him, the same bloke, when I went over to England for the nav course three years later and he happened to be at Dryad when I was there. He came up to us, said, "Hi," and he announced to all the group what I've just told you – how nice it was. How little deeds mean a lot.

23:00 Yeah. There was that time of the secession of Singapore and the riots and we had no idea what was going to happen. But anyway it all turned out all right. Lee Kuan Yew got on top of it and that was that. That was '64.

Can I just take you back a little bit to that time of the Voyager? Can you tell us what you remember of hearing about what had happened?

Very much so. I think it was about one o'clock, two o'clock in the morning the announcement was made of the system that Voyager and Melbourne had been involved in a collision. By about eight o'clock we

23:30 knew the full tragedy of it. We got back to Sydney then and they had a big memorial service in Saint Mary's Cathedral. Go to that. Basically we went down to Williamstown to get another coat of paint and scrape the bottom and everything and we came back and did a quick work up. But we had the Royal Commission people on board to try

24:00 re-enact it all with Anzac and we came in one night to pick them up. About eight o'clock at night. Piddling with rain. Rough as guts outside too. It's always seemed to be rough. But we picked them up just off Garden Island and went to sea with them and they were all seasick, the Royal Commission people. Except for one bloke who was – Jess, the MP [Member of Parliament] from Latrobe I think it was, who had been some link with Robertson and he was fighting for Robertson.

24:30 But we re-enacted everything in the rain and cold. No-one knew what – the civilians wouldn't appreciate what we were doing. But anyway they were all seasick so it didn't matter. We took them back in and dropped them off at eleven o'clock at night and sailed again.

So you were actually re-enacting the collision with Anzac? So what was involved in doing that re-enactment?

It was just – you knew basically

25:00 what had happened. What you didn't know was why it happened. There were different theories on that. But we were just trying to show because basically the whole things was Melbourne was out there and Voyager was out here and Voyager had turned into Melbourne and crossed into Melbourne. You could just show, with us pulling off at the last minute, but you could also show what she might have intended to do. What possibly

25:30 the plan was. I think more than anything it was showing what conditions people operated in. That was probably just as much of a lesson to the Royal Commission as anything.

How many people died?

She had – it was eighty-four? I think it was eighty-four.

And you knew that particular… ?

Yeah. I could have been on it. That was how close it was. I went to Vendetta.

26:00 James Dowling went to Voyager. How many people did I know on – I knew the gunnery officer, second gunnery officer – he'd been at Dartmouth with us. He'd been the parade training officer in Dartmouth, and Englishman, and he'd come out to Australia. Always wanted to go to Australia. Gets to Australia, his first ship, he dies in it. Eddy Brooks, nice bloke.

26:30 We had, oh a couple of other people I knew. Some I know now. I don't think they've ever recovered. One bloke who came off Voyager and came and joined us in Vendetta. He was on that '64 cruise with us. When we got back to Sydney, went on leave. And just before he went on leave he said, "You know anything about trotting?" "No." "Well, keep an eye on this horse that's coming down from the country." So he come back from leave about six weeks later or something and I

27:00 said to Gary, "What's happening with this trotter?" "Oh it's coming down. It's in the New South Wales derby or 'darby' or whatever it is." "Is it a good thing?" "Yeah. My grandfather who never travels is from down the country is coming down for the first time in twenty years to watch it." It won. So I was a rich boy for a little while. Never been since.

27:30 **I know it's not very pleasant to talk about and obviously it would hurt, but that was a huge incident at that time, that was a big accident. It must have been very difficult for those on board the Vendetta to participate in that re-enactment?**

I don't think it was. I personally didn't feel as such. Now you've got to put it into proper context here. Here I am a young blood

28:00 still thinking I know everything at the age of twenty-four, just doing what we – trying to find out what happened. I think a lot of us believe we know what happened or why it happened. We know why it happened. It should never have happened. But again it was a mistake and mistakes happen.

28:30 It didn't seem to worry us. The stress, really, the hurt was the people on board or people who lost people in it and a lot of those guys never recovered fully. But for us, no. I'd say, there but for the grace of God. I don't think I ever came across any close calls.

Did that accident though have any impact on the men on board the Vendetta or the way you operated?

29:00 No. I was saying, when we went north again we were operating to – we were going it a lot harder. There was no easing up at all. Sort of, I think, the attitude, we'll show them. We were a crackerjack ship though. Very good

29:30 ship, the Vendetta. It won the Gloucester Cup in '64 for being the best ship. But it was all the groundwork in '63 that did it.

You said you had a wake the night that it happened. What did that involve?

A beer or two. But I was duty, so I didn't drink. But yeah they went on – J.P. Stevenson left at one o'clock in the morning. Everyone was up to see him off.

30:00 You can't say much more.

It must have been a bit of a shock though. Because that kind of accident was pretty significant. There weren't too many of those happening in peace time I suppose.

Of course it was. No. They didn't happen very often, thank God. And poor old Melbourne got caught a few years later when I was living in Singapore. It was very

30:30 badly handled, the whole thing, with the inquiry and so on. That could be another beautiful story if you ever want to get stuck into it. Why did certain things happen? Why wasn't more books written? Why was there a second inquiry? Why did Tom Frame write that book in '94? Which is worth reading because that gives you a really why it happened, the lead up to it. The Voyager really shouldn't have been doing what it was doing. Should never have been there.

31:00 **Did you speak personally after that accident to any of the people who were on board the Voyager or Melbourne who could tell you what they had observed?**

Yeah. The officer on watch of Melbourne, Alec Bate, a good friend of mine. He, well having operated with these ships on the bridge of Melbourne you realise Melbourne was in a no win situation.

31:30 Melbourne should never have been to blame on that. Yeah, I spoke to Alec occasionally. I spoke to Russ Lamb who was the officer on watch on the Melbourne when they hit Evans. A good friend of mine, now dead. It was the second collision there. It was as though Melbourne was like a magnet. All the warnings had been given, the briefs had been given and everything. It just happened. Voyager you didn't expect it to happen because Melbourne was God.

32:00 Keep out of the road of Melbourne. That was it. She was flying. That was the done thing. It was the laid down thing. You expect these racing cars to keep out of your road and of course when it gets to the stage where it's too damn late. It was also a bit, I guess, you don't tell another person what to do. Another professional, are you doing the right thing? Because they are meant to be professionals. Unfortunately not the case.

32:30 Yes. I have spoken. I've spoken to Alec a bit about it. But you can't get much out of it. I think most of us know why it happened.

Why was why?

I don't want to talk about that. No. It's too – put it this way,

33:00 what I will say is that I think the higher ups in the navy, the Naval Board, didn't – were just as much to blame as anyone else for not taking action on certain things earlier.

Sure. So after that incident you said that you powered on but stronger than before. In what sense do you mean?

I mentioned refuelling, exercises and so on. Refuelling. You were doing it

33:30 quicker. You were getting alongside, connecting up quicker. They used to have these competitions and try to get it in to standards. Well, we were going well inside any standards.

What was involved in refuelling exactly?

Refuelling you just pull up alongside, the other ship'd be going along at twelve knots, fourteen knots, or something. You'd whistle in like a racing car, just park it alongside, keep it there, and you'd pass over the line and haul over

34:00 their tube, big pipes, rubber type pipes and just stick them into the connect them on the deck there and they pump fuel at I don't know a hundred and twenty tonnes an hour or something. Ship would normally carry about four hundred tonnes I think from memory.

So how long did it take?

It'd take sometimes you'd be up to and hour, two hours, forty minutes. Ships would normally

34:30 do it every two or three days when they were out there exercising.

What was the necessity for increasing the speed at which you did these things?

Back to the old wartime business. The longer you were tied up with another ship you were effective and a damn good target. Get two for the price of one. So the less time you're out of operations the better. So

35:00 by being smart – some of them would make an ungodly hoo hah out of it. It'd take hours. Connecting up even. They were stuffing up totally. They were inefficient. The difference sometimes between half and hour and an hour. Just took on the same amount of fuel. Because of course they cocked it up. That could be significant in the real business.

What was your position on

35:30 **board the Vendetta?**

On Vendetta '63 to '66, I was in the operations room. I used to talk to the helicopters when we operated with them. I was mostly the Special Sea Dutyman Officer of Watch. We were always up on the bridge when we required the first eleven going in and out of harbour and doing refuellings. I think I might have been sports officer one of those trips

36:00 as well. But that was probably about all the jobs.

What was the most challenging job and the challenging thing on that ship?

Beating the Kiwis at rugby. Best we ever did was draw. They were damn good. What was the most – that was the most challenging thing. We couldn't beat those bloody Kiwis.

36:30 **What position did you play?**

Halfback or breakaway. But I'm just trying to think. I don't know. Your job was never challenging. In fact, you just did it. And if there was exercises, you'd be watch on, stop on, four hours on, four hours off and you get tired and so on, but that was all part of it. I guess real challenges came on the sporting field. On the Melbourne

37:00 you'd have a Sunday sporting day and all the ships would just circle round and they'd send teams across. Then there in 1960 the American ship came alongside and they were a bit short on water. So they all wanted to come across for a shower and Melbourne wasn't flush with water either. But they'd been on water restrictions for days. But we had one of the electrical officers in the squadron is Charlie Morris, a big bloke, and he was a hammer thrower in the Commonwealth Games team.

37:30 Normally when the ship comes alongside to pass the gear over, you fire a line right out of a rifle and it has a nylon line. Well, instead of firing this rifle across they'd get Charlie Morris with his big hammer. On the end of the hammer was the line. So Charlie threw this bloody big hammer across the water and it hit the American ship. It got to the American ship all right, put a big bloody hole in it. That was in 1960.

38:00 **How did the Yanks like that?**

Didn't matter. They were getting a free wash. But all the sporting teams would come across and you'd have a sports day on the flight deck and up there in the tropics it's so damn hot everyone had to wear shoes except for one person on the ship and that was Sandy Brennan the PO [Petty Officer] diver; clearance diver. Very famous bloke, Sandy. Actually when I was in Kimbla just the following year later we had to go down to

38:30 Jervis Bay to retrieve the Viscount which crashed at that Christmas time – Christmas '63? '62? Yeah, Christmas '61. Just ploughed in just off the runway. They didn't find it till the next morning. We were down there and Sandy was in the diving team. It was the navy divers that found wreck on the bottom there, all the bits and pieces.

39:00 It was a Sunday afternoon and we were all there. The chief of police and the police divers and every other urk and turk around – the admiral, the lot. Everyone was a bit tense that day. Sandy resurfaced, got a big bag and he said, "Righto, you flat footed wallabies, come and get your meat." As harsh as it sounds now, it broke the ice.

39:30 There were people scared to go in. So the police divers went and did their very unpleasant job. But that Sandy Brennan got up and went to his little diving tender and was sick. Real tough nut. Heart of gold. But Sandy had feet like an – I don't know what. But he was allowed to be excused shoes on the hot flight deck of Melbourne.

And you played football on the flight deck?

40:00 No. They do prior to games, sprints, relays, the whole lot. Probably basketball in the lift wells. Whole host of things. But that was a sports day with the fleet. Individual sports days, we had a couple of them in Vendetta. We'd have a competition between all the different groups on the ship. Go all

40:30 afternoon and be absolutely knackered at the end of it and you'd have a tote running on it. Have everything. But no, good time. They take a lot of good organisation. Course you always had the battle between the officers and the chief petty officers. Great battles. There'd be a tug of war around the front end of the ship. You'd have a big rope go right round and one of the tugs we pulled went for five and a half minutes. That's a lot of – you try that one.

41:00 All the blokes were buggered after that.

Tape 6

00:30 **So Paul, can you tell us about the trip to Indonesia from the … ?**

Yes. It was in 1960. We went down to pay a goodwill visit to Indonesia. We entered the port of Tanjung Priok which is the port of Jakarta at about half past seven in the morning. Two Indonesian ships came out to join us and they fell in behind us and then Melbourne got alongside. It was about

01:00 twenty to eight, quarter to eight. There was guards and bands on the wharf and we were all in full liver up on the deck in our best bib and tucker and we had the band and the guard and everything there and there was going to be the big ceremony at eight o'clock when they raised the flag for colours. Well there was an established routine on the Melbourne when they did raise the colours and basically the signalman on the flag deck would ring down to the

01:30 quartermaster who was under the flight deck on the gangway on the sound powered telephone to tell him when it was time to ring the eight bells which denoted eight o'clock and then the whole guard and band would start saluting and playing the national anthems and so on. This particular day the second gunnery officer of the Melbourne was on the gangway and he changed the routine. "Don't pick up the

sampan telephone when it rings, just ring the

02:00 bell." Well it just so happened that the freshwater tankee – the freshwater tankee is a stoker who as soon as ship comes alongside races off and connects up the hoses to the freshwater so the ship gets shoreside water. Anyway the freshwater tankee was down in the engine room wondering whether it was time to go ashore so he rang the sampan telephone about one and a half minutes to eight o'clock and not at eight o'clock and the quartermaster went across to pick it up and the gunnery officers said, "No no no. Don't!

02:30 Just ring the bells." So the bells rang one minute before time and there was pandemonium on the wharf. Guards and bands weren't ready and the whole lot. What a shambles. But that night we had a big reception on. These receptions – we often got reception when we went into port. Some were blacklisted for those that you were on a list and you had to go because there weren't enough volunteers. This was a blacklist reception but you had to get a hundred and ten people I think it was, officers, and there was only about a hundred and twenty on board anyway. So they all had to go.

03:00 It was at the Sukarno, I'm not sure whether it was a palace or not. But we hopped in buses and big police escort and we drove straight down the main road right down the centre with a police escort waving all the cars aside to this reception. We got to the reception at I guess eighteen hundred or something. I mean, beer and this red sweet drink. They all drink the beer naturally. But after the reception, about half past eight we had to sit down and witness the

03:30 Indonesian dances. There were about twenty provinces or something and we had to witness the twenty different things. Well by about eleven o'clock all the boys are sitting there with their legs crossed. There's no toilets or anything and I was pretty uncomfortable that day. It made a good cartoon in the line book. We had a brilliant sketcher on board. Anyway, that was the trip to Indonesia. Another time in sixty-four it was when I was back on Vendetta we

04:00 had something to do with the confrontation besides the normal patrols. The HMAS Victorious had come down to Australia and busted an engine and so she was limping back to Singapore with her escorts and so on. We came down to meet Victorious just south of Sunda Strait. We came down with the Melbourne and both of us to join up with the Victorious to escort her back through the Indonesian waters exercising our right of innocent passage in accordance with the law of the

04:30 sea. Anyway it was a Sunday and off we go and an Indonesian navy plane comes out which is a Gannet, similar to the ones we had. And they buzzed the fleet. They didn't get shot down. Anyway subsequently years later I met the pilot of that plane in Australia. He was the naval attaché.

05:00 We often joked about that day on different sides, the same area.

What did he say?

Well he had to go out there and buzz the fleet. That was it. He could have got shot down. But he wasn't. Nice bloke. Ang Sutioman, his name.

How important was the Vendetta's presence in Indonesia in the confrontation do you think?

It was good because it was a good gun ship. Nice for –

05:30 better not say it – for wog bashing. Perfect ship for that. In fact the Vendetta went up to Vietnam, the gun line there. Normally that was reserved for the American built ship, but the Vendetta had to fill in one day and did it. Very good gunship, Vendetta.

Can you tell us what happened with Vietnam? The lead up to it. Was there much time in between?

Confrontation in Vietnam? I think from memory – I don't know much about

06:00 Vietnam. My brother went there as a conscript. We had the special forces, the Australian Army Training Unit went up there and I think they started in about '64 from memory. So it was well and truly still on when Confrontation was still on. That team was replaced by a regular, a bigger force in later years.

06:30 But from the navy presence. We had clearance divers there, a special unit of divers. We also had our fleet air arm pilots. One of my team mates who was a highly qualified air engineering pilot, he was up there flying helicopters and we had our navy pilots attached to one of the American helicopter squadrons. They spent some years

07:00 there. In fact one of my good friends was killed up there flying a helicopter. He was a pilot. And then we had the other ships on the gun line. The Perth, the Brisbane and the Hobart rotated and spent about four years drifting up and down the gun line. What else did we have? We had the

07:30 logistics side too. I happen to be a patron of the Queensland chapter of the Vietnam Logistics Support Association. They were desperate late last year and they asked me to fill in the job. Anyway, the logistics people are the people who supported the troops in Vietnam. Consisted of quite a few different groups – you had the navy ships, the Sydney which was transporting some of the soldiers up there.

08:00 Some went up by Qantas aircraft. The Qantas people are part of this logistic support too. All got a

medal, acknowledged back in about ’97 I think it was. The Australian Service medal. We’ve got the heavy escorts. We used to go and escort Sydney and we’d go and pick it up somewhere around Manus Island or wherever and take it up. And you had the airforce people flying in there and they were part of the logistics. It was a big effort.

08:30 And you had some of the army logistic people.

So were you part of the logistic presence?

Yeah. Vendetta escorted Sydney on two occasions. Probably two occasions. I was on it on one in ’65. I did ’64 too. Yes I was on it in ’64.

Can you describe that operation?

Sydney would go up, she’d go up normally through

09:00 east of Papua New Guinea up through the Dallman Passage. Because you didn’t want to go through Indonesian waters. So she’d go up that way and we’d pick her up normally around Manus Island. She’d stop at Manus Island for a night or something and then tootle across the, I’d say it’s the Pacific Ocean I think, across there and in through north of Borneo at the time and ten straight into Vung Tau.

09:30 We’d escorted them all the way to there and when they unloaded then we’d go. There’s probably not terribly much danger, but it was always there. Always something. You always took precautions and made sure.

What was the potential danger?

The main one would have – it’s hard to say because there could have been submarines around. There was no Vietnam subs, the Vietnam navy didn’t have submarines, but you don’t know what

10:00 alliances get done and so on. But we did that – ’64, ’65 I did that. And also in 1970 when I was in the Yarra we did the same thing. They were only a couple of week operations. Talking about submarines, I digress a bit here. I was on the Stuart and this was in 1971, miserable ship that. Miserable time for me, put it that way. We were going from Singapore to Hong Kong and it was a Sunday morning.

10:30 It was overcast and we were going to have division. Rarely did we have divisions at sea, but this was one of those days and you dress up in your best bib and tucker. Well we had a doctor on board, a fella, newly qualified doctor and very new to the navy and he wasn’t quite sure what buttons he had to wear on his white uniform. So anyway someone told him the wrong buttons which he duly put on and the Saturday night before the divisions on Sunday morning

11:00 we put the clocks – which way did we do it? We were going to Hong Kong so we advanced them half an hour, but the doctor didn’t realise this and so he turned up late for divisions with the wrong buttons on his uniform. But at the time divisions were meant to fall in at nine o’clock in the morning we were keeping a listening watch on our sonars. We were only going along about twelve knots which is silent speed. You can’t hear us. Our sonars picked up this pinging.

11:30 And so we’re listening to this submarine pinging on us. And we estimated later it was just over there probably about a thousand yards away, two thousand yards. It’s quite an eerie feeling knowing there’s someone out there in the water. We don’t know to this day what it was. We took a sounding of it, a tape recording of all the noise it was making and sent it off to US, but it was an interesting

12:00 little trip.

When you say it’s an eerie feeling – in what way?

An eerie feeling knowing there’s someone out there under the water who you don’t know who it is.

Who could be unfriendly?

Oh yeah. It was either going to be an American one or a Russian.

Russian, at that time.

At that time, 1970. China I don’t think they had them at that stage, 1970. Yeah. So they’re either Russian or American.

At that time, was the Communist

12:30 **threat very concerning for the navy?**

We got over the domino theory. Just over Vietnam I guess was part of the domino theory. Once they all started going Communist it would all come down to Indonesia and Australia. Indonesia threw over Communism – the Sukarno ousting. It was probably a wrong theory. Sounded good. No.

13:00 Yes. In 1970, where were we? We’d just got over the insurgency in Malaysia – Malaya at the time – in the fifties. But you still got it going over the Philippines. It’s a bit hard. It wasn’t a major – I don’t think we saw it as a major threat. But there was always that fear of something happening. China was pretty powerful at that stage and not as friendly. It was only just after that – 1970,

13:30 ’72 – that we started diplomatic relations with China when we put the first western ambassadors for a long time to go in there. We were actually the link with America. Yes, very good. I had dinner onboard the Vendetta there in – where are we? – 1965 now. No, another ten years later. ’76. We were in Hong Kong again. We had dinner with our Australian ambassador to Peking.

14:00 Beijing now, but it was Peking then. He was down studying Chinese in Hong Kong University. He was a friend of one of our blokes so we invited he and his wife down to dinner on board the ship. Very good dinner. We had some contacts with different people around the world.

So there wasn’t much involved in the Vendetta in Vietnam that you were close to?

No. Only just going up there

14:30 on those escort duties.

How concerned were you – we’ve heard lots about the mines being placed on ships by the VC [Viet Cong] – going into those waters?

We always took precautions. What we used to do was call Operation Awkward where we would be dropping live depth charges over the side at irregular intervals and you’d have boats going round with grappling iron and very much as a deterrent. And yeah we did that all the time.

15:00 Never took a risk. That plays on some people now. Some of these people who are getting stressed out because of some of those experiences.

But not you?

No. Not me. I’ve tried to work this one out because, see, I was a well trained mid twenties and thirties and you knew it was all going to happen. But a young eighteen year old, new sailor,

15:30 probably gets woken up out of sleep thinking all hell’s broken loose – there’s only a protective depth charge being dropped. Could play on his mind later. Quite easily.

So you really understand that someone could go through that a few times and still – ‘cause that wasn’t many times that you …?

No. Doesn’t matter. You only need one traumatic experience to play havoc with you. It can. And the more intelligent you are, too, I think that means a lot. Tried to work this one out when I

16:00 was doing the navy training. The gunnery training. Rewriting all that. People wanted to do some of the training to simulation. But there’s nothing like the big bang of a gun and you’ve got to really fire it to get the proper feel, smell it. But if you’ve done a lot of training and you want to go and upgrade or something there’s no problem. You can do the synthetic or the compute type training.

16:30 But you still got to do the proper full training at the beginning.

When was it that you were married? Before Vietnam?

I was married in ’66. That was the first time. The second time was – oh gee when did we get married? ’78.

So when you first got married as a young sailor was it difficult to have that relationship when you were going away to sea a lot?

No. Young officer I was then. No. Not at all.

17:00 That was the way life was. You packed your bongos and went away for six months. Bye bye, Mum. Better than the days of Nelson, when he went away for two years. It was all part of life. But unfortunately we were going through that odd period then when all this liberalism came into being and equality and everything else and didn’t quite work. And it certainly played a big part in us not having – I mean, we had the good with the bad.

17:30 She came to England with me the first time, two years in England.

What was that for?

That was when I went to the navigation course.

What year was that?

That was – when did I go over? – April ’67. We got to go across. That was good fun. That’s when I was explaining before I think when we went up through the west coast of England

18:00 and Scotland and down to Channel Islands up into the fjords of Norway. Great time. Through snow and rain and everything.

On the Vendetta?

No. That was on the RN training ship. What did they call it? Ostler. It was called the HMS Ostler which

is like the type fifteen, the Q

18:30 ships. After – just me digressing a bit again. We go on we're up in to, what, that was '68. When I joined the – I went and trained as part of the staff at the Royal Naval Training School at Dryad for a little while. Then I was posted onto the maintenance ship, the HMS Berry Head, which had open bridges and oh! One of the things we had to do was –

19:00 **What doest that mean, open bridges?**

Open bridges – you don't have a roof on it. It's open to the weather. Now they're air conditioned and everything. Freezing. We did a bit of a work up down at Portland, the Royal Naval Exercise Base or training base. That was – we left that after a couple of weeks and went up to Cuxhaven which is at the mouth of the River

19:30 Elbe. Just down from Hamburg. I think that's right. Hamburg. Germany. We were going up the English Channel and this is where the ships asked permission to pass. And here we are in this antiquated old ship. Anyway we anchored off the mouth of the Elbe at about twenty hundred the night before we went up and

20:00 waited for the pilot to come out. Think we had a pilot. Can't remember. But anyway we then went in early next morning at about six o'clock and it was snowing and it was freezing. Took about an hour to get up to the port. It's the coldest I've ever been in my life. Frozen almost unconscious from the cold. That was Cuxhaven

20:30 on the old Berry Head. Berry Head was an interesting little ship. It was a Liberty class World War II style ship. It could do about ten point eight knots. It had a fairly basic engine in it. Triple expansion reciprocating steam driven.

What does that mean?

Three big valves which are driven by steam. Simple as that.

21:00 And one big propeller.

As opposed to a motor?

Yeah. See, you've got your various types of engines. You've got your diesel engine or a motors, whatever you want to call them, your petrol engines. And then you've got your turbines which are like you've got in an aircraft. The ships have the turbines too. You get bigger speeds out of all of those, but this was just a real old plodding work horse. It was a maintenance ship. It had only done –

21:30 hadn't sailed many miles at all, about five thousand miles at the end of the war and then was put into mothballs at the RAN and was pulled out of mothballs and we took it out to Singapore to replace HMS Triumph which was going in for a big refit. She was a maintenance ship in Singapore. Anyway we sailed from Portsmouth and our first port of call was Gibraltar and we're going in there – again it was raining –

22:00 seemed to always rain. We were just going into the Bay of Gibraltar there and the electricity, the generators fell over in the ship so we had no electricity, no lights, no nothing. The gyro compass, it was an antiquated model, but that fell over. So we had to really anchor blind in the day which we did. Then we continued on through the South Atlantic.

22:30 I had one old gyro compass which when I did my training course, there was a pile of old junk in the training classroom and I asked them what that was – "Don't worry, you'll never see one of them." This pile of old junk was the same as what I had in this ship. But we had two magnetic compasses, the old traditional magnetic. Magnetic compasses are affected by the earth's magnetism, the variation and we're down there in the South Atlantic

23:00 and everything went haywire because of the change in variation so I thought, "Oh well." We just did a quick realignment with the gyro and fixed it up and when I came back twelve months later the same thing happened so we just changed the settings again. This was a very workmanlike way of doing it. It wasn't the professional way of doing it. It was the common sense way of doing it. Fixing things up. But we're down there in the South Atlantic and we were going to fuel off one of these Royal Fleet auxiliaries and this Royal Fleet auxiliary came.

23:30 It was an old one too and they asked us would we mind doing all the approaching and so on because they were old fashioned. Well, we were far more old fashioned than they were. But Berry Head was great. We went round up the east coast of Africa. The Agulhas Current there tootles along at about five knots, quite a very strong current, heading south.

What were you actually doing?

We were taking it up to Singapore to be the maintenance ship.

24:00 But we were going to Mombasa first because at that time we had the – the UN [United Nations] patrols were on. This was when Rhodesia was put under sanctions. One of my mates, an Australian, was on exchange with the Royal Navy like I was. He was the navigator of the Argonaut which was doing this patrol. All they did was run up and down a line about a hundred mile long or something for ninety days.

They went mad, silly buggers. But we were getting them a

24:30 maintenance period in Mombasa. So anyway Argonaut came in and our two navigators got together and we maintained ourselves quite well. We hadn't seen each other for some time.

You went out and got drunk together somewhere?

No, no we might have got a bit tight and played sport and everything. But while we were in Mombasa we spent about a month there I think maintaining these ships and some RN survey ships which were out there in that part of the world. We were

25:00 there when the East African safari rally was on. We went and helped with some of that. It was quite interesting to watch some of these mad rally drivers come whistling through Mombassa on the Windy. Fascinating little place, Mombasa though. Then it was across the Indian Ocean, tootling across to south of the little island of Gan and then to Singapore. Berry Head was good when it was at sea, but it was hard yakka alongside

25:30 all the time because you had nothing to do. Because it was maintenance and there's not much maintenance for a navigator.

So what would you do to fight the boredom?

That was hard. It really was that period. My wife flew out to join us in Singapore and stayed there. We stayed there for about ten months, but, no it was real hard. That was a hard period, to fill in the boredom. It's all right for the maintainers because they're doing their jobs.

26:00 Anyway, that was Berry Head.

Did you have sport that you could?

Oh yeah, we used to play the footy and so on, but there's only so much footy you can – when you're there all the time you weren't going to sea. You'd go to sea a couple of times up to Penang and up to Hong Kong, but, no, that was probably one of the down times in a way. That was 1970. It was when I came back to Australia, went back up the Far East in the Yarra.

26:30 This is the typhoon in Yarra. Yarra was in Singapore when I was there in Berry Head in January 1970 and I was joining Yarra back in Australia in about I think it was June or something. And so I had made arrangements for a car to pick me up at Spencer Street Station on such a day and this was four months beforehand and I was just going to hop on the ship

27:00 and we were going to sail up to Sydney and have a leisurely trip round Australia before Christmas and back home for Christmas. All sounded too good. So anyway back we went to England on the Berry Head and my first daughter was born when I was south of Dakar. Dakar, an interesting little town too. I get back to Australia, go down to Spencer Street, the car's there to

27:30 pick me up, the driver was a maniac. He was driving me at sixty mile along that Footscray Road and I said, "Oh we ready to sail on Monday?" This being the Friday and he said, "No. We're still in the dry-dock. There's been a strike on. We can't get out." And I thought, 'Oh gee, this is going to be good for Mum back home there expecting to see me." "Any other news?" "Oh yeah, we're going back to the Far East." Thought, 'Oh God, what's happened here?' That really blew me. Anyway we went back to the Far East, did a bit of work up on the way.

28:00 Again. But we had to go to Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, to finish off – it was the last segment of the Ikara anti submarine missile trial of which we had a system on the board. The ship that was meant to do it couldn't go. So we went up to Singapore, checked in there with the Commander Far East Fleet, a couple of days there and then trundled off to Hawaii which is quite a long leg.

28:30 Firstly we had to go to Subic Bay to get some fuel in the Philippines. And as we were heading up the South China Sea to Subic Bay there was a typhoon out on the Pacific Ocean heading towards the Philippines so we split up and we got into the Subic Bay about midnight I think it was. Sucked in the fuel and didn't hoist our special flag up.

29:00 Left about six o'clock in the morning and as we were leaving there the typhoon was just on the eastern side of the Philippines coming through San Bernardino Strait which we had to go through. And it came through San Bernardino Strait, we went south all the way around Mindanao, southern Philippines, and we were the bottom part of the circle and the cyclone was the top part of the circle, went in and gave Luzon and Subic a drenching.

29:30 We went out through San Bernardino Passage in the wake of the typhoon so that was another one we missed, but the sea was still that oily swell and then we had to go to Guam where we got some more fuel. Then we had to go to Kwajalein where they had the atomic testing after World War II. That was run by the Americans. It was only by good fortune I found Kwajalein

30:00 although it was in the eastern hemisphere, it kept western hemisphere time to be in the same time as the firing, where the missiles were firing from. There used to be a test place, it was a test place. I found that information out in a pub in Williamstown in Victoria one night. We rocked in; we had to go to Kwajalein. We did that. We got in there. Got some more fuel. Fuel is pretty important. Then we trundled

off to

30:30 Pearl Harbour.

How long were each of those legs?

Those legs would have been – from Kwajalein to Pearl was – dearie me, what was it? Two one six four? What could we do? Singapore to Manila was probably about

31:00 three or four days and then to Guam was probably about the same. The leg across down to Kwaja was probably about four or five days again. But then from Kwaj to Pearl was seven days I think it took us and we were going at economical speed and I think it was – it might have been two one six four miles. It just rings a bell. Something like that. Yeah I think it was.

Where's Kwajalein?

In the Marshall Islands

31:30 I think it is in the Eniwetok Atolls.

So it's an island?

Yeah. It's an atoll there.

What could you see of the island or the atomic testing?

It's just a big lagoon. An island just like any of these coral islands. Had their base there and so on. they sunk some of the German ships there. Prinz Eugen I think was sunk there in some form of trial at the end of the war and it's all in the atoll.

What,

32:00 **they just sank the German ships because they were?**

It was part of the trial I think. I don't know if it was with atomic bombs or what. No. It wouldn't. Yeah so it's still there this place I think. But it was all hush hush, top secret, and they didn't want to know us, but we sucked in our fuel and off we went to Pearl Harbour. We played our cowboys and indians in Pearl Harbour.

What was –

32:30 **it was a missile, submarine detection?**

Submarine weapon. Anti submarine weapon.

Can you explain what that is?

Yeah. It's a missile, that was sat on the back end of the ship and basically it was linked to your sensors and could be linked to a helicopter's sensors as well. Particularly useful if you had a helicopter who detected a submarine a long way away, or within ten miles, you could fire this weapon from your own ship.

33:00 Basically it was just a pedestal on the back of the ship stood about ten foot high and had a missile on it. Like normal shape missile. That was just fired. It had a torpedo attached to it. It just dropped the torpedo at the right time. It's all computerised, so on. That's all it was. We designed it, Australian designed. Unfortunately it – the

33:30 Brits took it on for a little while, part of it, some of it. But the Americans didn't get it. Didn't want it. Which is unfortunate the Americans weren't in it. It might have gone a lot further. But it was our design. Not a bad system.

What was the benefit of it?

The weapons you carried in your ship could only fire about at two thousand yards I think the maximum was or a mile. One thousand, yeah I think that was it. That was the range. And that was your

34:00 mortar bombs and so on. But this thing could go to a range of about ten miles I think it was. Yeah. Something like that. Or longer. And it could be linked into someone else's sensors. The helicopters some of them in those days didn't carry any weapons. Now they do, but they can stay up longer if they haven't got weapons on them. So that was something we did. But coming back from Hawaii we

34:30 we were on one boiler. We had two boilers in the Yarra and we blew the tubes – the ship went dead one night – an eerie feeling. And we may have blown a super heater tube in the boilers. This was a bit of a nuisance. We flashed up the other boiler. And that wasn't all. Not long after that we blew one engine which was unusual to do an engine.

35:00 We had a new officer joining us in Subic, yeah, we were going to Subic. The little part that we needed for our engine could fit in his luggage. Just fortuitous that he was coming to join us from Sydney. So he wondered why the big welcoming committee was there with the "Have you got the spare part? Not

"Nice to see you."

35:30 Because we busted our engine, boilers and everything, we had to stop big exercises planned with some of the US nuclear submarines. They would have been good exercises but that didn't happen. Anyway we got to Subic, got our big and tootled off there to Hong Kong. Christmas in Hong Kong I think it was.

Were you still with your wife at this stage?

Yeah. 1970. I didn't get divorced until '75.

36:00 **And what happened there?**

We just were chalk and cheese.

Did I hear you correctly before when you said another navy friend of yours, was it?

Yeah.

Must have been an awful situation?

Oh. I think we were busted before he came sniffing round. I'm not sure. Yeah. We were just incompatible. But she's incompatible with anyone. She's had what

36:30 three husbands now. We didn't get on. Just a fact of life I think. But the kids really had a problem there. That's life. I don't think it would have made any difference whether I'd been in the navy or not.

Were you away, were you living in Hong Kong at the time?

No. We were passing through in Vendetta when we got married. She flew up to be married. Just another gimmick.

37:00 We got married in Hong Kong, came back to Australia, that was in '66, '67. Then we went over to England and first child happened in April '70. The daughter. And then came back and went to the Far East again. What happened then? Yeah, just before I left for the Far East for some weeks we were together so I had another one when we come back. Twelve months between

37:30 one and two. And eighteen months between two and three and went to the Far East again.

Like clockwork.

It was a pretty hard period. All those stresses and we just couldn't match ourselves to the stresses, I guess. Like so many other people. We were well off. We'd built our house and everything. Would have been a multi millionaire now, but probably dead.

38:00 **When you went to England, how did the accommodation work then, having a wife and child?**

That's all right. You get the married quarters and so on. We were well looked after. No problems on that side. Good. Great. It was when you got back to Australia it was hard because you didn't get allowance, you didn't get anything and we were really on the bones – as I said before the pay was

38:30 not bad for bachelors, but gosh we hardly had a penny to scratch ourselves with and I know people of my vintage who were out pulling petrol on Sundays just to make ends meet. They were lieutenant commanders. That means they'd been in the navy for I think fifteen years. So it wasn't adequate really. And certainly not adequate now when you look at some of the responsibilities the captains of the ships have in relation to the

39:00 responsibility of some of these people who are sitting behind desks. They don't get paid nearly as much. I think that's not right.

What was the course like in England?

The navigation course? It went for about nine months. It was mainly intensive navigation and also a bit of operations stuff. We visited different places in England. The old place where they made gyros and so on

39:30 and trialled things. We went over to Ireland to Londonderry, Northern Ireland, and learnt something there. We flew over. There was about ten of us, twelve of us, I think, on this course. One Australian, one South African and the rest were Poms. We got to Londonderry and there we had a night off where we went across the border.

Tape 7

00:30 **Before we got to PNG, can you tell us the story you were?**

Over in Londonderry?

Yeah. From the beginning.

Yes. We'd flown over to Londonderry as part of this navigation training course and one night we made arrangements to go across the border into Southern Ireland to a railway station for a few drinks. We get to this railway station, get in the bus and get taken to the railway station, and it's full of people.

01:00 Old people, Irish people and we say, "When's the next train in?" "Next week." But this was just before all the trouble started again. And we were looked at suspiciously. There's no two ways about that. But it was interesting to see that and back in Ireland the same place about five years ago and we were pleased to be drive through it again, but they had a lot of trouble of there. But anyway

01:30 that's part of the navigation training we did. On the training ship I think I mentioned before we took that ship everywhere we could – going down the fjords in Norway flat out – or twenty knots plus if fog which is illegal. But we had to do it. We did it because we were being pushed the limit. It was fascinating. In the Channel Islands we had to balance the ship

02:00 between – stem the tide, but between two islands with only just metres on either side. Quite unreal what we were put through. And on the final day, the examination day, we did it back in the Solent. The Solent's a great place for many tides, currents, sandbanks, the whole damn lot. Perfect place for an exam. We actually had snow. So it was an interesting little escapade.

02:30 Shall we get onto PNG and so on.

Yeah. Can you tell us how you came to PNG?

Yeah. I went back to Vendetta again as the XO and that was good fun. We did another Far East cruise. I've actually spent five years of my life in ships in the Far East. I got off Vendetta in '78.

03:00 Went to Garden Island dockyard. This is what I missed before. I'd just about come to the end of everything. They gave me this engineer's job and it was a piece of cake actually but it was all to do with refitting and maintaining ships and it was good and I got on very well with the people there and that's how I got promoted with the next leg. But while I was there I said I wouldn't mind going to PNG and the place down in Canberra said, "Gosh, we're looking for volunteers, dang! You're on." And so, Helen, newly married, and myself went up there.

03:30 It was great. It was a double hatted job. We had a little naval base called Basilisk. HMAS Basilisk and I was the CO [Commanding Officer] of that but it was only in name only, but we were also part of the headquarters of the Australian Defence Co-operation Group. I was the personnel manager for that. We had at that stage I think probably close to two hundred Australian defence force personnel scattered around PNG. Some in Moresby, some in Lae,

04:00 and an engineering group in Mindi in the southern highlands. Being the personnel bloke I'd go round and visit all these people. It was a fascinating job. But we got there in March '79 and 1980 Vanuatu gained its independence. Vanuatu was run by both the French and the British and every sign was in

04:30 two languages. I think we sent on Australian ship across there and the PNG band went down and I think there might have been a small contingent of PNG troops went down as well – only a very small contingent. However, there'd been a bit of unrest in there. There'd been a few murders and then just after their independence they had a rebellion. The rebellion took place on the island of Santo which is one of the northern most islands

05:00 in that group. The leader of the rebellion was a bloke called Jimmy Stephens. The rebellion was partially funded by I think the Phoenix group which was American organisation. We got the passports. I got a passport there of this group which intended to take over Vanuatu. Anyway, the PNG went to send a force down. Because we had some Australians on the logistic side they wanted to have an

05:30 attaché down there so they sent me. For two reasons. A. I knew the people involved, our Australians down there. And B. I was the personnel manager anyway and C. there was probably no-one else to do the job up there. I was lucky. Might seem strange sending a navy bloke to do an army type job, but anyway that was the case. So I flew down to Vila. This was in probably

06:00 August 1979. We had a – I was met at the airport by one of my colleagues, Peter O'Lachlan, who got kicked out of the navy in '57. He was with AP then. Anyway we had a bit of discussion that night. Then we got into this looking at what was going to happen.

06:30 We flew up to Santo, the PNG Defence Force DC3, an old DC3 which was flown by an Australian pilot. We had on board this aircraft the PNGDF [Papua New Guinea Defence Force] general, Ted Diro, and the hoi polloi of the Vanuatu political side and the Australian high commissioner, myself. Australian high commissioner, Michael Overington, good bloke. Anyway we flew over Jimmy Stephens' village.

07:00 It's stupid when I look back. All they had to do was fire a couple of bullets up at us and we would have had one DC3 down. Anyway, we stopped in at Luganville, the airport there, and went into the town. On either side of the airport there was a French and British troops. They were crack regiments that had been sent out, but because they were always at each other's, at loggerheads

07:30 diplomatically, they weren't doing anything to keep the peace. Just to bring peace. So you had these dissidents up there and the town itself was like a dead town. We walked down the main street into the stores which were just totally deserted which was quite an eerie feeling. And there were two village areas, one was the defence one and one was the English section. The English section had been raided at night

08:00 some months before we started off the unrest up there. Anyway it was a good time in Vanuatu. The PNG troops then came in. They were in a rear base at Vila Airport and they had this forward base up at Santo on Santo Island. They'd been given some pretty good publicity about them being man-eaters and so on.

08:30 Cannibals and so on. I still maintain to this day – we might have been a bit unorthodox because the PNG Defence Force had marched into that town of Luganville with the band in front of them and the troops behind and a big cooking pot, steaming pot, cauldron – the rebels would have given up. I reckon that. It could have been as simple as that. You got to understand some of these people. I might be wrong. But I still reckon that would have been the easiest way of doing it. Anyway the PNG defence force went in, in their

09:00 rickety old planes and so on and the suave or swish French troops and English troops left and went back to their respective homes having achieved nothing. The force commander up there was a bloke called Tony Huai, a very good friend from Papua New Guinea. I got on very well with him. That's one of the reasons I got back there a second time, because I knew them all well. I used to fly up

09:30 to Santo every odd day in one of our army aircraft we had over there. Porter aircraft. Pilatus Porter. Just to talk to Tony and see what was happening. And we had an Australian up there as well who was in jail. So we had to visit him and see he was all right. So it was quite an exciting one. The day Tony took the troops in to arrest Jimmy – Santo, it took about – that was on the 31st of August.

10:00 Funny how those dates come back. It was a Sunday. I filled up there and got all the first hand news and came back and Australia knew straight away. Communications weren't all that hot, but Australia knew well before PNG knew what had happened.

Can you tell us what you remember happening and what you remember hearing that day?

Tony had gone in and attacked Jimmy Stephens' village which was

10:30 from memory probably about five miles north of the town of Luganville. And he just arrested them and that was it. I think one of Jimmy Stephens' sons was killed. He tried to run a roadblock or some such thing – not necessarily that day, but that certainly happened. Thank God there was only a very few injuries in this whole escapade. But anyway, Jimmy Stephens was taken to jail. He's now died, I

11:00 think. Yes. He has. But I still feel he may have been a figurehead for these other groups. But anyway, that happened. The Australian involvement, we had the Porters' Pilot [Pilatus] aircraft, the Macchi aircraft to try and help out a bit. But we also had a civil aid. We had a Caribou in for a while – sorry, a Hercules C3130 aircraft and a Caribou replaced it to take the people back to Santo

11:30 on a daily basis. That normally inhibitors, so they could try and restore these shops and so on. So we were doing a lot on the civil aid side which was good.

You were talking about Jimmy Stephens.

The whole thing with Vanuatu, you've got to understand some of these Pacific Islanders and the different tribal links and so on. I think

12:00 we in Australia get it all wrong when we tend to box them all in together when in fact they're all different cultures. Every island is different. Every tribe is different. The exercise at Vanuatu was interesting. Australia didn't think PNG would provide the assistance they did and PNG rather caught Australia by the hop. And went in there and helped their neighbours. But anyway that's probably all we need to say about it. One story

12:30 I can give you there, it was up the north end of Santo Island is shaped a bit like a tooth. And a PNG patrol boat was in there. We weren't allowed to have any Australians in the combat role. This patrol boat happened to be driven by an Australian but he got taken off it before it left Manus Island and a PNG bloke was in charge of it. But anyway this patrol boat was anchored in the bay there and on the shore was a rebel flag flying.

13:00 So they decided they would send a little party ashore in the rubber duckie or tinny I think I was. Anyway they just flying around that time was a PNG air force plane, a Nomad aircraft flown by an Australian, Geoff Woods. And Geoff could see some activity on the shore and he was trying to warn the patrol boat just to be careful.

13:30 Communications didn't work. They're always wont not to work. So he decided to fly down over the patrol boat to try and alert them. Just as he started to fly down the people ashore he'd seen fired at the patrol boat with rifles. In the little boat alongside the patrol boat in the landing party there was a couple of PNG sailors and some of the new Vanuatu policemen.

14:00 And one bullet came in and got two people, went right through the leg of one and into the leg of

another. You can laugh about it now, but the PNG patrol boat people didn't like this so they fired ashore with their Bofors gun. Just as they opened fire, Geoff Woods in his plane was just firing above it so we could have had another calamity there. How things can go all astray. That was just one little incident.

14:30 **Where were you when that happened?**

I was down in Vila. I was mainly in Vila for all of this. I'd go up to Santo pretty well as I said every second day or so.

Can you describe for us exactly what your own personal role in that whole thing was?

Yeah. I was the defence attaché. Basically the little high commission in Vila only had a high commissioner, communicator and one other Australian

15:00 staff and I think two locally engaged people. When this thing blew up the whole world wants to know what's happening, so we boosted the staff and I think they sent another couple of people from Australia and they sent a military person. I was the military person. To look after the military side and the military business. It included – there was one day I came back from Santo and go into the high commission office at I suppose about five o'clock or something and here's three little PNG people sitting patiently

15:30 waiting for me. They'd been there all day. What had happened was that one of the troops had been badly injured in a car crash I think it was and they wanted to medivac him to Australia so we organised the Hercules to come across. So we were trying to look after everyone, looking at all aspects of it. civilian and just the military side too.

As defence attaché what exactly were you responsible for doing?

Basically

16:00 advising Australia on the military matters, linking between the PNG defence force and Australia – that was probably the main thing. I knew them so well, you'd get all the information you needed. And providing assistance where we could. As simple as that. That's all an attaché does anywhere.

How did you enjoy that experience?

Loved it. It was great. It was my first break

16:30 out of the true navy and we were into defence, into the next step. Linking with the army and the air force and the politicians and the bureaucrats was a totally different experience.

So what did you love about it?

I liked being able to pull all the strings together and see how it all works. This is really

17:00 coming out of a very sheltered seagoing maritime bloke into the bigger picture. And just seeing how they all operated too. That was quite important. We were trained to the nth degree and so narrow it was untrue. Even though I thought we were wide visioned, we weren't.

What do you mean so narrow?

You were focused on just a narrow thing, that was keeping your ship and fighting unit. When you're cooped up with three hundred people for six months

17:30 on end for heaven's sake you mightn't think you've changed, but you do. You lose touch with a lot of things. But getting into this other sphere was an eye-opener to me and I quite enjoyed it. That was Vanuatu.

What do you lose touch with?

Every day life. The only news you'd ever get when you were at sea was the

18:00 news sheet which would come out or if you could tune into Radio Australia, that. And half the time you wouldn't get it. The worst thing was when you couldn't get the racing fields for the Saturday races. Half the ship – because you had the SP bookie [starting price bookmaker] on board and everything. You were a real little village. Had everything. Except girls.

Which is a big except, isn't it? How do blokes deal with being at sea for such long periods without having girls around?

18:30 It's no problem. Next question'll be, what about the homosexual aspects. Okay I can in all honesty say I know of only one case of a homosexual act – oh, on the ship I was on – and that happened just before we went to the Far East in '63 in fact. And the two people were taken off the ship straight away. There have been people who are

19:00 obviously – or you think they're a bit AC/DC. Might be just DC. But they've always kept it to themselves. Now it's open it's, I guess, perhaps changed things a bit. You don't practise – I don't know what's happened now, you've got a whole mixed crew, that's changed the whole navy. Some of us of eras gone by might have trouble coping with it.

19:30 But if it's not as good now as it was then, people in it now don't know what we knew so it doesn't matter. It's all the same. But the ships are all different designs now and smaller crews and so on. And people I think are more intelligent probably, being more technical minded because they have to be.

So how did crews view homosexuals?

Didn't like them in our time. It was –

20:00 you could put up with a person who was a bit strange, and if you didn't know about it, fine. But if anyone was caught at it, bang! It was perhaps a bit narrow-minded now when you think about it, but that was what happened then. I suppose a bit like religion – no other religion's any good except your own. In this way you can't have AC/DC.

So those two people who were thrown

20:30 **off the ship, they were actually discovered to have been practising homosexuality on the ship.**

I'll tell you the story. I came back on Monday morning. We were sailing for the Far East on the Wednesday. I was a new lieutenant, less than twenty-three years of age. The duty officer on the Sunday night was a bloke called Barry Todd who was an English bloke on exchange who now lives in Australia.

21:00 I just said, "How are things going? Any problems?" "Oh yeah. I got a shake from the quartermaster." The quartermaster stands on the gangway. "I got a shake from him about two o'clock in the morning. I said, "Ooh, my good man, what's wrong?" "Sar [sergeant], sar, there's a cake and arse party on in the stokers mess deck." He says, "My good man, what is a cake and arse party?"

21:30 "Oh sir, one sar up another." And that was the story word for word and Barry relating to me. One of the sergeants concerned was tall, handsome, blonde hair and girls going after him, the whole lot. Anyway they were taken off the ship. It was a disciplinary offence. I don't know what happened to them but they didn't sail with us to the Far East. Now

22:00 the stokers' mess deck had seventy people on I think it was three bunks, might have been two, in a fairly cramped space. So no privacy, no nothing. You asked me that question. I told you the story. But that was then.

Yeah. So it wasn't something that would be tolerated basically.

No. Not then. And I don't think it would be –

22:30 see places are different, ships are a different design. You have different standards of living. You haven't got the community type living. You've got your own cabin in a lot of cases and so on. So a bit more privacy, so what goes on behind the doors, who knows? But even when the girls came to sea there was always – when I was down in Cerberus as the XO I tried to improve some of the conditions there. One of the things I did was to people who have to live on board,

23:00 let's put a lock on their cabin doors so at least their valuables are safe. Then, "Oh what's going to go on with the locked doors? There's going to be all sorts of skulduggery – males and females and everything." The people are looking at the negative instead of the positive. I'm trying to run a proper outfit, not worried about some mundane issues.

So at what point did women start working with you on board ships?

Never.

Sorry.

23:30 **You were instructing later?**

Yeah. We had the women then, but I was never on a ship – I went to sea riding on the ships which had the females on it.

How did that change things, do you think, having women on board?

I really haven't spoken much about this. I haven't been to see about it, but you stand back,

24:00 the Vendetta had three hundred and thirty people. It gave us good sporting teams. Say you cut that in half. You've increased the number of activities you would have to have to satisfy everything, but you've only got half the numbers so to speak. So you would not necessarily get such strong footy teams and so on. So it could make a difference there. On the ships now, which I mean the Anzac class, only have about a hundred and seventy people on board.

24:30 Quite a few of those, divide it by two or two thirds, one third or whatever, it's a whole different navy. As far as the – see, they're all dressed the same too. They all have these grey overalls on and it's a bit hard to tell the difference sometimes. The equipments are different. I mean, the engine room, the old stoker used to have his overalls buttoned up to his naval and a big bloody spanner in his back pocket, a wheel spanner for

25:00 undoing big wheels and an oily rag and greasy boots. But now the stoker's different. He can be

immaculately dressed because we haven't got the same machinery and you can eat your dinner off the engine room floors now. So that's a different type of person involved. I seen the conditions in some of the ships we've got now or even – this is the older

25:30 designed ships – they're not good. The bathrooms are woeful. You'd have a bathroom about as big as this, nine by nine feet, where they'd have two toilets and two showers in it and a washing machine and a dryer and for twenty people that'd be male and female. That was on the Adelaide I think.

26:00 But that's life. That's what they sign up for.

Over the years that you were working on different ships, as you got promoted, how did you living conditions change?

Not much. On the ships it doesn't, because the ships' cabins are so small. When I was in Vendetta the first time three of us shared a cabin. When I was there the second time I had my own cabin. But that would only be enough for a bed and a desk and a wardrobe.

26:30 When I was down at Cerberus though, I had a nice house there. Beaut old house, lovely. That was great. There are different standards, requirements for your different ranks, but sometimes it doesn't happen that way.

So what other sort of challenges are there about having so many men on board at sea for long period of time together? Apart from the absence of women,

27:00 **what are the other real challenges of keeping those men happy?**

Well you've got to understand this, a ship runs twenty-four hours a day, so your cooks, they're fully employed. Your victualling staff, same. They're involved there. Your normal officer workers, your pay staff and all those, all the admin, that keeps going. Normal eight to five job. Nine to five job. Then you've got your watch keeping people and they'll be in the engine room, the electrical side

27:30 and on the bridge and in the operations room. You're probably one in three, maybe one in four. If you're one in four, what's that, six hours of your day just watch keeping, just making sure you're steering the right course or whatever. Then there's still the ship's husbandry to be done, the normal maintenance – the different types of maintenance to be done, the cleaning of the ship and so on. That all has – somebody has to do that. And there's a whole – I mean there's not enough hours

28:00 in the day and you look forward to perhaps having Saturday off. Saturday afternoon off. Sunday off. And more recently, last ten fifteen years I think the ships have been running round harder still and perhaps working one in two. That really takes it out of you. So you're awake for twelve hours a day and doing all your domestic stuff in the other twelve hours of the day some of the time. No. There's plenty to do. The quietest times are where

28:30 you're just on independent passage, sailing by yourself from point A to point B. You might have a bit of free time. But in the after normal working hours, four o'clock, you go and do some PT. If you've got your good football teams, you train them. Keep training. There's always something to do. Going back to the old days where we didn't have closed circuit TV or anything, you just had the little sixteen ml projector and you had the movie once or twice a week if you could get them you had to do a bit more in the evenings.

29:00 That was – you'd have your movie nights or you'd have your cards nights. You might have a ship's competition in cards, chess, draughts, whatever it was. You'd have all these things. All depends on who was on the ship, the personnel and so on – how well organised you were. But a good one was great fun. Bad one was hopeless, terrible.

When you say good?

Good crew.

What was the best crew?

I think Vendetta probably in the – I'm not sure which trip.

29:30 '63 was the one that I always enjoyed. I enjoyed it when I went back as 2IC as well. But I think probably the '63 trip with J.P. Stevenson, that was a tremendous trip.

Why was that the best crew?

He was one bloke who second was not good enough. So it didn't matter what you were doing – whether you were on the football field or exercising operations, you had to come first.

30:00 And we did come first. And winners are grinners. It was just something, the enthusiasm that went off. I remember in Singapore there it would have been just before Christmas '63 the Far East Golf Championships were on. Now we had good golfers. Every ship has some golfers and they always seem to go off early in the day and play this stupid game. Anyway this little group of golfers went off and they came

30:30 back with the trophy. Well they were from people who bludged and took all their time off, they were

heroes. It didn't matter what we put our hand to, we normally did very well. That was why – it was a happy ship too. A very, very happy ship.

What was the key do you think to making it so happy?

Well trained, good captain, good officers, all put in together, good chief petty officers, all the way down. No

31:00 friction. Limited friction. And it just worked.

And in other crews when there was friction and clearly you would have had that experience, how was that dealt with?

You just try to, had to persevere, do the best you could. Not easy. If it doesn't work it's very unpleasant and people aren't happy and it just goes on and on.

Was there a particular

31:30 **situation that you remember that was difficult?**

Yeah. I found it very hard in Stewart. Combination of reasons. Yeah, I was going back to the Far East again. Number three kid I think was on the way or something, or number two, I can't remember. And in two years I'd spent more than twelve months away from home. So I wasn't right for the job and I don't think the –

32:00 the captain didn't quite fit in my book. Wanted to fly before he could crawl and took too many shortcuts and didn't work. And the ship wasn't happy. He didn't have an easy program either. Anyway that was one episode.

When you say it wasn't easy, in what sense was it not easy?

We had to go to the Far East and none of our

32:30 equipment worked properly and we were in the Far East and then we had to go to Hawaii. So we do another trip to Hawaii from Singapore. This time we went via Manus Island and through Kwajalein and across the island to Pearl Harbour. But that was the end of four unhappy months in the Far East. And so you got another two months travelling halfway around the world.

33:00 And it was an awful lot of time and our stuff didn't work properly. There's nothing more frustrating.

Were there ever fights on board?

What? Fisticuffs? There'd be a blue ashore sometimes where blokes'd have it out. I don't recall anything on board all those years. There might have been some, someone might have punched someone, but never came out.

Nothing that you

33:30 **observed?**

No.

Going back to that time you were in PNG and Vanuatu you said that you absolutely loved that job. After all those years at sea, did you miss it when you weren't at sea?

No. Because I'd gone pretty well as far as I can. Remember I reckon that I'd probably done my navy life and I'm not going anywhere else. And at a certain stage in your life you do go into more of these administration shore base jobs. You either stay in the full navy

34:00 or not. And this was just a new door opening as far as I was concerned. I liked PNG. I loved PNG. It was great mixing with the people and so on. And Helen loved it too. In fact, she came across to Vanuatu. They were short of staff there and the high commissioner in Moresby got her aside one night at a function and said, "I want you to go over to see Paul. They need help over there in the high commission." She said, "I can't. I'm working

34:30 for ICL [International Computers Limited]." He said, "Hang on, I'll just go and talk to your boss right now." And did and said, "You don't mind if Helen goes?" So Helen came across and because she was a communicator in the WRANS [Women's Royal Australian Naval Service], the old WRANS, she was put into the communications there and helping with the constant stream of traffic to Canberra. But here I was in a totally different environment and fine. So we went back to PNG after that coconut war and then

35:00 back to Australia and what happened then? I went straight on to – before I left PNG I handed over to my relief and I stayed with the PNG Defence Force for about two months writing one of their manuals. Rewriting on of their maritime manuals which was fine in conjunction with another Australian. So that was all right. Then came back to Australia and went on the joint service staff college down there in Canberra for six months.

35:30 After that – what happened after that. Let me think. I'm just trying to work this one out. Yes. Went to JSSC [Joint Services Staff College] and then I got given a job to write a report on Jervis Bay, the Jervis Bay south of Sydney. Because what was happening then, all these people were wanting to know what was happening to Jervis Bay and complaining to the

36:00 Prime Minister and so on. Of course, navy owned the bloody place just about and hadn't got any plans so they wanted a plan drawn up for the future use of Jervis Bay. I didn't know much about planning of towns and things, but anyway we sailed on, soldiered on and I managed to get a reserve bloke to help me. Peter Waterman who was involved in town planning and everything. Great bloke. And we put together this hundred year plan for Jervis Bay.

36:30 That's how far we were thinking out and quite easy to explain because they were talking about putting submarines down there. Well the next generation of submarines wasn't coming on until just about the last few years – this was back in 1980. They'll last for forty years, so easy to get the hundred years. All these people that can't think past tomorrow. But it was a great exercise that, doing the hundred year plan for Jervis Bay. Anyway we came up with this plan,

37:00 got it accepted, but now it's been thrown out.

What do you mean it's been?

The navy wanted to put a big base down there. They wanted to put it down – you been down to Jervis Bay? No. Okay. It's a very big bay and on the southern side is the naval college and it's also a big camping visitors' area. They've also got the aboriginal tribes there. But they wanted to make that into a big base which would have destroyed the bay. In fact, I was told by the head of the navy at the time that said, "Make sure

37:30 you put the base down there." Well they started thinking a bit about it and that wasn't the right place to put any base. And so it didn't get recommended to go there. Anyway we won the day with that report but then some clown changed it. Then they all lost it anyway. So Jervis Bay is still pretty well pristine thank goodness. Okay, the next job after that was I was director for Defence Co-operation Programs.

38:00 Just as we were linking with all the islands – Malaysia, Singapore, India and everywhere. That was great. So I was back into slightly outside navy, more closely aligned with defence. Huge bureaucracy down there. You've got defence, army, navy and air force. Defence have the purse strings. They have everything. So that's where you want to be. And the Defence Co-operation budget was a separate one again. I enjoyed that.

38:30 We had easy access to a lot of things. And I learnt about that. That's how I got and stayed in this sort of defence co-operation, diplomatic game.

What did that role involve exactly?

What DCP [Defence Co-operation Program]? The director of that? It was basically work out training programs, material programs, co-operative programs with other countries. PNG it was we had a big training effort up there. I sent a hundred and ninety.

39:00 I think it got down to about a hundred and ten. I don't know what it is now. People up there, Australians up there and their families. We had the Solomon Islands for example. We had a landing craft which would go over there and make channels for some of the villages. Channel clearance I think we called it. Reef blasting's another name for it. Not environmentally acceptable. This would all come out of this co-operation budget. Wouldn't come out of navy funds. So

39:30 the navy were lending a ship there and getting it all paid for basically which was good. For navy. But it was also giving our people experience – the divers and so on. The other engineers I mentioned before in the southern highlands, they're actually the public works department up there, part of the local PNG government and they build the roads and everything and it's run by a major. When I was

40:00 up there with the head of defence, '87 and '90, they had their twenty-fifth anniversary, we had a bloody big celebration up in Mindi. People came up from down here in Australia and had all the PNG politicians, the lot and I helped organise that with the planes and everything. It was good fun. We had a band, an army band from Adelaide. The parade they had was a magnificent sight of twenty-two army

40:30 engineers marching on behind about four large groups of tribesmen all in their full regalia. Fascinating. I've got a video of that somewhere. But that was about '89, '88. No. It was good to be in that defence co-operation.

Tape 8

00:30 In PNG – what period are we talking about? I was there '79 to '81 and when we got back in '87 before we went up you would have thought it had fallen off the end of the earth. We got back in '87 and really just like we'd been away on long leave. Potholes were a bit deeper in Moresby, but that was – there was a slight bit more unrest, but not really much different. It was just –

01:00 I think people had always reckoned PNG was going to turn in a bloodbath. This is from independence on. And I was up there in independence. It didn't happen. But they're always saying it's going to happen and of course this created this myth that it's unsafe. We were classified under the Foreign Affairs as a difficult post and that was the top category. This was '87. At that time, that was the top category. It was on the same

01:30 par as Beirut which had all those problems and so on. We were nothing like it. I think a bit of a myth was built up about how dangerous it was. I couldn't be stupid – there was danger there, don't get me wrong. But also there it was not as bad as it was painted out.

And if you were part of the community, you were?

No. Moresby was – had all these rascals. You had all these people coming down from the highlands and so on because no employment.

02:00 Their employment was subsistence living. I think ninety-three per cent of the country is home ownership, owner subsistence living. You've just got to understand that – I don't know how many tribes there. There's a very good book written, Parliament of Seven Hundred Tribes or something. There are about four thousand dialects there and they vary

02:30 from village to village obviously. And one village can't understand others. Kaka Island which is right at the north of PNG there just north of Madang – that's going back about ten years, there's thirty thousand people on that, but there two different base languages on it. Try and work that one out.

What involvement with the villagers did you have?

My involvement was relatively small. It was more with the PNGDF. The tribal influence in the defence force

03:00 would have to be incredible. If you wanted to know an answer to something, or what the bloody outcome was going to be, you had to work out what tribes, what weapons and who the majority was and then you could find out what the answer was going to be. The village life we had – we went down and stayed one new year's I think it was or Christmas New Year period down in a village down at south of Port Moresby. Hua Village I think it was which had been there – missionaries had been there about a hundred years.

03:30 It was a fascinating little village. Probably I don't know how many people, about a thousand people, all living in little humpies and we stayed in one of these little two storey house and slept on the floor and so on. The toilet was beside the drinking water well and in the ground toilet. And the washing facilities weren't all that hot. It was an old empty water tank with a hole cut in the

04:00 side and that's where the girls could have a shower, but they didn't realise you could see off the top of the balcony. Helen and some of her colleagues, it wasn't quite the four star that she'd rather hoped for.

We've heard lots of stories about from World War II vets about their experiences in that region. Did you see any impact if at all on that region from World War II?

No. The Kokoda Trail starts up near Sogeri which is about thirty miles

04:30 from Port Moresby. My friends ran a plantation – Ilano Plantation – which is at the start of the Kokoda Trail. I used to go and stay up there from time to time with them. They now live in down in Vincentia in Jervis Bay. It's all grown over. The track is still there. It's obviously a track and it's used very much as a tourist outward bound thing now. I've been to both ends of the Kokoda Trail. I haven't walked it myself. I've done it the best way – flown over in a in a Caribou

05:00 just a few thousand feet above the trail. I stopped off at the other end of the Kokoda Trail and I'm just trying to think what the name of the place is called. Kokoda! Stupid of me. Seen that. It's – the Bomana War Cemetery between Port Moresby and Sogeri is a must for everyone. You only realise. It brings it home. I think

05:30 there's about four thousand graves in there. It just really brings it home. That's beautifully kept. Just opposite the other there's the Port Moresby Cemetery where my mother and uncle lie.

Where your mother lies?

Yeah. She went up there to die. Did I mention this before? Yeah I did. She came up to die there and that's where she looked out over the lagoon

06:00 of Port Moresby.

How did you feel seeing the war cemetery?

Very moving. We had our Anzac Ceremony there and the dawn service is very moving indeed. The thing that hits you with any of these places is the ages of the people. They're all too young. There's another war cemetery in PNG – several of them in fact – but another big one up at just near Rabaul at Bita Paka. Now we had

06:30 involvements up there. Every second year the Australian SAS would have an exercise and PNG would get to participate. I think it was ’89 Kim Beasley when he was defence minister came up and we flew all round the place and had a ceremony at the Bita Paka cemetery and it’s beautiful. We’ve got World War I people there. That’s where some of the first Australians were killed by the Germans in World War I. Their graves are there. A lot of Indians.

07:00 And a big cemetery in Lae. “Here Lies An Unknown Indian”, or whatever it is. A lot of them. You don’t realise where people came from. And another small cemetery up at Cape Moem which is just west of Wewak. It’s a fascinating country, Papua New Guinea. We just don’t know enough about it. Nor do we I seem to think wish to know enough about it. We’ve got too many damn experts who’ve never been there.

Incredible and we’re so close.

Yeah. It’s

07:30 great. I just love the place. So much history. So much everything. Some of those books that are coming out now about the World War II participation are fascinating and what Australia did was incredible, how they managed to get away with it. People from this town went up there. Now gone, but your basic training and off they went.

Can you tell me about receiving the medal?

08:00 Yeah. I was sitting in my office in the high commission, this was about ’89, and knock on the door, it opens and in comes Lima Dayatona, a colonel in the PNGDF and a very good friend. He got a couple of other people with him and my 2IC and said, “We want to present you with this medal. There’s

08:30 very few ways we can thank you for what you do.” But this was it. It was a tenth anniversary medal. I think it was two years after the tenth anniversary, but it didn’t matter. It was just the thought. And that was a prized possession. I really appreciated that. Used to get on very well with the governor generals and so on. Let me think, when I was there the first time, ’79 to ’81 as the personnel bloke, the little patrol boats’d come in

09:00 and we’d always have some reception on board the boat and normally I’d get the Governor General to come along. This time he comes and his aide calls me over. “His Excellency wants to talk to you.” “Paul, you got a cigarette?” “Yeah. Sure I got one, Your Excellency.” He said, “I can’t. I’m giving up smoking, but I need a cigarette.” “Okay.” So I give him a cigarette. And then he says, “I hear you’re leaving soon.”

09:30 “Yes. I am. I’m going back to Australia. Helen and I.” “I want to throw a reception for you. Can you come to my office on Monday?” This was Friday night. “Can you come to my office on Monday and work out the list?” So I do that. I get up there on Monday and I walk into the office and the blokes are there. “Cup of tea or coffee?” “Please.” And we discuss with the officials the people who are coming.

10:00 That’s fine. And say, “Oh, your cup of coffee’s inside.” So I go into His Excellency and he tells me “Hello hello. Loco loco.” He said, “Paul, you got a cigarette?” He needed a cigarette. He’s dressed up and everything and coat ready to put on. He says, “Look, I’ve got to go to lunch. It’s with the head air force person from Australia. What’s his name? Oh. Okay.”

10:30 But anyway so we had this cocktail party at Government House, fifty people, fine. We finished that and a few of us went off to a restaurant and about a half hour after that in comes the Governor General with the Ted Diro, the chief of defence and a few of their entourage. We’re sitting at adjacent tables and one of my mates at our table, he gets a cigarette out – not a cigarette,

11:00 a serviette out, and draws a dreadful picture of myself. But he takes it to everyone to sign it including the Governor General and that’s in a frame on that wall. But it was the way he used to get on. But that was ’81. Now I went back ’87 I go back again, it was six years later and I go down to the Aviat Club and I only ever went there about twice in my life and that was just in Konedobu in Moresby.

11:30 And the ex-governor general’s in there and he turns around, he hasn’t seen me for six years. “Hello, Paul, how are you?” Just like that. Didn’t ask me for a cigarette though.

Well and truly given up.

No. I don’t think he had. But once you get a friend, Papua New Guinea friend, you’ve got him for life.

What is their character like?

They’re fun loving people. They’re incredible. One of the struggles they don’t have like

12:00 we have, they haven’t got to worry about home ownership because the tribe owns the land. They all have their own plot of land and that’s it. You just can’t go and buy any land. There’s certain bits you can, but not generally. So you don’t have to worry about trying to get your homes and so on. You’ve got it and you’re all part of the tribe and everyone in the tribe has a role to play. And there’s respect given to the elders too. It’s a great society. The warring which

12:30 used to go on for them, this is part of the westernisation when you stopped the warring, because them men’s job was to protect the village. The women did all the gardening and the cleaning the house and

the cooking and everything else. The men were there with their bows and arrows and spears. Once the western influence came in they didn't have a job to do and so you start to cause this unrest. You've got the men doing nothing. And then trying to get big pay packets and so on. It's sad to see. We could have learnt a lot from them.

13:00 The wrong way round. But that village at Hula was just fascinating. Your social services is all built into your village life.

How did you meet Helen?

At Garden Island dockyard. I hadn't been there long and a friend of mine was captain of one of the ships and every month we used to have a dockyard officers'

13:30 drinks in the dockyard officers' little club at five o'clock Friday. Go on for about an hour. So I invited old Joe from the ship and he came across and so then we thought we better go and have a few more ashore. So we go up to the local mess at Kuttabul and there's a wedding on upstairs and the old mess there and the bar's vacant and there's just Joe and me and the bloke behind the bar. "Who's getting married?" And Joe happened to be good friends with

14:00 the bride. So he sent a little note up and she invited us up. There was only two spare birds there, Helen being one and an eighteen stone the other. So we met there. About in January I think, yeah, 1978. We were married in April. Decided to get married the following weekend. It was

14:30 love and lust at first sight, something like that. No, we're a pretty compatible couple. I think. Yeah so that's how I met Helen and she was a great asset. She came up to Moresby with us when we went up there. She lived a pretty – she hadn't been given the opportunity to expand and she was given that opportunity to blossom. It was great. She's on the friends of library up there

15:00 in Moresby and she had to give a speech at government house one day. Something like one of the first times she ever got up in front of people. She went on from – just looked up all the way.

Do you talk much to your children about your navy or war experiences?

No. I haven't had much contact. I've had a bit. I guess they're just like I was with my father. Not overly interested.

15:30 I think you find a lot of people unless you've got the enquiring mind you've got your own little world to live in. It's unfortunate. That's why it's important to get some of this documented. I must write a book or something.

Yeah. Absolutely. How did you become involved with the RSL?

When we were in Canberra there in '81 – went back to Canberra and did that Joint Services Staff College we joined the RSL down there. Helen went and worked with the national

16:00 RSL – secretary or something and we got to know some people there – Sir William Keys, lovely person who was the national president and Bruce Ruxton, the RSL's best PR [Public Relations] man – he always got in the press. I like Bruce. And that was okay, but being in the service you didn't worry about the RSL. They're just a mob of fuddy duddies. But I came up here and I get caught into the little RSL here. And that was it. And it needed a lot of improvement so I ended up being made the bloody president. But by default. No-one else would

16:30 do the job. The outgoing president didn't turn up for the AGM [Annual General Meeting], that was how bad it was. So anyway we got in. We were taking over from an old regime who knew everything but they couldn't see that the whole thing was disintegrating around their ears. So we jumped into that. And I thought, "RSL, Anzac Day, a bit of drinks with your mates and keep the building in shape," and that was all there was. I didn't realise all this other stuff about welfare and so on. Anyway

17:00 I spent seven years with the RSL here and I was trying to get out of it and I had someone arranged, only pork spat the dummy at the last minute and I told Helen on the phone and then she came back and she said, "What about me?" So Helen ended up taking over from me, three years and one of the few women presidents. And she did very well. Membership expanded. Because she was filling an unusual position, people in turn took more notice of her and she speak very well and she prepares properly

17:30 and she's done extremely well. At the same time as she took over I went on and reformed the district up here. The RSL District, Sunshine Coast District, I'm the pres of that. That's an interesting little episode too. But, no, one's got this involvement and I quite enjoy it.

Why is the RSL important now?

Important mainly because of the support it gives the veterans and their families and – see I didn't know anything about the support.

18:00 Half the problem, my family didn't get any of it and they should have. It would have helped ease some of the distresses they went through – this is my parents. I didn't really fully appreciate this until '98. Okay a few things might be wrong with you, you fling something off to Vets' Affairs [Department of Veterans' Affairs] and they say, yah or nay, and that's it. But, no, there's a huge process. And the biggest problem is trying to get the people linked into

18:30 the process because there are too many around here who say, “There’s nothing wrong with me.” When they got a major problem. That’s how we’re trying to do it.

Do you believe then in the PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] diagnosis?

Yeah. I’ve seen too many people with something wrong with them. Admittedly they could be some who are stressed out – the thought of not getting the cure is worse than the cause. I think by and large a few scrape through. But there are

19:00 many genuine cases. There are many more. You see too many stressed people around. You see too many people who have something wrong with them. Look at the Vietnam people. God knows what happened with Agent Orange and all these things, the rubbish around. We’ve got something going on now with the electro magnetic radiation. I’m trying to push that one because we don’t know what effect all this high powered stuff had on the ship – the equipment on the ships had on you. The effect

19:30 will be starting to come out about now. There’s not much research. Look at all the nonsense we had with the piddly little mobile phones. We had a bloody great radar whistling around above your head, pushing all that power.

And what sort of affects are you seeing?

I feel there’s too many people dying of cancer at too young an age. Different cancerous tumours and so on. This is a feeling I have. Anyhow I’ve asked them now to start having a look at it. They’ve been having a gradual look at it, but until you really start pushing –

20:00 this is the Vets’ Affairs.

Yeah. Sure. How do you push?

First of all understand that there might be a problem and then start pushing it through the main animation up and write a quick note to go with it and then bang! But there’s very little information on this particular one. Been on the internet and everything. It could be a can of worms when you do open it. But I

20:30 buried a colleague – the bloke I mentioned three weeks ago. He had a brain tumour, been fighting it for eighteen months. He was on a ship in Vietnam. Just being on a ship – didn’t have to be in Vietnam. But it could well be vastly caused by this. I don’t know. It might not be.

How closely do you stay in contact with people from the Vendetta crew?

I don’t. There is a Vendetta association up here. I know the president quite well.

21:00 But I’ve got enough on. I’m a patron now of this other one, the Vietnam Logistic Support Group and got my RSL business and got my Greenhills environmental stuff.

Quite busy.

Yeah. It’s good. That’s the next job for the RSL – to become involved in the environment. There’s been some good ads out recently, the last year or so, all salt areas where we fought for this land, now let’s start protecting it.

21:30 Forgotten who the actor was who did the ad for nothing. It was for the Environment Australia or something. But we can do something here at the RSL and become environmentally aware, put solar panels in all the buildings and so on.

Jack Thompson I think.

Yeah. If we can do that it’d be great. I’d love to push that one. I’m trying to push it.

What are you most proud of with your navy service?

The fact I survived I suppose.

22:00 There’s a period in ’83 or ’86 when I was 2IC of Cerberus and that was a great time. That was a very important time was when the women went from the WRANS Australian service to the RAN. And that was done beautifully. Like hell it was. One day they’re WRANS, the next day they’re RAN. Has anybody sorted out the uniforms? No.

22:30 So the old blue jeans and blue shirt which the blokes wear, they don’t quite fit most of the female bodies. They had pants which are either too short or too long or not wide enough or whatever it was and when you saw the – what was it? The wallet sticking out here and the cigarettes sticking out here it didn’t quite fit. Very badly done all round. What are we going to do with rifle training, sea crew training? They can’t fire rifles, oh dearie me. You ought to have seen it. That came in in ’84. Cerberus

23:00 was still in the stone era I reckon and we had a lot of work to do and that was probably one of the proudest achievements. To try and enthuse and get something happening they brought out a project called ‘Lifestyle’. This is when we put those dreadful things like locks on the doors and those ning nongs

up in Canberra and elsewhere thought, “Ah, all these people are going to get in trouble behind those doors.” That’s the way they were thinking.

23:30 Lifestyle became a part of the navy five years after I left service. It was that period I really enjoyed and we had a marvellous time. It’s a major training base and you’ve got all the new people coming in, the officer corps and so on. I was a great believer of the officers lead. Don’t sit on their asses behind. So we had to be involved in everything. So it was good to get them back into everything. Got them into the competitions, sporting competitions

24:00 and so on. I’d seen this years before when I’d come through. Firstly at the naval college, then when I went back to recruit school in the sixties. They’re all gone by the way, officer participation. Carry on, chief, they’re all fixed up and off they go away somewhere. Bloody stupid. Didn’t work. I guess I enjoyed it. I’ve got quite a few photos there of Cerberus and things we did, putting the water in swimming pools. Helen and I got there in December

24:30 ’81 and the boardroom had approved the money for the swimming pool. This had been on the table – the first part of that project started back in 1955, so a bit slow. But they’d approved the money to spend on the swimming pool. And I get down about 10 December and they say, “When’s the pool going to be ready, sir?” “What do you mean?” We got it open the following Christmas. It took twelve months – no plans had been done,

25:00 it was in the wrong position and everything. But I mean after thirty years you managed to get it and it proved to be a great focal point for summer activities for the families and the people there and bring them in together as a team. Marvellous fun. Never been down to Cerberus? You must go down there. The board room there it’s got two great murals, one on either end of the wall. One is the Armada of 1588 with Drake and the other one is Cook landing in Botany Bay. Now, why it’s the Armada

25:30 and not Trafalgar I don’t know. But it just – they were painted in about 1932, I think it was. ’28. ’32. Beautiful things. They occupy a big wall, big building. Must go down there. Got the loft at the top of the dining hall there for the band. Great.

So that was the proudest, was it?

I think so. I loved that more than anything. There was a lot of good times. I did love the ’63 trip in the Vendetta I mentioned. Probably –

26:00 I enjoyed PNG too as the attaché there. That was great. That was the real time peace work, so earning your keep in peace time. Direct contact. I had three bosses. The high commissioner, the chief of defence force and the secretary for defence force. I came down, they said, “Come to Canberra, Paul,” before I took some leave. That’s how we found this place and that. Well, found Maleny. I went down to

26:30 Canberra and over to defence there and said, “Oh look it’s ten o’clock now. We’ve got to go over to see Beazley at eleven.” “Oh right fine.” So I go to Beazley and it was just like that. Just like sitting here. Just chatting away. “Christ,” he says “we had blood on the walls in the cabinet the other day.” Because we were trying to get helicopters through for PNG. But that was a whole different life, me seeing how the government operated.

What do you think of the Iraq war now?

Iraq.

27:00 Look, I think the whole thing was very badly handled. Sure, there were weapons of mass destruction, we all knew that. We saw that cartoon where Bush is waving, “We know they’ve got it, here’s their receipt.” We know when we gave them to Saddam years before. At what stage those weapons were or what state they were in we didn’t know. But that was only one reason for going in. The reality is we should have continued on from the Kuwait thing of 1990,

27:30 ’91 and if we went in when we went in again we should have gone in with the prime thing being human rights. And the weapons of mass destruction were just a secondary issue. Important, but secondary. That’s what we should have done. We should go round everywhere. We should have done it a lot earlier. When they killed those Kurds, those four, five thousand Kurds – should never have done that. Should never have let that happen. Or if they did happen,

28:00 they should have fixed it. We didn’t. That’s my answer to that fairly diplomatically. As far as the Australian troops who are over there, they’re probably there as long as it’s needed to fix the job. And a lot of their job is doing this defence co-operation now – setting up the towns and so on, setting up – and that’s got to happen. I mean, we’re doing it in PNG. We just did it in the Solomon Islands. We’re doing it in Vanuatu. Do it every bloody where. It’s a good role for the defence force as long as we don’t be seen to be too much

28:30 in America’s pocket.

So after such an extensive experience which we’re really grateful to have heard, do you have a final comment that you’d want to put on record about your navy or life experience?

Gee that’s a – three o’clock, four o’clock in the afternoon, let me think about that. Yeah. I just loved it. I love the navy. It was a great job.

29:00 I love Australia. There's three things I truly believe in is integrity, your proper use of intelligence and professionalism. And it really irks me now when I see all the politicians and people in power and public servants who have difficulty in practicing or producing those three. I guess what I learnt in the navy was the value

29:30 of teamwork. And the ability, the great feeling when you can trust people and trust them with your life. And I'd love to see that in the civilian world. I'm not sure I see it quite as much. But I really appreciated it. I've had no regrets about being in that service for that long. But it's always time to move on

30:00 when you – I can't really sum it up, it's just it was great fun.

No. That's fantastic.

We learn little things. How to cheat – in the Mediterranean … can I still go on?

Sure.

In the Mediterranean there when we were in the training squadron with half the squadron you get – the three ships are there and the odd afternoon about three o'clock you'd have a competition between them in different things. Or you might stop for swimming. Well this particular day we stopped to swim.

30:30 And sun browned, bronzed Australians – we weren't too bronzed then, there was eight of us whatever there were, we were going to dive in off the upper deck. Now diving in off the upper deck was diving about twenty feet – not a thing you do every day – but oh, we can do this everyday. We dived into this Mediterranean, it was like diving into a bloody ice pond. Goodness me! It was about fifty degrees Fahrenheit. It was freezing. Talk about freezing the balls off a brass monkey. But it was unreal.

31:00 And then there was this another day we stopped and we had an army group on each of the three ships – about a dozen of them. And one of the exercises, we used to toss the life buoy over, "Man overboard," and you'd drop the sea boat and you'd row away and pick the life buoy up and come back again and the first one back would win the competition. That was fine. Well we saw our army people and realised they probably hadn't seen an oar as spelt O-A-R.

31:30 We thought, 'We'll help them. We'll tie a bit of string to their life buoy and just drag it along a little so they haven't got to row back as far'. Well bugger me dead, we did this and unfortunately we got caught. But the army people they still came back with blisters everywhere and they only had to row half as far as the poor other buggers did. So the lesson out of that was we were foolish because we got caught cheating.

32:00 **Don't get caught.**

Don't get caught. Too stupid. Better to be honest all the time.

Fond memories for you.

They're all right. I mean, there's so many stories we can go on with. I don't think I can tell anything else.

No. It's been great. We really appreciate you talking to us today.

INTERVIEW ENDS