Australians at War Film Archive

William Jarman (Bill) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:46 **Thank you for sharing your story with the archive. I would just like to start with a brief summary of your service from when you enlisted to your postings and when you were discharged.**

I enlisted in 1952 at the age of 17.

01:00 I went to Cerberus, which is the naval depot in Victoria. I did recruit training there and general marching, rifle drill, etc. I did about six weeks I suppose on the Gladstone. That's a training ship. From Gladstone I went to the Australia, which is a cruiser. I stayed on that for about eight months I suppose. From there I went to the Murchison, which is a frigate. I stayed on that until the frigate paid off in 1955 and from then

01:30 I went to Platypus for three months, which the Murchison was being paid off with a skeleton crew to just keep watches. Then I got a draft down to Flinders Depot from Platypus to do the gunnery course at gunnery school, which I did. I was down there for about 12 months and I thought I would stay there but obviously I didn't. I was drafted to go over to Perth to pick up Tobruk to go over to Malaya, which I did. Up there for about 12 months. Came back and I was posted to HMAS Penguin where

02:00 I got my discharge in 1959.

Great.

Do you want any more on that? I was going to be a 50 year man but my first wife said, "If you leave, if you don't get out, I would leave," so I got out of the navy. The worst thing that I ever did.

Well what did you do when you left?

I went from state to state from job to job for about two years. I couldn't settle and I just wasn't used to civilian life I suppose. Eventually we

02:30 had a daughter and I thought I had to get my act into gear and settle down somewhere, so I came back to Adelaide and went from job to job, but I settled down eventually.

And where did you settle?

Back in Adelaide. Then I went from Sydney and back to Adelaide. All over the place. But eventually I settled down.

What did you do when you got to Adelaide?

Some of the jobs I did were labourer's jobs, driver's jobs, floor surfacing, a mixture of jobs. And eventually I ended up

03:00 at GMH [General Motors Holden] and I stayed there 12 years I think it was. Worked my way up from nothing to a leading hand in charge of the paint shop. They taught me how to spray paint and everything else and then I was spray painting from then on. For the rest of my life actually, until they made me TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension].

And children?

Five. Well between us, with my second wife, five daughters and a boy. About 13 grandkids and 2 great grandkids.

03:30 Sorry, four.

That's quite a family. I might take you right back to where you were born.

Adelaide. I was born in Victoria Hospital near the racecourse and that was in 1935.

And where was the family home?

Carrington Street. Just up from the milk factory. And I went to school at Flinders Primary School until I was 14. I left

04:00 school at 14 and worked as a messenger in the news department at Adelaide Art and Graphics until I turned 16 and then on apprenticeship as a printer, and then after 12 months… You see, I was always going to go in the navy since I was a grasshopper. As soon as I turned 17 I said, "I want out of this." I got out and went straight into the navy.

Before we get to that decision to join the navy, I just want to ask you about your father. What did he do?

04:30 Dad was a fireman with the railway until the war and then he enlisted in the 2/10th Battalion. He went to England and from England he fought in Greece, Crete, Albania, Syria, Alexandria, and then he was badly wounded a couple of times and they ended up discharging him in 1943. I'm trying to think what term they used but because he was an engine driver. They discharged him and sent him back. Essential services.

05:00 Then he went back as an engine driver and he suffered, I now know what it was. PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] or shellshock they used to call it. We didn't know about that at that stage but he would be sitting there at night or at bed in night and all of a sudden he's firing at Germans or what have you and screaming and yelling and smash all the windows because the light was coming in. "Turn all the lights out! It's a blackout!" Sometimes he would go off his rocker and myself and my brother used to stand between himself and Mum so he wouldn't

05:30 get to her, and we used to take the blows because he would thrash out at us. He hit the grog.

That's quite a severe case of shellshock.

In them days it wasn't really recognised. I didn't really know what it was. I do now because I'm going through it myself. So now I know what he was doing and what was happening. I feel sorry about that actually. I used to think,

06:00 "What a so-and-so!" but it wasn't his fault. I remember before the war – I was only about four or five – but he used to be out playing with us and even after in his right mood he would be happy making bikes for us and tanks and toys and all this. Yachts out the back.

And how did your mother cope with this?

Mum was one of the old breed. When you marry, that's it. That was Mum.

06:30 Dad unfortunately died at the age of 64 because of war injuries and that was in 1977. That was the year I got married.

What were those war injuries?

Well I believe he copped a mortar near him and it went into his stomach and he was taking tablets for his stomach. I don't know the story on it really. He was on these tablets for a long time. From what I can gather from what Mum said one day he said, "I'm sick of taking

07:00 these tablets," and just didn't take them. A clot formed or something and it went to the heart. They put him in hospital and he knew he was dying, and he wrote this letter and put it in his dressing table. And three years afterwards Mum hadn't cleared the clothes out and we said, "Mum, you've got to clear it out," and the letter dropped out. It was addressed to Mum.

07:30 He knew he was going.

It would have been a very tough, tough way to grow up.

In them days it was. Not much money around. Hardly any jobs. When you live in Carrington Street it was like living in a slum area. It's still the same. You go to school with no shoes sometimes.

08:00 Eating wise, well we used to scrounge. Education was basic but you managed and you got through it. Things are different now. People have got it so easy. They just don't realise. We have a lot to be thankful for, I suppose, but we managed.

You said Carrington Street was like the slum part of the street. That's hard to imagine now. What was it like then?

You had not traffic down the roads. We used to play what we call rounders.

08:30 We used to play in Carrington Street at night. There was no TV [television] of course and the whole family would sit out front on the verandah. We knew all the neighbours and all us kids used to, and girls, we all used to mess around together. Not the crap that they go on with now. We used to play rounders as I said. Go to the pictures together. We used to sleep up at Hurtle Square on a hot night on a blanket. We knew that we weren't going to get touched by anybody or we weren't going to touch anybody. That was just the way we were brought up. You respected your elders. If you got in a

09:00 bus and an old woman or bloke walked in you got up and let them have your seat. Simple as that. You open the doors for them. I still open the door for my wife now. And that's the way we were brought up but nowadays it's all different. They have no sense of manners or responsibility I don't think.

When you used to sleep in Hurtle Square, was that on hot nights?

Yeah.

But were there a lot of people staying in Hurtle Square?

Oh yeah stacks, whole families sometimes.

09:30 You'd go across to, just across the road. Mum would take these little containers and get a couple of pints of cold milk. Mum's favourite thing was to go to the markets on a Friday night and get some sultana cake, two pints of cold milk, and we would go up to Hurtle Square and that's where we would stay of a night. We never used to lock our doors in the house. Incredible! I joined the navy from there actually. Good years, that.

10:00 **So that was the home you really grew up in up until the navy? How many rooms were in the house?**

A typical, four rooms. That's right, four rooms in the house. My grandmother used to live with us. I remember during the war my grandmother used to look after us because Dad was at the war and Mum used to work in Finsbury Munitions making munitions. And she said because Dad was fighting she had to make certain that he got the bullets, so my grandmother used to look after us. A typical Irish woman.

10:30 Her name was Jessica Violet Maude O'Reilly. How Irish can you get? She was about four foot nothing and, oh boy, when she spoke you said, "Yes, ma'am." She died of breast cancer, unfortunately. So yeah, good years.

So during that time when Dad was away, who was the disciplinarian in the home?

Nanna. Old Nanna. One word out of her and you jumped.

11:00 But it wasn't over strict. Yeah, I mean them days were different. If Mother said to do something you do it. Not like, not now when you tell your mother to go and get nicked. We wouldn't dare say that. We just wasn't brought up like that. But discipline was there. Teachers used to, too. Discipline was the teachers. There is no discipline in schools now as you know. When I went to school, gee. I had a teacher called Garth Pierce

11:30 Occanan – GPO for short. He had a withered arm and if you did something wrong he would pick you up with this arm and belt you with the withered one. Or you would get the cane for doing something wrong. I often say now they should bring it back because it never did me any harm. I didn't grow up with any problems because of it and I'm a firm believer in discipline.

So what would you have to do to cop the cane?

Mess around. Get a dart

12:00 and throw a dart around, the paper darts. Or the girl in front, you would put her plaits in the ink wells or something. At one stage there I kicked a little bin thing, wire thing to put paper in. It was there so I kicked and Miss Momroy was her name. She said, "Jarman, get out here." And she made me stand there with this thing on my head. Never forget that.

What was it she made you put on your head?

It was like a little basket,

12:30 wire basket that you throw papers in. It stands near your desk. I kicked it so she said, "Right," and I had to put it on and stand there. I'll never forget that.

So did you enjoy school?

Oh yeah. I'm still in contact with some of my old school mates. Some of them joined up in the navy just after I did so I came across quite a few.

What was your favourite subject?

13:00 None in general because in them days we used to do, what did you call it? Mental arithmetic, spelling, composition, writing. You had to write properly. Geography. We did all that. But that was part of the education and that's why I think the education today is lacking badly. I worked with some of the

13:30 youngsters when I was spray painting and you would ask them to write something and the spelling was always wrong. Or you say, "Add that up." "Derrr, where's the calculator?" Nothing up here. I find the education is lacking badly nowadays. They should bring it back to the old days.

What made it excel in the older days?

I think because the teachers commanded respect

14:00 and when they were out front teaching you paid attention. Not like they do now. As you know, kids just storm out of the classroom now. “I’m going home,” and they just go. The teachers say, “You have done so-and-so and you are going to be expelled.” They love that because they don’t have to go back to school. There was none of that in my day. If you played truant there was a truant officer out there – you were in trouble. Not now. I put it all right

14:30 down to discipline and respect. I really do.

What teachers really stood out in your mind from that time?

Uncle Charlie is one. He was an ex RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] pilot from the war. He was a great bloke. Mr Francis was the headmaster and he was terrific. Miss Momroy, other than the thing on the head she was a great teacher. Mrs Daly, I remember her when I was in real primary school.

15:00 Old Garth Pierce Occanan. A bit of a pig but a nice bloke too. All the teachers were all right. We got on all right with them. I had no problems with them really.

What was the school like? You went to Flinders Primary School. How big was it?

It’s a fair size. It’s still in existence now. I wouldn’t call it a big school. Just an average school. A school’s a school. But it had been there for God knows how long.

15:30 **Did it have a sports oval?**

Not as such. We used to go down to Victoria Racecourse if we wanted to play football or rugby or any of that sort of thing. We were separated. Males were that side and females were that side, of course. It was bituminised both sides. The girls had basketball courts, you know, hoops. On our side we set up a rubbish bin for a wicket

16:00 and we used to play cricket and all the boys would be lined up with the ball and they would practise bowling. If you weren’t playing that you would be playing release, which was a game where you had two teams, and one team had the other, and you put them in one particular area, and someone had to guard them, and you came in and released them and they got free out. That sort of game. Or marbles or tops. Used to do all that type of thing. They were good years, very good years.

And who were your mates?

16:30 Oh gee. Eddie Cowly, Ray Brady, Charlie Rolfe. Unfortunately he’s dead now. Shirley Brady, Coxy, the whole lot. I can’t name there off front left and centre but there are so many of them. Often wondered what happened to them though. I don’t see a lot of them these days.

What sort of things did you get up to?

After school?

17:00 Look we would get on our bikes and ride up to Waterfall Gully and ride down the beach to Glenelg and back again. Think nothing of it. Go down the parkland and built forts out of grass and trees, or we would go catching tadpoles. Just riding our bikes in general. Going for walks or on hikes down to the River Torrens and down through the bush where nobody had ever gone before.

17:30 Climb trees. Usual kids’ stuff.

So how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Up to the war there was the three of us. Myself, my second brother, Dennis, and younger brother, Alan. After the war I had another brother, Peter, and a sister, Rosie. She is the only girl.

Four boys and one girl.

My brother, he ended up as the head salesmen for John Martins.

18:00 My other brother Alan, he ended up in Sydney. He was doing septic tanks I believe if I remember rightly. Peter did his apprenticeship with some engineering company and he’s in the CFS [Country Fire Service] and my sister, she did ballet and she run three ballet schools and she does choreography for TV and all that sort of thing.

A bit all over the place.

Yeah. Turned out all right, most of them.

18:30 **You said your Mum worked in the munitions factory. Whereabouts was that?**

Finsbury.

And how did she get there everyday?

Good question, actually. I couldn’t answer that. I reckon she would have either rode a bike or walked or maybe they had buses. I just don’t know.

I was going to ask what kind of shift she did?

They varied. That's why grandmother used to look after us. And she would go down there and she would

19:00 make the bullets and hold them in her hand and check all the cord set. But I don't really know how she got there. I know she did. And once there they were going to go on strike or something down there and Mum and the rest of the women, so, "No, we are bloody not. We are not going on strike. My husband, they need the bullets. We're not striking." The strike was called off. I remember that.

Women played quite a role

19:30 **back then.**

If it hadn't been for the women Australia's role was dead. They took over everything. They did munitions, they did spray painting, trams, buses, trains and in the services. Yeah. Australia got a lot to owe to all of them.

You were quite young when war was declared.

About five, I suppose. I was born in 35 so about five, I suppose.

What memories do you have of the war?

I remember digging.

20:00 We had slit trenches dug in Hurtle Square. Dad dug this huge big one in our backyard and covered it. There was sandbags all over the place. There were slit trenches all over the place. They used to have air-raid drill. Our school used to have a siren above it and every now and again that siren would go off and it was a drill, and if you were in school you would get under the desk or get down to the trenches or whatever. Fortunately

20:30 enough it never came to pass that we ever had to do it. But that's what I remember of the war years. And the schools we'd – I don't know if it was a Friday or a Monday – but we used to knock off about 11.00 and go down to the market, and we would get the market little pan carts and we used to go from company to company, factory to factory, or house to house and pick up old tyres, aluminium, brass, anything. Paper, cardboard, and take it back to school and they'd weigh it

21:00 and send it off to recycle for war material and it was called the State Patriotic Fund and we used to have a little purple badge with 'SPF' on it and a little clasp. Every time you got so much weight they would put a clasp and when you got so many clasps they would give you a bomber. They used to give you a plane. All the schools used to do that. We used to do that every week and that was our part to help the men.

21:30 **So where would you get the materials from?**

Factories. We used to go from factory to factory, house to house, and knock on the door and pick up scrap rubber or metal or anything for the war effort. And we used to put it on the carts and when you got it full you used to wheel it back to the schoolyard and they used to have a big weight type thing, scales, and they'd weigh. They would mark down how much you got and when you got to so much weight you used to get this little clasp that used to go on your SPF, and when you go so much clasps

22:00 they would give you the bomber. But you see all the schools used to do that. That's just what we did. They needed it and we did it. Some days you would come back with hardly anything, but all of us at a time to see if we could get something by them.

Do you remember rations and rationing?

Yep, oh yeah. I remember the ration book. We never got much butter or meat but we managed. Things were pretty tough

22:30 but we got through it all right. Clothes were rationed. Anything you had to get you had to take this little stamp and but Mum fed us. So I've got no worries on that.

Do you know how much she was bringing home from the factory?

I wouldn't have a clue. Would not have a clue, no.

And blackouts. Do you recall blackouts?

Yes, we used to have blackouts.

23:00 In fact our windows used to be painted black. That was a big thing, blackouts, and the car with the headlights. So they were so big, all painted except for a little strip and that was the light. That was the only light that came from the headlights. And to operate them they used to have what they called a burner at the back. You used to fill them with timber, coal burner, and that's

23:30 how you used to operate your car. I remember Dad used to have one of them. He used to get all this timber or whatever and put it in the burner and convert it to gas and put it through.

I have never heard that before.

Haven't you?

No. Where did the burners sit?

At the back on platforms. And the burner used to sit on the back and fill it up with coal or wood or whatever. Have you never heard that before?

No,

24:00 **and how did that replace petrol or…?**

I don't know the whole workings of it, but when you put water or something in it and it coverts it and sends the gas from there to the engine. Just like a gas thing nowadays, apparently, and that's how they used to use the Oldsmobile. About every car had one of them on because you couldn't get petrol. There wasn't too many cars in those days anyway to drive but.

So when you say it sat in the back, was that on the back seat?

24:30 No, outside the car. You would have the back of the car and then you had… What do they call it? They used to have what they call a luggage rack and it used to fold down and fold up, and you would get one of those and you would mount it on that and the pipes would go through underneath. That's how you worked it. You could probably do it now if you wanted to. I don't know about now because the engines are different but about every car had one of those on.

And did it come off after the war?

25:00 Oh yeah, once petrol came back out, yeah, yeah. In those days you couldn't get cigarettes or anything like that. You just couldn't get them. You can't just walk in the shop like you do now. You were lucky to have a shop open.

And do you actually remember the end of the war?

Yes. We were at school and all of a sudden they declared it had finished.

25:30 So we all came out of school yelling and screaming, "We won the war! We got the Nips after all!" All celebrations all over the place. Adelaide just went absolutely wild. I remember Dad sat down and cried.

So when you were at school during the war, were you given updates of the progress of…?

No. All we got…

26:00 As far as the progress of war went, all we got on that was from the radio or the newspaper. We never got it at school anyway. Not at least ours did, anyway. Mind you, they were all pretty patriotic, the teachers, of course. We used to have collection days and if you had a penny or a halfpenny you'd throw it in the flag to go off to the Comfort Fund [ACF – Australian Comforts Fund] or something like that. As far as the rest goes, no, we never got anything like that.

So do

26:30 **you remember when the Japanese entered the war?**

Yes. I remember when Darwin got bombed. We heard about it and we thought, "The troops are coming!" We had mixed feelings about that. "Are they coming down or aren't they?" But the bombing went on and they didn't get here so I don't know what happened. I suppose in a way we felt lucky because we weren't being affected by it.

27:00 We weren't like the other countries in Europe and Asia; they were copping it. Australia never copped it. Darwin did but we weren't getting what they were getting. We never have up until now, thank God. So we felt pretty safe to a certain extent, I think. But then again, kids, when you are a kid you don't think anything is going to happen to you anyhow.

And what about when

27:30 **the atomic bomb was dropped?**

We thought it was the best thing they ever did. Well when they said, "What about that bomb that killed so many Japs?" "Yeah, little slant-eyed Nips, bloody beauty! About time they copped it." We were little kids as I said and we thought it was great. The best thing they ever did got rid of the war and it did. Little did we know what it was going to eventuate into

28:00 to come in years. Oh boy. But that was the atomic bomb for you.

What did, what did it eventuate to?

Well from there they have gone to all these guided missiles. Everything is pushbutton now. Germ warfare. All come from that and unfortunately the amount of money that they are spending on all these weapons you would think that they would spend it on finding cures for cancer and stuff instead of going to war. It's so stupid.

28:30 People who glorify war. Oh boy. They don't know what they are talking about.

Well you mentioned that you left school. Where did you go for high school?

I didn't.

Oh, you didn't.

You didn't have to in those days. You started school roughly at the age of six and you could leave at 14. If you wanted to go to high school, fine, but my parents couldn't afford to send me to high school

29:00 so I left school at 14 and, as I said, I started as a messenger boy at News Limited, Adelaide Advertiser, until I turned 16 and then they put me an apprenticeship. When I turned 17 I said, "Out of this. I'm going in the navy," and I did.

So what did you do as a messenger boy?

I would take plates or photographs from the Advertiser to the News, which was on North Terrace, or from the News to the Advertiser. You would go from Myers, John Martins,

29:30 any of those stores to pick up photographs that they wanted to put in the paper. What photographs or what leaflets. And I would take them back to the Adelaide Advertiser where they used to make the blocks for the printing thing for it and then return them after. You used to do, once every three weeks you would do night shift and you would go from the News to the Advertiser during the night and pick up the advertisements that they had or vice versa, and knock off about 12.00.

How did you get

30:00 **around?**

Pushbike. Everybody had a bike. That was the mode of transport. Or you could catch a tram, but in my case it was a bike.

And the Advertiser and the News, what was the difference between the two papers?

One got printed in the morning and one got printed in the night as far as I'm concerned. But basically it's not much difference except one was a morning paper and one was a night paper.

30:30 The News came every night and that was it. After a while the News finished and we only had the Advertiser, but no difference I don't think.

Were they from the same company?

I think they were. I'm not certain on that but I have a feeling they were but I'm just not certain on it.

So you started as a messenger boy and then gained

31:00 **an apprenticeship.**

16 was the apprenticeship age and to do an apprenticeship, any apprenticeship was five year course. So I signed on the dotted line at 16 as an apprentice, not realising then at that stage to get out of an apprenticeship was bloody hard, I can tell you that now. I just didn't like it. I was always going to join the navy from the time I was knee high to a grasshopper. That was my idea. That was it. Nothing else. And when I turned 17 I thought, "I want the navy. I don't want this." So

31:30 eventually the boss of the Adelaide Advertiser was Norm Burnston and he was an ex squadron leader or something in the air force, and when I told him I wanted to join the navy and I didn't want to be an apprentice he said, "Okay, I'll sign the papers for you," and he released me and I went straight in the navy.

So if you had this great ambition to join the navy, why did you take the apprenticeship?

In those days you just didn't know what was going to happen. You couldn't just turn around at the age of 16

32:00 and say, "Hey, I'm going to join the navy," because you would have got the sack. I didn't know what was going to happen so I signed the papers. Well Mum and Dad did, anyway. I couldn't. But Mum and Dad did and I just didn't want to be it. That was all there was to it. I was going to be in the navy. Simple.

Tell us what you did as an etcher in your apprenticeship.

Yeah a line etcher. My thing was to

32:30 to do the weather map, and you'd get the plate and get a blueprint or a print on top of it and put it in the blueprint thing and it would take an image onto the plate, and bring the plate back and what they call a router, and you would route in between the lines about so deep. You would take and put it in an acid bath upside down, and the acid used to come into where the print was and etch it off. And then you would put it in a finer one and then press it and that's how you got it. So that was my job.

How long would it take

33:00 **you to do? How long does that process take?**

It varies on how big the boxes are. A couple of hours, probably a bit more. You would do two or three jobs in one day. If you weren't doing that you could be a guillotine operator cutting things around. You are just all over the place as an apprentice. You are just the lackey. Whatever they wanted done, you had to do it. It was an interesting job but I just didn't

33:30 want to do it. I wanted to join the navy.

Did you need a very steady hand?

Oh yeah, for the router because you had two controls and the router was in the middle and you had to guide it around. There was a big clamp there with the lines and you had to just guide it around to get the lines and dig it down. A couple of times it would go through and you had to do it again. A couple of times or more than once. You had to be steady with them.

34:00 It's different now.

And with the weather map, were you doing the isobars and that?

Yeah.

It's quite detailed.

Oh yeah very detailed.

How big was the map?

About like so. What you see in the paper now.

And was it magnified?

No. No. It's just, you look at a weather map in the paper today

34:30 and that is what I seen. Exactly the same thing. You had to get this router and go in between it and then acid etch it so it was flat so you could print it.

So you needed a real eye for detail.

I suppose. Yeah you would. I made a lot of blunders.

So whereabouts were you based in your apprenticeship?

Adelaide Advertiser, North Terrace; the News right on the top floor.

35:00 They have a reunion coming up shortly and I stayed there as I said for about three years.

You made the comment that you wanted to be in the navy from knee high to a grasshopper. Where did that passion come from?

I don't know. I always remember I always wanted to join the navy. I never joined the Boy Scouts or the Cubs but as soon as I turned 11 I joined the Sea Scouts and I stayed in the Sea Scouts until was 17

35:30 and then at 17 straight in the navy. I always had an ambition, I never ever did it but I'd always had an ambition of a thing, I always wanted to go around Cape Horn in a three master and I still want to do it. I think that would be fantastic but that never eventuated. If my first wife hadn't said she was going to leave I would have stayed in the navy. I would have stayed there forever. I'd go back in tomorrow if I had a chance but

36:00 that is never going to happen.

So what did you do in Sea Scouts?

We used to go down to Port Adelaide rowing. We used to do different badges, which I did. When the jamboree camp came up you had to have a first-class badge, which was pretty hard to get in those days, before you could go. I tried and succeeded and went to the jamboree. It was just anything to do with the sea like rowing, yachting. We went down to a ship called the Warrawee. It used to be in the Antarctic.

36:30 It was stationed down at Port Adelaide and we had a camp down there for a week and I thought that was fantastic. A real ship, you beauty! And we just played games and the rest of it. Get up on the helm and pretend you were out in the middle of nowhere.

So where was your club?

I was a member of the 2nd Order of St George's, which is just the Adelaide side of the Goodwood subway and the church is on the right-hand side.

37:00 The bloke that used to run it, we used to call him 'Skipper', and it was Mr Rogers. He was the skipper. I

was in the seagull patrol and the seagull patrol was red and blue tassels off your arm. And I was what they called the second. The second in command.

So you were there for really your teenage years but you grew up in a time when the teenager was really coming into fashion

37:30 **so to speak. What kind of things did you do socially?**

As a teenager? Up until I joined the navy I was what they called a bodgie. In them days there was bodgie and widgie, which was similar to the… What would you call them now? Surfies or whatever you call them. But remember Fonzi? That was the '50s. Used to have the dovetail haircut, bracelets, rock'n'roll.

38:00 Never used to hit the booze, no drugs, never used to sit around street corners and belt people or anything like that. None of that and that's how we grew up. Some of us used to have motorbikes so we'd knock around on the motorbikes and it was just good clean fun. None of the garbage that they go on with now.

What sort of motorcycle did you have one?

I never, ever had one but my mate Brian Denning used to have a, in them days

38:30 it was the latest and it was an automatic Jawa and I was a pillion passenger on the Jawa. Brian is dead now, I believe. I haven't seen him for years anyway. But yeah others had Triumphs, BSA Gold Flash. Good motorbikes them.

So what was the gang you hung out with called?

Oh yeah. The Saints. And our theme song was 'When the Saints

39:00 Came Marching In'. That was us. But as I said we never used to do any stuff like they do now.

Well what did you do when you got together?

We'd just sit on the corner and talk. It would be a mixture of male and female. None of this nonsense of sex orgies or anything like that. That was garbage. We never ever did that. We had just good clean fun that's what I would call it. We'd go to the movies together. Our favourite was the midnight movie. In them days

39:30 they would have a midnight theatre; that was great. It always used to be Frankenstein or Dracula or one of those horror movies and we'd sit there and roll Jaffas down the aisle and yahoo when the scary bits came on, and a bit of a pash [kiss] with your girlfriend while you were there, and 2.00 or 3.00 in the morning you'd go home. Or stop at the fish and chip shop and pick a shilling's worth of fish and chips and they'd come in a big bag, and sit in Hurtle Square and have that and then you go home. Good clean wholesome fun.

40:00 They were the good days.

So what did you used to wear as a bodgie?

Peaked top trousers. Elvis Presley blue jumpers, yellow socks. Anything that was outrageous in those days. And you'd play rock'n'roll music loud, but not like they do now. When I say loud, you could hear it but not like they do now where you can't hear a thing. Yeah

40:30 Bill Haley was the favourite in those days as well.

We've come to the end of our first tape so we'll just change tapes.

Go for it.

Tape 2

00:32 **We were talking about you being a member of the Saints and what you used to get up to, but you also were talking in the break about the police also having motorbikes.**

Yep.

What kind of motorbikes did they have?

In them days it used to be the Harley Davidson or the Indian with a side box. They didn't have solos at the beginning. They came in later. But we all found that if you did something wrong on a motorbike

01:00 and you wanted to avoid them, all you had to do was turn to the left. Because of the side box they had to slow down otherwise they would go over. So you did a couple of left-hand turns and leave them and they never caught you. I must have been in them days the police, you respected them. They were a force to be contended with. If you did something wrong, that's it, you went. Not like it is now. And we had a

great deal of

01:30 respect for the police and particularly the local sergeant. I guarantee he knew everyone in the town and a couple of times I have been kicked in the backside by the sergeant. “All right Billy Jarman, I’ll get you home.” And Dad would belt me afterwards. But that’s what it was in them days. Everyone knew everybody. Different now.

What would you get up to for the local sergeant to reprimand you for?

What would you call it? Larrikinising.

02:00 In them days it might be just singing loud or some stupid thing compared to nowadays. To them that was bad. You could break an electric light bulb in the street with a shanghai and if they see you, bang, you were gone. Silly little things. But they were all right. I still have a great deal of respect for them. In fact I’m working with one now. Every day I help out with welfare and pensions and the bloke I work with,

02:30 ex navy bloke, ended up as superintendent of police, retired. So yeah, quite a few navy blokes are like that in the police force.

You joined up in the navy but your father was in the army. What about your grandfather…?

Army.

In World War I. Why didn’t you choose the army?

I just didn’t want to go in the army. I don’t know but navy, navy, navy. That was

03:00 always going to be me. I loved the sea and God knows what else and that was it. It was just going to be navy. As simple as that. No reason. I just wanted to join the navy.

Well Australia wasn’t at war any more. It was peacetime. So why did you feel it was necessary to join the navy?

I always wanted to do something

03:30 for the country I suppose and I thought that, “I’m going to do my bit,” so I went in regardless. I just wanted to be in the navy. As simple as that.

And where did you go to join?

The recruiting centre used to be in Curry Street. And I went down there and got the papers and of course

04:00 Dad had to sign them of course. And he signed them and we went back down there when they called me and you had to do an exam. Reading, writing, arithmetic. All the usual stuff. And a medical. And if you were accepted you got the letter and you had to go down to the RTO, which is Rail Transport Officer, which is down at the railway station. It used to be a little dog box. And they’d give you the ticket and off we’d go from there to Flinders.

So how did your

04:30 **parents react with you coming home with the form to join the navy?**

They knew. No worries. Dad was going to sign the form. They knew I was going to join the navy. He never tried to stop me. I was going to do it so I did. They didn’t want me to go, of course, but it’s the way it goes. But I went.

And how did you feel when you got in and you got that letter of confirmation?

Best thing of my life. I thought, “Beauty! I’m in!” I couldn’t wait to get there.

05:00 Mind you, it was a shock to the system when I did get there.

Well you took the train over to Victoria?

Yeah.

Melbourne?

Yeah.

Was this the first time that you had really left home?

No. I had been to Melbourne for the jamboree when I was in the Sea Scouts. I had been there before.

And were there any other new recruits?

Yeah, there was two that I know of came from Adelaide. One was Kevin Bates. He went in as an electrician. There was another one.

05:30 I can't think of his name. A Scots bloke. And I believe that he got there and ended up getting out for some medical reasons or something. He didn't actually continue on. I always remember Kevin Bates. I often think about him. Even today I often wonder what ever happen to him. I never, ever came across him in the navy in all those years either. Mind you he said he was an electrician and I went to gunnery.

So you… What acknowledgment of the Sea Scouts did they give you when you joined?

06:00 None. You mean the navy? None, none at all. Scouts are scouts.

So you went to HMAS Cerberus and what was the base like?

It was a World War II base actually. Nothing had changed because it was only a matter of a couple of years.

06:30 It was pretty basic. The dormitories were very basic. You had a small locker which you had to put all your gear and a hammock which you had to sling up on these rails at night. You used to have to clean the dormitory, not by yourself, but every second night or something you had to clean the dormitory, the officer would come in and salute him and, "Present dormitory H1," or whatever, "ready for inspection." And he'd walk in and have a look and walk on. But everything was

07:00 discipline, as simple as that.

How did you respond to the discipline?

The first, when we got there the master-at-arms, we used to call him 'Master-at-Arms Kusack'. His nickname was 'Snake Eyes' Kusack because he had little beady eyes. And he used to drive a Renault, I think. And, anyway, I always remember him walking up and down in front of us. We were still civilians then having just arrived and he had stick and he was going, "We are going to make you

07:30 or we are going to break you." I thought, "What have I got myself in for?" But that was it and I found if you did as you were told and kept your nose clean, no worries. And I thrived on it. It was great. They taught you not only discipline but they taught you how to work things out yourself. So when you came out you were…

08:00 Barb can tell you, my wife. She says, "There's no good telling him anything, you've already done it." "If something has to be done you don't do it tomorrow or yesterday, you do it now." I'm a firm believer of don't do tomorrow what you can do today. So that's my thing now. If something has got to be done, you do it.

Well what was the training that you undertook at Cerberus?

08:30 Well as a recruit you start from scratch. They'd say, "Left," someone would turn to the right. They'd say, "Right," and they'd go left. And you had to learn to march properly, slow march, rifle drill, saluting. Like 45 degree angle with your arms and all this sort of thing. Just the basics to get you going. It goes for about six months. You do education as well, I might add. You go to school. English, mathematics and all the rest of it and seamanship school. Learn how to steer a ship,

09:00 how to swing the lead. That is to measure the depth. You swing the lead a deep six and all this sort of thing. They don't do it now but we had to learn all that sort of thing as well. A bit of signalling, knots. Even today I can tie a knot at the back of my back like that. No worries. Guaranteed. You learn all that so it's just basic stuff ready to go on. From there you go on, there used to be a little corvette called the Gladstone and I went on that just to do basic training,

09:30 learning how to steer ships, etc., and today I maintain if you can steer a corvette you can steer anything. They were the biggest bludgers of things. It was like rock'n'roll on a blade of grass. That's how small they were. If you could steer one of them you could steer anything. That was your basic seamanship. From there you go on further.

Well just to, if I could just go back to Cerberus for a moment. You made a comment that you really enjoyed naval life, but how were the other men

10:00 **that were naval recruits responding to it?**

I can't think. One of them, he couldn't take it. I can't think of his name but he used to wander out and quite a few times they found him out in the back of the blocks in the trees and mulga just talking to himself. In the end they took him before the shrink [psychiatrist]. He got discharged. Medical grounds, of course. I always remember, I was on the Gladstone

10:30 and he came to the Gladstone and he stood on the shore and he went, "Ha, ha! I got out, didn't I?" He didn't like it and that's how he got out. Some could take it and some couldn't. There was another one in our dormitory. I can't think of his name either after all these years. And the first night I remember he was crying. He wanted to go home. I thought to myself, "What a whacker! If you are going to get homesick, what the hell did you join for?"

11:00 I often wondered what happened to a lot of those blokes. I never met them after that because you go your own ways and some of them have gone. I never ever met up with any of them, unfortunately.

Well you didn't seem have a problem with it, but what do you think it was that made men want to leave after joining?

I think probably because it was a bit of a shock to them when they found out the discipline. A lot had never been away from home

11:30 and when they got there, "We're here and Dad's over there or Mum's over there." And when they had to start having to do things they just couldn't handle it. That's how I think anyhow. Some made it. Some didn't. I guess when you work it out a good 90% made it. I mean maybe the 95%. There was just the odd one. Some weren't cut out for it.

12:00 **And who were your instructors?**

The first one was a Petty Officer Grey. A great bloke. He had been in the navy I suppose eight years by then. He was a firm disciplinarian but he was a good bloke. You knew if you got in trouble you deserved it, otherwise you wouldn't have got into trouble. And 'Dolly' Grey, that was his nickname. Dolly. If you are called Grey you are always called Dolly.

12:30 And 'Dolly' was a bloody good bloke. The leading seamen was Stan Hutchinson. 'Lemon Drop Kid' we used to call him. Bright red, so he got the nickname of 'Lemon Drop'. He was a leading seaman and he was one of our instructors on the rifle part, the rifle drill, and I actually served with him later on. He was my boss on HMAS Tobruk and he and I were very close friends after that. He was a strict bloke but always fair. I always found that most of them

13:00 were. I always found that if you did what you were told without arguing or back chat and you kept your nose clean you were all right. It's only those that were trying to buck the system, and you can't do that. The navy is built on discipline and without that discipline you don't have a navy, so you've got to come in with it.

And these instructors, were they ex World War II

13:30 **servicemen?**

I don't think 'Dolly' was. He may have been. He might have been. I reckon he might have been. I don't think Stan was but 'Dolly', I reckon he would have been. Eight years, and that was '52, so probably at the back end of it. A lot of the others that were there as instructors were Second World War blokes. They had their ribbons up and everything else. They were chiefs and petty officers

14:00 and 'Dolly' was the only one, I think.

Did they ever make mention of the war?

No not really. It's funny. Most ex-service people, especially veterans, don't talk about it really. If they do talk about it it's all the good times. Very rarely do you talk about the bad times. Even today, and even today too, I find it very hard to talk to, for want of a better word,

14:30 a 'civilian' because they just don't know where I'm coming from. The classic example is my neighbour across the road. A fantastic bloke. He's made me welcome from the time we got here and he said to me once, "Bill, I'm not going to ask you what you did in the navy because I wouldn't understand." Now he's the first one that's ever said that. I said, "I'm glad you said that Mike because you wouldn't and I'd be reluctant to say anything." He said, "No. Fine." That's great. It's very hard to talk to somebody about the war time.

15:00 **So when you got to the navy, what part of naval life really appealed to you?**

Discipline. Ceremonial. Ships. Sailing. Not knowing where you were going to be tomorrow. The whole kit and caboodle. I loved it. I'd be back there tomorrow if I could. Of course at my age they won't take me now, well not in my condition.

15:30 I go down to the ships when they come in and go over them.

So then after Cerberus you went to Gladstone?

Yes. That was only training for a few weeks.

So what was, what, how did your training differ from the Cerberus?

It was like sea training. You did watches at night. We used to do three watches in them days. Four on and eight off, so you could be up at 12.00

16:00 to 4.00 steering, lookouts, lifebuoy sentry, sea boats crew. It was just basic training at sea to learn what you needed in the future. We learned everything. What to do in the future as I said so when you got to another ship, say a convoy ship, and you were actually going somewhere, they could rely on you. So I always maintained, no matter what ship you were on,

16:30 everybody on that ship their lives depended on you doing your job. The same as you relied on the cook doing his job and the other 300 as well all have to be like that, and you'll find most navy blokes are like that even today. All rely on each other. It doesn't matter where you go. And a good incident has just

happened recently. I had to go down to the dentist and take the wife down there and a bloke walked in and he looked at me and I had my hat with me,

17:00 my HMAS Tobruk hat, and he said, “Navy. I’m so-and-so navy.” Navy blokes, you always find them, always find them. Even when I was in hospital. A bloke came down and I can’t think of his name. Fred. Hang on, it is Fred, Fred Butler. And he came up and said, “Fred Butler, ex navy. They told me there was a navy bloke here so I found him.” That happens even today. It’s just a camaraderie that we have. It doesn’t matter when you served, what year

17:30 or how old you are, all navy blokes can sit there and relate to each other just like that. We all have our own language and all ships are the same. Even today the ships are the same as they were when I was on them. So yeah, that’s navy men for you.

So back to the Gladstone. The keeping watch. What did they train you about keeping watch? What are the important things about

18:00 **keeping watch?**

Well if you are on lookout duty, the port starboard lookout, you would be trained how to sweep from the bow to the stern with the binoculars. You go across and lift up slightly. Go back the other way and back and you reported everything you seen. Lights, aircraft, you reported it. Even a piece of junk going past you reported

18:30 it as an object. It would always be like for argument sake, “Bridge, starboard lookout. Bearing red four five, object.” And they would come over and identify it and mark it. And when the bloke came in to identify from we would point out each of the objects, light, etc., that were reported so he knew they were already covered. So if anything came up in the future he would report the next one. And that goes on 24 hours a day at sea.

19:00 Everything is reported.

So is there two people keeping watch at once?

Yes. One on port side and one on starboard side, plus you had the officers with their binoculars, of course. But your job was to go from the bow to the stern on each side and there would be another one down the stern looking from the port side to the starboard side on what we called lifebuoy sentry. If anyone was over the side he was there to throw the lifebuoys over. You would be on either one of those duties. Or if you weren’t on the helm steering

19:30 you would be required to be near the sea boat. And the sea boat was a whaler. It used to hang over the side of the ship and if anyone went over they would call, “Away lifeboats crewed!” And it didn’t matter who you are, if you are near that sea boat you’ve got to get in it straight away. Even the captain. They would drop the boat and you go back and pick him up. Other than that it was sea boats crewed and if they said, “Sea boats crew!” you would be away and go back in that as well. Just taught you basic seamanship. That’s what it amounted to.

20:00 And people relied on you to do your job and that’s what you did and that’s what we did on the Gladstone.

Well that seamanship that you were learning about at that stage on the Gladstone, what were you being taught about sea life and living on board?

Well you had to learn that you lived in confined space. That you had very little room in your locker to put your gear. You had to eat, sleep, lounge

20:30 around, write letters all in the one area and you had to learn to live with other blokes. I mean if you were shy and all that there’s no good being on board a ship, I can tell you that. If you went for a shower you went for a shower with 900 other blokes so you had to learn all that and yeah, you’d cope. That’s what you did.

Well that lack of privacy was quite prominent on ships.

21:00 **How did you cope with having no privacy?**

It didn’t bug me. It didn’t worry any of us. Look, it’s like. How can you put it? It’s like growing up in a family. On a ship, it’s just a brotherhood. You know you are the same as the next bloke. You go ashore together, you get drunk together, you fight together, you sweated together, you cried together.

21:30 That’s what you did. But I found no problems whatsoever and none of the other blokes either. If you did you were obviously in the wrong service. We coped.

How did the older men respond to the new recruits, so to speak?

You got the odd one that was a proper whacker but the average older bloke. I always remember Merv Hard on Tobruk. He was a three badge AB [Able Seaman]. He had been in the navy for a hundred years. He had been there and done the whole thing and

22:00 come from Adelaide and if you ever wanted to know anything you would ask Merv and he’d only be too

happy to tell you. He'd sit there, and we used to call them 'sea daddies'. He looks after you and he makes certain you go the right way. That's what they did. They passed the information on, which was great. I don't know if it's like that today but it was in them days. So you learned a lot from them.

22:30 Especially when it came from tid [tiddly] gear. The uniforms you get issued are always a bit big so after you got out of recruit school and got onto the ships you would have your own tailor made and mine were the 36 bell bottoms with the creases and the jacket and jack me hardy. He used to tell you where to go and how to get it.

What was the recruits' uniform?

Just a basic serge uniform.

23:00 They were bell bottoms as we knew it. They were a straight sort of thing and the jacket was all floppy here and around here was floppy as well, but when you got out of recruit school and you were allowed to wear what we called tid gear you could buy collars, dicky fronts which was a T-shirt up here. A dicky front was just a tie one. The uniform was tight. To get it off it took two of you. You had to put your hands on the bloke's knee and peel your jacket off.

23:30 It was like a skin. The bell was tied around here with the flaps and the bells. As I said, mine were 36-inch bottom.

What was the status of having such?

The Australian navy uniform in them days was absolutely fantastic. We were known everywhere by the uniform. It was just, how can you put it? It was spot on. There's nothing better to see

24:00 blokes marching in 36-inch bottom bells and skintight uniforms. They were just fantastic. They just stood out. The uniform these days is just load of crap. They've got these creases like the Yanks. They've got these jackets that don't fit. They've got their hats too low. We used to wear them flat at back or on a joining angle. Mine was always on a joining angle. Now they look like a heap of garbage. They need to get back to the basic uniform. The Australian navy was

24:30 well known for the uniform and their cleanliness and we always used to look smart. As simple as that. But still.

So you had this uniform tailored? Was there any guidelines about how far you could alter the uniform?

You weren't supposed to but we did. You could have 38-inch bottoms if you wanted. 34, 36, 40. You could please yourself.

25:00 Mine was 36 and that was the basic, too, I reckon. There were no particular rules to it. We used to wear the silk around the jackets. The silk you were issued with was a dull colour, but the tid silk was a nice shiny one. And instead of having a little bow thing at the bottom we would tuck it down and tie it. Simple. None of this other garbage they used to do. The lanyard used to go around your neck across then down, and we would shove it down the ends and put the ends on. That

25:30 was it. Not around your neck. We always found that if you had it around your neck and you got in a fight someone could pull it and strangle you. So we used to, once you got out of recruit school it used to go down there, and not there unless you were on ceremonial duty it was different, but ashore.

And the tight jackets. Was there any ever comment about altered uniforms?

Not really. We used to get a remark from an officer

26:00 but they never used to push it. They were never going to do anything about it anyhow but they might make a comment, "That's a bit tight," or something like that. "Yes Sir." They were pretty good blokes.

And where did you have this uniform made?

Glendiney and Staceys, which are still available. They now have a shop at Flinders Naval Depot, funnily enough. In them days it used to be in Sydney just down from Johnny's.

26:30 You could get them made up in Hong Kong if you were up there and they used to sell everything.

That's really interesting that the change, getting a new uniform and having it tailored. Was there a status involved in that?

Not so much a status but it was just the uniforms they give you was garbage

27:00 and I always looked at the tid suits; we all did that they just looked good. The Australian navy stood out. Simple. You could always pick an Australian sailor from all the others the way he was dressed, the bells particularly. They were dressed the same but they haven't got bells. They don't do that. The fronts instead of down here they would have their T-shirt up here and their collars would be this way

27:30 and up and over and whatever. You've seen the photograph there. It just looked good. We had our thing and you could always pick an Australian somewhere just by looking at him. There was no status system;

it's just we wanted to look good and we did. Simple.

So it was quite a short stint on the Gladstone.

Yeah, just training.

Then where were you drafted?

28:00 From there I went to the Australia. 8-inch heavy cruiser.

And where did you join the Australia?

In Sydney. That was a shock too. You get on them big ships and it's like being back at Flinders. It was a flagship. The Admiral was on board so everything was spit and polish. You used to wear your uniforms and salute everybody and all that crap. Just like being back at the depot. It was still

28:30 basic training again. Being at sea on the Australia doing lookout duties and steering and lifebuoy sentries and all the usual thing. You just stay on that and you got made up as an ordinary seamen. You go from recruit to ordinary seaman and you stay on that as an OD [Ordinary Seaman] and then when you get your next draft, maybe 12 months later, you get made into an able seaman. I was on that for about eight months and my job at that stage was

29:00 I was quarterdeck party ship and I was starboard watch, and my job during the day was working up in the flag deck in the signals office, taking the signals down and putting them in the pigeon holes for the officers down in the saloon. Or I would be sentry duty. I've done that. You would pull into a port and you would be sentry on the gangway. .303 rifle and standing kit caboodle. You used to have to walk up and down the ship

29:30 and guard it, whatever. Salute the officers as they came on. Just general sentry duty and you just learn the general things again.

Can I just take you back to steering? I forgot to ask you this before we left the Gladstone. What was the art of steering a corvette?

The corvette had what they call a magnetic compass. It was a compass like so.

30:00 Now when you turned the ship the compass, being magnetic, would take it's time coming around, so by the time you are getting to there on the compass the ship is over there, so you've got to bring it back again. It makes it difficult, whereas the bigger ships and the later ships had what they call gyro repeat. It was a big strip like so and it was mounted up on the deck, on the bulkhead I should say, and you'd be steering there and you'd just watch

30:30 the compass there on the strip and it was accurate. If you move the ship it would go click, click, click and you knew when to bring it back, whereas the magnetic, oh boy, if you could steer one of them you could steer anything. That's just the difference in the steering line. The corvette used to rock'n'roll on a wet blade of grass. They were incredible things. They were like a piece of cork whereas the bigger ship didn't. So that is steering on ships.

And what were you like

31:00 **steering a corvette?**

Not the best. I managed but not the best. I was lucky when I went to the other ships; that was easy. I made quite a few boo boos but then again what can you expect.

What sort of boo boos did you make?

You didn't correct in time or you turned the wheel the wrong way or you overcorrected and she would be way over here before you knew it and start turning circles. Get it back.

31:30 But still all good fun.

And you noticed a real difference when you got to the Australia?

Oh yeah. I mean steering a cruiser is like steering a truck. That was easy as hell. Then again the steering of a cruiser. On a corvette you are up on the bridge and the steering is just there. On the cruiser you go down from the upper deck, in to the next deck down. You go down and

32:00 there's like a passageway all the way down to the bottom to a little room and that's where the helm is, so the rest of the ship's up there and we were way down there. So you were virtually right on the water line. But to steer it was easy, easy as hell, and you always had a quartermaster there. He was always with you and he used to correct you and show you what to do and you'd be steering. You could go for the helmsman certificate, which I did

32:30 and you report to, you volunteer for the helm. You only do a one hour trek. You weren't allowed to do any more than one hour per watch so you would report that you wanted to do the helmsman certificate and they mark it, etc. Once you get ten hours you get your helmsman certificate and you can steer any ship. Now it's all pushbutton, isn't it?

Did you do that on the Australia, your certificate?

Yeah.

33:00 Yeah, which doesn't mean much. It just means you can steer a ship. No big deal. And then you go to other ships steering in different areas. Some are on the bridge and some are below. But once you get past the first couple of ships it's a piece of cake, a breeze.

What was the Australia like? You mentioned it had the admiral and was a flagship.

33:30 Being a flag officer's ship it was spit and polish. All the brass work was polished. You had to wear uniforms. It had wooden decks and when I say wooden deck it was still a ship that had wooden decking and every morning you had to holy stone the deck. The holy stone is like a brick about that big and you roll your trousers up to your knees and you are on your hands and knees and up and down the deck cleaning it, and then you hose it down with salt water.

34:00 Then you do PT [physical training]. Run around the upper deck doing physical training. You'd have classes, seamanship classed, knot classes. Similar thing to recruit school except you are at sea training and having the experience and once you got out of that you were home and hosed. You go to another ship which is entirely different again. I left the Australia for the Murchison and the Murchison was a frigate

34:30 and on that ship we used to wear jackets, flying boots, jeans you name it. Completely different. No uniforms. You could wear what you like, anything you like. So there was a big difference.

You did say though that when you started training that you really enjoyed the discipline.

Oh yeah.

Well how did you respond to it on the Australia because it's a different type of discipline?

No difference. Discipline is discipline.

35:00 You did it. Simple. As I said, it doesn't matter what ship you are on the discipline part of it is if somebody tells you do to something you do it, so there's no difference to what ship you go to. Except on the Australia it was all full uniforms and you used to have be dressed properly with your hats and all this type of thing. "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir," and

35:30 it was just because it was a flagship. Simple. But the rest of the ships, like the cruisers and the destroyers, a different kettle of fish. We used to wear pirate gear, which was great and relaxed, but the discipline was still there and always will be.

And where was your mess on the Australia?

Right up forward, below B gun. To get to it you go from the other deck. There was a big long wide ladder

36:00 you go down and come up. You go down and turn to your right and go down again. It was on the water line. I've got a photograph there. The lockers were right through the actual mess deck and you used to have to swing your hammocks above the locker, which was pretty awkward to try and do. When you went to eat you had a cafeteria on board so you didn't have to eat and sleep in the same area, which made it

36:30 easier. It was pretty crowded. There were lockers like three high, if I remember rightly, and there was rows and rows of them and the hammock bin used to be in the corner. You used to lash your hammock up and put it in the bin during the day. But yeah, a lot of blokes on that ship.

How many men?

I honestly couldn't say but going on say 600 roughly. I suppose that would be about that, maybe,

37:00 and that's officers included. I would have to look in the book, honestly, to tell you that.

Was is it a bit of a culture shock to have to share with so many men?

No, not really. It was just like being in recruit school. It doesn't matter who they are or what ship they are on, as soon as you got drafted to a ship and went on board you were one of the crew and they were your brothers. That was it.

37:30 They were family straight away. So there was no drama.

Where did you sail on the Australia?

New Zealand. Cairns, Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney. Just training in that area. You never went to a war zone, just around the place.

So when you became an ordinary seaman, was there any initiation?

No.

38:00 No, you just made OD, that's it. You go before the officer and request to be made ordinary seaman, granted, signed, that's it. Salute and you are an ordinary seamen. Your pay goes up of course, and you stay on that for about 12 months and when your time came up to be an able seaman it was done automatically. You went to able seaman.

But you had to go forward and say you wanted to become an ordinary seaman?

Mmm.

Why did you think you were ready for that

38:30 **step?**

Because my time was up. You see it's not a basic exam. After your recruit training, after six months, you automatically become an OD. Now an OD is not an exam as such, but you are marked by the skipper in charge on your progress over that time. Mine was always VG, which was very good, so my time

39:00 was up, very good, bingo. If it wasn't you had to go back and do it again. The same with AB. When I got to an AB superior, straight away AB, and so it goes on. And after four years you apply for your GCB [good conduct badge] which is your first stripe. That means you have been in for four years good conduct and no charges. So you request that and get it granted and up goes your pay again.

39:30 **So how long were you on the Australia before you became an ordinary seaman?**

I was an OD before I got there. I got it straight from recruit school. I did my training, OD, and straight on. And then you do your OD's training.

Right. So you were an OD on the Gladstone.

No. The Gladstone was in that training period. I was a recruit then.

So at the end of the Gladstone?

The only recruit time and then you get OD, which is

40:00 ordinary seaman, but don't ask me. You would think it would be OS, but it is OD.

Okay. We'll we've come to the end of another tape, so.

Okay. That was quick.

You're doing all the talking so that's why it goes quickly.

Tape 3

00:31 **So, Bill, just to clarify, where did you sail again? Just tell us again where you went with the Australia? What the operations were?**

They weren't operations as such. They were virtually goodwill tours. New Zealand, from state to state just to let them see the ship. Just basic stuff. We went

01:00 to Tasmania and Hobart just to let them know who we were. Just basic seamanship training. That's all we did. We didn't get any combat information or anything like that. None of that. Just stuff.

And so on the Gladstone, had you done any trips on the Gladstone or was that mainly in dock?

Oh no, say Western Port Bay to Melbourne and back again. Just local, just training, that's all it was.

01:30 **On the Australia did you suffer any seasickness at all?**

Never seasick in my life, to answer that question.

You were quite quick to find your sea legs.

Oh yeah. I was born with them, I think.

You were born in a boat.

I reckon.

Okay, well perhaps we'll move on then. You spent about eight months with

02:00 **HMAS Australia and then you got drafted to the Murchison.**

That was a frigate.

That was a river class or bay class frigate.

Bay class, that's right.

So where did you join the Murchison?

In Sydney. And I stayed on that until 1955 when she paid off. She did the armistice tour to Korea, which was virtually

02:30 sailing around and doing station in Japan. Came back and then we went north to Darwin to do the fishery patrol for the Indonesian fishermen. Back in them days there was always a frigate or destroyer that was sent or operated from Darwin right around to Broome checking on the fishing areas for 12 months, and that's what we did.

First of all before we go on, can you tell us first of all about that armistice

03:00 **trip to Korea?**

Yeah, well it was an armistice patrol. You go up there and just be part of the United Nations armistice patrols just to make sure that the armistice was kept. You weren't shooting anybody or anything like that. You just had to make sure that everything was going okay, and that went on until 1956. Every ship that was stationed in the Far East made a trip to Korea for that particular reason, just to let them know that hey, they were there.

03:30 I went on the Tobruk in '57 again but yeah, that's all that involved. No fighting involved in it. No combat as such.

Did she go on her on or in convoy or…?

Usually by herself. Sometimes you would be with somebody else. It just varied. You see the Murchison spent 12 months previous to that in 1951–52. I wasn't on it then but she got called the

04:00 baron of the Han River. She spent 60 days straight on the Han River in Korea and she made a reputation for herself, a very good reputation for herself. She was a great ship that one, but after the armistice. We were only up there for six months or seven months or some damn thing and then we came back. There was no drama involved in that at all.

Did you go into either Sasabo or any other places?

Kure.

04:30 We went to Kure. We were stationed there. And we went to Tokyo and places like that. They were just ports. No drama in that either. Just basic stuff.

Were there any ceremonies that you were a part of up there or…?

No. It was cold, I know that. Snow everywhere. I'd never seen it snow so much. But we weren't involved in much.

05:00 **Did you go ashore on Korea at all, in Korea?**

No, I didn't, no. I did in Japan. As soon as we got back, straight in the bar.

That was in Kure?

Yep, or wherever else we went to, Tokyo or whatever. A nice place that. Go back to there tomorrow if I got a chance as well.

Well what did you like about it when you got on shore?

05:30 The foreign places, I used to like seeing how the other person lived. It's an eye opener. It always makes you glad to get back to Australia. After I've been to some of these places I think, "Wow, we've got it made down there." Some of the things or the way they used to live is an eye opener. Australia is a lucky country. It has been and always will be.

06:00 And I think the overwhelming impression I got, especially with Japan, was the, regardless of what they did during the Second World War they are such a clean nation, clean people and very respectful. That always stuck with me ever since. I've always said and always will. Even said it a couple of weeks ago to my wife. Japan is the greatest country I've ever been to

06:30 and it's a pity they did what they did because I think they would have been fantastic. They probably are now. I mean you can't blame the other generation for what the other generation did but.

Well you were there ten years after the end of World War II and just at the end of the Korean War, I'm just wondering what signs of war could you see, if any?

Well we went to Nagasaki.

07:00 Not so much in the Murchison but I've been to Nagasaki and I've been to Hiroshima. I've seen the museums and I've seen what was left of it. You see the population and they talk about what happened to it. People die from disfigurement and that later on because of the atomic bombs. It's there. It's probably

still there but not so much as it was in our day, but there was a lot of it around. And to me they were still trying to get back on

07:30 their feet. We used to have a saying that when you threw your garbage, it doesn't matter what it was, into the garbage bins, a lot of Japanese would come and get it and that afternoon you would be buying that gear back again made up as a suitcase or something like that because they just grab anything together. They all to me looked as if they were hungry. Whether they were I don't know, but that stood out to me as well. I think the greatest thing I ever found

08:00 was they were clean and so respectful. That's all that got to me. Other than that, no.

And what were the bars like that you went to?

Typical bar. You could get anything you want, that's for sure. Beer wise and they had a pretty good price, and they always welcomed the servicemen there anyhow. It was all money to them. It was just a typical

08:30 Japanese bar. Did what you like and that's what we were used to. A few beers and go back. I don't think there was anything startling about it.

And how welcome was the Aussie sailor?

I think you were. You didn't know what they were thinking. They were all smiles and everything else but this is just a few years after the Second World War so really you didn't know

09:00 what they were thinking, but they made you welcome so it never used to worry us or anything like that. I suppose some of them hated us, I don't know, but I never found that. I never found any animosity. They were… Found they were pretty good people, actually. Very respectful, as I said, which was great.

And as a sailor on shore while you were out of Australian

09:30 **waters, did you find that there was a peer group pressure to go into the bar and have a few drinks and get drunk?**

No. No there wasn't any of that. During all my time in the navy I can honestly say there was no peer pressure. Not to me personally, anyhow. You found once you were on board no matter what ship it was you always wound up invariably with someone from South Australia, but if there was nobody else there, you

10:00 ended up with two or three mates that you cottoned on together and you always went to shore together and did everything together. Even though you knew everyone else, you always had these particular people and you just did it. If you wanted to go and have a beer, go and have a beer, but if you didn't want to go ashore, you didn't go ashore. You just did what you wanted to do. I found that easy.

Well perhaps

10:30 **you can just describe the Murchison. We've described that she was a river class frigate. What was she like? She was a training ship when you joined her?**

No she was a fleet ship or a combat ship. The skipper was Lieutenant Commander Savage, who had already been to Korea once before, and a frigate, it's a small ship

11:00 and there wasn't so much, how can I put it? There wasn't so much garbage going. You didn't have to wear uniforms and that type of thing. We used to wear what we called pirate gear. If you wanted to put on a leather jacket you put on a leather jacket. If you wanted to wear flying boots you wore flying boots. The only time you got done up in uniform was for ceremony. It just wasn't all the discipline and everything else that you get on the bigger ships or in a

11:30 depot. There was discipline, don't get me wrong. There was discipline but not strict discipline. None of this, "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir." It was only a small ship and you were just like normal people. As simple as that. The skipper was great and the first lieutenant was Lieutenant Logan Brown. He was a great bloke. When we were in Sydney he would give you a lift home in his car. Great. Terrific. You would call him, "Sir," and everything else

12:00 but it wasn't all the garbage that you got on the carriers and the cruisers. All that ceremonial stuff. We used to wear pirate gear put it that way. Just like a pirate ship.

But you had taken quite a lot of pride in wearing the uniform so how did you…

That's ashore.

So how did you find that transition from the Gladstone and the Australia to wearing

12:30 **what you say now, pirate gear?**

Simple. There was no transition. You were always proud of your uniform but you only wore it ashore unless you were on one of these carriers and you had to. At sea, especially in hot weather, shorts and sandals that's all you wore. No shirt, no hat. I've got a photograph at the back on the Tobruk of shorts,

sandals and a neckerchief wrapped around my neck. That was it. That was all I wore at sea.

13:00 But going ashore, that was a different kettle of fish. You wore your uniform and your creases were sharp, clean. That's the difference between ashore and being at sea. That doesn't mean you weren't clean or anything else, don't get me wrong. The clothes you wore, even if it was only shorts, they were always ironed and always clean. So were you. You were always clean-shaven and

13:30 you always had your hair combed. So discipline didn't relax to that extent. But clothing wise and dress wise yeah, which was great.

Is there something to do with the seven creases to represent the seven…?

What a lot of garbage! People reckon it's to do with the seven seas. When you iron your seven creases it's so that they fold up in a nice little bundle to put in your locker.

14:00 End of story. All that seven seas is a lot of garbage. Some of them used to have six creases, some of them had five. Mine was seven because I was a jack me hardy.

So you did have the seven creases?

Oh yes. Yeah, sure.

And you've used to term jack me hardy. What does that mean?

A jack me hardy. A jack me hardy is a

14:30 larrikin, and most of us were. You take on the world if we had to. Jack me hardies. So when you went ashore you had seven creases and your uniform was pressed absolutely immaculately and your hat was always at the back of your head unless an MP [Military Police] caught you and then you had to put it back straight again because you weren't allowed to have a flat a back. Your cuffs were always rolled up

15:00 and your tattoos used to show, of course. Always have a hand in your flaps.

So was jack me hardy a sailor, or where did that come from?

It's just a term: "Look at the jack me hardy. Hat flat a back, sleeves rolled up and just like a larrikin." A larrikin. And we were all like that always. But on a ceremonial occasion that was different. Your sleeves were down and your hat was dead straight. You were still immaculate. You took pride in that uniform.

15:30 I know I did and a lot of my mates did too.

So when you say you were a larrikin and prepared to take on the world, does that mean that that you had to be good at fisticuffs or…?

No, no, no, no, no. What I mean by that was we knew we were well trained and we knew that we could do the job we had to do. And if the world wanted to take us on – fine.

16:00 Come and get us. If you want to come and get us we will defend the country if we have to. We weren't worried by that and we were highly trained. Even today we are highly trained. That's what I meant by that. Not that we will take on the world because we are good at fighting. Don't get me wrong. I've been knocked out but, yeah. What's next?

So you were ready for the

16:30 **war sort of thing?**

We were ready to take on anybody who wanted to have a go at us.

We were just describing the Murchison and the type of ship it was. So it had a small crew of 100 and…?

The ship had 140, I suppose there would be.

17:00 I couldn't honestly say on that, but 140 I reckon. It was only a small ship and very tight living quarters and very basic for the lockers and everything else. It wasn't built for cold weather. It was built for tropical conditions so if you were in Japan or anywhere where it got cold you would freeze.

17:30 No airconditioning. None of that. It was just a World War II frigate and she had the basic needs on it, but it was a good ship. Very good officers, good crew. On all the ships I was on. I enjoyed being on there.

Did she roll very much?

She used to. A couple of times we got caught in a typhoon when we were doing the fishery patrols and I'm just

18:00 trying to think of the other ship we were up there with. There were two ships up there at that stage and the sea was that rough that you can imagine the big swell and the two ships down here and then you

would be up here and you'd see each other and then you'd be down here again. Good stuff! Or you would be in the galley and the cook would be cooking eggs. Now when they used to do the fried eggs they had patty pans with all little doodahs and they would put a bit of grease in and throw the eggs in, so consequently when the sea's like that

18:30 the eggs would go boom, boom and onto the deck. Then it would go back the other and plop this way, so you would always lose two or three eggs while you were cooking the others. But she'd be rolling around, but in a calm sea or ordinary sea, no worries. Go straight ahead like most ships would. But she didn't roll like the old Gladstone did. The old night sweeper. A bit more steady but there were no stabilisers on her or anything like that. And steering them

19:00 it was hard but you did it. It wasn't difficult. You had to watch what you did. If she was carrying five degrees to starboard you would have to throw that wheel on to hold her back. That means if she is throwing five degrees to starboard wheel you would have to have that wheel on five degrees to hold her straight because if you let it back to zero she'd go. So that's what that means. Sometimes it would be the other way around. Ten degrees to port wheel to keep her straight.

19:30 But you got the hang of it after a while. You never used to stay dead on course. Nobody could ever do that unless it's real calm sea. You always do one or two degrees as you are going up but it's basically straight. So that's a pretty good ship.

You mentioned that you got in a couple of typhoons?

More than one, in different ships I might add, but up in the tropics you always get some sort of a

20:00 cyclone or typhoon or something like that. Other days it might be like going across glass water, like a river. It varies up there. One minute calm and the next minute rough.

So on the Murchison, when you were in a typhoon like that would you have to lash things down or what would you do?

You used to have to make sure everything was secure and you very rarely went up on the upper deck. To go to the upper helm you would go through the decks and up through the ladders,

20:30 but very rarely go up on the upper deck. I know on the Australia in a rough sea she used to rig lines from forward to aft with rope and an eyelet and you used to hang on to that to walk up, and then you would go back the other side. We never ever did that on the Murchison. We never did that on the Tobruk or any of the other ships that I was on. But yeah, you got the hang of it. A typhoon is a typhoon. It's just a sea; you don't worry about it.

21:00 **So your providence is not upper deck; you were mainly lower deck?**

What's that?

You were OD on the Murchison.

I got made AB on Murchison.

So your mess was in the lower deck area or…?

Mine was on the starboard side aft.

21:30 I can't think of the number. I've got a picture of the Murchison over there but I was starboard side aft on that one. I was watchkeeping at one side. My action station was portside Bofor [Bofors machine gun]. I was a loader and I had just basic seaman duties. You'd clean the heads or you'd be mess deck sweeper or doing the usual things. Lookout, steering, lifebuoy sentry or whatever,

22:00 sea boats crew, all seamanship.

Well the Murchison was armed? You mentioned Bofors and four-inch guns. Can you just take us through what kind of guns it had on board?

Yeah. It had four-inch up forward, twin four-inch aft, Bofors port and starboard side and that's about it.

22:30 We had a hedgehog, was that on the stern? Yeah, we had a hedgehog mounted on her as well. That was the basic armament on that one. The 40 mm Bofors, there is a three-man crew on that one. You've got the loader that stands above it. You've got the bloke that actually sits in there and then you've got loader and another one handing ammunition up. That's on both of them. And then you've got 1, 2, 3,

23:00 4, 6 about 8 that operate the four-inch and that is layer, trainer, the loaders, the fliers. That was basically it. What else do you want to know?

Well you went on to do a gunnery course after the Murchison, but I'm just wondering what sort of training in armaments you had done on the Murchison or…?

None.

23:30 None at all. Mine was a loader. All we do is pick up the ammunition and put it in. I had no skills

whatsoever as far as laying, training or operating Bofors or any of that. In recruit school you learn the basics of how to fire a rifle, machine gun and mortar or what have you. Everyone did that. But when it came to the big guns you had to do a gunnery course to do that and I didn't do that until 1956.

24:00 Until then I was bare arm. You had no GCB badge, you had no right arm rate, which was either gunnery, communication or whatever else you was. I had none of those. I was an able seaman, as simple as that. The able seaman would steer the ships, lookouts, that type of thing until such time as you got your right arm rate.

Well perhaps we'll talk about

24:30 **doing that gunnery course then. You left the Murchison and paid off.**

In 1955 she paid off and I stayed on that for roughly three months after she paid off as skeleton crew with another six blokes, and we used to sleep on the Murchison but we used to eat and everything else on the Platypus, which was on the other side of the wharf. So we were just a skeleton crew while she was going into mothballs. And as I said we used

25:00 to do everything else on the Platypus.

And this is in Sydney?

Yes, yep. After she finished completing, that's when they gave me a draft to Cerberus to do the gunnery course and I went down there in January, I think it was. January, February '56 to do the gunnery course, which I did.

Well you had done quite a few trips away and then you came back and then you spent some time living on the Platypus or sleeping on the Platypus.

25:30 No eating on the Platypus and sleeping on the Murchison.

Sorry, the other way around.

We used to keep watched at night on the Murchison and every hour you had to go right through the whole ship with a torch. You had torchlight and checking that nothing was leaking, everything was locked, nothing was missing and nobody was on board. Just generally looking after it until such time as they tell you to tie her up in mothballs. I did that for about three months, two or three months. And the Platypus, all we did was have something to eat because they had the galley there.

26:00 Have a shower and all that sort of thing, but the rest of the gear was on the Murchison.

So the Platypus just had better shower facilities or…?

Well the Platypus was just like a depot ship. We used to go there to be drafted there. It was a working ship but the water was on, the power was on, sleep there if you wanted to do, eat there. Do what you like. We had nothing on the Murchison because everything had been turned off, so consequently you had to go across there.

26:30 We became part of the Platypus people, I suppose you'd call it. Most of the time we spent on the Murchison checking her out, making sure she was okay.

Was there anything untoward that you would come across or any incidents?

No just basic, all ships that pay off go through that. There is always a skeleton crew on board and that's what you did. You just keep checking it out to make certain

27:00 everything is okay. That it didn't go up in smoke or didn't spring a leak or… Yeah, they just tow her away and put her in mothballs and that's about it.

And what were your options at that point in time? Why had you become interested in doing a gunnery course?

I was always going to be gunnery. From the time I joined I always wanted to be gunnery.

27:30 Nothing had changed. They said, "You are going to do a gunnery course," so I did. It worked in real well for me, but that's what I wanted to be.

So you went back down to Flinders?

Yep. I reported down there and got drafted into a gunnery school and started a gunnery course. I started going to gunnery classes and that's another shock to your system to because gunnery school, that

28:00 was spot on. You never walked, you ran everywhere, and we were the only ones. When lunchtime was on and everyone had finished to down to the cafeteria for lunch, the gunnery school, we marched back and we had to be spot on. Each person in my class, which was S13, would take it in turns to be in charge of that class. So you would form up in front of the gunnery school and there might be four or five, six, seven or eight

28:30 classes and the officer of the gunnery school would be in the middle of the parade ground with the chief gunnery inspector on either side of him. And you would have to go out and you had to salute him and you had make certain that your salute was 45 degree and arm back. Spot on. And if it wasn't, when you finished making the report the chief or that chief, depending on which way you turned, would say, "Report to me," and you had to do it over and over until you got it perfect. Oh yeah,

29:00 and if you went across the parade ground you didn't walk, you ran. If you was gunnery school you had to be immaculate; you had to be the best. They drummed it into you. The gunnery, seaman, gunner, senior. You had to be the best and some of the chief gunnery inspectors during the classes they would walk up to you and they might say, "You." "Yes, sir." "No, not you, shocking head. You come here."

29:30 Or, "You goat's breath, move it." Or if you say the wrong thing. Like one of our blokes picked up an eight-inch shell, which is about that big, and he said, "Oh, look at the pretty coloured bullet." The chief gunnery instructor heard that. "Bullet! That is a shell! Pick it up and double!" He had to pick it up and that was his punishment. He never, ever called it a bullet again

30:00 after that. Or if you did your rifle drill wrong or your dropped your rifle, double with it above you, and that gets pretty painful after a while. But it is all discipline and as I say at the gunnery school it was the best. When you left gunnery school you knew you were good. The blokes that I did the gunnery classes with I'm still in contact with them even today

30:30 some of them, and they would say the same as what I did. It was hard but we did it. I might do it again too.

So the discipline racked you up a gear so to speak?

Oh yeah, oh yeah. She was tough.

And a couple of those penalties that you described, did you find yourself having to do them?

Nope. No I always maintained, keep your nose clean

31:00 and you will be okay. Simple reasoning. I got through unscathed. Some didn't. As I said some, people called it a bullet. I mean how stupid is that? Particularly with the chief gunnery instructor there. Crikey! But the discipline was tough but it was all right.

But was there a level of intimidation or…?

I never found any

31:30 but you hear today about what they call bastardisation. Perhaps there was some, I don't know, but I never experienced it. When you cross the line [equator] ceremony… Have you seen that recently? That happened to all of us. So big deal. That was part of the initiation ceremony when you are going across the line for the first time. I thought that was great but to hear the people crying to mummy, what a load of garbage!

32:00 Come on, grow up, that's part and parcel of it. But the rest of it, the sexual intimidation, I can't really comment on that because it never happened to me and I've never heard of it. Whether it did in the army or air force I just don't know. I never struck it.

And what ship were you on when you crossed the line for the first time?

Murchison. No sorry, Murchison

32:30 but we didn't have a ceremony, not on the Murchison. Some ships do, some don't. You don't necessarily have to have one. It's not a part and parcel of it. But we had a bit of one on a couple of ships that I went on and it's just King Neptune putting a bit of water on your head or something. Nothing to it. I don't know why they make a big thing of it.

So sorry,

33:00 **you did go through a crossing of the line?**

Oh yeah, I've been through the ceremony and I found no trouble with it. Not at all.

Can you just explain what they did to you or…?

All they did was squirt me down with some water. There was just nothing. Not like we've seen on the TV just recently. We didn't go through all that stuff with garbage and dipping your head in muck and all that. We never had all that. We never had any of that,

33:30 but as I said it was part and parcel of the services for crying out loud. You expected things like that. I've got no qualms on it.

So back to the gunnery course then. How, what sort of tests did they put you through?

34:00 Well you would go on every position of the gun: layer, trainer, gun captain, ammunition loader, ammunition supplier. You would do basic written theory, written test, practical test and then hopefully at the end of the day you passed and then they would rate you what you are going to be. It all depends

on your tests and your results.

34:30 Well you start out, if you are captain of the gun you would be say on left-hand breech and you would click it, bring the breech down, clam it ready for the shells to go through. Or then you got on training and follow the spindles around or laying, which is a similar thing. Then you go into the workings of the gun and the recoil and the compression and the elevation of a gun. The whole. It's just like being an apprentice. And then you

35:00 sit for the exam after and when they've finished that they say, "Jarman, you are quarters rate." I could do anything or quarter arms, which means you are going around repairing the guns, cleaning them, fixing them or what they call a weapons mechanic. And you had all these different rates in the gunnery branch. But a quarters rate was a general rate but you could either be a layer, trainer, you could be in the gun bay, which I was in Tobruk,

35:30 or you could be on the bridge or you could be captain of the bridge. You could be anything. But it is just a basic knowledge of gunnery and how a gun is and then you get rated. You had no choice on that. They told you what you were going to do. In my case it was quarters rate, which was great. It was what I wanted to be anyway. Some were quarters armourers. Some didn't even make it. And then you just settled

36:00 back and waited for your next ship.

And those exercises that you would be doing, were they with live ammunition?

No. We did do a live ammunition run later on, but that was basically in the school itself in the middle of Flinders and it was all dummy ammunition. It was fair dinkum ammunition, but it was dummy. You would just push it into the breech, fire the breech and then take it out again. It wasn't real. When you were on the big guns they would send you down

36:30 to the west gate where the Bofors were and that was like a huge, a big dome, and there would be a platform, which was the Bofors, and they turn off all the lights and it's just like looking at the sky. You would have aircraft coming in from all directions and that's what you did and that's what your training was in that dome. And when you finished that they'd take you outside and they had two Bofors outside itself with live ammunition

37:00 and they'd bring a plane, air force or whatever, or even one of our own, and we would fire at it with blank cartridges of course but we would get the bang, bang, bang.

So you were required to do some aircraft recognition?

Not as such, no.

And you mentioned the west gate. Was that a shore establishment or…?

No, the west gate is the west gate of Flinders Naval Depot. You had the north gate, the gunnery school, the dormitories,

37:30 west gate. The west gate was way down the back and on the west gate was this big huge dome with the Bofors and that was the anti-aircraft field. And once they got you in the dome and turned the lights out it was just like being in a gun bay in the middle of the day and you had all these aircraft coming at you and just pick them off. You just get the hang of it. Good stuff.

So it was simulation?

Yeah, and when you finished that, as I said,

38:00 you'd go outside and you had the Bofors outside. An aircraft would come in and you would have ammunition that was live but it was, I won't call it live. It would explode and smoke would come out and you would just do a run as the aircraft came in. You found in them days, whereas an ordinary aircraft it was coming in at you it would dwindle like that and a jet can't. A jet's got to come in at you dead straight,

38:30 which means it was easier to knock off. People don't realise that. So you learned all that type of thing.

And did you have simulated flights over with planes or what were you aiming at when you were…?

The plane itself as it was coming in. The ammunition wasn't going to hit it because it would go off and just the smoke came out. It was just to give you the hang of what you were doing

39:00 but there was no points or anything scored on it. It was just to give you a dry run, that's all.

But as you correctly pointed out, it was the jet age by then.

It was, yes, and we found an ordinary aircraft would waiver coming in from side to side but the jet couldn't. When the jet came in she had to go straight. She couldn't wiggle. It just made it easier, particularly if they were coming straight at you. Easy to knock them off.

39:30 Mind you it’s different now. They just push a button there.

Well we’ve got to change a tape so we’ll just do that.

Tape 4

00:32 **So I want to spend a bit more time doing the gunnery course because that was quite a long course. Weren’t you, or you were at Cerberus for about 12 months.**

Yeah, but I wasn’t at the gunnery school all that time. It was only a matter of a couple of months, three months or something like that, and then we were drafted to what they called ship’s company at Cerberus and I was put in charge of the mail office and that as my job.

01:00 Either that, I was in the laundry as well looking after that until I got a draft to Tobruk, which was a bit of a surprise because I thought I was on a bit of a cushy number there for a while and all of a sudden they hit me with the draft and said, “Hey, you are going to Perth to pick up Tobruk. You are going to Malaya.”

So you were quite happy spending time working at Cerberus?

I was happy anywhere I went. It’s just a job.

01:30 But yeah, I was quite happy working in Victoria. I had been at sea all that time and I thought, “This is great. I finished the gunnery school and I got my first good conduct badge and I’ve got my right arm rate now and terrific. I’ve got a good cushy job looking after the laundry or at one stage the post office as well. Great. Settle down here for a while.” Wrong. “Bill, you are going.” So okay.

Before we go off and join the Tobruk, did you get…

02:00 **This is now ’50…?**

1956.

1956. Did you get into Melbourne at all very much?

Oh yeah, regularly. I used to go ashore with the boys hopefully on weekends. Sometimes I would stay back and didn’t want to go ashore so I would do all the laundry and do all the ironing and make sure my locker was correct and all the clothes are clean. Even today I’m still like that. You look in my wardrobe today and everything is packed, stacked neatly. It’s just a habit I’ve got

02:30 into. Some other times I would go ashore with the boys and get as drunk as a monkey or go yahooing somewhere or pick up some birds or whatever we were going to do. Go dancing or go ice skating. We did that a few times but yeah, I never stayed at Cerberus all the time. It was just like a job.

But you were free and easy without any commitments?

No commitments at all.

03:00 I was trotting around a WRAN [Women’s Royal Australian Naval Service] at one stage. Julie Bianco. She was a cook and used to make nice apple pies and we separated after a while like everybody does. I went with a nurse for a while but never anything serious.

Well what opportunities did you have to mix with the WRANS?

Well they were there, weren’t they? The WRANS did their training at Cerberus

03:30 and you got to know them after a while. They’d have dances at the local rec [recreation] hall, which is in the middle of Cerberus, so you would go to them. We used to fraternise with them. Good people. I still know a lot even today and it’s surprising all navy blokes have a great deal of respect for the WRANS. For that matter, any servicewoman,

04:00 especially the nurses. For what they did was incredible. I still know a few today, so does the wife.

As you say you were… It took you by surprise that you got presented with another draft.

It came as a bit of shock. The signal came out to pick up Tobruk with the gunnery rate and away I went.

04:30 Packed up my gear and did the draft out routine and you had to go to the office and get everything stuff, back in gear and picked up the train. I had to go by train, would you believe, all the way to Perth. About a four day journey or some damn thing and picked up the Murchison on the 4th and we sailed two days later. The first thing they did was issue me with a life jacket.

05:00 I never had a life jacket issued in my life in the navy, even after the Tobruk. I was issued with that and at a later date after we got up there we were issued with winter gear, like Eskimo gear, with the fur and the gloves. Eskimo gear. And I thought, “What the bloody hell is going on here?” I found out when I got

there. So we went to Malaya, on the way into Malaya, because it was a pretty mediocre trip going up.

05:30 The usual thing sentry, lookouts, etc., but when we got to the Sunda Straits it was at night that we got there. I don't know why, even to this day. I spoke to a mate of mine recently from Perth who was on there and he can't answer it either, but we blacked out the ship going through there. Not a light on board including the navigation lights, and I still don't know to this day. I must find out from the skipper one of these days. But we blacked ship out going past Indonesia on the way to Malaya through the Sunda Straits.

06:00 Then we went into Singapore. We arrived there and were made welcome of course and about 26th of April we went out to do manoeuvres and we had only been there a couple of weeks. We went out with a couple of other ships and night manoeuvres with no lights on and everything was blacked out

06:30 and we were following in the radar shadow a Pommy cruiser. A radar shadow is you are following a ship at the back of it and if another ship picks this one up on radar it doesn't pick you up because you are in its shadow. Just like a sneaky. And we were doing this and HMS Cockade starting firing star shells. Now a star shell comes over,

07:00 explodes and a star comes out with this bright light and the casing goes forward. The Cockade was lobbing them short and we'd been hit each side. A mate of mine, Brian Osborne, he was on the upper deck when it was happening and he told me afterwards the shells you could hear them lobbing on each side, and all of a sudden we got hit and the shell came through the upper deck on the port side and spun somehow and went through

07:30 the bulkhead into the, I think it was the writer's section, through their bulkhead, out another bulkhead and through to the gun, cut the stanchion in halves, through the gun bay door and hit my mate Bob. Blew his leg off and that at a 7:02 and killed him. The shell continued

08:00 through the other side and hit Shortie Stevenson in the leg and knocked his kneecap. He was wounded badly and blood everywhere. I knew he had been hit. I was down the stern with a guy. I knew he had been hit but I didn't know Bob had copped it. There was panic stations, of course. We went back into Singapore to take Shortie in and then they told me Bob had copped it and I thought, "Christ!" We went back out again and finished what we were doing

08:30 and about three days later they sent three of us into the gun bay to clean up the mess, the blood. And the surgeon gave us surgical masks to wear and he put some sort of, I suppose you'd call it antiseptic for the smell and I couldn't handle the smell when I got in there. And we were cleaning the blood

09:00 and I took the mask off and all I could smell was death. The smell was terrible! And we did that and I kept thinking, "Why did they send me in there?" but they did. They knew I had come from South Australia because Bob was a mate of mine. And we did the job and we buried

09:30 him at sea two days later and all the ships that were present came through and there was a full ceremonial burial at sea and they all saluted us and everything else. But I've always thought, felt guilty that we didn't bring Bob home. We left him there.

10:00 I never forgive myself, not so much me but why we didn't bring him back? We just don't leave our blokes behind! And when we got back here his parents come on board. I never got to see them. In fact I didn't come across them until years later. When I say years later, I mean only about six years ago and it might have been seven

10:30 years, and all of a sudden it sort of hit me. They had put an article in the paper about Malaya being recognised and I started having nightmares from then on and even today I'm seeing a psychologist for flashbacks and I just had to see his parents. I found that they had died, obviously, but I found his brother and sister and I sat down and I was there two hours. And as soon as this happened I sat in a corner and

11:00 Barb said, "Are you all right?" and I just cried like a baby and I said, "Barb, I've got to find them." I got the phone book and I found his sister and I found his brother and I rang them and I said, I told them who I was and I said, "I've got to see you," and they said, "No worries." So I went out to their place, which was out at Flagstaff Hill way, and the first thing I said to them was, "Ask me anything you like." "How did Bob die?" and I told them

11:30 and they said, "That is a different story to what the government told us." They got three different versions. And I said, "Well the government versions are wrong. This is what happened." And I told them and I've been in contact with his sisters and brother ever since and I've made certain that he got his medals he was entitled to. I made certain he got those. And Pat his sister is now a life honorary member of our

12:00 association and wherever we go she goes. But I've always felt sort of guilty that we never brought him back and even today I still feel guilty about it. He shouldn't have been in the gun bay anyway but he was, and I've found out after that we merged as one. It was just as though we merged into one people.

12:30 We were so efficient from then on. Nothing was going to beat us after that and were that close and are

still close. The crew of Tobruk I've still got good contact with, even today. My wife made a comment in Canberra – we just went up there. Blokes I haven't seen for 47 years and as soon as they, "Damn you pirate." "Shit! Ike!" I hadn't seen him for all those years and we sat down, my wife said, "You sat down and talked today as if you had never been apart."

13:00 I've found with all of them, the whole ship's company including the skipper are all like that even today. Yeah. But to leave Bob up there. It's always played on my mind.

And did the family tell you what sort of story the government had told them?

No. I never bothered asking.

13:30 **Okay, that's a really sad story.**

He'd already done one trip on Tobruk up there. He was due to come home in three weeks.

And how long had you known Bob?

Not a great deal of time. Only when I joined Tobruk. When you join a ship you always seek out the ones from your own state. There was four of us, Merv Hart,

14:00 Cookie. Sorry, five of us. Merv Hart, Cookie, myself and Bob, and the other were a couple of stokers as well that I didn't know very well which were Brian Osborne and Bruce Blain. But they were the seamen that I knew from Tobruk and you just seek them out as you normally do and yeah, as I said he was due to come home. He was going to come home, get married and start a shop.

So this is one of the first instances where, not long after you…

14:30 I had only been there a couple of weeks and that was it, it happened to us. We got hit by friendly fire and I know that the ship's company at Tobruk wanted get Cockade and knock hell out of them for what they did. We found it, every time

15:00 we went into one port and Cockade was there ready to move because they knew if we were there they weren't coming in. They kept us separated for a while. We were ropeable.

Did you ever come close to meeting them on shore?

No. It's funny that because in later years in the year 2000 at a reunion in Brisbane the bugler they had to play the last post was the bugler from Cockade

15:30 who was living in Australia. That's incredible isn't it? But yeah, we found from then on in the Murchison we were as one. We were that efficient it was incredible.

The Tobruk.

Oh yeah, even today we are still bonded. That did it and

16:00 yeah, we had a pretty good reputation up there. Still have. Our skipper, who's 90 now, even today he recognises all of us. He ended up a vice admiral. He was a captain in them days and ended up vice admiral and chief of navy staff. Sir Richard Ennis Peek. And that bloke as we told him in Canberra if we had to we'd follow him to hell

16:30 and back because knew he would get us back. He was a skipper and a half that bloke.

Well there is a lot to talk about with the Tobruk but I might just stay with this incident for a while because it happened fairly early on. So just again you've moved into Malayan waters and had you known

17:00 **that the Cockade was around?**

Oh look, we knew it was there. We were all out doing night manoeuvres the whole lot of us. It was just a night manoeuvre job to get used to the area I suppose, etc., and the whole thing at that stage was to be working together. So they had a night exercise where you use star shells and as I said when a star shell comes above you it explodes.

17:30 We were travelling in the shadow of a cruiser so they couldn't find us and we found out later, years of course, that the gunner of the Cockade said to the skipper of Cockade that we shouldn't fire astern of the cruiser, they knew where it was the cruiser. "We shouldn't fire astern. There could be a ship following it." And the skipper said, "Don't be stupid. No-one would do that. Let it go." The gunner said, "I'm telling you, there could be a ship following." "Do as you are told. Fire." He did.

18:00 **And do you know the name of the cruiser that you were following?**

I've often thought. For some reason Newcastle rings a bell but I don't know if it's the right one or not. It's been that long. I don't think it was the Newcastle. I just can't think of the name of it but I know we were in the shadow of it. And the skipper of the Cockade got reprimanded over it. That's about all he got out of it.

18:30 **They must have been fairly close, the Cockade.**

We were all in the same area. We weren't that far apart. Only a couple of miles or something like that. But at night as I said you've got no lights on and you are working by radar and we were in the shadow of the cruiser and the radar didn't pick us up and we got hit.

And when that happened had you been called to action stations?

19:00 All those that were required were on action stations. In our case we only had A gun on action stations for the star shell firing. B gun that I was on wasn't on action stations. I was astern and I was down in the mess. But all of us knew we got hit because we just felt it. I know my reaction was, "Hey, we've been hit!" and someone said, "Don't be stupid." And funnily enough we had been and I've got photos there of it.

19:30 **But you heard the noise of the star shells going off?**

We could hear the guns going of course. You could see those at night. But when it comes to the shells landing opposite I wasn't on the upper deck like Brian Osborne from South Australia, he was. He was the other South Australian bloke and he said, "Bill, we would have been straddled. Shells were going on either side of us but it's just this one shell hit us. Apart from that we wouldn't have known a thing.

20:00 It would have been all right." But it certainly made a mess of the ship. Great holes and it went through bulkheads, and all Bob was doing was sitting on the rail. In the gun bay you've got two rails, one above each other. One's got cordite on it and the other's got the shell on it. His job was to

20:30 put the shells on ready to go up the spout into the gun and there he was just sitting there going around and as the gun was turning he just got in line with the doorway, the hatchway, as the shell came through. It got him in the back and blew all that out, and his bowel was out, stomach was out.

21:00 He was dead within about three minutes. They brought Shortie up and the surgeon, Lieutenant Clarke, he did a marvellous job on Shortie with what we had, and they took him back to Singapore and he went into hospital. We went in to see him and about a week or so later they medivaced him back to Australia and

21:30 they put him in Childers, which is a naval hospital at Flinders, and they discharged him from there. I never heard a thing from him for 42 years after that. Didn't know what happened. I'm in contact with him now of course. He's had a limp for the rest of his life. He just recently got a gold card. And they've given him an operation on his hip to replace that. The opposite hip to his leg played up because he had all his weight on one side so he had a hip replacement.

22:00 He's all right now. I'm in contact with him and most of the other blokes as well.

And you mentioned to this day you are not quite sure why you were asked to go and do the mop up.

Well none of us were. It's just a job that you were detailed to do. They don't take into consideration who you are, where you are from or anything. It's a job that's got to be done that's it. So myself, a mate of mine John

22:30 Tindell, and I can't think of the other person. John can't think of it either. He comes from Newcastle. Another mate of mine has contacted him too but he remembers when we went in there a similar thing to mine. He had to take the mask off to and the smell, it was just death. You could smell it and that's all that's remained. I can still smell it. Even when I'm talking to you now I can still smell it and yeah, it was just a job we had to do and we did it. But I often thought in them days,

23:00 it's easier in hindsight to think about it. Why send another South Australian in? Why not send in someone else? But that's the wrong way to think of it. I was a seaman and that was my job. I had to do it and I must admit with all due respects it didn't really hit me. I was only 22, the same as Bob. We were born in the same year. But it didn't really hit me like it does now until years later. There was psychiatrist that told me

23:30 it was like a film. Just seeing it go on in my brain and because I had the kids and was working and putting them through school I never thought about anything. It just needed something to trigger and when they put in the newspaper about the Malayan navy blokes being recognised after 40-odd years the film started rolling and from there I went downhill. As I said I was a spray painter at the switchcraft and any time I sprayed orange or red paint and it splattered up on the wall

24:00 I'm back in the gun bay. I was screaming out orders and all sorts of things. I'd blast hell out of the apprentice and tell the bosses off. I'd just go berserk and I could never work out why until I started seeing this shrink, so I've got flashbacks and nightmares about it now. It's just something I've learnt to live with. My wife has had to put up with hell because I was doing the chewy.

24:30 If something was supposed to be in its place and my wife moved it I would say, "Why had this been moved?" and away I'd go. And it's all part of the PTSD crap. I'd like to turn the clock back and be like it was ten years ago or twenty years ago. So now I'm on full TPI pension and psychologists once a month and psychiatrist once every three months. It was not a very happy thing.

You mentioned

25:00 **that he was buried at sea. There was a funeral?**

Yep.

When did that take place?

26th.

The day after that it happened or…?

No, sorry, the 27th, the day after. We got hit on 26th and they buried him on the 27th and that was halfway between Pulatima Island and Malaya, sort of midway. And it was full ceremonial

25:30 and I was on the mezzanine deck when they buried him and I knew I was crying my bloody eyes out and I thought, "These whackers are going to think you are a dickhead." And I looked around and it wasn't just me – even the skipper was crying! And it's funny that when they buried him and came over the side his body came back up and floated.

26:00 Eventually it went down and we all said it was Bob saying he didn't want to go. And I say that for a reason because about 12 months or so before that Bob had an accident in Sydney. He fell on the gangway of the Vengeance I think it was or one of the carriers and drowned, and someone reached in and grabbed his collar and pulled him back up and he hated being at sea.

26:30 He said to a couple of my mates at Tobruk, "I never want to be buried at sea," or, "I never want to go to sea," or something like that. My mate Cookie, the bloke I rang this morning, and he said, "You know Bill, when the body came back to the surface I'm bloody certain it was Bill saying he didn't want to be buried at sea. He wanted to go home." And it plays up on all of us now. Plays up. I wish we had brought him back

27:00 like we should have done. We shouldn't have left him there. And then for the next 40-odd years after that I've been trying to get his name put on the War Memorial and they wouldn't do it because we weren't recognised. Eventually they did recognise us in the year 2000 after 40-odd years and his name was going on the War Memorial. Having said that, I contacted here the RSL [Returned and Services League] and the Adelaide City

27:30 Council and his name has been on the War Memorial for the last three years now and they put it on. And in February they had a big ceremonial service in Canberra and his name is now on the honour roll in Canberra at the War Memorial. They had a big ceremony. The skipper was there, the first lieutenant, the gunnery officer, most of the crew that were still arrived and we ended up with all of them after all these years and going into the War Memorial itself

28:00 I could hear a voice yelling out and it was Ike Quinn and Harry Ashby had come up. "Harry!" I recognised them all straight away. It was incredible after all these years! But we just sat down and talked in general. Not a mention of what happened but just the good times.

So just to touch a bit more on the ceremony at sea.

28:30 **Was the ship at full stop?**

Yep. For sure. All engines stopped. They carry a, helicoptered in a chaplain and bugler. The blokes in the mess deck that Bob was in such as Harry Ashby, etc., they were pallbearers. The whole crew was in white uniform with arm bands

29:00 and the ceremony was burial at sea. Buried from the stern of the ship. A complete ceremonial burial. And all the ships went past one at a time and saluted us as it went through. Yeah.

And how many ships was in that or…?

About eight I suppose. I never counted them to be honest with you, but Pommy ships. I've got a feeling there was a Yankee ship there too

29:30 somewhere along the line. I can't be sure but I've got a feeling there was. But most of the ships went past as I said and saluted us.

But obviously the Cockade wasn't one of those ships?

She was.

She was?

Yep. What else could she do? I still hold malice towards the Cockade. I always will do. I know people say you shouldn't after all these years but I do.

30:00 No excuse. I'm not going to make excuses for it either.

Well friendly fire is an unfortunate thing in war time, even more difficult when, effectively, it

was a familiarisation exercise that you were doing.

Yeah, before we started our big one, that's right. The old story. How can you call it friendly fire? Since when does friendly fire kill people if it's supposed to be friendly?

30:30 But still.

So on that day of the burial after the ships all sailed past, were you then off duty for the rest of the day or…?

No we just went back to routine. We were in a war zone so you just went back to your usual routine whatever it was. All the ships just did their own thing and that was it.

31:00 And then we settled down for the next, well February the following year we came back. No, January. Ten months roughly. So then we started settling in the routine of bordering patrols, lookouts and up and down the coast and different places.

I might actually go right back to the beginning now because we have kind of skipped

31:30 **forward to that incident, so I might just rewind a bit and go back to when you first joined the Tobruk. What were your impressions of the Tobruk when you first set foot on board?**

What can you expect? Wow! The only ship! Bloody destroyer and the latest! Battle class destroyer! Gee. She had twin

32:00 4.5s and 13 Bofors! What more can you ask for? What a way to go! Yeah.

So was she an impressive sight?

Oh yeah, any destroyer is. I'm a destroyer man, obviously. One hell of a ship!

Can you describe her?

A picture of beauty.

32:30 She had sleek lines. Built for action. Clean. Efficient. Yep. That was Tobruk. What a warship! As we said to the skipper we would have followed him to hell and back in that ship because we knew we were going to get back. I'd still do it.

33:00 In fact I said to him just recently, even though he's 90, "Sir, if you ever get another ship and you need a crew…" He said, "Everybody's said that!" And I said, "I know. We'll go to anywhere with you." A great man, that one.

And why was he, that's Captain Enis?

Sir Richard Ennis Peek.

What made him a fairly godlike figure?

He was what I call an officer's officer. A man's man.

33:30 He commanded respect and he got it. We'd do anything for him and he was just one of them. As I said he was a leader and if he wanted us to go through a minefield with 900 mines we'd go. No worries. "If you want to do it, sir, we're going." He was just one of them blokes. He was a disciplinarian and he was firm and he was fair as well.

34:00 What more can you ask for? There was a saying in the navy: "A clean ship is a happy ship and a happy ship is an efficient ship." We had three plus. Our officers are the best and even today they still are. As I said after that incident with Bob we just worked as one. We become that efficient and it was all those men on board.

34:30 Each of us knew we had a job to do and each of knew that everyone relied, their life was in your hands and your life was in their hands and that's how we did it. Nothing was too much.

And when you first joined her was this a new crew that had just been raised or were you…?

Oh no, some had been on before. You see Bob had already done a trip on her. There is never a new crew. You might only get two or three new go on it. Sometimes you mightn't get any.

35:00 In my case it was a crash draft. I was the new boy. I picked it up from Australia but you go on board and you do the draft in routine and you are accepted straight away.

And what's the draft in routine?

Report to the victualling store, the office, the pay office. All these different things, report to the coxswain and then they give you what watch you are on. Mine was first to port. You've got first to port,

35:30 second to port, first to starboard, second to starboard. Your watch, what part of the deck you are on and what your action station is. Mine was B gun bay turret. You knew what mess you were going in. Mine

was mess 25, which was down the stern. Who your killicks [leading seamen] were in charge. Mine was Slim Bayliss. He was in charge of us. Watch reccing [reconnaissance]. I worked in the gunners party working with Stan Hutchinson who was one of my instructors in recruit school. I worked with him and a few others.

36:00 My job was to look after all the ammunition and all the magazines. I had all the keys and every morning I had to go into any magazine and any oil that might have seeped out of the shells because they've got grease and oil around them. I had to mop up the deck and make sure it was clean and everything was secure. When that was done turn the light off and lock up the magazine and go to the next one. That was my routine every day. Every magazine. You would be back and cleaning the guns

36:30 or painting them or whatever as part of the gunners party. You do your watches on the helm or lookout or sea boat or whatever and all the other bits and pieces. Just basic routine but yeah, I was gunners party.

Okay we might just go over some of that again. So you were mess 25?

37:00 Yeah.

Did you sling your hammock or was it bunks or…?

It was hammocks in mess 25. We ate, slept, lounged, talked, rested all in the one area. We didn't have a cafeteria on board. The galley was just above us. You would go up the ladder and near the sickbay was the galley, get your food, take it down again. Wash your dishes and put them away.

And how closely together

37:30 **did you have to sling your hammock?**

So you had like that. Very close. I could reach out and touch the other bloke. I was lucky. Mine was right under a vent so on a hot night I had the cold air coming in from outside and I used to have my eights, which is your working dress. That was rolled at the foot of my hammock and directly below was a pair of three quarter,

38:00 what we call three-quarter Wellingtons with zips, socks and anti-flash gear so if we were called out at night I could leap out, put on the eights, the anti-flash gear, Wellingtons and zip and go to our stations. That's how I went to bed every night on board.

And what would you do with your hammock in the morning?

In the morning? We would lash it up and you'd drop it down, fold your blankets, put your pillow in the middle and fold it so that it was like a fold and then you put seven lashing

38:30 through all the way down and bring the actually cleats over and fold them through and put it in the hammock rack. At night you bring it out and unfold it. That was a daily routine.

And would you only have your own hammock or do you sling others as well?

You only did your own unless someone said, "Hey Bill, can you do mine? I'm going to be late!" I'd do it. Nothing was too much bother for anybody. If someone said,

39:00 "Can you sling six hammocks?" you do it. It's all just part of the job. You are all mates on board, all brothers so you just help each other. On the Tobruk I did anyhow. On all the ships it was the same but other than that you just did your own. You had your own eating irons which knife, fork and spoon and your own cup which was in your locker.

And so how many were in mess 25? Roughly.

About 15 I reckon, maybe 16

39:30 and that was this side and then you had mess 23 on the other side.

Okay well that's great. We've just come the end of another tape.

Tape 5

00:31 **Bill I would like to just take you back to you found out you were being posted to Tobruk and that you were going to Malaya.**

Yep.

What did you know about what was happening in Malaya?

Not a great deal, not a great deal at all. I'd go so far as to say nothing at all. I thought it was rather unusual when I got issued with a life jacket and anti-flash gear. That was never ever issued to me on any other ship and I thought then,

01:00 “What’s going on?” and of course I’d find out when we got there.

Did you have an pre-embarkation leave?

No, I got a crash draft straight from gunnery school. I hit the train, straight across to Perth, on the ship north. That was it.

So what preparation did you have for going to Malaya?

None. We were just told to go. I had already had the training, basic training and gunnery school and all that stuff but I got drafted

01:30 that’s it. Pick up the ship and go, so I did.

I’m just thinking about personal preparation. Were you able to put a will together?

No. Didn’t even bother about it if I could have done. It never entered my mind. I just got my gear, did the draft out, got on the train and went.

So we were talking about the Tobruk. She is a battle class destroyer. I was wondering if you could detail the weaponry

02:00 **that she carried.**

Yep. Two twin 4.5 mm forward, 3 x stags, which are 40 mm Bofors, and there was 2, 4, 6 single so there was 12 Bofors all told plus a set of squid, which are three squid, like a mortar, at the back and they used to fire over. Anti submarine and that was it plus torpedoes. We had five torpedoes on board and that was about it. The forward one had been removed already and the

02:30 arms on board like rifles, etc., which most ships carry anyhow. But that was all the armament we carried.

Sorry, can you just detail where each of the guns were located on the ship?

Sure. You had two 4.5 mm twin behind B gun, which is the second one in, was a 40 mm Bofors. On the bridge on the wings was a 40 mm Bofors and on the mezzanine deck behind the stack was two Bofors and then on each deck behind that was an

03:00 individual twin stag, and then there was a bigger deck with two twin stags and then the individuals after that, and then the tripping mortar was on the side of that on the stern.

And where were you located again?

Me? Directly below… What would you call it? It was down stern just in front of the rear Bofors and the mortar. It was near the mess deck, just inside there.

Which

03:30 **weapon were you allocated?**

I was on B gun gun bay.

Sorry, where was that located?

That’s forward. Second gun in. You had the A gun up forward and then the B gun. I was in the gun bay in that one.

And how many men did it take to man that gun?

In the gun itself you had two, four, six, seven. I can’t remember it if was seven or eight. Seven if I remember rightly.

04:00 Layer trained, loaders, loader about seven I would reckon. In the gun bay you had six.

And what was the role of each of the men?

In the gun bay our job was to bring the ammunition. How can I put this? From the magazine you had off duty stewards and cooks used to load the ammunition onto the hoists which brought it up, and we’d take it off the hoist in the gun bay

04:30 and put it on the centre ring, or if he was inside the thing you would take it off the centre ring and put it in the hoist and up into the gun itself. Two blokes up there, one each side, would take it out and put it into the gun. The stoker that used to sit in the middle of it, he’d pull the levers that clamp over and they did what they had to do and fire it. That was the basic operation.

Were you loading then?

What we were doing was taking the ammunition from the hoist into the

05:00 gun bay itself and then it went up to the gun. That was our job.

And the squid, can you detail how the squid worked?

I've never worked one because that's anti-submarine gear and I wasn't what they call torpedo, anti-submarine rated. I wasn't that. But you've got the squid and you can imagine three barrels at the stern like that and they fire over the ship to where the submarine was and lob and cross over it and then she'd blow up;

05:30 it would explode. It was just an anti submarine, something like a depth charge sort of thing. But the actual workings I wouldn't have a clue in the world, but I know that's how they operated. Yeah. We did that a couple of times just for exercise to see how they worked. That's how I knew they went across. You are standing there watching them and they are going over the top of you and then landing in front and then you cross over and you think, "Oh wow!" They were all right. They were safe enough.

So as the loader

06:00 **of the B gun where, what shifts would you work? How often would you actually be working?**

You mean on the actual guns itself?

Yeah on the gun.

Only when you closed up. You see being in the gunners party as I was our job was maintenance as well. If they needed painting we would paint them and if it needed cleaning we would clean it. Other than that the only time you was in the gun bay was if you closed up or doing exercises. Many times you'd go

06:30 to bed and say at 2.00 in the morning the bell would go boom, boom, boom. You'd jump out of bed, grab your anti-flash gear and away you'd go action stations. It might only be for an exercise but you had to be there and that's the only time you went there. Once, which you will probably get to later on we went through the Sunda Straits so we closed up at action stations . In fact we had lunch there. They brought up sandwiches to us because as that stage the two were having a go at each other and we had to go through the straits, so we closed up at action stations

07:00 and we stayed like it until we got out. That happened many times wherever we went. When the bells go you don't really know if it is fair dinkum or exercises so you've got to be on the ball all the time.

So when you say closed up, what do you mean by that?

Closed up means action stations. That's what closed up is. As soon as you hear the gong. It could be 1.00 in the morning, whatever. As soon as you hear the ding, ding, ding, ding, you know what it is and you leap out and put

07:30 on your eights, which is trousers, shirt, anti-flash gear, gloves, whatever you've got and go to your gun straight away or your action position station until such time as they say all clear.

And how long were you given to get yourself given to get into the gun bay?

As fast as you could. You got there as quick as you could. The times I've gone up there still pulling my trousers on or putting my anti-flash gear on. You just get there and once you get there

08:00 you just do what you have to do. You just get there.

Anti-flash gear. Can you describe that?

Anti-flash gear, it goes right over your head with just, it's like a balaclava. The gloves go up to there and it's made out of like an asbestos type thing, asbestos and it's just anti flash. If a flash comes back on you your not going to get burnt. That's what it's for. And you'd wear that all the time on the guns regardless. As I said, when we went through Mimosa

08:30 it was bloody hot I can tell you, we were sweating to death but you had to have it on. In them days no airconditioning.

And you had never used this before, anti-flash gear?

Oh yeah we did at the gunnery school. It's part and parcel of being a gunner. It's part of your uniform virtually when you are on duty and you carry it around with you. As I said mine was always below with my boots at the end of my hammock just in case I needed it in the morning or whenever they called me and that's how I used to go to bed with everything ready and all of us.

09:00 It's just a state of awareness.

So in the Malayan Emergency, what role did the HMAS Tobruk play?

We were there to patrol the area and create like a blockade so that some other country like Chinese or any other communist country wouldn't be able to smuggle in food or supplies to the communist terrorists of Malaya.

09:30 Our job was to patrol the coast of Malaya to make certain that didn't happen and that's exactly what we did. Fortunately enough we never had any reason to stop anybody. Now we all say it's because they

knew we were there and they didn't bother coming through. But having said that later on in that year we were dispatched from Singapore down to Sunda Straits again to shadow a Russian guided missile cruiser and two destroyers that were going through.

10:00 We were told to shadow them and make sure that they did go through and they weren't dropping any supplies or anything to the terrorists, and when we were down there they knew we were there of course. We could see each other. And the first thing we had to do was to disguise the port and starboard Bofors on the bridge to make them look like guided missiles. We disguised them with canvas and painted them. They didn't know what they were. And one of the signalmen said later they actually contacted the Russian ships

10:30 and you always say, "Who are you? Where are you going?" and the answer they got back was, "Get stuffed. It's got nothing to do with you." That's the answer we got, which was fair enough as well. But they knew we were there and we knew they were there and I thought, "Well, if they've got guided missiles, what the bloody hell hope have we got?" They went on their way. I assume they were going to Vladivostok because that's where the Russian fleet was and I reckon that's where they were going. But anyhow they shot through and we turned around and came back in again. Another time

11:00 we were followed by a submarine. We don't know who it was or what they wanted but we were actually followed by a submarine and our crews were up tracking it and nothing happened. Whether it was a Chinese submarine or a Russian we don't know but it was probably one of them. That happens today. All ships get tracked by somebody but it's scary stuff when you think about it later on.

Did you do any watch duties?

Oh yeah. You were all the time watch. A seaman,

11:30 you got up in the morning, say 6.30, 7.00, and you had your breakfast and then you might be painting or maintenance or in my case looking after the magazines or whatever, and during that time the watch for instance the first to starboard or the first to port was on duty and would do on an hour on the wheel or lifebuoy sentry or lookouts, or you could be sea boats crew. Other than that

12:00 you just did your general duties. You knock off about 3.45 for tea. Now if you had the first dog watch or second dog watch you would have your tea and you would go on duty for two hours. The dog watch was two hours. So the first watch was 8.00 to 12.00 and the second watch 12.00 to 4.00, or morning watch which was 4.00 to 8.00 in the morning. So you did them as well. You worked all day plus did watches at night. Part of that duty, especially on lookouts, you had to be on the ball. You had to report

12:30 everything and anything. No matter what it was you reported it, especially up there. If you dropped anchor at night you had the electrician come up and do Operation Awkward. Now Operation Awkward was you would drop lights below the water line and if any divers came through to drop mines or whatever, that was Operation Awkward. So yeah. It was all protective type

13:00 stuff shall we say.

Well that's interesting, Operation Awkward. How would you spot underwater divers?

Easy. When the lights go down below, any diver that comes into those lights you can spot them straight away. It's just like illumination under the ship. They'd even do it in Malaya, not Malaya, Vietnam, and they used to throw

13:30 grenades over the side in Vietnam as well to be just on the safe side. We never did that but we had the Operation Awkward going. That's only if you were at anchor, especially in Malaya, because you didn't know who you were fighting or who the enemy is. These Asian countries like Vietnam, Malaya, whatever, there were all what we called the black pyjama brigade. They all wore black pyjamas and you didn't know who you were fighting. You didn't know if they were friendly or what they were.

Well with the

14:00 **watch that you were doing, what type of objects would you be reporting?**

Aircraft if you'd seen any. Lights, coloured lights, white lights. If you seen something floating on the surface and you weren't certain what it is you would report that there was an object so that the officer of the watch or the officer of the lights would have a look themselves. You did training to a certain extent on trying to recognise periscopes in rough water. If the periscope is up

14:30 the water will go around clear of the back, so you learned to pick that up. If you weren't certain you would just report it as an object. Anything and everything. No matter what it was. And you scanned the horizon. It wasn't just going nothing there, you would slowly go across up, across up and then you might give your eyes a rest and then you do it again. You were continually going from bow to stern and that goes 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is always somebody up there with binoculars going.

15:00 **So did you ever come across any suspicious boats or ships?**

Not really. There were plenty out there but nothing looked suspicious to us at that stage. I think they got the message that we were patrolling because there were other ships doing the same thing, so I think they got the message. In fact I'm certain they did.

Did you have an interpreter on board in case there were any shipping boats?

Not that I am aware of.

What was the procedure if there were any

15:30 **suspicious boats in the area, say a smaller boat and not necessarily a naval craft?**

I guess if you suspected they were carrying arms or ammunition or food you tell them to stop of course. If they didn't stop you would put a shot over their bow and take it from that but that never, ever happened. Not with our ship anyhow. We never ran into that type of thing but we were prepared for it if we had to. We had landing parties

16:00 on board. Each man was either a rifleman, machine gun or two-inch mortar trained and if you had a landing party you went in the boat and that was it, you were a landing party. They were all gunners of course. I had a machine gun if I remember rightly. Not that I ever used it. But I was allocated a machine gun if I had to be on a landing party but fortunately enough we never came to that.

Sorry, you had landing parties on the Tobruk?

Oh yeah, there were landing parties on every ship. We were allocated.

16:30 **But you were never actually called into…?**

We never ever had to do it, no.

Well on those patrols what, did you come into any contact or any action?

Yes. We did a bombardment on the 26th of August 1957. The communists, they called it a rest spot, and we were about two miles off the coast of Johor and we had a spotter plane supplied by the English. I think it was an army plane

17:00 if I remember rightly. And they were our spotter plane and they spotted our shells for us. We sort of went up and did a U-turn and fired, etc. Don't ask me how many shells we fired but they let some go and that was it. We bombarded a terrorist position. Whether we hit I don't know. We might have just killed monkeys for all I know but we let them have it anyhow. We picked up the Sultan of Johor and his wife and we took them to Singapore with us.

17:30 Whether we took them back there for safety or whether it was because he got married I don't know, but we took them back with us.

This was after the bombardment?

After the bombardment yeah.

Did you then go ashore?

We didn't ourselves. They brought him out by gunboat, which I've got photos of there. He came out by gun boat and we took him from there.

How long was that bombardment?

Only about three or four hours I think. It was so long ago

18:00 but I think only about three or four hours.

This is your first taste of action in a war zone so to speak.

Yeah.

How did you feel when you were?

Funny, everyone says that. When you are only 19, 21, 20 you are invincible. But having said that, you think, "What happens if they fire back?"

18:30 To a certain extent you're not sort of scared but you are because you don't know what's happening. Once the guns start firing you lose that sense of being scared. You get on with the job. When it's finished you sit back and think, "Thank God that's over!" Things start sinking in a little bit. It's a funny sensation but that's service for you.

19:00 **Are you talking to any other of the men in the gun bay during this time?**

Not a great deal. Not a great deal spoken at all except regarding ammunition. "Get the cordite out," or something but no, there's not a great deal of talk as in talk. It's all to do with your job. You just do your job. Once your job is over then you can talk but before that time, no. You just get on with it.

19:30 **And how much ammunition do you go through?**

Would not have a clue. Would not have a clue in the world. It was A gun that was firing. We didn't do the firing, it was A gun that did the firing and how many shells I just wouldn't know. Some of the blokes said

afterwards they felt a bit apprehensive they didn't know what they were doing in that they didn't know who they were killing, if any. They talked about it after.

20:00 "I wonder if we killed women and kids," or, "Did we wipe out the communists or did we just kill monkeys or dogs or something? We just don't know." It's amazing. On ships, ships are different. When you are firing at something on a ship and you don't know who you are firing at or who you are hitting it's a funny sensation. At least with the army and the air force you know what you are doing. If you fire at someone you know it's an enemy. In our case you don't.

20:30 You just rely on the spotter plane to lead you in on it.

And no real indication from there what you…?

None at all. Even today I couldn't tell you whether we hit anybody. I really don't know.

Well how different was that piece of action to your training exercises that you had been going through?

In regards to what?

In your own personal reaction to it. How different was it?

I think with all the training

21:00 that you do previous to that it boils done to your training paid off because you did the job, which is a great feeling. You think, "Wow! I'm there! I made it!" Yeah. It just goes to prove best trained people in the world I suppose. We did a job and that's all there was to it.

How did it feel to finally get a piece of action?

21:30 I preferred not to. War is something that should never happen. Nobody, and I really mean this, nobody should be made to shoot at somebody else. There is no need for it. I still feel that way even today. All the money that they spend on weapons and shells and everything else the amount of cures they could find to diseases

22:00 in the world is incredible, but they are out there killing each other. How stupid is that? So yeah. There shouldn't be any wars. People who glorify it. We had one bloke come up to us one Anzac Day only a couple of years back. We all walked in and had our medals on and he said, "Oh, I'd like to go to war and get them," and we all looked at him and said, "No you wouldn't. You wouldn't like to go there." He just looked.

22:30 "That's enough." "Oh yes I would." "No you wouldn't. We've been there and done that and we're telling you now it's not worth it." He wandered off still raving about it so you can't tell them. They won't listen.

So can we just go through the areas that you patrolled again?

Well we went from one end of the coast of Singapore, right around the cape and right back up the other end to Penang. We did the whole lot.

23:00 Penang, Malacca, Drigana, Singapore etc., etc. But in between those ports that's your patrolling area and that's what we did. You see we were called in to shadow that Russian guided missile cruiser. We followed that. Then we were sent to other different places to check it out. We were sent to Borneo to check it out, which we did, and of course the confrontation or the Emergency

23:30 included Borneo anyhow. And I have a feeling we were sent to Borneo to check out the oil fields and make sure they were safe. We did that for a week, two weeks maybe, and then turned around and went back to Singapore again to do the patrols. If you weren't at Singapore, Borneo, patrolling, you would shoot off to Korea, which we did, just let them know what we were up there. Just about every ship went to Korea at one stage as part of the UN [United Nations] truce thing I suppose you would call it,

24:00 just to make sure that everything was okay and we were there if they wanted. And from there you might go to the Philippines. We went to Japan, Thailand, Vietnam. We did a courtesy call to Vietnam and we went up the river and I think we were only about the second ship to go up the river and just did a salute going up, and that scared hell out of the neighbours I can tell you. They ran in all directions. And when we got up there, when we docked we had a machine gun nest

24:30 at the bow of the ship and one of the stern of the ship on the wharf. Even to today I can never work out why because the Vietnam War hadn't broken out then. And then we had the Vietnam President Dien [Dien Bien Phu] something or other. He came on board with all his bigwigs to have a look at the ship. But I forget when he came on board. All along the boulevard they had armed machine gunners and all on the wharf God knows how many guards

25:00 all with machine guns, and we had one little sentry on board on the wharf looking after the destroyer with a 1914 .303 rifle a chrome bayonet and no bullets! A .303 rifle! I thought, "They have got all that for one bloke and we have this one bloke looking after us!" I always remember that.

Well when you say courtesy call, what do you mean by that?

25:30 It's just like showing the flag to let them know that yes we are up there, the Far East fleet attached to the British fleet of course. The presence of the navy ships were in the area because at that stage Bob Menzies was calling it the domino effect of communism. They predicted that the communists would come into Malaya, Korea and eventually Vietnam and Thailand, which was all correct. They did eventually. So we had to just fly the flag and let

26:00 them know that we were up there as part of the Far East Strategic fleet. And as Menzies said, "It's better to fly it up there rather than on our own soil." So we were part of the Far East Strategic Reserve and that was navy, army and air force and that's why we were up there for. Anything was going to happen we were going to be the first line of defence, which we were, and we had strict orders about Chinese ships holding up British ships and what we were to do, how to go about it.

And what was that procedure?

26:30 The procedure was we weren't allowed to actually make armed conflict with a Chinese ship unless that ship was trying to board an English ship or taking hostage we could go in and fire. Unless that happened we weren't allowed in. We had to try the diplomatic thing first. There were two sets of rules. There was one for being up there in the Emergency and there was the secondary one,

27:00 which was to do with countries holding up British ships. It's all bureaucratic type stuff, what you can do and what you can't do, but we had direct orders about what we could and couldn't do and that's what we followed.

I'll just take you back a step and when you say flying the flag, what flag were you flying?

We were flying the British white ensign, which was the flag in them days. The Australian white ensign as you know, which is the Australian flag,

27:30 didn't exist until abut 1986 I think. We used to fly the RN [Royal Navy] flag. In fact when we arrived in Malaya the first thing they did was a paint a Union Jack on the top of B turret on our ship. And I remember saying I think to one of the officers, "How come we've got a Union Jack on the turret?" and he said, "Because we are part of the Far East British Strategic Reserve."

And you covered quite a bit of area in those patrols

28:00 **and…**

The whole coast of Malaya.

But also venturing out to Japan.

When you ventured out to Japan that was virtually a courtesy visit. Just to let them know we were there and to show the flag sort of thing. To let them know that Australia was up there. Same sort of thing in Vietnam. Vietnam. I always had a sneaky feeling that in Vietnam we were doing a sneaky. When I say a sneaky,

28:30 I've got a feeling we were up there checking the joint out because something was going to break out. And something did break out and most of the blokes on the Tobruk have all said the same thing. Only a matter of last February in Canberra we talked about it and we all said, "Yeah, we did a sneaky, I reckon." It seems awfully strange that we went up there. I could never work out why but I reckon that's what it was. With the two Chinas going through Mimosa they were at each other's neck and we had to go through

29:00 the straits, so we all were at action stations. I remember one bloke said, "We've got a gun that way and a gun that way and whoever tries us first we're going to fire back." We never did but yeah, that type of thing happened quite a few times wherever we went. We would close up for some reason.

The Strait of Mimosa… Why… I'm a bit confused. Why you were in there playing umpire

29:30 **so to speak?**

We weren't, we were just going through.

Right.

Heading for Hong Kong or Japan or whatever and we just went through there. If you want safe passage you close up at action stations. The Chinese could turn around I suppose and think, "That's a Taiwanese ship," and the Taiwanese could think, "That's a Chinese ship," and let us have it, although we are on a rightful passage on a rightful journey, so they closed up at action stations. We did that just in case. Always pays to be safe and sure

30:00 rather than sick and sorry after. Every ship I know did it through the Mimosa Straits. It was just part and parcel of it.

So of the many different areas that you've gone through and the different areas that you've visited and patrolled and ported at, who would you say was your enemy?

At that stage the only enemy we had were the communist terrorists in Malaya.

30:30 I say that because we were attached to the FESR [Far East Strategic Reserve] in Malaya. While we were on active service, once we left the 12 km limit of Malaya we were no longer on active service. We were just a ship going from port to port but whilst we were in that area we were active. Having said that, even though you were going to the Philippines or Japan if there was a Russian submarine or a Chinese

31:00 submarine or a Canadian submarine or whatever you would be tracked. You might not know it but they would be tracking, so wherever you went you were being tracked by somebody. But the only active service part you got was while you were in the coast of Malaya because you were up there for the Malayan Emergency. When the confrontation broke out at a later date, which was about '64 I think against Indonesian, the Far East Reserve sent their ships down there as well. They were on active service. In between those years

31:30 they weren't. And of course when Vietnam broke out any ship that was in the FESR went to Vietnam. The same thing. As soon as they got to Vietnam they were on active service and when they leave Vietnam waters they were not active. That's how the navy operates. You are allowed a certain mileage from the shore to be an active service zone. Once you cross that line you are not on active service. You are just an ordinary ship doing what you do.

But if you are being tracked to a degree, you still have an enemy?

Of course you do but you don't know that

32:00 and you're not in the limit. You live with it. You see people don't realise a sailor on board a ship is virtually living on a time bomb. You are living about ammunition, powder, fuel and whatever else. If you get hit say in the engine room a magazine will blow and the engine with blow, the fuel will blow, the next magazine will blow and you are dead. So yeah, you are continually living

32:30 on a tinder box all the time but you are never aware of it. You never think of it until you get to my age and you think about it and you think, "What the bloody hell did I do that for?" So yeah, it's a pretty hectic life.

When you were going through the Mimosa Straits, and I'm using this as an example because you did make the point that you closed down

33:00 **on a few occasions…**

Closed up.

Closed up, sorry. How did you remain calm?

You didn't. You were uptight. When you are in the gun bay or in the gun for that matter you can't see outside. There are no scuttles or portholes. You can't see. There are no scuttles to look out of

33:30 and you are stuck in there with all the hatches locked. You don't know what is happening out there and when you are closed up like we were… And we had lunch there. They brought up sandwiches to us and cups of coffee or tea or whatever and you think to yourself, "What the bloody hell is happening out there?" You are waiting. You are on edge and waiting for them to say, "Load," or what have you. Once they had said that you just do your job and just keep pumping ammunition, and when it finishes you think, "Whoa!" But

34:00 yeah, you are pretty uptight because you don't know what is happening and nothing is happening and that makes it worse. We don't get any message or anything coming down saying that it's all clear or what have you. You just sit there in silence. And you don't talk much either. All the blokes just sit there. There might be someone say, "I'm going to have a beer when I get back," or something like that. Chitchat type stuff. And you can see what's going on in your mind. "Are we going to be hit?" "Are we going to fire?"

34:30 "Are we going into action?" "What are we going to do?" And you can read their thoughts. When it's all over you laugh about it. You might not have a laugh about it today but you do. You think, "Gee, thank God that's over!" but yeah. Funny thing to be on, actually.

So from what you just described it sounds as if the B gun wasn't really fired that often?

35:00 No. No, it was A gun that did the bombardments. But you were still there ready to fire if you had to. You see to do a bombardment you don't need to fire every gun on the ship to do a bombardment. It all depends who you are firing at and what you are firing at. A gun was selected to do that, particularly bombardment, which it did, so we had a stand down, which was great. But even so you don't know what's happening. When the bombardment finished

35:30 everyone said the same thing. "Did we get them?" "Did we kill anybody or what?" Even today I often wonder, "Was I part of the ship that killed people?" We probably were but you don't know. If you are in a foreign land doing a bombardment you must be killing somebody I suppose. That's a terrible feeling to know that you are part of it. It doesn't matter who pulls the trigger on the ship. Say one bloke

36:00 that pulls there trigger, there are 350 blokes that are guilty of killing because you are all part and parcel of it. The stoker made sure you got the ship there. The cook made sure you were fed there. The writer made certain you got paid to get there so you are all part of that crew. If one man fires the shot

the lot fires it, and that's standard procedure on any ship. So you are all guilty.

And when you are in the gun bay and you can hear, you can hear the bombardment

36:30 **and you are just sitting there, how do you retain your concentration? How do you stay focused?**

You try to think of everything and anything. I used to think about what I was going to do when I got home or what I was going to do when I got to Japan or do the next day. Anything to get your mind off it because not much was said. It was all thoughts and everybody had their own thoughts.

37:00 As I said, after Bob was killed we all bonded together as one and we all knew what was happening. We knew what they thought about and what they felt because we all felt the same. It didn't matter how often you were closed up, nobody razzed somebody else because that person was shivering or shaking. None of that. Each just focused on

37:30 different things to keep your mind off it.

And what was your worst fear during those times?

I've often thought about that. I think the first fear I ever had was being take by a shark. That was my first fear that I thought about. Being hit never worried me.

38:00 I've often thought if the ship went down or I went overboard a shark would get me. That's the only worry that I ever had. The rest of it I never bothered. You get scared and all the rest of it but it never used to bother me a great deal and it's a funny feeling.

And would the B guns be ready on standby, loaded and ready to go?

38:30 They would never load them. They always had what they call 'the ready to use lockers', which was ammunition in the locker ready to use, so if you closed up there was ammunition there ready. You didn't have to wait for it to be loaded. By the time you got there the ammunition would already be up to you. That was standard procedure. All guns are like that, especially when you are up there. So yeah. If necessary you could get on a gun and fire it straight away.

39:00 But it was never ever kept loaded. Even when you finished firing you always made certain that the last shot was fired and the guns were cleared, cleared off and clean it up.

How far did the ammunition travel up to you?

In B gun it would be one, two decks. It was like a tube

39:30 about so big and it was like an elevator with a production line. You put the shell in and click it and it would go up and it would go stop and the next one would go up and it would be shell after shell. One side was shell and one side was cordite, and you would take the cordite out and the shell and you put the shell in, cordite, ram in, up the spout, fire. There was two sets of these hoists. One from the magazine to the gun bay

40:00 and from the gun bay to the centre ring, and from the centre ring to the barrel, so there was two sets going. As I said, the loaders from the magazines were always off duty cooks, stewards, writers, whoever was available. They used to be down there and they would send it up here and in the gun bay it was however, was trained to do it at that end. So it would be about two decks you'd come up, maybe three.

Okay great we've come to the end of another tape.

Oh right.

Tape 6

00:32 **Bill just staying with your B gun, which is what you were talking about before we stopped. Did the bay have any windows?**

Nope. Scuttles, no, or portholes you would call them, no. It had a hatchway and that was all. Once you got in and locked the hatch that was it. You were inside.

01:00 You can't see out.

And you would lock the door?

Yeah, pull it and dog down, dog it in. We had to do that so you couldn't see a thing outside at all. You just sat there and hope.

And how big was this bay?

About as big as this room I should think. And it had a central ring in the centre

01:30 with the hoists in the middle to take the shells up to the gun itself, and the hoists had a set each side for the shell and for the cordite and yeah, that was about it. The centre part was revolving of course and the outside stay as it was, and of course the gun turns, hence the two hoists inside the ring otherwise you wouldn't be able to get to the shells up there. That was about it.

But the whole thing itself turned?

02:00 Yeah the centre part yeah. You had like a walkway around the ring itself so you just kept putting them on the rings and but yeah, the whole thing turned.

And how stuffy was it inside there?

Bloody stuff as hell because there was no airconditioning inside those ships. But up there in the tropics you would sweat to death, particularly when you've got all these trousers and all this gear

02:30 the sweat runs down. But you live with it. It's part of the job.

And did any of those mechanisms that you've described ever jam or…?

Not that I know of. They never did on mine, I know that. They were pretty well checked regularly, greased and checked and general maintenance. All parts of the ships were like that

03:00 24 hours a day. You never used to let things go too far out and if it had to be repaired it was repaired straight away. If it had to be painted it was painted straight away. Yeah, everything was tiptop condition. The skipper wouldn't have it any other way anyhow. As I said that's a, as I say, a clean ship is a happy ship and a happy ship is an efficient ship. So it was all cleaned, repaired and bingo you are in, efficient.

What sort of clothes,

03:30 **I mean we were looking at photographs before but what sort of clothes when you were inside that bay would you wear?**

We would wear a blue shirt, long sleeve. Dark blue, navy blue trousers, full length, and your socks and your boots, anti-flash gear and a hood and that's it. You never wore a helmet. You wore a helmet outside on the Bofors but never inside the gun, and that was your rig iron.

04:00 **And what was the purpose of the hood?**

The anti-flash gear? If there was a flashback or one of the shells explode or something happened and it flashes back on you because it's made of asbestos you would get burnt. That's all it is, anti-flash gear, so that you don't get singed. All that shows is your eyes and all gunners wear that. Even today they still wear it. It's just safety gear. That's all it is.

04:30 **And would you wear that gear all the time that you were in the bay?**

Yes. Oh yes, you wouldn't take that off. It was like a hanging offence if you took that off. No self-respecting gunner would take that off. Once you get all the all clear and secure you would take it off by all means, but other than that no, it stays on. It's just too risky.

What about protection for your hands?

Gloves.

05:00 **And the ears?**

Hood.

No protection against noise?

No, no. We had no noise protection in them days as we do now. We had no sun protection either. I mean our dress during the day was shorts and sandals, that was it. Now you wouldn't dare go out on board the ship like that. It's against the rules now. But back in them days,

05:30 shorts, that was it. No solar protection. No earmuffs for gunfire. Cigarettes were a shilling for 50 so you used to smoke your lungs out. Not any more. The gear they've got now is entirely different to what had.

And were you permitted any drinking water while you were waiting it the gun bay?

Oh yeah, if you were in the gun bay

06:00 closed up for two or three hours or whatever. They supplied us with lunch and drinks and whatever. They used to be called limers in those days. A limer is for scurvy and, as it says, tastes like lime. They had a big tin of it and they'd bring it up ice cold, or coffee if you wanted it too, kai, or whatever you wanted. Oh yeah, they looked after you. There's no two ways about that.

06:30 **Well earlier when we were looking at your photographs we saw a picture of you on the Tobruk with a set of keys.**

That was a key to every magazine that was on board. I'd have to go from magazine… I would start from

the bow of the stern and go to every magazine and make sure it was safe and secure inside, that nothing had moved. No shells had dropped out of anything.

07:00 Any oil or grease that might have melted and leaked from the cases onto the deck I would mop that up and clean that out so there was no drama if anybody had to go down there they wouldn't slip over. And I would just go from magazine to magazine. That was part of my job to just check it all out. But I would go back to the stern where I was based as a gunners party and whatever job I had to do I did, but my main job was to look after the magazines.

07:30 **And how were they stored, can you tell us?**

Naturally, the shells are stored on top of each other. There was like grooves with slats so when you put the shells in to load them you put a slat, and then the next one another slat, and then another slat, and you just check to make sure that the slats are okay and they are still secure. None of the shells had dropped around or anything or had come out of place. When you close

08:00 up for action stations or something you take the first slat off and take the shell and put it in the hoist, and as it goes down you take the slat off and it goes down but we never did that anyhow. We never got that far. We had to make certain that those slats were in position and the oil had been mopped up and make sure nothing had moved. They were pretty secure.

And those slats that you were describing, were they a wooden slat?

Yes. I don't know what sort of wood but pretty hard wood, I know that.

08:30 They were pretty hard to break. They would have been about so long, like so, and so thick and just slide them out. There was a heap of them and just take one out each time you wanted to get a shell out.

And how much would those shells weigh?

I did know, funnily enough, for years but I wouldn't have a clue now. They were bloody heavy, I know that. When I say heavy, you could still pick them up and put them in there but they were a fair

09:00 weight. I've probably got it listed somewhere in one of my books but they're not that heavy that you can't lift them up. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to do it.

Still it's quite hard work on your back.

Yeah but you get used to it. When you are 18, 19, 20, 21 you will do anything. You never bothered about that. You were pretty fit. The navy made sure you were fit and so yeah,

09:30 but you never, ever overdid things.

So you would lock them up?

You mean the magazines?

Yeah.

When you are finished, certainly. You most certainly would. If you knew you were going in to do say bombardment you'd make certain that the particular magazine you were going to use is unlocked and ready to go, but other than that they always remained locked.

And how many shells were in one magazine?

Oh gee, now you're asking.

Just roughly.

10:00 A couple of hundred I suppose, maybe more, because they are only so big and so round and stacked them like a big stack of them and it goes right across this whole thing. Plenty of them.

I was just going to say that. You are travelling with a lot.

Well yeah. You've got 12 Bofors and they are about so big and so round and they come in groups of five, so you've got 12 of those to look after and there are heap of magazines for that and then

10:30 you've got the 4.5. There's not only high explosives shells but you've got star shells as well. You carry a variety of shells on top of that so you've got a pretty good mixture, and there was a lot of them.

So they were all stored in different parts of the ship?

Yeah, usually directly below the guns. With A gun, directly below it was a magazine and in that magazine was a combination of star shell, HE [high explosives] or what have you. B gun, similar

11:00 situation. Then you go to the stern where the Bofors are and directly below that is the Bofors ammunition would be those boxes, and alongside it would be a big box about so or a bit longer than that, and that had a spare barrel because Bofors guns used to overheat. When it heated up you had to replace them. Unscrew them, take it out and put another one in, and that was done after the firing. All that type of thing was there. Anything you required

11:30 for a gun you carried on board. And you always carried a porter's armourer, which used to look after the gun or the changing of the barrels.

And in any of your rounds was there anything on miss at any time or what would you be looking for?

Oh, on my round?

Yeah.

Just to make sure that nothing had moved or been dented or what have you.

12:00 Just checking to make sure that they were still secure and in the proper order, and as I said if any oil or grease had melted and gone on the deck I would clean it up and made certain it was completely oil free in case anything came up and they had to go down to that magazine the blokes wouldn't be slipping and sliding in grease. That's just asking for trouble. I had to make certain that that didn't happen and I was pretty good at it too.

And if a shell was dented, would that make it unusable?

To a certain extent, yeah.

12:30 You would report it, but that never happened to me so. You just check things to make sure they were all safe and secure. That's all you did because you can imagine a rough sea if the shells weren't stacked properly and the ship went over the shells would go bump, bump, bump, bump. They could explode and goodbye charlie. Fortunately that never happened, but that was because they were properly stacked.

13:00 You see when you load the ship up, particularly what they call an ammunition ship, they clear lower deck, which means everybody on board had to go up and get the shells and stack them. And they would pass them down to the magazines and the bloke down there, his job was to make sure that they were stacked correctly. For us, we had a pretty efficient crew. We were awesome. But you still had to check them. That's part and parcel of service in the navy, or any service for that

13:30 matter. We were trained to make certain that things were okay. That was your job and you did your job and if they weren't okay you would report it.

Did you ever lose those keys?

Never. I never put them down. Wherever I went those keys went. The only time I didn't take them was when I was returned them back to the key board. I used to hang them up and lock it and in the morning I would go and sign for it and get the keys again,

14:00 and every morning that was my routine. Get the key, do the magazines. Once I finished the magazines report to the killick in charge and, "What they want me to do next?" Whatever it is I'd do it, or if I was on watch or lookout I'd go up there and do lookout of lifebuoy, and when I've finished that, back to the killick again. "What's next?" They might say, "Oh look, B gun needs painting," or, "A gun inside needs painting." So I would go up with a thing and start painting inside.

14:30 Just general maintenance work, but that was part of it.

And that paint, painting that you've described, is anti-rust paint or…?

Red lead in those day. Red lead on the Dakota grey, and inside the booth was sort of like a whitish type of colour

15:00 for the light of course, but outside was all grey, the ship's grey. You always had to chip the rust off first and then red lead it and then paint it. That was just general maintenance. That happened right through the whole ship. We always had clean decks. As soon as the paint would start wearing you would paint it again. That ship always looked brand new and that's what you did, just general maintenance.

15:30 They don't do it nowadays apparently, but in them days we did. It was part of the seaman's job was to make certain that the paint was up to scratch and there was no rust and if it needed painting or if it needed washing you would wash it, or if the brass needed polishing you would polish it. It's just part of the seaman's job and that's what we did.

And I mean

16:00 **you've talked a lot about the bombardment that took place in August '57. I've got a question to follow up on that one.**

Sure.

Or two questions, actually. I understand your position on the ship but I was wondering if maybe later you might have found out what those targets might have been?

I tried to. I knew it was a communist terrorist respite. We knew that but

16:30 if there was anybody there I don't know. If we hit anybody and killed them I don't know. I'm assuming we did because we had a spotter plane, and even just recently in Canberra I couldn't find any answers either so I just don't know. I think after all these years I don't think I particularly want to know.

And the other question I had in relation to that was I'm not sure whether you

17:00 **would have any contact with the army at any point in your travels or whether you would have been aware of the army's position.**

We were aware the Australian Army was there. Oh yeah, we used to run across them ashore as well. Australians are a funny breed. We always find each other no matter wherever we go. So yeah, we'd go ashore and somebody would come up, "You're army. Right, let's go and have a few beers." And the same with the air force.

17:30 **And would they talk to you about their experience in the Malayan campaign?**

Sometimes yeah. They did the patrols in the jungle. As I said there was 39 Australians were killed during the Malayan Emergency. Two of them were navy and the rest were army and air force.

And when you say you ran, did you say you ran troops over or did I miss hearing you then?

Ran troops over. Run across them. Not run into them.

You didn't

18:00 **take troops there or anything like that?**

No, no. We were strictly a destroyer. We were never a troopship. I believe the Warramunga did escort. I'm trying to remember the name of the ship but they seconded it to send the 1st Battalion I think in 1955 and she was escorted by an RAN [Royal Australian Navy] ship to get make certain she got there, but after that I think they flew them there

18:30 if I remember rightly. You see the air force and the army had their bases on the land and they also had their wives and families with them, whereas we in the navy, no. We were stuck on board the ship. You couldn't take your wife or family. When you went ashore you had to wear uniform because we were open go for any race riots that were going on. If they didn't like a sailor they would get bashed up and left by terrorists. When they were ashore

19:00 that happened quite a few times. Not just on our ship but other ships as well. A mate of mine off the Queenborough, he went to play a football match for some army people and they got ambushed and fired at, so yeah. These things happen. And unfortunately the navy being the only ones that had to wear a uniform we were just open go. They knew who we were so you had to watch what you were doing and where you went to and you always made certain that you had somebody with you.

19:30 If you went by yourself, never. That was Malaya for you. They had race riots left, right and centre up there, especially in Georgetown. Even in Singapore itself they had a couple of race riots around the navy docks. So yeah, it was pretty hectic. As I say, Malaya is the forgotten war. Not too many Australians know about the Malayan Emergency and you mention it to them and they say, "What's that?" Even the DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] don't know about it,

20:00 which you'd think they would. You give them identification and that's what happens, but you mention Malaya and they say, "What's that?"

Well you have mentioned that you were part of the Far East Strategic Reserve. What sort of contact did you have with the British sailors?

Not a great deal. We knew them, that they were there, but we never mixed a lot with them. They were all right but

20:30 I'm afraid with all due respects their hygiene wasn't what ours was.

How do you know that?

I know for a fact on board the ships, especially the Australian ships, when you finished your work and you were going ashore you made certain you had a shower and shave and got clean before you went. Not them.

21:00 Their personal hygiene wasn't the greatest, I'm afraid, so we never used to do a lot of mixing with them. It might sound bloody terrible saying it, but it was in those days. But no, their hygiene wasn't like ours. I mean when you join the services here, your personal hygiene, heaven help you if you are not clean. I know quite a few blokes that joined the navy and their personal hygiene wasn't the greatest,

21:30 especially in recruit school. They found out about it so they took them out in the middle of the parade ground at night with a brick and scrubbed them. I've seen that happen.

With a brick?

Yep. A brick. You get it and scrub their skin to get it clean. I've seen that happen. Most people from then on had a shower every night. It taught them a lesson.

That would have hurt.

Oh yes, it was meant to.

22:00 But I've seen it happen, which is fair enough. You can't expect to be on board a closed up ship with someone who hasn't got personal hygiene. It's just asking for trouble. You can't live like that, especially in a cramped area. So yeah. To the extent that even if we ran out of fresh water at sea, which we often did, we would have a salt water shower. You ought to try that. That's good stuff.

22:30 Your hair goes all blurk and you feel all salty and you still get under it. Yep. And that stays with you the rest of your life. You never change your habits after that.

Well staying the theme of personal hygiene, I understand part of the ship's routine was to have a make and mend day. What was that?

Make and mend days

23:00 were really come from way back in the old days. Make and mend was you would make your own clothes, you would you mend your clothes, and hence make and mend. So every week we had a make and mend on the Tobruk at sea. And if you wanted to do the ironing, you could. If you wanted to have a sleep, you could. It's just like half a holiday sort of thing. That's what it was. They call it make and mend. It's just a fancy word for saying have the afternoon off. Some of the blokes

23:30 used to. Well Curly Elliott used to do the haircuts on board so he would set up his little thing in a space and cut hair. Another bloke might have tombola or bingo as they call it, so you would play tombola for so many Hong Kong dollars. You could win 150 Hong Kong dollars and you'd say, "Wow! I'm going to have a good time in Hong Kong this time!" Some blokes would play cards, chess, write letters, sit on the upper deck, have a shower and get nice and clean, especially in the tropics, and sit on the upper deck and

24:00 have a cigarette and a bit of natter. "What have you been doing today?" or, "Do you remember so-and-so?" Yeah, that was make and mend. Originally it was to make your clothes or mend them back in the old days. That's how it originated.

And did you have to mend your own clothes?

When you join the navy you get issued with a housewife. Not the female variety, I'm afraid. It's a roll about that long and in it you've got black cotton, navy blue cotton, needles, thimbles, tape.

24:30 Just like a sewing kit. And you repaired your own socks, did you own ironing, do your own washing. Even today I still do my own smalls [underwear], shall we say. I always wash my own. Socks, I wash my own. Even these. They get cleaned every time. I take them off at night they get cleaned and put away. It's just part of my habit now. You take something off, you polish it and put it away. If a shirt needs ironing I iron it before I put it away, and that's part of it.

25:00 So when you come out it's inbred in your character like that and that's how I live my life. Strict navy. Love it.

So you learnt to use a needle and thread?

Oh yeah. That's for sure. If you didn't know when you got in you knew when you got out. You had to do something. You couldn't take it anywhere. There was no,

25:30 well there was a whackatack man. Now a whackatack man when you go to the Far East you might go to say Hong Kong or even Singapore and you pick up the whackatack man. He was one of the natives. And you'd take him on board. In fact we took one, two, three, four, five I think Chinese from Hong Kong. One was a whackatack man who used to repair shoes and make

26:00 uniforms, and the others would run the laundry because we had a laundry on board and you'd take your clothes up there and they would wash it, iron it and give it back to you all navy style, and say you didn't have to do too much mending. They did it for you. You had to pay for it but they did it for you. They called him the whackatack man. Whackatack means hammer and nail whack a tack. That's where they got the name. Or you would have a Jenny side party. Jenny was a Chinese girl and she had all

26:30 these other Chinese girls and when we dropped anchor in Hong Kong Jenny was there to meet you. She always knew when you were coming in and knew when you were going. How they knew I don't know, but when we arrived Jenny was waiting for us. So Jenny and the side party would come on board and they would paint the ship, do the decks, do sewing if you wanted, sell you bottles of orange drink if you wanted. They used to have that on board. They did everything. You got to know all these people and they were good people, terrific, great people.

27:00 When you left, Jenny would be there and she would come up with the girls in what we called the bum boat or sampan, and when the ship left they let off firecrackers as a farewell. And they would be there to welcome us when we got back. I don't know if she's still alive now. I guess she would be but I'll never forget Jenny and the side party. Everybody knows Jenny.

Well I'll come back to talking about locals a bit later, but

27:30 **just staying with this theme of hygiene. I'm just curious, did the haircuts on board cost you anything?**

Oh yeah. Oh yeah, the bloke that did it, Curly. It might only cost you sixpence or threepence or whatever it was. He used to do the haircuts and we didn't have a barber on board. Your hair got long so you had to get it cut so he just made a bit of money on the side.

And was it regulation short?

Oh yeah.

28:00 You wouldn't have long hair. This is long for me now, I'm telling you now. Mine needs cutting now. The only one that I found who can do it properly is here in Elizabeth, in Craigmore, so I go to her regularly. But your hair had to be… My hair in them days was about half an inch in front, back to zilch. Of course in the tropics you didn't want long hair and have it

28:30 flop in your eyes. And that's how we used to keep it. But you had to, on board the ship you had to have personal hygiene. You couldn't live in a ship board of people without having the personal hygiene going for you. It was just ludicrous to think that you could. It's just, especially in the tropics, there are so many diseases and fortunately for us the Australians have a reputation of being

29:00 pretty hygienic I think, especially on the ships. What else would you like to know about the hygiene?

Well there's probably more questions but maybe I'll move along.

Some of those questions you wouldn't want to know the answer to I can tell you now.

Well I was thinking about the soap question.

29:30 **What questions do you think I don't need to know the answers to?**

I'm talking medical wise.

Oh medical. Such as?

We had a few come back with a few social diseases.

Oh. From?

Different birds they picked up. Up there it is rife.

Is that around the Malayan stops or more up in Japan?

You name it. Malaya, Hong Kong,

30:00 Japan. It's rife. Thailand was the worse. Siam as we called it. That was, you got the big one. Gonorrhoea, syphilis, you name it. We had a few blokes went down with it but they were all right with it. But fortunately enough when they go down with it they are not allowed to use the toilets that everyone else uses. There are two toilets that are called CDA – confined disease toilets – and they are to the side. And they have to use those and they have to report regularly to the medical officer.

30:30 We had a lieutenant surgeon on board. It was all looked after and nothing dangerous about it. You just had to watch it.

Was the view at the time, particularly from World War II and BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force], but from your time of the Malayan Emergency had the army, navy, sorry, view changed? Was it still regarding as a self-inflicted sort of wound, so to speak?

31:00 Of course it is. You see that's the paradox with the navy. If you get sunburnt it's a self-inflicted wound but the dress of the day is shorts only if you want to. Now that's a catch 22 situation. How clever is that? Wear shorts, but if you get caught you're in the shit. So what do you do? Nowadays you wouldn't dare wear shorts. You've got overalls, grey overalls

31:30 that's washed for them as well I might add, and they've got woven hats. We had nothing like that. Shorts, sandals, that's it.

And you are saying that is the same for venereal diseases? What was the comparison there?

Well the comparison is it's just that when these people got venereal diseases and came on board because of the hygiene situation they made certain that they reported it, and they made certain that they used the toilets that were allotted to them

32:00 and didn't affect anybody else, and they attended regularly for their injections what have you. So the hygiene part of it on that score of it… What I'm trying to say is each bloke used to do the right thing. They never ever tried to veer off on it, which was good. If they let that go it would run rife, wouldn't it?

But sort of shame was there attached to it?

There wasn't any, no shame at all.

32:30 Just, “Stupid you!” that was our answer to it. “You’ve got a load. How clever are you?” They don’t get any sympathy, hell no. Even today you don’t get sympathy. When I had that operation for cancer they came to see me and there was no sympathy. “Get up you lazy whacker and make me a coffee.” You are sitting there with all these stitches. You thrived on that. You didn’t need that sympathy. If you got gonorrhoea or some venereal disease

33:00 or something stiff, how stupid are you? And that’s part of the cult.

And were you briefed on, did word get around?

Briefed all about it. Before we arrived in Singapore, Lieutenant Clarke, he got us altogether and he gave us this fantastic speech, “Now when you get up there, boys, don’t go to these brothels

33:30 or do. There are plenty of nice clean women around. Blah, blah, blah.” “Yes sir.” And within three or four weeks there’s knocks at the doors, “Lieutenant, guess what I’ve got?” “Those lectures I give you.” He was wasting his time. In one ear and out the other. Boys will be boys. Poor old surgeon. I often think about him. He must have felt awfully frustrated after all those lectures.

34:00 **Now I don’t want to cast any aspirations on your character by any means, but you did tell us earlier on in the day about your nickname.**

Oh yeah. ‘Radar’. Pick up any bird you put me in front of. As one of you made a comment earlier on, “You’ve got such a baby face,” and I did have in them days. Yeah. Had the gift of the gab as well so they called me ‘Radar’.

34:30 Pick up anything.

And did you?

Sometimes, yeah. All depends. You know, it all depends where you were and what you were doing at the time. My favourite thing was especially when it came to any sort of women, etc., especially in Japan. You’d go to a bar and wait until 12.00. Now between 8.00 and 12.00

35:00 the Yankee navy would be there as well. They would spend all the money on the birds and they had to be back before 12.00. We didn’t have to be back until 7.30 so when they had spent their money and gone we moved in. We saved a lot of money that way. The Yanks didn’t like us. We had a reputation with them. I always remember one set of Yanks,

35:30 he come up and he said, “What’s with you Australians?” and I said, “Why?” He said, “You come up here and you don’t spend anything and when we leave at 12.00 you walk in.” And I said, “Yeah.” “Why do you do that?” “You spend all your money and you go home and we get all the benefits.” “Oh.” I thought to myself “What a dumb bastard.” I thought they would have realised that.

36:00 They also gave us a reputation – they thought we were fighters. Apparently one told us, he was a Negro bloke, said, “Never ever pick an Australian,” and the bloke said, “Why?” He said, “Because if you do you won’t be taking on one, you’ll be taking on the whole 300.” That reputation got around. It wasn’t true, mind you, but yeah. I’ve often wondered about that. If you pick on one you pick on the whole lot of us. But they believed it

36:30 and I found a Yank will believe anything.

And were there many blues in the pubs?

Yeah, a few.

And what would they be about?

Nationality. Especially with the Americans. We figured the Yanks always thought they were one better. We’ve got this and we’ve got that and blah, blah, blah. And with all due respects,

37:00 they did. They would come back from shore, take their uniform off, drop it in a chute and put a new one on. We had to come back and wash our own and iron our own. So they would throw their money part around, so they would start and we’d say, “Okay, let’s have it,” and it would be on, bang, bang. The Poms were the same when we were there. For some reason I found a lot of the Royal Navy blokes didn’t like Australians.

37:30 We had a couple in a bar and he said to us, “You Australians you think you’re tough but you’re not really, you know. You’ve got a good suntan and that’s about all you’ve got.” We thought, “What are you coming at?” and before you know it it’s on. So they get down and we’d walk off. As simple as that. We stuck together.

Every time they’d get done?

Guaranteed. A few of us got hit and got a couple of black eyes but

38:00 they got done.

And how would you explain that to the ship's doctor?

With much difficulty. Walked into a door, fell over on the ladder. He didn't believe it of course, but then again as long as you were okay. It didn't really matter as long as you were operational you were all right. It would be different if you broke your arm or leg, but if you've got a black eye and a couple of scars

38:30 it's all right.

No broken noses?

No, thank God. I had a little upturned nose in those days. I didn't want to go damaging it.

Well it is interesting to hear that culture, the cultural brotherhood that you have spoken about today.

It still is today and especially with the blokes off Tobruk. They could walk in here right now

39:00 and sit down as if we had never been apart. That proved that in Canberra in February. I hadn't seen those blokes in 47 years. Hugs, tears, whatever. When I was in hospital for the first time I was getting phone calls from them all and even New Zealand would you believe, "How are you going Bill?" I hadn't seen them at all in all those years but they knew I was crook. Even now I get phone calls,

39:30 "What's your last test like Bill? Are you okay? You still kicking?" "Yeah, I'm okay. Are you going down to the big reunion next year in Melbourne?" "Probably see you there." It is a brotherhood and only a veteran understands it. I think more so veterans, but even servicemen. They all have that sort of brotherhood. But unless you have been in a combat zone it's different again.

40:00 As I said, you don't talk about the bad things like Bob being killed and that always gets to me. I always break down something terrible when I even look at the pictures I break down, but you never talk about it. You talk about the good things. A mate of mine, Cookie in Victoria…

I am actually going to have to stop you because I know our tape is about to.

Tape 7

00:35 **Before we broke we were talking about some of your leave and time on shore. You were about to talk about Cookie in Hong Kong.**

There was four of us, Cookie, commonly nicknamed 'Buddha' because he looked like a Buddha in shorts, Slim Woods and Mack, Ian Mackay, and myself. Cookie and I always went to shore together mostly and in Hong Kong we went into the forbidden city.

01:00 And we didn't know it then but to go into the forbidden city you would be murdered. We were looking for a bar and we got in the middle of it and as it says it's dark and it is forbidding. The next thing we know we got surrounded by all these civilians and we thought, "Oh oh!" There was about 12 of them and as it turned out they were the local police in civvies [civilian clothing] and a Pommy bloke actually said,

01:30 "What are you doing in here?" and "We're looking for a bar." "Do you know where we are?" "No." "You are in the forbidden city." "So?" "You are not allowed here. Did you know you can be murdered? You can have your throat cut here if you don't watch it." We said, "Well whoopy do." And they escorted us out and the first thing we did when they went was go straight back in again and found the bar. We did quite a few things like that. Once in Singapore

02:00 Cookie and I were ashore and the British Red Caps were there in training for some reason and they hate the Australians for some reason, and these two found us and they were going to have us. We weren't exactly drunk as a monkey but we'd had a bit. We were back to back and we said, "Okay, we are going down and we're going to take these two with us." As they were approaching us the Royal Navy patrol car pulled up and they said, "What's going on?" and we told them and so they put us in their jeep,

02:30 took us around the corner and let us go. Quite a few things like that, especially with Cookie. After we got back from Malaya I lost contact with Cookie for about 42 years. He came from South Australia and I used to watch Anzac Day looking for him. I used to ring up all the Cooks in the book trying to find him and could never find him, and as it turned out when I first got married I lived in NSW and didn't come back here, and when he

03:00 got married he moved to Victoria and lived there so consequently we missed each other. When I came back to Adelaide I kept looking and couldn't find him. We had a big review here a few years back to be recognised for Malaya and his name came up in book: KH Cook in Victoria. So I rang Victoria and I said, "You've got Cooks in Kororoit, what's their number?" They had two so I rang both numbers and one was a civilian and had never heard of him and the other was a Vietnam vet [veteran].

03:30 He said, "No it's not me mate but hang on, there's a bloke moved next to Mum around the corner. He's

a navy bloke. I'll ring back." So he rang back and he said, "He is a navy bloke and his name is Cook and he moves in next week." I said, "Listen, could you tell your mother if it is Kim Cook to tell him Bill Jarman rang and are you Buddha?" Next thing, about a week later the phone rings here and it was Cookie and he said… I picked up the phone

04:00 like I normally do and answered, "Living legend Mach 3" and he said, "Bill Jarman?" and I said, "Yeah." He said, "This is the Buddha." I said, "You bastard! Where have you been?" Of course tears and everything else. He'd heard I'd died ten years previous and never bothered looking. From then on he comes over every Anzac Day and stays with me and marches with me. So yeah, him and I are back in contact after all of these years. We can't find Mack or Slim. We've looked everywhere for them

04:30 and can't find them. I've got a feeling Slim was a Pom and figure he must have gone back to England and Mack was from Scotland and I figure he must have gone back there too. We could never find them unfortunately. We'd love to. But I found Cookie.

Why was Cookie always getting into trouble?

That was Cookie. He was always in trouble. He was the only man that I knew that as soon as the last rope

05:00 left the wharf on the ship he was seasick. Straight away he was sick and an hour later he was okay. If Cookie went ashore and something was going to go on, Cookie was in it. We never used to look for trouble, but as I said with the Red Caps, they hated Australians. The Yanks didn't think much of us anyhow and so it went on. Wherever we went like the forbidden city. We didn't know it was the forbidden city. We didn't know that.

05:30 We shouldn't have been there. And Walker Street in Singapore is another one. You're not supposed to be there. We didn't know that. Just one of them things. And when they find out you are from Australia, "Oh Australians! The rascals!"

Were you not warned of the areas you could and couldn't go?

We were told such things as the red light areas and the forbidden areas, but unless you knew where the sign was

06:00 you didn't know you were in them. They are not marked, 'Don't come in here. We are out of bounds.' So really you didn't know unless you see the sign and they were few and far between. You didn't know where you were half the time and that's the same with any town we went to. Anywhere. That's just life.

When you say Red Caps, are you talking about military police?

Yeah, British military police.

And were there any other episodes where you crossed paths with the MPs?

06:30 A couple of times but I think the biggest one that stood out was two of our blokes were picked up by the MPs and taken to the police station in Singapore. And the story goes, our Captain Peek heard about it and he rang the Red Caps and said, "I believe you have two of my men up there?" and they said, "Yes sir, we have." He said, "I'm giving you two hours to get them back here or I'm sending the ship's company to get them." The jeep turned up and they were released straight away.

07:00 And from then on if they seen Tobruk on your hat they would leave you alone; they kept clear. Whether it was because they got the word I don't know, but they laid off us after that. For some reason they just hated Australians. We've had reports from other ships where some of their crew have been belted up by the Red Caps for no reason because they were Australian. Belted the hell out of them! Two on one! They wouldn't dare go

07:30 one on one but yeah. That was rife in Singapore and Malaya in those days.

That's when you were ashore, but when you were in port or say working in the dock or anything like that were you still under their jurisdiction?

Yep. I remember once in Hong Kong there was a group of us, we were ashore in the base itself and we were

08:00 restoring the ship or doing something for the ship, and anyhow it was on a Saturday and the local commander or captain he was doing the rounds for his particular Tahmar, I think his name was, and he was doing the rounds of the depot. We are there working away with shorts, flat a back, fags in your fingers and the bugle went and we thought, "What's going on here?" and it was this bloke doing the rounds, Royal Navy. A lieutenant commander came up and this captain said

08:30 something to him, but anyway he came up to us and said, "Excuse me, who are you?" and we stood at attention and said, "Able Seamen Jarman of HMAS Tobruk." "Where are you from?" "We're Australian." And this bloke turned around in a plum voice and said, "Their colonials, sir." And I thought, "Up you jack! Go to hell!" And they said, "Don't bother. We'll just keep moving." And they moved along and I thought, "How dare they?

09:00 Colonials!" But that was their attitude. To them we were colonials but we never let it bug us. The same

with the other blokes, “Go to bloody hell!” and we just carry on what we were doing whether we liked it or lumped it. But we found that that they just didn’t like us.

Well how did it feel to be with that kind of attitude and being called colonials and then standing

09:30 **on a ship that’s got the Union Jack painted on it as part of the British Reserve?**

The way it goes. You live with. It didn’t bug it. “Well, you are only jealous,” which is fair enough. We got on and do what we are doing.

Earlier today you showed me a flag that was seconded?

Yep, pinched that from the Japanese palace in Tokyo.

10:00 My grandfather took an Australian flag to the First World War and got it signed before he was killed. Dad took an Australian flag away to Greece, Crete, Albania and Palestine, Alexandria, etc., and got it signed. When I was going north I tried to buy an Australian flag and couldn’t find one and I thought, “That little Japanese battle ensign will do me,” so I pinched it. Typical Australian attitude, “It’s mine!” Took it back on board and got the boys

10:30 to sign it. I’ve had it there for 47 years signed by the crew of Tobruk.

Where did you steal it from?

The Japanese palace in Tokyo. There was a reception being held here and we went there and I seen all these little flags and thought, “I’ll have one of them,” and I did. Typical Aussie style. Real rascal.

So what was the reception for?

Look sometimes you go to any port and

11:00 the people would put on a reception, G’day type of thing. Have a beer or a cup of tea, or they would invite you to play golf or football or soccer. It’s just a social thing as a welcome and that’s all that was. There was no ceremonial occasion or anything like that. It was just a thing to have a cup of coffee with whoever, and that happened quite a few times through different places like the Philippines,

11:30 Japan. But as I said, I didn’t have a flag and thought, “That will do me!”

And attending these receptions, was that optional?

Oh yeah. You didn’t have to go if you didn’t want to. They just called for volunteers, “Do you want to go to it?” “Do you want to go play golf?” “Do you want to go and play football?” “Do you want to go and visit the orphanage?” We used to adopt an orphanage and you’d go and visit the kids and give them toys, or you would adopt a charity. You would donate blood to the

12:00 Red Cross or whatever. That went on; it still goes on even today. The navy is well known for that. Yeah, that’s all that was.

Just touching on your Japan visits, were there any previous members of the HMAS Tobruk that were a veteran of World War II?

Yeah, Merv Hart. He was from South Australian. He was a

12:30 three badge man. Now a three badge man is three stripes, which is four years for each stripe that so that’s 12 years, so I figure he would have had to have been at the tail end of World War II. I think there was a petty officer on board too who was similar but yeah, we had a couple from World War II but Merv, he was like a sea daddy. He used to look after all the junior rates and make sure that they were okay. If you needed any advice whatsoever about

13:00 the ship or seamanship ask Merv, he knew. Merv knew everything and a three badge man in the navy is to us the equivalent of a skipper. He knows everything or he wouldn’t be a three badge man and he was pretty well respected to by most people. But other than that I think we only had a couple from World War II. They had been to Korea and everything else of course but you get that on every ship.

Did Merv have any strong

13:30 **feelings towards the Japanese?**

He used to like them. The Japanese are the cleanest, respectful race in the world. Even today they still are and I often say had they not done what they did in the Second World War they would be the greatest ever, but you can’t hold that against the generation now and I’ve got a great deal of

14:00 trust. I like them. I reckon they are all right. It’s a pity a lot of Australians didn’t do the same thing respectful wise as what the Japanese do.

And you mentioned quite a few ports that you went ashore. Which one was your favourite?

Japan was all right but Hong Kong was the favourite for most navy blokes, I think. It was the

centre of everything. You could buy anything like electrical gear and all these type of things real cheap. Singapore was all right but it just didn't have the same atmosphere as Hong Kong. Japan was a fantastic place, particularly the Ging and all them places, but it just wasn't the laxity as it was in Hong Kong. They are more respectful. Hong Kong was an open city and terrific. Everyone, I don't know what it would be like now the Chinese have taken

over again, but it was a fantastic port to be in. Singapore was all right and so was Malacca and Kuala Lumpur and all those places, but Hong Kong is the one that stands out. The Philippines wasn't bad. They sort of, we got on well with them but no hassles, but it wasn't the same as Hong Kong.

You said the atmosphere there was different. What was the atmosphere like?

Where, in

Philippines?

No, in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong. It was more friendly. It was more open and as I said you could buy anything. No matter what you wanted you could buy it, and in the bars the prices were incredible. You could sit there and hassle and hassle and hassle and get things for virtually nothing if you were a good hassler. We used to like it. It was a terrific port to be in. The beer was always cold.

What electrical goods were really popular?

Up there at that stage radios, mix-master type things, record players, stereos and because we didn't have TV in those days and you could buy watches, cameras, all top notch cameras and watches I might add for damn near quarter the price you'd pay anywhere

else. And as I said if you hassled enough you would get them next to nothing sometimes. You could just buy anything and some of the toys they made up there that were remote controlled. You'd never get them in Australia but you could up there. The blokes would buy a robot with a remote control and put it in their pocket and have it walking down the street with a press of the button. I brought my younger brother back some electric trains from Hong Kong. They were German ones, Fleischmann, and I hardly paid anything for them. I bought him

about six engines and God knows how many lines and electrical points and all this type of thing and paid hardly anything for it. China, dinner sets and all this type of thing. I used to pick them up for a song. So yeah, Hong Kong was the place to be. But it's probably different know but I think most of the places are different now. They are all pricey. But that was towards the end of the war or only ten years after. Good shopping place.

We were talking about the limited space on board, where would you put this stuff?

We used to buy suitcases and nine times out of ten they were made out of cardboard, and we had a suitcase and we had them stacked underneath the ladder. They were stacked anywhere because everyone went shopping. I brought back a heap of stuff. Cases full of it and not just me, the whole crew did,

so consequently when a lot of the storage areas were freed when we were coming back we could take them out and put them in these compartments if they weren't going to use them any more, and that got us back. Blokes were up there buying outboard motors and all sorts of things, which you could do, and you paid hardly anything for it so you did. Clothes. We used to have suits made, shoes tailor made, sharkskin suits tailor made. I brought all these back. You weren't paying much for them so you would shop

while you could. Brought heaps back, but space wise it was a bit touch and go until you started clearing some space out when you were due to come home and then you could move some of the stuff in. But we used to set the electric train up on the mess deck. The boys used to play with it. You'd have these trains going.

I'm sorry, I've just the image of these sailors playing with this train set.

There would be

at least ten of us sitting on this huge mess deck and I'd set the train set up and we were like a mob of bloody kids. It was terrific. You'd get the train going and you'd put a little bit of oil across the line and when it hit the oil you'd put it in reverse and the wheels would be spinning like this and still going forward. Or the blokes would get out their cars, remote controlled cars, and have smash-ups like proper kids. Then you'd put them all away again until next time.

One night we had them up and we had rounds. The first lieutenant was doing rounds and he came down and he said, "Oh, we've got the trains out again, have we?" He stayed there with us for a while. Lieutenant Commander Goble. A terrific bloke. Yeah that was just navy life.

You made mention before of going ashore in uniform. Was that every port?

Yeah, we had to wear uniform. You had no room to carry civvies anyhow.

20:00 But yeah, we wore uniform everywhere we went. Nowadays they don't of course, but in them days yeah. You weren't allowed to wear civvies so consequently you stood out like a neon sign, but still we got through it.

Did you have any civvies with you?

No. Didn't have room to put them. You only had your locker and that's it and a little bit of hanging space

20:30 underneath the ladder to hang your coats like your watch coat or whatever. We didn't have a lot of room. I mean the mess deck itself, you ate there, you lived there, you slept there, you socialised there, you did everything there. You virtually lived in a confined space. Hot weather you tried to sleep on the upper deck. If you were lucky enough you had a good spot. If you didn't you ended up with the soot coming out of the funnel.

21:00 Pretty tight fitting and pretty cramped. No airconditioning of course. The only airconditioning was from the vent, or you'd put a scoop out the scuttle or the porthole as you people call it, which is a scoop and it faces like so. Nine times out of ten as soon as you put that scoop out the ship would turn and the water would come in on you. Guaranteed. Never missed. But that's the only cooling you got.

21:30 **You are describing some very confined spaces. You did say earlier you just accepted that this was it but were there ever any times where it just got a bit too close and perhaps tempers became frayed or…?**

No not so much with the blokes. The only time when tempers got frayed we had one bloke in our mess and he was

22:00 married with two daughters, I think, and he never went ashore, ever. And we said to him once, "Why don't you go ashore?" and he said, "No, I'm never going to be unfaithful to my wife." And we said, "You don't have to do that!" and he said, "No, I'm never going to go ashore." And his temper was pretty bad because he didn't go ashore and he went what I call a bit potty after a while. You couldn't make sense of him.

22:30 And when we came back to Australia the last I heard of him they sent him to Callum Park, which was a mental place in Western Australia where he came from, all because he didn't go ashore. But other than that no, the tempers didn't fray with the blokes. As I said, after Bob was killed we were just as one except for Ned, old Ned Kelly, he was the only one that was a bother, but the rest of them were pretty good blokes.

23:00 **Is Ned the man you were just describing?**

Yeah. His name was Ned, nickname, but he was only one. He was all right. We had good times. In fact there was a group of us, Ned was one of us and he bought this little accordion from a bloke that came on board. A press-button accordion. And I bought a mouth organ and another bloke made a skittle thing out of a tea chest with a thing and Curly had a ukulele that he used to play and we started up a band.

23:30 I never played a mouth organ in my life but I learned. The same with the squeeze box. Ned learned to play that and we used to just play music. And then I took up chess. We had chess competitions and yeah, there was no frayed tempers with anybody. We always did something. Most of us found something to do. Or we played tombola, which is bingo, and maybe 200 or 300 wherever we were going Hong Kong dollars

24:00 or Singapore dollars. We always found something to do.

Was there any gambling on board?

What do you mean? Like cards and that sort of thing?

Yeah, cards, two-up?

Not so much two-up. That's strictly army I think. Yeah, I dare say the blokes would probably gamble for matches, which represented money of course, because you weren't allowed to gamble. I dare say they did. I never did

24:30 and I can't place, I don't think anyone in our mess ever played cards for money. I know they did up forward but how much I wouldn't have a clue. The only gambling other than that was the organised tombola which as I say was called bingo, and that was organised by the social committee on the ship. They used to have that regularly. It was just something to do. Or the Resches brewery would send us up beer and we would have a beer issue, which was

25:00 great, so you would have a Resches bottle about so big and play bingo or sit up on the upper deck and talk, which I did with Cookie many times. So yeah, we had our relaxation time but frayed tempers, I don't know of any outbursts of that at all.

I was about to ask you about the policy on alcohol. What was the policy on alcohol?

We were allowed, every so often we would be given

25:30 a bottle of beer and we could be at anchor, we could be in Singapore or wherever, and you had to drink that bottle yourself. And you couldn't save say six months or six bottles or whatever and then drink them all in one hit. That was a no no. And there was no drinking at sea. While you were at sea, no drinking at all. Only at anchor or at port and that was the ruling of it. The beer was given to you. You didn't have to buy it. But

26:00 other than that nobody ever went over the line on that anyhow. They were pretty good that way. But other than that you weren't allowed to drink at sea. Even the officers couldn't drink at sea.

And with that beer ration, was there any bartering involved? Was there any teetotallers who…?

Oh yeah, that went on. It wasn't supposed to but it did. Yeah, quite a few didn't drink

26:30 and they'd say, "For a couple of dollars you can have the beer," or, "If you stand my watch when you are in port next and I'll go ashore…" That used to go on. Yeah.

Were these long necks?

Yeah. Do you call long necks the big bottles? Yeah. They didn't have stubbies in those days or cans. They were all big ones. It was Resches brewery from NSW used to supply it. They were nice

27:00 too, actually.

How often would you get the beer ration?

Any time you dropped anchor you would probably end up getting a bottle, or if you were in port somewhere they would say, "You can have a beer issue," and they would bring it up. There was no regular thing; it was just whenever. They used to produce it and we used to drink it.

Before you left for Malaya did you have

27:30 **a girlfriend?**

Yep. She ended up being the first wife. She lived in NSW. When they sent me to Malaya as I said they crash draft you and I just rang up and said, "See you in 12 months," and that was it, away I went.

And what was the arrangement for your relationship when you were at sea?

How do you mean? Letter writing, or I used to write letters, and like everything else

28:00 you would write them and write them daily and you would keep them there until you found somewhere to post them, and then all of a sudden you might half a dozen letters in one hit, and then you get half a dozen back and so it went on. But it's a ticklish thing, navy, girlfriends and marriage. It's a ticklish thing. I've seen a lot of marriage breakups in the navy. I've seen a lot after it and mine was one of them. But yeah.

28:30 It's just not a married man's game I don't think anyway, whereas the army and air force can take their wives with them but with the navy you can't. You can't take them on the ship so it makes it awkward.

And was there an issue about being faithful?

Yeah. If you were married or engaged, yes. If you only had a girlfriend,

29:00 no, because you weren't terminally attached. I mean boyfriend and girlfriend break up every time. But if you were married, yeah. I mean Ned Kelly was a classic example and no way was he going to be unfaithful. Others who were married, yeah sure, they went ashore and shacked up and all that but they never ever told their wives of course. You wouldn't. But

29:30 if you weren't engaged or married you just did what you wanted to do. If I wanted to get drunk I got drunk. If I wanted to shack up I shacked up. Anyhow, I got married when I came back anyhow. The worst thing I ever did.

A question was raised earlier too today about peer group pressure and I'm just wondering with Ned's situation

30:00 **whether he would have felt that there was peer group pressure, because as you said there were married men who did shack up. How, was there a peer group pressure in that sense?**

No, no, none at all. No, everyone said to Ned, "Go ashore. You don't have to shack up. Go to the movies, do something, but just go ashore." And he didn't do it. He made up his mind he wasn't going to do that.

30:30 There was nothing you could do. No-one was going to force him to do anything. You couldn't. It was just one of them things. But he got no pressure.

But was there a, I can't really find the right word for it, but was there a boasting after leave about the girls and…?

No, never was, ever. Very rarely spoke about it. What you did was your own business.

31:00 Nobody made a big thing of it. Most of the blokes wouldn't either.

We are still talking about leave. We were looking through your photos. We actually took a still today of a monkey, you and a monkey.

Yeah. The monkey with a broken tail. I went ashore a group of us, and Duffy was one of them, and this monkey had a broken tail. And I had been on the booze of course

31:30 and I bought this monkey because it had a broken tail and took it back on board and the First Lieutenant Goble said to me, "Able Seamen Jarman, what have you got there?" and I said, "A monkey sir." "And where were you going with that monkey?" "To Australia sir." He said, "No you're not, my boy. You get that monkey back ashore and report to me on the gangway," and I said, "Aye, aye sir." So I took the monkey back and came back on board. Lieutenant Goble wasn't on the gangway so I didn't report

32:00 and nothing was ever said. Now having said that, I've often wandered what he was thinking. This year in February I went to the opening of the War Memorial in Canberra and Commodore Goble was there, who was my first lieutenant, so Cookie and I approached him with the photograph of the monkey and said, "Sir." He said, "No, my name is John." "Okay John. Do you remember the monkey?" He said, "Oh yes, I remember that monkey."

32:30 And he looked at Duffy who was with me because Duffy had bought one as well and he said, "Duffy, I remember that monkey." I had to take mine back to Borneo. Duffy got his on board and it went berserk in the paint locker. I said to the commodore, "Tell me something, John. You said to me, 'Report to me if I'm on the gangway when you get back.' You weren't on the gangway and I never reported to you. You never ever said anything and I've often wondered." He said, "I know."

33:00 I said, "You bastard, you set me up." He said, "Yep." He had no intention of doing anything. He said, "You worried about it didn't you?" and I said, "I've been thinking about it for 47 years and I've found the answer." It was just him being his usual self – a terrific bloke. But Duffy. He said, "I'll never forget Duffy's monkey. I remember your monkey – it went berserk." Poor old Duffy. Unfortunately he's dying of cancer now.

So Duffy's monkey made

33:30 **it on board.**

How he got it on board I don't know, but I couldn't get mine on. Mine got caught. But he got his on somehow. How, I don't know. And it got in the paint locker and it went berserk in the paint locker and paint everywhere. God knows what else it didn't do, but they got him out. That was a good time.

And what happened to the monkey?

Took it back. You couldn't have a monkey on board.

How did you think you were going to sustain a monkey

34:00 **back to Australia?**

Didn't have a clue. Didn't even cross my mind. I was going to take a monkey to Australia. I don't know how I was going to feed the damn thing but you do silly things. I just took sympathy. This monkey had a broken tail and it was hanging down and I took sympathy. "I'll look after him." So I bought it. It probably cost me something like 50c or some damn thing.

That's an interesting point. You said you were really drunk when you got

34:30 **back on board. Once a ship leaves and sets off to sail again you are back on duty. How did you cope with hangovers?**

You made certain you didn't get drunk before you left. If you knew you were leaving say tomorrow you wouldn't get drunk tonight. You'd be stupid if you did. We never had the problem. We always

35:00 knew that we had to be sober and no, that never happened. It might have happened to some of the others, I don't know, but the mess I was in, no. We made doubly certain we were okay. You would be pretty stupid going to sea half cut. That's just asking for trouble so you never did that. Too many people relied on you.

Well we've talked a bit about life at sea but…

35:30 It's very boring life at sea. Very boring. It's usually the same routines. Look out, steering, what have you. You look out and you don't see nothing. You don't see nothing, nowhere, no how for days and days and days. Very, very boring and tedious but you do it. It's part of your routine. You always look forward to getting to a port,

36:00 breaking the monotony. Or if you see a whale or something like that, terrific. People out there with binoculars and God knows what else just to break the monotony. But being at sea is very, very boring and it's tedious but it's a case of that's what you do. You accept it. I did and I liked it anyhow. I liked

being at sea. Terrific. As I said I'd be there tomorrow

36:30 if I could but I won't. Unfortunately.

Well how do you quell the boredom?

Oh well as I said you play chess or uckers. Uckers is cluedo, but uckers is the navy term, or tombola or make pictures, make movies. Every now and again they would set up the screen in the torpedo space and we'd have movies. Or you'd play cards, write letters, talk, play with the electric train, set up the electric train and mess

37:00 around with that. Whatever. You always found something to do. You would get the odd occasion you would be doing something and all of a sudden clang, clang, clang, clang and away you go. It might only be for an exercise and you think, "Bloody hell! I'm in the middle of a card game and he wants to throw in an exercise!" But you did your job and then came back and carried on what you were doing before.

Well sometime boredom can lead to mischievousness. Did you have any people that got up to any tricks on the ship?

37:30 No. Never did. I don't know of anybody that did. As I said we formed a small band and messed around with that, but you would never do that at sea. Too many people rely on you to do your job. You wouldn't go jeopardising their lives or the ship. You wouldn't do that. That's just a no no.

Well with the band that you formed, did you

38:00 **have any songs or ditties?**

We had a few dirty ones, yeah. End of story. Sometimes when my wife and I are out dancing, we're not made rock'n'rollists or anything but I'll start singing the dirty version and she'll say, "You're doing it again!" It just comes automatically. I don't know the clean versions.

Can you share one?

I don't think so. You wouldn't like them.

Don't think

38:30 **we haven't heard them.**

It's just not my nature to. No. I wouldn't do it. As much as you would like me to I'm not going to.

Well that's fine. Can I just ask what were the subjects?

What we did on board. Yeah, as I said we played music or played chess.

No, no, no. What were the subjects of the songs?

Oh sorry.

39:00 Well, 'All the Nice Girls like a Sailor', do you know that tune? The 'Good Ship Venus', a dirty version of that. 'Rock Around the Clock', there is a dirty version of that.

To 'Rock Around the Clock'?

Oh yes. The navy can give you a dirty version of anything. I can still find a dirty version for you but there is always a dirty version. 'Waltzing Matilda', there is a dirty version of that too. Every song has got a dirty version somewhere

39:30 along the line and that's what we used to sing and the boys thought it was great. We wouldn't sing it in front of women of course, but on board yeah. Everybody knew it. One of the best ones, especially with navy boys when they get together and they strike up, I can't think of the name of it but it's, "We're a bunch of bastards." That version.

\n[Verse follows]\n "We're a bunch of bastards\n Bastards are we\n We come from Flinders\n The arsehole of the fleet..."\n

And so it goes on.

40:00 That's a marching tune. Now if you get in any bar with a lot of navy boys and somebody plays that tune I guarantee everyone will sing it. It was just part and parcel of us. Go on.

I've had a taste now so I'm going to ask. Can we have the dirty version of 'Rock Around the Clock'?

No.

'Waltzing Matilda'?

No. No. No. No. No. Never.

I assure you we've

40:30 **heard these.**

No it's just not my… I won't go into that.

Well on that note I think I'm going to wind up this tape.

Tape 8

00:31 **Now as I said Bill, before we go on, I would like to come back to the Tobruk but before we go on I would like to spend another few moment reflecting on your Korean active service, and you did show us a photograph today of the kind of gear that you had to wear while you were up in Korean waters.**

01:00 **So was it absolutely freezing cold when you were there?**

Yeah, oh hell yeah. It was cold. I've never seen snow like that in my life and it was bloody cold, there's no two ways about it because our ships weren't built for cold weather. They were built for tropics and when you get up there there's no insulation. The cold water taps, the pipes freeze.

01:30 The guns would freeze and you would have to belt them with something to get them going. Yeah. I can never work out why they fought in Korean. Even to this day I don't understand. When you look at it in summer it's bright red bulldust and in winter it's freezing. Who wants to fight over it? It's just ridiculous.

02:00 Yeah, an unreal place that.

So when you took part you were on the Murchison at the time. Are you saying you felt you weren't quite sure why you were there?

We knew why we were there. We were part of the UN armistice patrol. But I could never work out what the hell they wanted to fight about. You look at the country and think "Who the hell wants to fight over that country?" A waste of time!

02:30 But as it turned out the north wanted the south and the south didn't want it, and I could never work that out. That is the only, it would be the only time in history I would reckon that the United Nation has shown any guts. At the moment the UN is weak as. They don't do anything. When Korea broke out the UN went straight in, country after country. Now they are too mambi pambi.

03:00 When the Iraq thing started I thought, "Why couldn't the UN go in and do that? They had the opportunity." But no, they left it for America to go in and America was wrong. They shouldn't have done that thing and Australia shouldn't have followed them, but however they did so. To me I don't think the UN is worth a crumpet unless they get their act together like they did back in the '50s. As I said, with the UN patrols they went on right up to 1956–57. Every ship that went to the Far East called

03:30 into Korea at some stage of the game. They might have been there four weeks, five weeks, six weeks, even two weeks, but that was just to let them know, "Yes we are there." But there was nothing dramatic there. No firing shots or anything.

And I have heard stories of the steel on the ships being so cold that you would lose your skin on your hands. Did you have any incidents like that or…?

04:00 No. No. It was real cold there's no two ways about it. There's a photo in one of the books I've got in there of Murchison tying up in Kure and all wanted to go ashore just getting the snow out so we could put the gangway down. Yeah, if you're not used to it it's bloody cold and as I said it's the first time I've ever seen snow in my life like that. I've seen in on TV but never seen it in reality and it just seemed so strange. One moment you are in the tropics and next minute you are

04:30 up there with all this wet weather gear on, especially when I was in Malaya and did it. From shorts to Eskimo gear all in a matter of a couple of days. Bloody hell!

Do you think you did do it a bit tough with lack of proper clothing?

What, on Tobruk or Murchison?

Murchison.

Oh no, you were warm enough. You survived, there's no two ways about that.

05:00 It's just that it was bloody cold. Simple.

Well returning to the Tobruk, you mentioned earlier in the day and we have seen a couple of photographs and you have told us the story of the sultan, but what other visiting dignitaries did you have?

05:30 and we had the President of Vietnam. President Dien something or other. He came aboard with all his generals for a visit. It was only a while after we left, a couple of months that he got assassinated anyhow. I said earlier on that I've still got a feeling that the Tobruk went into Saigon for a sneaky. I'm bloody certain of it but whether it was true or not I don't know. But yeah, we had the dignitaries come aboard

06:00 and we had to throw them the salutes and all the rest of it. He seemed a nice bloke but he didn't last long. They were going through them like Epsom salts. They get a president and they do him in and get another one. Funny place that. And of course you know what happened afterwards – Vietnam broke out.

So you say you would throw on a ceremony or a salute?

Yeah, when he came aboard

06:30 you had a guard of honour and you had to salute him. But he talked to everybody and he said, "How are you going?" and blah, blah, blah. He seemed a nice enough bloke. But that was just one of those visits as far as we were concerned. Any time any dignitary, even the queen, whoever, the average servicemen would say. "Not again!" You don't want to get all dolled up for people. Bloody garbage! But you do it. You are supposed to

07:00 but it's just garbage. Diplomatic stuff. It's okay for the bureaucrats but not this boy.

Well you were talking earlier to Louise about learning to play the mouth organ and being part of a band, organising a band. What sort of...

07:30 **I mean did you play concerts or just jam?**

No, just on board. Something to do. Someone said, "Let's do something," so nine times out of ten you would be out of tune but who gives a damn. But yeah, it was good. I'd never played a mouth organ in my life until I bought this damn thing and I learned it and yeah, it was something to do. It was quite fun too, actually.

And where did you get your mouth organ from?

08:00 I bought it in a market in Singapore if I remember rightly. I seen it there and I thought, it was about so long and they wanted a dollar in Hong Kong or Singapore or whatever and I bought the bloody thing and I thought, "That will do me. I'll take it." I just sat down. I learned playing 'Silent Night' of all things over and over and over. I drove the blokes up the wall and eventually I worked out what the notes were and I started

08:30 experimenting after that. "You're not going to play that song again are you?" "Yeah." My dad used to play a mouth organ and I think that's why I bought one because he used to play one. I ended up all right on it. Like Ned Kelly when he bought his little pushbutton accordion and I said, "How are you going to learn to play that?" But he mastered it and he could play a tune on it. It only had four buttons if I remember rightly but he could play a tune with it.

09:00 Curly Elliott with his ukulele, but he could play the ukulele. I can't think of this guy's name now but he made this thing with a tea box and a stick and that was his boom, boom, boom. He was good on that as well. A good band that. Never made a record.

But you had plenty of time to practise.

Oh yeah.

Well some time to practice.

We used to get told on the mess deck, "Get out here playing that," and we'd go up on the upper deck and do it.

09:30 But yeah, they were all right.

Well what was your favourite part of the Tobruk?

Favourite part of Tobruk?

Yeah to go.

That was the favourite part, Tobruk. The whole lot.

But did you have a special place that you really liked to go and sit or stand?

No, not particularly. At night, I suppose if it was a hot night,

10:00 and nine times out of ten I had me, Cookie and Slim up on the foreign torpedo space and we'd sit up there and have a bit of a smoke and a talk. No special place, no. Or we might go to the mess deck and have a cup of coffee or tea or something and come back again. But no, no special place.

Did you have a fairly free rein? Were there places that you weren't allowed to go?

What, on the ship? You couldn't walk

10:30 into the skipper's cabin, no, but pretty well free rein to most places. Of course you wouldn't go to the engine room because you weren't a stoker but the radio shack and all that you could go in there if you had to go up there. The foreign mess deck. You could go anywhere. The other place was like the chiefs' mess, the POs' [Petty Officers] mess, the officers' mess. Certain places, but free rein to everything else. You had to. We were a seaman

11:00 and if you were a seaman you might be called to go in there to repair something.

And you were also talking to Louise about your attempts to buy the monkey and that made me wonder about, you've mentioned the few things that you've bought like clothes and record players and things. But I'm wondering about other sort of souvenirs

11:30 **that you might have gathered on the way.**

Yeah, I've got something up there now. I got a set of bamboo, for want of a better word, glasses. They are about so high of bamboo with a little palm tree on them. I sent Mum home a lantern that when you turned it on it used to spin, Chinese thing, and it had all these funny little figures through it. Different things like that but that's about all.

12:00 Clothes and electrical gear was a big thing. Things like lanterns and that you would pick them up and send them home. I got a lucky tea set in Japan. I think I paid five shillings for that. I sent that home. I think they are pretty expensive now but we only paid five shillings for the damn thing. Quite a few things like that.

And what was the system of getting paid?

What, on board?

12:30 Well we used to get paid in… I'm trying to think now. We used to get paid in the countries' dollars, Hong Kong dollars or Singapore dollars and we would get paid in Australian money for scrip dollars. I think that's how it worked, and scrip dollars were American dollars. America did that instead of going ashore

13:00 with American money they used a scrip dollar. Any money that wasn't spent would go to Japan and then would send it back to America. So yeah, there was a lot of money changing going on. But we were really always paid in the currency in the country you were in. Japan was the only one that I can remember if you went ashore you had to change your money for yen and then back into scrip dollars and then back into something else when you came back. We got, we didn't pay tax. That was our relief

13:30 up there. No tax on what we were getting, which makes our pay look pretty sick to what the are getting now. They get $100 a day for being in a combat zone. We never got that. All we got was tax relief, which was about $5, or five pound I should say, in them days. You would end up with about 21 pound a week, which was pretty good money. But in Japan for 1,000 yen, which was about 25 shillings, which would be about $2.50, that supplied a flat, all the beer you could drink,

14:00 and a girl, for a week. Big difference nowdays.

That was the bargain.

That was the bargain. You wouldn't do it now. The money they get now makes ours look sick.

And would you go see the paymaster on a weekly basis? How would it work?

A fortnightly pay. You'd be paid fortnightly,

14:30 and the paymaster would be there. Money would be in your, they would put it out not in pay packets. You'd front the paymaster, off cap, and he'd put the money in the cap and that's it. That was the navy way. And at a later stage they would give you an identification card, you would present your identification card and say your last three numbers. Mine was 148149 so I would say the last three, which was 149, and that was my pay number. You got the money. Nine times out of ten we used to put it in the bank anyhow,

15:00 which was on board. You would hand it back to the paymaster and it would go in the bank and when you went ashore you just draw some out. It's basic. You didn't need money at sea. Sometimes you would spend three weeks at sea, maybe two, maybe a month, so what's the use of having money? You couldn't do anything with it. You would bank it and draw it when you wanted it, but no hassles. You got paid when you are supposed to be paid.

It interesting hearing about the money on the hat.

It's an old navy custom.

15:30 You'd go up and they would call your name. You would say, "Sir," take one step forward and cap on this side like that. And of course the cap would be there and they put the money in, drag it in, put it on, salute and then off. Later on, it's all different now, it goes straight to your bank. It's all done for you.

The pay system.

16:00 **Well I guess now we are moving to the end of your Malayan time so what was it like for you to come back to Australia?**

I was looking forward to it. We had been away too long. Yeah. Our first port of call coming back was Perth. The first thing we'd do is go straight to the pub and have an Aussie beer, and I mean a beer,

16:30 quite a few. And some of our blokes were left there because they were going ashore to finish their time so they went home. Then we came to Adelaide and my parents at that stage had moved from Adelaide and had gone to Queensland so a lot of the South Australians were left at Adelaide such as Cookie. My aunty and uncle came down to the ship. They were still in Adelaide. They let me go ashore and have a talk to them. Sat in the car and had a cup of coffee and a sandwich and all that.

17:00 After that we headed for Melbourne, back to Sydney and from Sydney I went to Queensland and Mum and Dad came back to Sydney then and I got married. That lasted for about 13 years. I was going to stay in the navy as I said and she said, "If you don't get out I'm going to leave." I got out and she left anyhow, so I should have stayed in while I was on a good thing. I've never forgiven her for that, but still, that's life.

17:30 **But do you think you would have preferred to stay in the navy even though you have said it's difficult with family being in the navy.**

It is, that's right, it is. It's bloody difficult. But I always wanted to stay in the navy, simple, and to have that ultimatum put to you. We had a little girl then, my daughter, the first one,

18:00 that if you don't get out I'm going to leave you. I suppose I can understand to a certain position but I just wanted to stay in there. I'd be back in tomorrow as I said. I wouldn't hesitate. The best time of my life. The best friends I've ever met. But it wasn't to be so I got out and went from job to job, etc.

18:30 The last job I had, the one before last, I ended up as a supervisor anyhow so I worked my way up. I didn't look back. The best thing that happened was when Barb came on the scene. That's the best thing that's ever happened to me and I've never looked back since. So we raised the kids, etc., and put them through school and done all right. Both had good jobs and not wanting for anything so we are up to the present day.

19:00 I'm going through the cancer bit but even with that I volunteered to do the trial for that on the new drugs. I'm like a guinea pig at the moment and cancer has been in remission until the last CAT [computerised axial tomography] scan, which shows that it has grown again. We'll see what happens with that one, but I believe there is another drug that wants to go on trial so I've volunteered for that as well. If it does me any good fine, if it doesn't it might help somebody else.

19:30 **So what did you miss most when you left the navy?**

The navy itself. The discipline. The camaraderie. The blokes. The sense of being. The lot. It's a funny feeling. Some, all they want to do is get out,

20:00 but I wanted to stay there. I thought it was great. I just miss it. I've missed it for years and still do. I'd be back in tomorrow given the chance, but I'm too old now. But still that's life again so.

20:30 **And I'm just wondering how you think the navy or your time in the navy might have changed you?**

In regards to what?

What you learned? The lessons you learned?

Self-discipline, how to take care of yourself. Respect for others. Just everything in general. Self-confidence. I'm very self-confident.

21:00 The cancer, I know it's not going to beat me. I won't let it. You learn how to battle these things. You learn not to sit back and say, "Poor old me." That's crap. Get on with life. I'm a firm believer that National Service should be reintroduced for young people. Teach them a bit of self-discipline and a bit of respect. They've got none. That will do it. You learn that life is not what you think it is.

21:30 You've got to be there for other people. You can't say that, "I'm here for me only." That's crap. I've stuck by that. I've raised my daughters the same, navy discipline. They hated me for it but they don't at the moment. You can go to my daughter's house at Murray Bridge and open any of the drawers in their dressing room and everything is ironed perfectly and in practical order. The kids were brought up right and that was my training

22:00 and she got the same from me. My younger daughter is the same. Mind you they hated me when I brought them up like that but not so much now. I think if you've got self-discipline and self-motivation you do, you just grow up properly. You've seen it here with the house itself. Certain things have got to be done and get done.

22:30 You don't talk about it, you do it, and unfortunately these days the youngsters don't do that. They think everything should be given to them on a gold plate but they haven't earned it. They have done nothing. So yeah, bring back National Service. Get them in there, women too. Teach them all a lesson. A bit of discipline.

You've made mention today and it is quite well known that the Korean War and the Malayan

23:00 **Emergency**

Were forgotten.

Were quite forgotten.

That's for sure. We found this in the RSL. When we came back and we went to join the RSL we were virtually told, "They weren't bloody wars! They were just police actions!" And even the Vietnam vets copped it as well. They didn't want to know us. It's different know. All the old blokes are dying, aren't they,

23:30 and the RSL is going down the gurgler. It's a different story now. They are accepting us now. They didn't want to know us before and we're finding that a lot of the older blokes are coming to us for help. On a Tuesday and Friday I go down to the Torrens parade ground and I work with the Vietnam Veterans' Association. I'm an associate member and there is three of us, three navy blokes. Ex chief technician Dixie Lee,

24:00 ex telegraphist who is an ex superintendent of police Don Hay, and myself, and we do welfare and pensions for veterans. We fill in their forms and help them with anything. The people who run it, Cath and Ron Coxman, who are Vietnam vets, Cath often calls me in if somebody comes in if they are upset to talk to them because she knows my attitude, so I go and talk to them and tell them don't worry about things, don't let it get on top of you. Fight it, accept it, which I do.

24:30 Or somebody will ring about their entitlement for medals and I've made that my forte that they get the medals they are entitled to, so I tell them and help them fill in the forms and that's what we do. It's just veterans helping veterans and I find that helps me as well with my PTSD.

And I'm just wondering if you had been recognised when you came back do you think that would have made a difference to you at the time?

25:00 Yeah, because for years and years and years we fought to be recognised for Malaya and we kept saying, like with Bob, we buried him at sea. There is no grave, no gravestone, nothing, so where do you go to put a wreath? Get in a plane to fly over and drop it? And that bugged me because as I said it upset all of us because we didn't bring him home. So yeah, I fought for years for that and finally we've done it. We've got a name on a wall

25:30 that we can go to. In Adelaide there is one but I think it would have made the world of difference. Because for years I never marched on Anzac Day. It was about 1993 I suppose it would be, 3 or 2, and only then it was because they reckoned they were going to recognise Malaya. And I rang up the guy who used to run the Vietnam Veterans' Logistic Association and I wanted to find out a bit more and the first thing he said to me was, "Do you march on Anzac Day?" and I said, "No." He said,

26:00 "Well you'd better come and join us as a member and march with us." "I've never served in Vietnam," and he said, "It makes no difference. You are one of us." So I did and I started marching on Anzac Day with them. And one thing led to another and I got accepted and I got heavily involved in the committees, and then we started up the FCSR [?] Association. They asked me if I would start the one in South Australia and I was the first president, which I did until I got cancer of course, and I organised that. Then

26:30 Mr Don Hay, he took over from me because of the cancer and now we have a membership of 110 in South Australia. We go away on weekends a group of us with our wives, and have functions, and we went to Canberra for the opening of the War Memorial. We went to Wallaroo as a group and we got invited there by the RSL for a barbecue on the Sunday. We went in mid September to Dundas. So it's just all the veterans get together and we find they help each other as well. A lot of us have got PTSD

27:00 of one sign or the other and it's easier to talk to another person who has been there instead of a person who hasn't been there, and with the navy we have our own language so all of us blokes can talk around and nobody has a clue what we are talking about but we do because we have our own language. Yes it's a great help, and I find it's a great help helping other vets in the program with all the other vets that are there. There is three, actually three, four, five, six,

27:30 seven navy blokes work out of the Vietnam Veterans' Association. Three of us on Tuesday and Friday and the rest of us scattered through the group. A lot of the Vietnam vets are doing it, army blokes and a couple of air force I believe, and we are doing more work regarding pensions and disability claims than any other organisation in South Australia including the RSL. The air force association has one member who does pensions

28:00 and he hardly ever turns up, so consequently we cop it. And if anyone was to walk into Torrens parade ground to the Vietnam Veterans' section of it their office is going continuously with people coming in

and pensions being done. Not just Vietnam vets, but Korean vets and Malayan, widows, nurses. We do them all and we don't care where you served and that's what I do now. Other than the cancer clinic and the trials on the drugs;

28:30 I do that as well.

And you do march on Anzac Day, what does it mean to you when you march?

It means a lot to me at the moment. As I said I didn't do it for years because I didn't think anyone wanted to know us, and now when our group marches Barb will tell you she can always pick me out and my chest is right out. The arms are back and we are with the boys and we are in step. It's just like

29:00 being back there. As one. We all feel the same, funnily enough. Yeah, it's a funny feeling. When the march is finished you go back to… Well normally when Cookie comes over on Anzac Day I have a special wreath made up and him and I go to the dawn service down at Port Adelaide and we lay a wreath down there on behalf of our crew, and then we have a special one made up and him and I go to North Terrace War Memorial

29:30 and we lay it for Bob and then we carry on. We always remember Bob. Now we have a focal point to go to so we always do. We've never forgiven the fact that we never brought him home and the only outlet I've got now is knowing his name is there. It's starting to get to me. It should never have happened.

30:00 But yeah, and then of course we get together and have a few beers after. We never talk about the bad times, always the good times. But Anzac Day I often think if they had recognised us years ago, all those wasted years. Now we are getting too old. Look at me – I'm 69 this year and I don't know how long I'm going to last because of the cancer.

And when you

30:30 **spend time looking back and reflecting on your time in the navy as we have done today, what do you think stands out for you as your proudest moment?**

Serving a nation. Simple as that. Yep. That's a simple answer. I think most of us feel the same. We joined up, well our motto

31:00 on the FCSR thing is 'For Freedom We Served' and that's exactly why we did it. Not just ours but everybody else's. If they need freedom and they want help, fine, let's do it. It was the Australians that did it and I've got no regrets on it. Australia has got to be protected and so we joined and did it and I'd do it again tomorrow. There's no bravado

31:30 about it. It had to be done and I think unfortunately nowadays the young people don't think that. It's very hard to get in the service but they just don't want to. My son's a classic example. I said to him once, "Why don't you join the navy?" "I don't want to be told what to do. I don't want to be told I've got to do things." I thought, "What an attitude! What happens if something breaks out?" I've often said "What happens if something was to break out and we got invaded? It would be the old farts like me up there with a rifle even at my age trying to do what I can!" And all the others would be the

32:00 same and the younger ones would be sitting there saying, "What do we do?" because they've got no training. Hence I'm a firm believer in National Service. They should be trained now not wait until the last minute. Do it now. We are only 20 million. Indonesia has got 160 bloody million and what chance have we got so unless they are trained? Well yeah, with Anzac Day itself it's a time to remember Bob and the others

32:30 that didn't come back. It's not, it doesn't glorify war. A lot of people think it's a glorification but it's not. It's a remembrance and you march because of it. And as Cookie once said to me – I'm going to get upset here, I can see that – he said, "Bill, Bob's with us." He was.

33:00 Barbara Anne.

So you were speaking with a really strong sense of love of country and is that what you were referring to earlier in the day when you were referring to the jack me hardy

33:30 **and the larrikin?**

Yeah.

That's what you want to defend.

Yeah. Australian way of life. We have the greatest freedom in the world and we've got to stick to it and we can't let anybody else take it over, and that's why I'm a firm believer in National Service. I think everyone should be doing it. If they don't, somebody is going to walk in here and take it and they will take it like a

34:00 breeze. Yeah. I think Australia is the best country in the world and we've got to protect it and all the garbage that goes on, especially with the politicians, that is just garbage. Instead of penny pinching they should be getting the best weapons we can get and the best training we can get, the best ships we can get. I mean they build frigates now with the capability for them to do things, but that capability is

not built in. It can be built in afterwards

34:30 but in my day when you built a ship the capability was built into it, not later on. So the politicians have got to get their act into gear but they never will. They are too busy backstabbing each other. The defence minister himself should be replaced by somebody who has been there and done that. He hasn't got a clue in the world what he's talking about. He's always fumbling about something.

35:00 I think Kim Beazley is great. I'm not a Labor man but Kim Beazley, when he was a defence minister, he knows what it's about and I reckon he would be a great one. That's about it I suppose really, but I do think that Australia doesn't have the national pride that we should have. I'm a firm believer of flying the flag. There is one sticking on the back of my car right now, but they don't.

35:30 They just recognise. We have got that many foreign people here now that to become Australian as such I think we really need it. I really do. There are quite a few Croatians, for argument's sake. I used to work with one and he was going to a rally and I said, "What are you going to a rally for?" "We want so-and-so recognised for so-and-so." I said, "Hang on, aren't you Australian?" and he said, "Yeah." And I said, "That's their business, not yours. You are Australian. You're not Croatian. You were born here."

36:00 "Oh yeah, but Dad is." So I said, "You bring your shit with you. When you come to Australia you leave your shit back there. We don't need it thanks. We've got enough." And unfortunately I think that's what's happening. People are coming in. Not just Croatians but Iraqis, Arabs, Greeks or whatever and leave it behind. You are either an Australian or you're not. If you are an Australian be an Australian. You are not Greek any more, you are Australian. If you don't want to be, POQ [piss off quick], we don't need you.

36:30 **Well on that note we are coming to the end of our interview today so people in the future are going to look back on your story and learn from it. What message would you like to put down in relation to your own service experience?**

That anybody that starts a war is a dickhead. That's putting it bluntly.

37:00 War is not what people think it is. It's horrific. You've got to live with it the rest of your life. Instead of fighting people, help them. Instead of spending money on weapons, do away with it and find a cure for cancer. The poorer countries just don't throw a couple of pieces of bread to them. Send a heap of stuff over to them. You've got it there, do it instead of

37:30 fighting each other. It's garbage! Anybody that glorifies war they don't what they are talking about. You've got to be there to do it to really find out and I'm telling you now it's not worth it. But having said that, if someone threatens your country, fine, then you fight. This day and age it's got to be preparedness all the time. You can never get full peace.

38:00 In the future they might do something about it but you'd have thing they would have learnt a lesson by now. These terrorists, for argument's sake, what are they trying to prove? They are not going to win, no way. They are not killing us; they are killing their own people. I can never understand that. To me that's just a waste of life and effort. I mean young people kill themselves now on roads, let alone going to war. But I just hope people in the future to do something about it. I really do.

38:30 We don't need this. We shouldn't have people sitting in front of cameras like I am now saying what they did when they were in Malaya or whatever. It should never be that. It should be, "Yeah, I went to a party last week." Not that I was stuck in Malaya firing at somebody or stuck in Vietnam being bombed at. You don't need that. But that's about all I can say. The only message I can give. Wake up to yourselves! Life is too short for that and I know – I can talk from experience.

39:00 **Well on that note I'd like to thank you for speaking to us today. It's been a pleasure.**

I've enjoyed it.

So again, thank you very much.

I hope you've found it interesting.

We have indeed.

Good. Good.