

Australians at War Film Archive

Reginald Hulbert (Reg) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/392>

Tape 1

00:42 **Hello Reg. I can't tell you how much we appreciate you. To start with, as I was talking about we need just a summary of your life. So I'll ask some questions but first just the main points. So can you tell me about where you were born and your family?**

I was born at Bowraville. It's on the Nambucca River up on the north coast of

01:00 New South Wales, on the fifteenth of November 1924. When I was twelve weeks old my mother died and then my sisters reared me until I was seven. When I was seven I came to Sydney for a holiday with my eldest brother. My auntie - my mother's sister, had one child, a girl and she wanted to adopt me when my mother died. She said, "Now I've got you in Sydney I'm not going to let you go home again." So

01:30 from then on I was educated in Sydney at Glenmore Road, Paddington. And after I had passed the...I think it was a QC those days, I went to Cleveland Street, Redfern School and was educated there.

Where did your aunt live in Sydney?

In Paddington.

In Paddington.

Her husband was the Mayor of Paddington on two separate occasions. Once in '27 and the other in '32. He was

02:00 the Mayor of Paddington. I used to like going out with him because in the Depression days, being on the council, they had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK raffles and things like that and I used to go round and help them sell the raffle tickets, and I used to think that was real good. And on election day, that was the real good thing. The people with cars would come around and they used to pick up the pensioners to vote, and then take them home again.

02:30 I was always the navigator, and I remember one day we were going on the tram line and the wheels got stuck on the tram line, and he couldn't get off the tram line. That was part of my youth. I was in the church choir at the local church and I used to enjoy all of that.

Where did you go after Cleveland High School?

I went back to the country

03:00 for a little short while, to my father on the farm. We had a farm on the Nambucca River. And when I came back to Sydney I was working for Warren Josephens until the Friday before manpower came in. With my uncle being in politics, I knew that the manpower was coming in on the Monday and I would have been a protected industry.

What industry was Warren Josophson's in?

Tractors and things like that they had there, and also they had a war contract

03:30 making refrigerators. The big refrigerators. I was on the big planing machine there and I left on the Friday and manpower came into being on the Monday. I was friends with a few friends, and two of my friends wanted to join the navy and I was going to join with them. And we all went down to Loftus Street in Sydney and joined up. Because I had the intermediate pass

04:00 I was accepted, but my two friends had to sit for an exam and they both failed. So out of the three of us I was the only one who actually got into the navy.

You were on your own?

On my own.

The war was going by this stage?

Yeah. This was 1942. I enlisted on the thirteenth of April '42 but was called up on the fourteenth of June '42, so that was when I was first in the navy.

04:30 **And what was your first role in the navy.**

I went down to the Flinders naval depot, HMAS Cerberus they called it for thirteen weeks training. Most of the training was marching. Then we had a torpedo school and gunnery and all of those things, rifle firing. It was more or less getting us into condition. I was only seventeen at this time. I was seventeen and a half when I joined the navy.

05:00 **Did you need your parents' permission?**

Yeah. I had to go home and get my father's written consent before the navy would accept me. That's why the two months delay between joining up and being called up.

Did you get posted to a ship shortly after that?

Well when I finished my training I was sent up to Sydney to Balmoral naval depot. And from there I went onto the Birchgrove Park, which was a mine sweeper.

05:30 Every day we used to go outside Sydney Heads and sweep the channel out and then come back in and sweep the channel back in again. I got chronic seasickness. They classed it as chronic seasickness. I was seasick everyday. And I ended up in Balmoral naval hospital. They put me back on the ship one day and I went to sea again and I was crook again. And they sent me to the HMAS Australia, the cruiser.

06:00 I was only on there a couple of weeks and I had my appendix taken out, and after that I never got seasick again. So it must have been appendicitis that I had, being sick on the ship all the time. Being listed as chronic seasickness, cruisers only, I ended up being on cruisers for the rest of the war.

Was that a better role than the minesweeper, do you think?

Oh yes. Better than the minesweeper because you are bit slow, and the ship's

06:30 rolling and rocking. It was no wonder we got seasick because it was only doing about four or five mile an hour up against the cruiser which was doing about thirty mile an hour when they are going flat out.

How long were you on the Australia for?

Oh just about twelve months I think it was. One day they called for volunteers to do a radar course. So anyone who was good at maths they wanted them to

07:00 volunteer for radar. And we went down and we had an examination. The examination was, the officer put a clock in front of a mirror and we had to tell what the time was in the reflection in the mirror. That was the exam.

How does that quality you to be a radar operator?

Because when I was a radar plotter I had to write upside down so the person on the other side of the table could read what I wrote.

07:30 So if I could read what was back to front I could write back to front. It took a bit to learn to write back to front. The S's and the N's were the funny things. You try and write back to front S's and N's.

So you became a radar plotter. How long was that course for?

About two months. While I was doing that course I had to go on the

08:00 HMAS Yandra for two days. We went up round passed Newcastle and I happened to be off Newcastle the night Newcastle got shelled, and we chased the submarine that was firing the shells. So it was a bit exciting but if the Japanese only knew it, they could have surfaced and outgunned us, and outrun us really.

The Yandra was a training ship?

It was a training ship, yeah. It was a little coastal steamer that used to be...It was only a very small ship.

08:30 **So did you get a posting to another cruiser?**

Yes. After that, after I finished the radar course they posted me direct to Shropshire. To do that, to get to the Shropshire I was sent up to Townsville and at Townsville went out by boat to the island and then transferred to the Shropshire. I was only on the Shropshire for a while and then I came back to Sydney, so

09:00 if they'd kept me in Sydney for another fortnight or three weeks I needn't have gone the whole trip up to Townsville and back.

How long was the Shropshire in Sydney for after that? Did you go somewhere else?

About twenty-eight days... usually it was twenty-eight days but it could be fifty-six days sometimes. Each part of the watch...half the ship would go on twenty-eight days leave, and then the other half of the ship would go on twenty-eight days leave, and then we'd sail north again.

09:30 **What do you mean sailing north? Where was the Shropshire mainly involved when you were sailing in it?**

It was at Milne Bay. At Milne Bay was where we saw the first action and from there we went over to New Britain and we bombarded Arawe and Cape Gloucester. And the troops landed on Christmas day and the Japanese

10:00 got caught very shortly because they didn't expect the Christians to do anything on Christmas day. And we had our...that year we had our Christmas on the forth of January.

Was that 1944 or 1943?

'43 Christmas and the fifth of January we had Christmas Day.

Where else did you serve on the Shropshire?

10:30 Well then we went up and did all the bombarding on Dutch New Guinea and New Guinea itself, and then up to Sansapor. Then we went up to the Halmahera Islands, bombarding up there and then we went to Leyte. That's the first time we'd seen a... During all the bombardments we'd never seen a Japanese aircraft or been fired upon by a Japanese. We did all the bombarding. We bombarded them.

11:00 They never retaliated because we were too far out to sea and their guns would never have reached us anyway. We went up to Leyte. That was one of the biggest convoys there was going up there. They reckoned it was bigger than Normandy when we did the invasion of Leyte and that's where we bombarded up in there. And whilst we was there a Japanese fleet came through Surigao Strait,

11:30 and along with the Australia and the Arunta with all the rest of the American ships we engaged the Japanese ships - and there was a sea battle and it was the last sea battle of the war I believe. That was a very exciting night that was. About three o'clock in the morning the guns opened fire and the Shropshire was firing at the Yamashiro, which was a Japanese

12:00 eighteen inch battle ship. We've seen the green tracers they fired. I'll never forget. It was one of the most exciting moments we had, seeing these green tracers firing at us and seeing the shells exploding just short of us. The next lot went whistling over the top, and then as the third lot started coming there was about four or five of us there watching it, and we made a dive for cover and landed belly first behind a metal protection. But the ship had already changed course anyway and

12:30 the shells landed harmlessly.

Were there any hits on the Shropshire that night?

Which?

Were there any hits on the Shropshire that night?

The Shropshire was never hit, all the time. I can say this, I was one of the lucky ones. All the time in all the ships I was on we only ever had one casualty. And that casualty was an electrician who got electrocuted while I was on the Australia. And touch wood as the old saying was, I went right through the war with only one casualty

13:00 on the ships that I served on.

Did the Shropshire score hits on the Yamashiro?

Yes. It did. Yes. All our guns were radar controlled and at one stage I was on the 285, which showed where the shells went. You could see the shells going over and you could see them landing short of the target or you could see them going over, and the radar operator's job was to say, it's fifty yards short or fifty yards over or

13:30 you're on target. Then the gunnery officer would - once they've got the proper range, then they'd fire. Usually they only fired a couple of shells at a time. Then before full broadsides, they'd fire the big eighteen inch guns that the Shropshire had.

So you had a range of radar plotters working on each gun post?

Yeah. Well there were seventy-five radar operators and officers connected with radar on the Shropshire out of a crew of eleven hundred. There were eleven hundred on the Shropshire.

14:00 So that was...

A fair compliment of radar.

Yeah. A fair compliment of radar, but there were thirteen different radar sets doing different jobs, all controlling the guns. The main one I was on with the plotting was a 282 which is what they called the

radar. It had a range of a hundred and seventy-five miles. We could pick up Japanese planes a hundred and seventy-five miles away. I'd be on the

14:30 board plotting the direction of the planes, and I had to tell the officer by writing on the board, what speed we're doing and what direction they were coming in and also how high they were. The radar operator on the radar set would tell me what height they were and I'd have to work out the speed and direction they were in. When the American aircraft went out we had to plot

15:00 for interception and it was a very interesting job, and very time demanding because when we were in actual action we had half an hour on duty and half an hour off, because in the fighter section we had two crews. They had half hour on and half hour off because you were going flat out all the time, so half an hour at a time was a good time.

A lot of concentration?

A lot of concentration.

15:30 **Did you serve on the Shropshire to the end of the war?**

Yes, I was on it right until the end of the war.

Where else did the Shropshire go during that time?

Up to Japan, the Lingayen Gulf and the bombardments up there, and Corregidor. We bombarded Corregidor. That was the last bombardment we had. It was also down at Balikpapan in Borneo. And there was another place, I just can't think of the name of it but we bombarded there.

16:00 The main thing - we were out on patrol in the South China Seas at one stage and the Japanese ships had left Singapore and were trying to make their way back to Japan. At one stage we got too close to China itself, and they reckon we were within range of the land based planes. So they told us to go back and we altered our course. We were caught in a typhoon while we

16:30 were out in the China Sea. And the ship was listing twenty-six degrees to port and then back twenty-six degrees to starboard, as well as pitching and tossing at the same time.

That was a very big storm.

It was a very big storm and lots of the sailors got seasick and I had to clean up the mess. So good for me being classed as chronic seasickness.

You were never sick again after your appendix?

The first day out after I'd been back in Sydney

17:00 for twenty-eight days, and then for another twenty-eight days, your first day out at sea you get a bit squeamish. But I was never sick.

So where were you when the war ended?

In Subic Bay in Luzon Island up in the Philippines. I was there. In fact it was something that happened and everyone reckoned they'd never seen

17:30 before - a blue moon. Once in a blue moon. It was in Subic Bay, which was a harbour surrounded by mountains and the vegetation... just on sunset... We were just about to watch movies, and everyone come out and talked about how blue the moon was. It was the reflection of the setting sun hitting the water, and all the rotting

18:00 vegetation from the mountain and that made the moon look blue in the mist.

Sounds quite beautiful.

It was a beautiful sight but I wasn't the only one who commented on the blue moon. Everyone was looking at it.

It must have been quite a celebration on board the boat.

There was quite a celebration when war was declared. A lot of the American ships, they were firing guns and everything but nothing like that happened on our ship.

Where was the Shropshire sent immediately after the war?

18:30 We came back to Australia. We had two and a half months in Japan, up in Yokohama.

This was before going back to Australia?

Yes. Before. As soon as Japan said they'd surrender we went to Yokohama. We arrived in Yokohama, in Tokyo Bay and anchored off Yokohama for two days before they signed the peace.

19:00 The peace was on the Missouri which was only anchored about half a mile or a mile away from where

we were.

What was your role during that ceremony?

Well some of the officers off our ship went but none of us were there. We just had to be bystanders at the time.

In the Bay, that's very close. What were you doing in Yokohama Bay after the surrender?

We went on leave

19:30 up to Tokyo. Went ashore and we got day leave there on several occasions. You'd go ashore at Yokohama and get on the train. You'd go up to Tokyo and then walk around Tokyo. But we always had to go in groups. We were told nobody was to walk anywhere alone, so ten or twelve of us always stuck together, wherever we went to

20:00 round the place. But what struck me most was when you got on the train at Yokohama, as you went into Tokyo which was a few miles; all the houses had been destroyed. They were wooden houses and the Americans had used incendiary bombs, and all you could see was brick chimneys and things like that, and fire places and that were left standing but everything else was burned out,

20:30 and that. And I suppose I've seen pictures of Tokyo and that today, and it was nothing like that.

How did it make you feel to see the devastation and that in Tokyo?

Really we didn't think about it much. Some of the stories we were told and some of the stories my brother told me.... He was in the army and he told about how the Japanese

21:00 had treated them. One of my brother's was a prisoner of war. He was a stepbrother really, but he was a prisoner of war. He got captured when Singapore fell and he died on the Burma railway. So it was really...it was a repayment as far as I was concerned, at that stage.

What happened when you returned from Japan? Did you stay in the navy?

No.

21:30 They asked us to sign up for another two years, but being only twenty-one at the time, I'd been in the navy since I was seventeen and I wanted to get out... but they didn't tell us that the Shropshire was going to England for the victory march. If they had told us that they were going to the victory march over in England I would have signed up for another two years just so I could go to England. I never went out of the Pacific Ocean.

Did you go back to your job

22:00 **when you were discharged?**

No. It took me several years to settle down. I went to live at Maitland with my sister. She lived at Morpeth, near Maitland. And I got a job there, a peacetime job there tabling millet and cutting firewood. Any job I could pick up. Then I went back to the farm up at Macksville and a

22:30 banana patch. And then I got married to a local girl at Taylor's Arm where the Pub with No Beer is. Then I went tomato growing and bought a farm with my cousin. We put a tomato crop in and it was the year of the big flood up there. I think we made about five pound each out of the tomato crop because of all the rain and the flood we'd had up there.

23:00 Then I went working at the abattoirs. So then I was working at the abattoirs for eleven years. I was a loader, loading the trains....all the meat and stuff into the trains. Then the tally clerks used to come down here, and it was a different tally clerk every time, and in the end I was teaching the tally clerks what to do. The man in charge of the abattoirs came down one day and he stood back there, and

23:30 I didn't know he was there and he said, "How long's this been going on?" I said, "What." "You telling the blokes what to do." I said, "Oh the last four or five men you've sent down here to do it." He said, "Do you want a job in the office?" I said, "Oh yeah, ok." I've always been good at maths, so I went into their office and I became one of their top cost clerks, doing the costing for the abattoirs. And from then... after eleven years they wanted someone to manage a place in Sydney, the Country Meat Works Co-operative,

24:00 which was a co-operation of a lot of the country abattoirs. When they took their meat to Sydney they unloaded at Canterbury, so I agreed to take the job on. I was there for several years anyway. I think it was about fourteen years I was there. So...

You had come back to Sydney?

Yeah. I was back in Sydney. After that I

24:30 had fourteen years at the railway siding. I was offered a job as a liaison officer for a friendly society, the Grand United. And I took that job on, and I was there for five years until I had my first heart attack and then I went on a pension. I had three heart attacks in about twelve months. I survived the lot of them,

thank goodness but then I went

25:00 on the pension.

Did you have children?

Yes. Four children. Three boys and a girl. The eldest still lives at home. He reckons Mum's too good a cook to leave home. And the second eldest boy, he got killed when he was going to work one day. So he was unlucky, but the other youngest son is

25:30 married and a couple of grandchildren we've got there. And the daughter is married and she's got four children too.

Are they all in the Sydney area?

Yes. All at Campbelltown. They all live in the Campbelltown area, except the eldest is living with us at home here because to go to work it used to take him an hour from Campbelltown, but it only takes him twenty or twenty-five minutes from here. He'd been down here staying with us while he went to the TAFE at Kogarah

26:00 So down there once he had finished his course at Kogarah he went home. Then the job he got was about an hour, so he came back. He didn't ask he just said, "I'm coming home to live, Nan."

Did you have any contact with the navy after the war or the RSL?

No. I joined the RSL. I went to the first couple of Anzac Days and all it was was

26:30 drinking after the thing and I'm not a drinker. I don't drink and I gave it away. I went to the fiftieth anniversary march. I went to that one. I've never been since. The only thing is I've got a bad back from a fall I had in the navy and I can't stand for too long. I've got to be seated as much as I can.

27:00 That's the reason.

It's a bit difficult to march on Anzac Day.

Well I can't walk more than fifty or a hundred yards without a walking stick, so I couldn't march too well.

That's great. That's your whole life you've done now, so we're going to go back and do it again.

Right.

I'm going to go back to your childhood actually and talk about that for a while. Do you have any memories of living up near Nambucca River or...?

Yeah. The main one I can remember - or actually there are two or

27:30 three things I can remember. We were down at Shelly Beach one day, which was down at Nambucca Heads, and we were fishing and I hooked a nice little bream one day. And it must have been a big one because I couldn't bring it in. It was pulling me into the water. My father had to come and grab the line off me to bring this big fish in. And I just remember that because I was seven when I went to Sydney and I must have been five or six when I caught this big fish. And the other time my step mother chased me with

28:00 a broom.

Your step mother... she was married to your father shortly after your mother died?

Yeah. I don't know how long after. But she came there, I believe, as the housekeeper. See, I had two sisters and two other brothers, no three older brothers. I forget about the oldest one because he'd left home long ago.

They were siblings or step siblings?

No. All

28:30 my siblings. The step siblings I think there was four boys in the step brothers. And she came and was more or less housekeeping for Dad and then they got married. So it was probably the cheapest way those days to have someone look after the family.

Why did you move down to Sydney?

Well the reason...as

29:00 I said earlier my auntie wanted to adopt me when my mother died. I was only twelve weeks old. And my two sisters said no, and also one of the local mill owners in Nambucca Heads, he had no children and he wanted to adopt me or so I've been told. So therefore my two sisters - one was eleven and thirteen

29:30 when I was born. They more or less wouldn't let Dad give me away sort of thing. And they reared me

and then when I was seven, my eldest brother, who lived in Sydney, he took me down to Sydney for a holiday. When I got down to Sydney, my aunty who only lived half a mile away from my brother's

30:00 place, said, "Now I've got you I'm not going to let you go home. It took me all these years to get you and I'm not going to let you go home." So she more or less captured me and kept me down in Sydney.

Kidnapped.

Kidnapped.

Did you enjoy living with your aunt?

Very much so, because, as I said it was the Depression days and my uncle was a politician, and in '27 and '32 he was mayor of Paddington.

30:30 He was connected there with all the social things. They had to try and raise money and give gifts for the pensioners and things like that. So I used to enjoy that and I remember my uncle being an organizer for Jack Lang. Every Sunday all these politicians used to come in the backyard and they'd be talking

31:00 there, and every Sunday I had the job of going down and getting so many penny ice creams and so many bottles of drink. They never drank beer. I'll give them that, those politicians, they just drank cordial. And it was an interesting time because I used to listen in to what they were talking about.

What kind of an area was Paddington in those days?

Oh it was good. It was

31:30 quiet. I went to Glenmore Road and there was never much crime. The only thing I can remember as a youngster was going up to the Oxford Theatre on a Saturday afternoon, and there was one hotel we had to walk passed, and on a couple of occasions there was two women out on the street fighting, pulling hair and carrying on. As a young child I

32:00 thought fancy women fighting like that.

What did you like to do for entertainment when you were a child in Paddington?

I used to play cricket at the school and play soccer. And I was better at cricket than I was at soccer so... As I said I was also in the church choir as well.

Were you religious?

Not very.

32:30 I went to Sunday School. I haven't been back to the church at Five Ways Paddington. I believe my name actually went up when I joined up in the war. A friend of mine was there in the church one day and he saw my name up there and he told me that. One of these days I should go out and have a look.

The area has changed a lot since those days.

Oh since then it has changed a lot, yeah. I wouldn't like to live there now.

33:00 The tenement houses there, they're all cramped together and everything like that. I wouldn't like to go back to living with someone listening through the wall, sort of thing.

Was Paddington not as built up as it is today in the twenties and thirties?

It was built up, yes. There haven't been many fresh homes built there I don't think. They have all been renovated and altered like my brother's place.

33:30 He glassed in the front veranda and he glassed in the upstairs veranda. Then the heritage mob tried to get him to pull it down because it wasn't stock standard and he told them where to go.

Do you remember the house you lived in with your aunt and uncle?

Oh yeah. It was a nice house.

Tell me about that house.

It was in Cascade Street Paddington, and there was a big block wall, and actually the house was fifteen or twenty feet above the street.

34:00 It was built on top of the rock wall. It was still classed as Cascade Street because there was a lot of houses up on this rock face. It was a good backyard to play in. And I remember with all my mates, we had a big house on the corner there and we used to play cricket and we would paint a wicket on the side of the house.

34:30 And we used to play cricket there until the people complained if the ball hit the wall too much. We did it that way.

Were you involved in politics at all?

No.

Or just through helping your uncle?

Only through helping my uncle. Well I got very disillusioned with politics, because when Jack Lang went out of favour my uncle stuck by him, and the Labor Party

35:00 they wiped him. He didn't get elected at the next election after that, and he went out of politics, and they did the dirty on him I reckoned. I said if that's the Labor Party I'll vote independent after that.

Did you view your uncle as a bit of a father figure?

Yeah. I did. Yeah. Actually I was named after him. His name was William Earnest Reginald Bates. And he

35:30 was a very good man, really.

Can you tell me a bit more about him? Was he an older man or...

He was fairly old, yes. But he was secretary of the Clerks Union of the day. And I remember every Saturday morning he used to go into work at the Labor Party near Hyde Park, and my job when we got there was to test the burglar alarm.

36:00 I had to switch the alarm on and hear the alarm go off. That was my job ever Saturday morning. Dad would go into work and I'd have to test the burglar alarm for him.

What sort of burglar alarm did they have in those days?

Oh a big one, really... not like today. A big ring with a clapper inside there, and it really made a noise. And what I liked about it too was I'd get a couple of pence, and I'd go next door to Coles and in those days you'd get about ten

36:30 or fifteen lollies for a penny. So it was a bit cheaper than lollies are today.

Were you a good student at school?

I was very good. If I wasn't in the first three in the class... If I didn't come top of the class or come in the first three I got into trouble.

Your aunt and uncle were strict about this sort of thing?

No they weren't strict. I think it came from when I first went to school, when I was living at Urunga, which is where we were living on the Nambucca. I went to school

37:00 with Frank Partridge from Bob Dyer's Pick-A-Box. He was in the class above me at this school, and he had a magnificent teacher. And there were about seven classes and about twenty pupils for seven classes. They set the boards up... all the blackboards would be set up when you went into school of the morning. It was from first class up to seventh class. And if you finished your work on the slate you could

37:30 start any other one. And when I came to Sydney I knew up to the thirteen times table because in those days all the kids would sit out in the sunshine reciting the tables, and even in first class I knew the tables in first class, up to thirteen times. That was why I was so good at maths, I believe.

Did you have any other favourite subjects or was math's your favourite subject?

Maths and geography. I liked geography.

38:00 **What did you learn in Geography?**

Well the main thing, when I sat for the intermediate... I took this subject, they said any subject that you are any good at, and you had to study it for two years. So I put geography and I got a pass in geography. And there was one question, it was describe a water supply to a town, so I described the water supply to Paddington. So I used to do things like that...

38:30 and all the different places. At one stage I knew all the rivers in New South Wales going up the coast. But ask me today and I forget half of them.

Can you still tell me about the water supply in Paddington?

Yes. It came from Wyangala Dam through pipes. There was two big reservoirs at Centennial Park and from Centennial Park it comes down in two lesser sized pipes, down to the

39:00 streets, and then smaller pipes down the street into the various houses. So that was the subject that got me through in the intermediate.

It is a bit different today.

Yep.

We might just stop there and change the tape.

Tape 2

00:32 **How did you get on with your new family's siblings? Your step brothers and sisters?**

They were only small when I left and I got on alright with them, except the oldest boy there - that's why my stepmother chased me with a broom one day. We got into a bit of a fight and I gave him a whack. That's why she chased me. Other than

01:00 that that was the only one time that I can recall. When I first used to go to school up there we would go to school and the others were at home. We had to walk three mile to school every day.

When you came to Sydney how did your father feel about you being left down here with your aunt?

I don't know. He

01:30 he never said anything. He was a quiet man, my father, and I'd never seen him raise his voice all the time there. He was a very quiet man really.

Who would you say was the person who most influenced you as you were growing up? Your dad or your uncle?

My uncle because... you see I was seven when I went there, and until he died just before

02:00 the war started more or less, he had the most influence on me. But education-wise the teacher at the Urunga Public school put most of the education there. Because as I said all the different boards there you could try anything. You were one of about twenty pupils and there's seven

02:30 classes going on, and he's marking and talking about other things. So I was very intent on listening to what was going on. That's why the teachers in Sydney... even when I went to school at Glenmore Road, Paddington, they were amazed at the amount of education I had. I was that far advanced compared to all the rest of the pupils in the class. They used to say if I wasn't top of the class or in the top three I got in trouble.

03:00 **Were you a reader?**

At that stage, yes. I used to do a fair bit of reading, but today, I couldn't be bothered reading today.

What were you reading?

Mainly Thwaites. I used to like Thwaites's books and things like that. Whatever I could get my hands on. Magazines and things like that.

Comics?

Yeah. Comics, yeah, like most boys of the day. Comics were... There wasn't as many comics about those days as there is today.

03:30 **What sort of comics did you read?**

Ginger Megs I suppose and in the later years the Phantom and all those. They were old magazines.

You said you were into geography. What did you know of the British Empire?

I knew the different parts of it in different

04:00 states in South Africa, and a lot of the different islands, and India at that stage. We used to draw maps when I was going to school, and I was pretty good at drawing maps. They weren't the proper proportions. That's the only thing.

Your uncle was a Labor man. Is that right?

He was a Labor man. Yeah.

And did that mean that he was also a royalist and you grew up in a family that...

04:30 **a household that looked to the Queen as head of Australia?**

Yes. He was. In those days they were royalists. But in those days with Whelan and Eddie Ward and all those.... I never heard them speak up against the Queen. There was never anything about a republic spoken in those days. It was

05:00 more or less just the Queen and those there.

Did you regard yourself as a royalist or did you feel some republican urges?

No. Royalist, more so because we fought for our Queen and our country. I've still got those foundations.

What sort of child or adolescent were you?

05:30 I only ever got into one fight when I come to Sydney. I got into several fights when I first went to school with another chap who I was in the navy with. And we couldn't better one another, so we became best of mates. I couldn't beat him and he couldn't beat me. So we become very good mates.

Physical fights?

Physical fights. Yeah. I only had the one when I come to Sydney.

Can you tell us about that one?

Well I was going to Glenmore Road and there was a class bully. He was trying

06:00 bully everyone and I'd take no notice. I would just walk away from him. And one afternoon him and some of his mates caught me in a lane in Paddington. And I give him a bit of a bashing and I got in trouble for bashing him up. But he was trying to bash me up. So I got the better of him but I got into trouble. But that was the only fight I ever had in Sydney.

Who did you get in trouble from?

Once I told my uncle what it was all about he said I did the right thing.

06:30 I had got picked on so he said I had to protect myself, he said. So that was it.

What other things made up your life as a young man?

Oh playing cricket and going over to cricket with my brother. He used to play cricket as well. That's where I got interested in cricket, going out with my eldest brother. I used to go

07:00 over there, and his father-in-law used to be the scorer of the thing, and I used to help out and carry the bats out and things like that. That got me interested in it. And over in Centennial Park, we used to go over there almost every Saturday in the cricket season and it was good fun.

Who were your heroes in cricket?

Don Bradman and Sid Barnes.

07:30 I was over there the day in Sydney when they were both scoring well. My brother and I often went over and watched the cricket. We would sit on the hill, in the real Paddo section there and we enjoyed it. on a Saturday afternoon watching it. And also sometimes when the Test was on we

08:00 might get over there and see a day of the Test. My brother would take a day off work and I'd get...either school holidays or something like that. He'd take me over and we'd watch it.

Did you see Don Bradman bat?

Yes. I often saw Don Bradman bat.

What was his most memorable innings that you saw?

I don't know what he scored but he scored a lot. It was good to watch because he was so fluent.

08:30 He'd step out and smash the ball all round the ground at times.

Did you regard yourself as a Paddo boy?

Yeah. I was a Paddo boy, yeah. As I said I was seven, I was reared from seven on. I wasn't there in my first seven years.

What contact did you have with your father after you came to Sydney?

More so after the war. I went home there, and at that time

09:00 he had retired. He had built a house on one section of the farm and we lived there. What I remember most about him was he used to make his own cornflour. He used to grow the arrowroot and he would wash it, and he built his own machine to make arrowroot. All this fine powder and then he'd have a big washtub

09:30 and he'd put it in and wash it and wash it until he got the fine powder, and he used that for cooking.

Did your uncle discuss with you the First World War?

No he never did. No. I don't think he was a returned serviceman from the First World War. Not that I know of.

Did you have any relatives who were in the First World War?

10:00 Yes. One uncle. He was a sniper at... what's a name? He was wounded and he went to England and married his nurse... Aunty Leanne and he brought her back to Australia to live. And that's the only contact I've had with a relation who was in World War I. He was a good marksman.

10:30 I can remember before I went to Sydney he was out there one day and this big eagle was flying round after his WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. They were...He shot it. And that was flying up in the air and he brought it down. He said, "That won't get my WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s any more."

What did you know of the First World War as you were growing up?

Just about Gallipoli and what's a name....

11:00 What we learnt at school and all about the trenches in France and that. Not much really. Just what they taught us in history. Not that much really.

What did you enjoy most when you were growing up at that stage?

Playing cricket really I think. And going to the movies. We used to get

11:30 a sixpence. I had to collect snails for my uncle. I got ha'pence a dozen for snails and put them in a bucket. And then at the end of the week, I'd get sixpence to go to the movies, and threepence to go in and threepence to spend on chips and things like that. That used to be a treat because Five Ways Paddington was a very steep seating arrangement and the kids used to

12:00 get these round lollies and they roll them down the steps. And you could hear them coming down the steps.

What were you collecting snails for?

My uncle didn't like the snails eating all the plants you see. If I collected the snails he'd kill them. And I'd have to show him the snails I collected and he'd pay me a halfpenny a dozen. So I used to get

12:30 tuppence or threepence for the snails sometimes.

How did you get on with your Aunty?

Very good. She was a very kind lady. She had one daughter. She didn't have any other children. She was a grown up girl and she had a boyfriend when I was there. And she married a soldier

13:00 who was in the movie industry. He used to work down at the Empire Theatre, her husband. I got on well with them because.. I will never forget one day, he wanted to make a show of the local team playing cricket, and the stumps were knocked over and I had to get up in the middle of the wicket and throw the ball at the stumps. I missed it about three times before I actually hit the stumps because I was on TV, on the camera. He had a movie camera.

13:30 And there was a bit of fun we had that day.

So were you helping him make the movies?

No just this day. I started to go and get a billy of water for him one day. I had to run down the hill to get a billy of water and he put me on the film. There was only twice he actually wanted to make a home movie.

What were your strongest impressions of growing up in the Depression period?

14:00 Living in Sydney in the Depression. Well the Depression never really affected us because the uncle always had a job. When I was on the farm we always had plenty of food, because on the farm my father used to kill the calves and sell the skins. We lived on veal and pork. We reared pigs. We never wanted for food.

14:30 So really that's the way it was. But in Sydney, when I come to Sydney there, as I said the uncle had a job and he was well off to most of the people around in those days. He had a decent job and being in the local council. Helping him as I said, at the

15:00 WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK raffles and things like that. Selling the tickets. I thought that was it. That used to make my day. Helping out. Helping other people. I think that's the main thing. It gets instilled in you to help other people.

What qualities did you take from your uncle?

Well to be truthful, I suppose, would be one, and

15:30 to be polite to people. On election days I would be navigator for the blokes to go to different streets and pick up people to take to the polling booth, and back home again. And I really enjoyed that. That was my day to be a navigator round all the streets of Paddington, and it was fun and

16:00 we enjoyed it.

Did you have a car?

No my uncle didn't have a car. But these people came from other suburbs who had cars, and they wanted someone to show them the way to go to certain streets in Paddington. That's how... I'd show them how to get to the place and bring them back to the polling booth. It was really good.

16:30 **Who was the first girl you had a crush on?**

I suppose it would have been when I came back from the war.

Before the war?

For two months I had to get a job until I was called up, I went working for a firm in Sydney, and one of the girls who worked there I went to the dances with a couple of times.

17:00 That's all. The first one I really went out with was the wife after I went to my brother's kitchen tea. She was there at the kitchen tea, and when it came supper time I asked her to come and sit with me, and that was the start of it. So that was really the first girl, and the other one was really just a girl that I worked with who I went out with a couple of times.

Where did you go with her?

17:30 **To a couple of dances out at Eloura. I went to a couple of dances. I went to a dance with her a couple of times. So it only lasted a couple of times. It was only for two months that I knew her.**

What sort of music did you like when you were going out?

Well being a country boy it was country and western. The yodelling and things like that. That's about the

18:00 main ones. And I don't mind classical music and any kind of music. But the modern music I wouldn't give you tuppence for. Being old fashioned I suppose.

What kind of country music did you like most? Singers.

Wolfe Carter and some of those other ones. And probably the...all the old timers. Tex Morton and Slim Dusty and all those. There was a lot of those around in those days.

18:30 **They weren't around in those days were they?**

Yeah.

Slim Dusty? Before the war?

It might have been after the war. There was a lot of old ones. I've got some old seventy-eights of them out there too.

Did your family have a Gramophone player?

An old wind up one. You had to wind it up and put it on. Put the needle in and if you didn't

19:00 renew the needle it got a bit rough.

And you were listening to these records at home?

We used to, but now we've got tape recorders and we haven't listened to them for a long time.

Did your family have a radio?

Not before the war, no. The uncle had one...

19:30 he got one just before the war. I think he got a radio, because he used to listen to the radio. That was the main thing of listening to the radio, the music and that. But it didn't please me because there were no westerns on it.

Did you get involved in political discussions with your uncle when you

20:00 **were growing up at the time?**

No. The only thing is every Sunday afternoon or Sunday morning they'd be sitting in the backyard there, and I'd be listening to them, and occasionally they'd ask me a question, my opinion of something.

What was happening in the backyard?

Oh, on Sundays my uncle would have some of his politician friends down to have a discussion. They'd have a meeting in the backyard. Four or five of them.

20:30 Nearly every Sunday they would have a meeting in the backyard if the weather was fine. They'd talk politics and I'd have the job of going down to the shop and getting ice creams and drinks for them. And so they got mixed up, and I used to like to listen in and listen to what they were talking about. And I got interested that way. Eddy Ward was one of them and Whelan was there as well. It was real

21:00 interesting. So that was good. I remember one Sunday they invited the local fish and chip shop man down. He was a commo. So he came down. I got a few good Russian stamps out of that. And they were arguing away there because they baited one another. That was really good. That was the only time they

ever invited a commo,

21:30 just to have a good old argument, sitting in the backyard there. It was good entertainment.

What did you know of the communist party?

Just that...that's all I knew about it. That he was down there. And that discussion. But even though my uncle didn't like communists, he'd buy his fish and chips from his fish and chip shop. And when I had to get fish and chips I had to go past a couple of other fish and chip shops

22:00 to go to his shop to get the chips. So that was the only thing. He had his arguments with the...but only friendly arguments. There was never any fisticuffs with the politicians there. They were just having a good time.

How idealistic were you as a young man?

22:30 I had my ideals. I had my ideas on various things. Mainly I would rather walk away than have an argument, most of the time. I had very few arguments. In fact the wife and I have never had an argument yet in fifty odd years.

Had you thought about joining the navy

23:00 **independently of the war? The desire to support the empire?**

The idea of joining the navy was, as I said, these two other boys who I used to knock around with, or about four or five other boys, and they wanted to join the navy. So they talked me into going down to Loftus Street with them and joining up. And I got in and they missed out.

What experience did you have of anything remotely to do with the navy?

23:30 I had nothing. Nothing to do with it. Just out of the blue I more or less decided to join it. And also, one of the reasons was you had to be eighteen to join the army, but the navy, they would take you at seventeen. So that's the reason. I was only seventeen and a half when I joined. So I joined what I could, I suppose. But I'm not sorry I ever joined the navy. I enjoyed the navy. They were good times.

24:00 **So if the war hadn't been on do you think you still would have joined the navy?**

Possibly not. I probably would have been working for the Sydney Morning Herald because my uncle, being in politics, he had a great thing. He had me lined up to go to the Sydney Morning Herald when I left school and work for the Sydney Morning Herald. Then he died and I joined up after he died.

What did you really want to be when you were growing up?

24:30 No idea. I was still going to school. All I knew was I was good at maths. So something to do with maths. Well I ended up being a cost clerk anyway, so anything to do with maths I would have been quite happy.

What happened when your...Why did your uncle die? What happened to him?

25:00 He had diabetes. I remember when we used to go with...my cousin's boyfriend had a car and we used to go out on Sunday drives, and eat prickly pears on the side of the road. They used to stop and get prickly pear leaves and stew them up for the diabetes. They reckoned that the prickly pear leaves were good for diabetes, and

25:30 in those days they would cock them, stew them up and he'd drink the juice. I don't know whether it was any good for diabetes or not, but he believed in it in those days. They didn't have the drugs in those days for diabetes. But he eventually died of diabetes.

How did that affect you at the time?

Well as I said, it wasn't long after that that I went home

26:00 for a while, and I came back and went to night school. I went to night school for two years after I left school. When my uncle died at the end of my second year at high school I came back two years later and sat for the intermediate, and went to night school for six months, and passed the intermediate. The maths put me through because at the last exam at school I got a hundred percent for maths.

26:30 and a hundred percent for algebra and ninety-eight percent for geometry. That was my last exam at school and they went crook when I left school. I was certain to get eight A's in the intermediate. As it was I hadn't been to school for two years, and then six months at night school, I ended up getting four Bs. Which they reckoned was pretty good for not having been to

27:00 school for two years.

Why did you go home after your uncle died? Back to Nambucca?

Well I don't know. Because I probably missed him and went home. I don't know. I just can't recall. I just went home for about twelve months and then I came back to the aunty. And that's when I went into night school.

27:30 She talked me into going back to school to get the intermediate pass. As I said after I passed that and then after six months I joined up.

Was there a feeling of wanting to see the world?

No.

Or wanting to escape from the circumstances at home or...

I don't know. I just joined out of the blue, and no thought.

28:00 I hadn't thought of joining up and it was just that my two mates were joining up, and being young and impressionable I said I'll just go down and join up with you. That was it.

Were you seeing newspaper...I'm sorry, newsreels at the cinema which made it more real?

Yes. I saw newsreels of them. Well the night the submarines came into Sydney we had been over at Manly, and we were coming back

28:30 in the tram when all the gunfire was on. If we had been half an hour later we would have been on the ferry that the Japs came in under. But that was just one of those things. And that was the first really...It struck home then that Australia was at war.

Can you describe that night for us?

29:00 Well we had been up to Narrabeen Lake. A friend had a cottage up there, or I suppose a weekender it was called in those days, and we'd been up there swimming in the lake. We used to go swimming all year round, so it didn't matter whether it was summer or winter we would go for a bit of a dip. And we came back to Manly and we caught the ferry over and caught the tram back to Paddington and while we were on the tram we heard the gunfire, and the

29:30 Chicago was firing at the water trying to get the submarine and there was the explosion. There was a lot of fuss that was going on. I didn't know until next day what had really happened. We heard these bangs and that going on, and the next day it was sunk in, what it was. And we thought to ourselves lucky that we had been half an hour earlier. Rather than just on the time.

30:00 **What effect did that incident have on you joining up?**

It probably had a bit to do with it I think because it wasn't long after that that I joined up. So it could have done. So all those years ago, it's hard to remember what the actual feelings were, but mainly it was a spur of the moment thing - that was why I joined up.

30:30 **Did you discuss joining up with your aunty?**

No. I didn't discuss it with my aunty. I just told her I was going to join the navy. And she went crook and my sisters went crook.

Why did she go crook?

Oh being so young probably. Being so young, and she probably didn't want me to go

31:00 to war. Being young it didn't seem to worry me.

How had the First World War affected your auntie's family?

I never saw much of them. Uncle Arthur. He also took a while to settle down after the war.

31:30 He had a banana plantation for a while and then he bought a shop in a reserve somewhere, and I remember when we used to go over and see him we used to get ice creams because... That was before I went to Sydney. I used to go over with the father a few times. And most of his sons all joined up

32:00 during the Second World War. But my father never went there because he was on the farm, looking after the farm at the time.

What did you know of your stepbrother who had gone to Singapore and was now a POW [Prisoner of War] when you joined up?

Well I knew she had been married before and divorced, and

32:30 she was a fairly domineering woman. I was that pleased to get away because really you can't remember much of what happened at seven. See, most of my things I can recall are after five. I can't remember much before five.

Did you ever get...How did you get along with your step mum?

33:00 Well we used to call her nice little names.

What did you call her?

Biddy. Violet was her proper name, but we called her Biddy. Well the sisters did. My sisters. And I just copied them.

But were you close to your stepbrother who went over with the...?

No I wasn't close to him. No.

33:30 Because they were a lot younger than me, and her child by her first marriage was a lot older than me.

But what about the one that was the...that became the POW?

Well that was her eldest. The child that she had by her first husband. We used to get on alright when we were on the farm here. As I said I was only seven and he was in his teens then.

34:00 My brothers and that used to fight a bit with him, but being a lot younger I didn't know what it was all about.

Were there any other relatives that joined up to fight?

No. Not ...

34:30 Only my brother who joined the army. But I had some cousins, Uncle Arthur's children. An Air force type and my some of my female cousins joined the WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force]. So that is the main one. And there was another cousin who joined the army.

35:00 That was a funny situation. We were going home on leave to Macksville once, and in those days you got on the train at Central to go to the north coast, and there were no things available so you had to sit in the corridors. So I sat down beside this soldier and we were talking all the way. And we got to Kew, about five minutes out of Kew, and he said, "I get out at the next station." And I said, "Where?" And he said, "Kew". "I've got an aunty who lives at Kew." "What's her name?"

35:30 And I said, "Ruby Chapman." He said, "That's my mother." We were cousins sitting alongside each other all the way out of Sydney, until about five minutes out of Kew and we had about five minutes to talk about the relationship. Billy Chapman. He was the same age as me. There was only a few weeks difference in our age. That was a coincidence you strike at different times. And it's

36:00 funny how you strike people at times.

What happened to Billy?

Well he survived the war. He worked in a sawmill at Heron's Creek. A couple of years ago he passed away I believe.

Can you tell us a bit about joining the navy down at Loftus Street?

Loftus Street, yeah. I went down to Loftus Street there and

36:30 had a look at the eye charts and the doctor and all that, and went through all that there. And he said, "You're under age so you had better go home and get your father's consent". So I went up to Macksville and got my father's consent and come home and handed it in. That was the main thing. Just the medical and you had to fill in forms and

37:00 things there. I had to take the intermediate certificate I had, otherwise I would have had to sit for an education exam, you know. But I didn't have to sit the exam because I had an intermediate certificate.

What was your entry level rank?

Ordinary seaman second class because I was under eighteen. When I turned eighteen I

37:30 became an ordinary seaman, and then later on, when I was on the Australia after eleven months I became an able seaman. On the Australia I got one month for good service. I was made an able seaman one month earlier. So when I became radar,

38:00 I was just a radar operator when I first went through. At the radar school, one of the radar sets I passed with a ninety-seven percent pass on it. Operation and technical. I really enjoyed it. And when the war was over or just about over, they then brought in the different classes.

38:30 You were a radar plotter first class, or I ended up as radar plotter third class professional, because I hadn't sat another exam. When the war ended they sent another radar plotter up from Sydney. He was a second class thing but I had to teach him what to do. He didn't have a clue.

What did you know of the history of the Royal Australian Navy?

They gave us a course. A half day course down

39:00 in Flinders naval depot and part of that course...It was either that course or the radar course that they told us how radar was invented. It was invented by this chap; I just forget his name now. He was sitting near a pond throwing pebbles in the water. And he saw the ripples go through the thing in a rush and

then the ripples coming back. So that got him the idea about radio waves. You can do the same thing with radio waves. This was back

39:30 in the early thirties this happened. And that was how radar was invented they told us. They told us the history of the ships, of different ships down at the Flinders naval depot. They gave us history lessons on the navy down there on World War I ships and how they performed.

40:00 And also too, part of the radar course was, we went to sea one day on a tug and we had to steer the tug. You can imagine with all of the different waves you soon got off course and you had to stay on course. It was a crash course. Thirteen weeks to do everything, but most of that thirteen weeks was marching really.

We might just stop there and change the tape.

Tape 3

00:33 **Reg. When you were at Flinders naval depot were you living in the depot?**

Yes. In the depot. At a barracks down there.

What was the barracks like down there?

Very cold because it was June 1942. Very cold. And because nine o'clock we would have to be out on the parade ground every morning, and sometimes if it had rained the previous day there would be sheets of ice

01:00 on the parade ground, but the barracks themselves was very comfortable. We had to learn how to sleep in hammocks. It was a bit of canvas with a bit of mattress in it and it was swung between two rails sort of thing. It took a while to master how to get into them in the first place. But to get out was easy. All you'd do is roll over and you'd fall out. And it took a while to master. Once you

01:30 got used to it it was comfortable and you could rock yourself to sleep if you wanted to.

How did you take to life away from home?

Good really because as I said all I had was the aunty and the cousin, a girl there. All the men there I went through the training with. We were kept busy.

02:00 Each day you had a different course to do. You had a gunnery course or a torpedo course, or you had to go out on the rifle range. And then on the ship you'd have to rifle the machine guns and the rifle. Each day you had something to do. They put you through in thirteen weeks. And you had a couple of route marches and we marched way out into the country side and back again.

02:30 **What was your favourite thing in training that you were introduced to?**

I liked firing the Bren gun. What the target was, they used to put... In the mud they would put poles into the mud, a fair way away, I don't know what range it was. And then you'd have to fire at these poles and on two occasions I cut the poles in half.

03:00 The Bren gun was pretty accurate.

You don't use a Bren gun much on board a ship do you?

No. Oerlikon guns and radar. That was only a half a day sort of thing, firing the guns. The Lewis gun, the Bren gun and the Vickers gun. There were three different types of machine guns.

How much had you fired guns before you joined the navy?

03:30 A fair bit. That was after the war that we did the shooting. Not much really. It wasn't until after the war that I did the rifle shooting.

When you were in the barracks in Flinders depot did you make friends very easily?

Yes. We made friends. We made a lot of friends there, but we all went in different directions once we...

04:00 I was the only one that was confined to the...or sent to Birchgrove Park and all the others were sent in different ways.

What were the men like who were joining the navy at that stage in the war?

Mainly like myself, in their late teens, most of them. A few of them were a fair bit older than me,

04:30 and it was mainly young in those days.

How did the different ages get on together?

They got on alright. Once you got on the ship the old hands would teach you what to do and show you what to do, because it can be very dangerous on a ship because when they are tying up to the wharf, you have ropes going from the ship to the wharf.

- 05:00 And if you stand in the wrong place and the ship sways you can have your legs cut off, and things like that. I've seen blokes being grabbed and pulled out of the road. And I wonder why and then the next minute you see the wire snaps tight when the weight of the ship comes onto the rope.

Did they always have respect for the new recruits? The older hands.

Yes. Always.

- 05:30 I never struck any that didn't have respect for them. Some used to try and you know, give them the jobs... Send you down to get a left-handed screwdriver or something like that. Those things happened a few times.

Why were you the only one from your class who was sent

- 06:00 **to the Birchgrove Park?**

Well the Birchgrove Park was only a small ship and I don't know why. But all the others went various ways. Only a crew of under twenty I think was on the Birchgrove Park because of the engine and the mine paravanes and that to look after.

Can you describe that ship for us?

It was an old coalier.

- 06:30 Eventually after the war she went back and sunk in the rough seas off Newcastle, after the war was over. She was only a very slow ship but they had what they called paravanes. These were put out and if they got the chain of where the mine was anchored, theoretically it would cut the chain and the mine would float to the surface

- 07:00 and you'd have to destroy it by gunfire. But that never happened while I was on the Birchgrove Park. We'd go out only doing about four or five knots going out of Sydney....just outside the heads. Sydney Heads was mined. There was all mines outside and there was two channels, one in and one out. And we had to sweep them every day.

- 07:30 And we'd go out there. And that's where I used to get sick and I'd be leaning over the side and losing all my breakfast every day, I was. In hindsight I think it was only appendicitis that was coming on that made me so sick.

What was going through your mind those first few times you were out on a ship?

- 08:00 Why did I join up? It's all going to be like this so...But when I got on to the Australia, steady as anything. The big difference.

How did the other sailors on the Birchgrove Park treat you when you were sick?

I was sick all the time. They were giving it to me all the time. "You'll never make a sailor," they said.

What other things did they say?

Things you can't print sometimes.

- 08:30 Because they had to do the job I was supposed to be doing because I would be that crook.

Did they have any facility for you when you were feeling sick to...?

No. There was nothing there. Eventually they sent me into the hospital. Because the Birchgrove Par... when she would come back in of a night, she would pull the paravanes back in and she would go and anchor at Balmoral just below the Balmoral naval depot,

- 09:00 in that inlet there. Eventually they put me in hospital and they classed me as chronic seasickness.

What symptoms were you feeling? Was it just seasickness do you think?

Just seasick. Vomiting and pains in the stomach. They didn't take much notice of the pains when I got to Balmoral naval Hospital. They thought it was just the seasickness and I couldn't stand the sea. But as I said, once I got to the Australia, within a fortnight or three weeks, I

- 09:30 had my appendix out.

Is that the most embarrassing thing for a naval person to get labelled with? Chronic seasickness?

It is, but I looked at it this way. I liked the cruisers because one I got onto a radar, well radar was the thing.

Did you ever have to deal with that pronouncement again that you had been called a Chronic

10:00 **Seasick case?**

No. It never worried me.

Never worried you.

Never worried me.

So what happened after that stint in the Balmoral hospital?

Well they put me back on board the ship and I was sick again the next day. I went back to hospital and then the... what's a name ...posted me to the Australia and they said, 'Cruisers only.' And once I got my appendix out I was never seasick again.

How did you get to the Australia? Was it

10:30 **at sea at the time?**

It was up in the...Cid Harbour, up near Townsville. I took a troop train all the way up to Townsville. When we got to Brisbane, it was a couple of days in Brisbane waiting for another troop train to take us north. And I had to take Atebrin tablets and all the needles and everything like that there and when they gave us the Atebrin tablets they said to chew them.

11:00 Once again I'd been warned by my brother never to chew them, just to swallow them because Atebrin tablets if you chew them you've got a bitter taste in your mouth for hours. So they told us to chew them and a couple of them chewed them and they were spitting and trying to get rid of the taste. But I'd been forewarned so I just swallowed them whole. That was for malaria.

11:30 **What was the atmosphere like in Australia at that time? It's '42.**

'42, yeah. I'm wondering how the war was going because it was just before the Americans came into the war. We were getting reports about all the defeats and

12:00 Dunkirk and all that there. It was pretty low on that. And I mean we were a bit confident that we could hold our own, I suppose. That would be the feeling of most people.

Did you have any dealings with American troops in Sydney...

A lot.

I mean in Brisbane.

Not in Brisbane, up in the islands. When I was on the Shropshire

12:30 we were...The Shropshire was part of taskforce seventy-four which was, at that stage... There was the Shropshire, the Australia, Warramunga, and Arunta. Four Australian ships. And all the rest were American ships. And we would go ashore and we would be there with the Americans. In fact they used to call us 'the hopeless and the helpless'. That was the name of the Australia and the Shropshire,

13:00 as far as the yanks were concerned. And then after the first engagement we had at Cape Gloucester the Shropshire reported these planes a hundred and seventy-five mile away. So when we got back to Milne Bay they sent all these officers over to check to see what it was like, because we had reported the planes a hundred and seventy-five miles away and the yanks took no notice of them

13:30 until they got about seventy-five mile away. And then they sent the fighters out to intercept them. When we got back there they sent out two planes and we had to direct one plane to intercept the other. They were amazed. All these Yankee high ranking officers came over to see what we could do. And we was there with the direction and flight and everything like that we had there. Then

14:00 later I seen a copy of a signal. It said any time in the future the Shropshire gave warning of an enemy aircraft take notice of it. They can pick up planes a hundred and seventy-five mile away.

Why was Shropshire's range so much better than the Americans?

Our radar was better than the Americans.

Do you have any detail?

I don't know why but it was more sophisticated than the... what's a name. And also we had a good operator

14:30 on the... what they called the 282 set. Radar on those sets, all it was was a little straight line across the screen with these little things going up. It was what they called a 'grass'. We used to call it a 'grass'. You would see a little blip come up. It was a plane or an island or something like that and you had to know the difference,

15:00 between what was an island or a plane. And you'd have to track it and give reports on it. And it was

very interesting.

What is a 282?

A big radar set. On the Shropshire, it was the biggest radar aerial that we had. It was about five or six

15:30 foot wide and about three foot high with all these bars going across and a directional beam. And they'd pick up the radar as a pulse going out, and then if the pulse hit an object it would bounce back, like a pool of water, as I said. The radar was so sophisticated it could

16:00 pick that up and then you could work on... On the screen there is a scale and that tells you how many miles it was away. Then you'd report that to where I was in the radar plotting room, and that's how you could tell. And the radar operator who was operating the set, it would depend on the size and the range and with that he could tell how high the plane was. Being a good operator

16:30 with experience. He was pretty good.

So that was the main radar on board the Shropshire?

The main one, yes. That was the main one for aircraft. And we had one American radar set. What they call a Sugar George, which was for surface craft. At cruising stations...I was on the Sugar George at cruising stations and then at night you'd have to keep contact with any other ships that

17:00 got too close to you. You'd have to give a report up to the bridge. "The ship on the port side is too close."

How did the Sugar George differ from the 282?

It was only low angle. Surface only. The 282 was a high one. It's main beam is up. And you could pick things up at 20 000 feet at

17:30 175 mile away. So it's a pretty high beam but the other one is directional. The Sugar George was more or less ground only. It couldn't go up. The directional beams were more or less to the surface rather than up to the sky.

Did it look similar? Was it a big aerial?

No. It was a small aerial.

18:00 It was only a small aerial which was half round or... how would you describe it? It was just a round thing with the air inside a semi round thing. Like a dish, I suppose you would call it. Like a half dish. And it was only very small compared to the other one.

18:30 And that's how it...The directional beam is the part of radar.

We'll talk a bit more about radar further on but we'll talk about the Australia first. When you joined the Australia you weren't a radar operator.

No.

What was your role on the Australia?

Just a seaman....an ordinary seaman when I joined,

19:00 and I was on the Australia for a few months. I was eleven months in the service and they made me an able seaman. Mainly there it would be scrubbing the decks. And in actions stations I was on an Oerlikon gun. Number three on an ordican gun because whilst I was on the Australia she never went into action. But you still had your action stations to do. I used to load the ammunition on a

19:30 Oerlikon Gun.

Did you go out and then come back to hospital to have your appendix out. How did happen?

I had my appendix out ... I got the pains during the night. Very sharp pains and I went down to what they called the sickbay or the hospital ward, and I reported that and they sent me back to bed. And about half an hour later I came back to them and they said, before they get the

20:00 doctor out of bed, they said if it wasn't serious I would be in trouble - for getting him out of bed for no reason. So they operated virtually straight away and took my appendix out.

On board the ship?

On board the ship.

Can you explain the sickbay arrangements onboard the Australia?

Well it was actually a big long room with all the beds and that in it, and the attendants there were all the male nurses. Sickbay tippies we

20:30 used to call them. I remember when I was going under the anaesthetic; outside the room was an

electric motor. The motor got faster and faster in my mind and it started to get a knock in it, and I don't remember any more. When I came too the antiaircraft guns which were directly underneath above the sickbay, they were firing.

21:00 And they soon rushed over to tell me it's only a practice shoot. It's only a practice shoot! I was just coming out of anaesthetic with the guns going.

How long were you in hospital on board the ship for?

About five days then they sent me ashore to Townsville. Then when I got to Townsville, the wharf was a long way from the thing and I got a lift into Townsville itself in an American army

21:30 jeep. They took me into town and I had to report to the transport officer at the railway station because I had my leave pass for twenty-eight days leave. The leave pass said from Townsville to Macksville and also on the leave pass it said to report to Sydney when I had finished. And I had to wait until after dark before the train left. I went and had a

22:00 feed in the local restaurant there, and then I ducked underneath the rail in the middle of the street and I didn't know there was a slit trench in the middle of the street. And I fell down the slit trench. And when I got back on board I had stretched my appendix scar. I got in trouble for not reporting to the hospital straight away. I went straight home on the train there. A funny thing happened. Once I got to Macksville I then

22:30 went to Maitland to my sister's place and from there I went to catch the train back to Sydney and Newcastle. And the guard wanted me to pay from Macksville to Sydney because my leave pass said from Townsville to Macksville. But also on the leave pass it said report to Sydney. And he wanted me to pay. So a mob of soldiers on the train said no way.

23:00 **How did the leave pass work? What was it and how did it work?**

Oh, it just said that officially you are on leave as from such and such a date to another date. It also said where you had to report back. See, I had to report back to Sydney rather than back to Townsville to join the ship. And that's why I had the trouble with the guard because

23:30 he wanted me to go there. I think he was the bloke they called 'black panther'. The soldiers didn't like him. He was too officious on the trains. During the war when we got on the trains, even in Sydney, we never used to pay. We'd come on leave and come out to Hurstville or something like that to visit. You never bought a ticket.

24:00 On the trams you never bought a ticket. We were supposed to but we never did.

So it was an unofficial rule that soldiers were...

Yeah. We got free transport.

Although officially you needed a movement order or something to...

Yeah. That's when you are on leave but night leave, twenty-four hour leave... see sometimes you would go on shore for a night leave and you wouldn't have to have a pass but you'd have to report back

24:30 on board next morning.

When you were in Maitland on leave were you in pain? How was your appendix?

Once I went on leave the appendix was no pain at all. Not once the appendix was out. A bit sore that's all. You had to be careful. You couldn't lift anything heavy because we were told to do nothing.

How did you feel to be sent ashore again?

25:00 Well I was glad to get...Because on the ship, I had duty to do on the ship. Sometimes you'd have to be painting over the side of the ship. And you had to paint the funnels and things like that. We were forever painting the ship. That was before I was on radar. Once I was on radar we had a really soft job I reckoned.

Did you have any second thoughts about having joined the navy?

No.

25:30 No. No second thoughts. It's the best thing that ever happened really.

After your appendix came out?

After it came out, from then on I had a really good time.

What happened immediately after that when you arrived in Sydney on the train?

Well the Australia was back in Sydney at that stage. And I rejoined the thing. I remember one day one of the leading seaman wanted me to go over the side of the ship and do the painting, and

26:00 the petty officer came along and saw me over the side there and knew I had just had my appendix out and he wouldn't let me climb back up the rope. So I had to tie a rope to myself, and then the leading seaman was made to pull me back up - for being silly enough to send a bloke who was just back from an operation over the side of the ship.

How do you paint a ship like that?

Well you have what they call a bosun's chair. It is a piece of wood, I suppose about

26:30 six inches longer than your body - your backside. There a rope up onto the deck and then you have a paint pot with a brush hanging down from there, and you've just got to paint the side of the ship. You get more paint on yourself than you would on the ship.

How would you get up and down on this bosun's chair?

You just had to climb up and down.

27:00 If you fell, you fell into the water.

Was there a ladder?

No you just had to shimmy up. You can climb a rope. You have to put your feet round the rope. That was one of the things we learned while at Flinders naval depot, how to climb a rope.

Did you ever fall into the water?

No.

Did anybody fall off those bosun's chairs?

No. I never seen anyone fall off because it's a very big solid chair.

27:30 If you sit on them properly then you don't try to lean over too much and you keep seated all the time.

This may sound like a silly question but I can't imagine painting a boat at sea. How close to the water line do you get?

No. This is while we are in harbour. Not in dry dock. Just anchored in Sydney Harbour we'd paint the side of the ship sometimes.

Did you go down to the waterline?

Right to the waterline.

Did it ever...

28:00 **How do you paint a ship in the water. Is that difficult to do?**

Well I never got down to the waterline. If you get down about half way you are only a few feet from the water sometimes. But they'd send them down. I was never required to go right down to the waterline.

Why did you have to keep repainting the ship? Can you explain a bit about...?

I don't know. I suppose the rust and things like that, I suppose.

28:30 Sometimes the paint would be nearly a quarter of an inch thick before it got into the metal sometimes.

What colour were they painting them in those days?

The Australian and the Shropshire were painted blue. But early in the war they were camouflaged. They had all colours. But mainly blue.

What shade of blue? Light?

Well I suppose at a distance it would be more or less contrasted

29:00 with the blue of the sea. Although up in the tropics often the sea would be green.

So they remained the same colour throughout the war?

Yes, right throughout the war...and also too we would have to paint the guns. When we were up in the Philippines, all the guns had to be repainted because when they fired the guns... they might fire a hundred rounds from the guns,

29:30 and all the paint blistered off them. They get that hot.

Talking of guns, you were number three gunner on the Oelikon.

Yes.

Can you explain to me how an Oelikon gun works and what your job was there?

Well the job there was, you had the round cartridge with all the bullets in it.

Can you explain what an Oelikon gun looks like to someone who's never seen one.

A twin. It's a twin gun, two guns and you had to put these round

30:00 cases in with all the ammunition in onto them, and somebody would be firing them. Our job would be to...When they run out of ammunition you put the next case on. But it was never fired in anger when I was on it. It was always just practice shoots. That's all.

How did the team working on an Oelikon gun function?

Well you had the

30:30 gunner firing it there and I was number three. See, with the twin guns I could only load one barrel. Number two would do the other barrel and then there was the actual gunner. There was a crew of three for the twin Oelikons. But they got rid of those before we got to Leyte and then we put Bofors guns on.

31:00 **When you say you didn't fire the gun in anger did you have many drills onboard the Australia?**

Oh, we had plenty of drills when you went to do practice shoots.

What sort of things would they do on a practise shoot?

Oh, they'd have an aircraft flying past with a big sleeve flying behind it, and you'd fire at that sleeve.

I wouldn't like to be a pilot in that situation.

Oh it was well and truly behind him.

Did that have a particular name? The sleeve behind

31:30 **the pilot?**

It did have. I can't recall what they called it.

Drogues. Or something.

Something like that.

Did you have any other role on board the Australia apart from painting and scrubbing decks?

No. That was about all I had there. When they called for volunteers and my brother told me when you are in the services you never

32:00 volunteer for anything. Well I volunteered to do radar and I'm glad I did because when the Australia got hit with the suicide planes up in Leyte one of the suicide planes hit where the Oelikon gun was. But the Oelikon gun was probably replaced by that time. So I was lucky really. I wasn't on the Australia.

32:30 **Where did you go onboard the Australia?**

Coral Sea, over to the New Hebrides, Espirito Santo. A funny thing happened while we were over there. The Yank's aircraft carrier was over there. They used to buzz us. The yanks would buzz the ships real close so we had an old Walrus aircraft on the Australia. So the pilot

33:00 went off one day with a plane and he hedge hopped the ships, and he headed straight for the Yankee aircraft carrier and they scattered everywhere. They didn't know that the Walrus was...It had it's motor on the back of the wings. You could turn on a threepenny piece. And it came towards the ship and did a 180 degree turn. The Yanks thought it was going to fly into the side of the ship.

How did that plane work? How

33:30 **did it take off and land on the Australia?**

If she was at sea, by catapult and then the plane would land. If the sea was calm enough he'd land on the sea and we would go along side of him. But if the sea was a bit rough they would put oil over the side of the ship and they would do a U turn and the plane would land on the wake of the ship. It would come alongside and they would hook it with a crane and lift it back inboard while.

34:00 while the ship was moving. But when they are in harbour they'd just lift it off by crane.

Did you see the plane get catapulted off?

Yes. I've seen that a few times.

What does that look like? What happens?

It fires and the plane goes off. It just gives a bit of a dip and then it zooms up into the thing. When I was in the Coral Sea, while we were at sea it would go off every morning and look for

34:30 submarines.

What did the Americans do to get that in return? They buzzed the ship. Can you explain what that is?

They flew down just above mast height. They flew down just above mast height and passed the ship. Whether it was the pilot or the skipper or who organized

35:00 our wars to go and do a bit of a buzz of them, I don't know.

But you were sort of chiacking in the...

Yeah. A bit of fun. You remember the fun things that happened during the war but the serious things you forget about.

Was that a little bit serious at the time? Was there a bit of rivalry between the Australian and the American ships?

Oh a little bit I suppose because the American ships...

35:30 I was on American ships for a while. When I got...After my appendix, I was on an American ship. And the tucker they had. I happened to be on there on Thanksgiving Day. You should have seen the tucker they brought out. And they had a sailing race that day - the Australian blokes who were on the ship, against the Americans. And they wouldn't let me go on the Australian ship because

36:00 was back from my operation. And they wouldn't let me go on the ship. But the food they had! The cranberry sauce, turkey and all that.

Why were you on the American ship? How long were you on for?

Well I was only on for a couple of days until the Australia came back into port. It was up at Sid Harbour.

Do you remember what the ship was?

No I don't recall.

Was it a destroyer or a cruiser?

No. It was a supply ship.

36:30 **Did you make any American friends during that time?**

Odd ones. The main thing with the Americans, when you went ashore on leave, they would talk to you and they would want you to write home to their wives, their girlfriends, and they would get a letter from someone on the HMAS Australia

37:00 and the girlfriends and wives would know they were out in Australia and not over in Europe somewhere.

How did the mail work onboard these ships?

Every so often a supply ship would come up and it would bring so many bags of mail, and it would take any mail you had. Sometimes you wouldn't get mail for about three months.

What sort of letters were you receiving? Who were you receiving

37:30 **letters from?**

Well when I was younger I had a couple of penfriends, one down in Tasmania and down in the countryside of NSW... who I had never met. I used to write to them and I got letters from them. And also my sister and brother. I got letters from home.

Were they men these penfriends or women?

Well they were young...I started writing

38:00 when I was...when I was still at school I was writing to them. In those days you would see ads in the magazines and that. 'Penfriend wanted'. And so I wrote to a few of them. I had a couple.

Was that common in those days?

Yeah. It was common in those days. Yeah. Having penfriends and... because you had no television and very little wireless around in those days.

38:30 We had various interests.

Can you remember what kind of things they wrote to you when you were at war? What were they doing during this time?

Oh just general things. I remember, the girl from Tasmania. She wrote that she was in the river and she was swimming and the top of her bikini fell off. I wrote back and said we picked up your bikini top.

39:00 **Was that ever a little bit romantic, that letter writing?**

No. no. It was never romantic. I was writing to two different girls so I wasn't interested. It was just getting mail. That was all.

Did you get letters from your aunt or your sisters?

Yeah. I got letters from my sisters and my aunty until she died.

When did she pass away?

39:30 I forget when it was. I've got the date of her death out of my computer but...

Was it during the war?

During the war. Yeah. During the war. While I was away.

We'll stop there and change the tape.

Tape 4

00:31 **We'll let's just talk a little bit more about the Australia before we finish talking about that. What actions was it involved in at the time? Had the Coral Sea battle happened at this stage?**

The Coral Sea battle had already occurred. It was already over and the Canberra had been sunk. That's why they gave Australia the Shropshire, to replace the Canberra.

What was Australia doing in the Coral Sea after the battle?

Just patrolling. You'd be out in the Coral Sea patrolling up and

01:00 down there, because they were frightened the Japanese would come down... See Bougainville had been invaded and they were pushing the Japanese. They were frightened the Japanese fleet would come down and try and... They were there to intercept any Japanese ships that happened to come down. But the Coral Sea battle had already been fought.

01:30 **So can you just describe an average day onboard the Australia while it was patrolling. What would you have to do?**

Well first thing of a morning, if it was your... See it was four hour shifts. If it was your four hour shift first thing in the morning, you'd have to scrub the decks. The decks were as white as snow... wooden decks they were. You'd have to scrub them down.

02:00 And if there was any paintwork to be done inside of the ship - you couldn't paint the outside of the ship while you were at sea. And so mainly duties there. If you were off duty you had your own leisure, you would play cards or something like that.

Can you describe to me what your conditions were like on the Australia? Did you have a...

02:30 Well on the Australia, you had the bunks slung up in the thing and then you had your mess deck, and at mealtimes you had to go down to the mess deck, and we had those long trays... the American trays for food and you would get your meals.

03:00 You didn't have to wash up because that was part of the cooks and their offsiders' job. But if you were on punishment you would have to come in and help them. Luckily I never struck any punishment because I behaved myself.

How many crew to the one mess deck?

Oh everyone went to the mess deck. All the seamen. The officers had their own wardroom and they ate in a different part of the ship.

03:30 But see it was more or less set time for your meals, sort of thing. And because those who were on watch... See at midday, you would change watch and those who weren't on watch would have their meals before twelve o'clock and then go onto duty. Then those coming off duty would have their meals. So they had two settings

04:00 for all meals.

What did you eat off? Were you at big long tables? How was the mess deck set out?

At big long tables. Oh I suppose it would seat about fifteen or twenty people to a table. And then there were set stools, because sometimes

04:30 during the what's a name, rather than get into the hammock you would curl up on the stools and go to sleep. Often I've slept on the stool like that.

How do you sleep on a stool? Is it very difficult to sleep on a stool? How do you do it?

You get used to it. You can't roll over; you can't turn over because you are on the floor. But it was good that way. You could...

05:00 Not all the time, but especially up in the tropics it got too hot because the hammocks are slung close to the roof and in the tropics it was too hot to sleep there. You would either sleep out on deck....I had a bit of canvas and I went up on open deck. I would take the canvas and just curl up on the wooden deck and sleep there with a pair of shorts on.

Where would the hammocks be normally slung?

05:30 **Outside the mess deck or where?**

No. They were in the living quarters. The mess deck was a separate section of the ship. It was the eating section of the ship. And the others were just where the living quarters were. You had your lockers and the hammocks were just slung up there. Your hammock being high and with the heat in the tropics, being at sea all the portholes would be closed. You couldn't show lights at sea

06:00 so it was pitch black outside. There was no light. And especially once the lights got dimmed... They weren't out completely during the night hours. You still had a little bit of light so you could see.

How do you get in and out of a hammock when it's strung up so high?

You've got bars there and you lift yourself off the ground

06:30 and slide into the hammock. You've got to put your backside at the right spot of the hammock because if you are too far to one end you can't move yourself down from one part to another. I got used to it after a while. But it made it easy. You've got like a bar across the thing. You grab that and just pull yourself

07:00 up. You've got to learn to pull yourself up. Learn to chin the bar sort of thing.

Did people fall out of these hammocks?

Oh some do. New chums do.

Could you tell the new chums when you went to the sleeping quarters?

You could tell them.

What did they look like?

The way they tried to get into their hammocks. Sometimes you'd have a laugh at a bloke trying to get into his hammock without doing

07:30 the right way.

How were you adapting to life at sea at this stage?

I liked it. The only scary thing - when I was on the Australia we got torpedoed one night. A Japanese submarine torpedoed us but the torpedo didn't explode. It just hit the side of the ship.

08:00 At the same time, the Hobart got torpedoed. She got a fifteen foot hole in the side of her. That was a bit scary that night.

What happened that night?

Well we were on the upper deck and then all of a sudden there was an explosion. We saw the Hobart get torpedoed and our ship was zigzagging around, and the destroyers were dropping depth chargers.

08:30 And it was a bit hairy there for a while but It was good when it was over.

Were you at action stations? How did you hear about what was happening?

Oh, they just close all watertight doors. When they got to dry docks they had a bit of a dent in the side of the ship where the torpedo had hit, but didn't explode.

09:00 We were lucky.

Could you hear it when it hit?

No, but one of the engineers...they reckoned he was down there sitting on a chair near the side of the ship, and when it hit he fell off his chair.

What were you doing during this attack?

It was night time. It was pitch black outside. We were in bed. And a lot of us got out there and went out and we couldn't see a thing.

09:30 But once they said "close all watertight doors" you can't go from one compartment to another. You've

got to keep all the compartments locked up.

How frightening was that, your first whiff of action at sea?

Oh I suppose being young I didn't think much of it really. Just a bit of excitement, that's all.

You must have heard about...

10:00 **well the Sydney being sunk and then later on the Canberra going down. What were your fears at sea?**

Well if we did get sunk I wasn't a good swimmer. I can just swim and that's all, sort of thing. But you had your rubber life raft...not life raft, belt. But it didn't seem to worry me. I just

10:30 didn't worry. It was not I didn't care but it was just that I shut it out of my mind.

What did the sea represent to you then?

It was a nice place to be on on a big ship. Fresh air and good companions, and something to do.

11:00 When we were off duty we played cards a lot on the Australia.

How does it feel to someone who's been on land all there life to be on a ship out of sight of land. It must be a strange experience for the first time?

Oh the first time it was when I couldn't sea land. But then I remembered the old saying. "You are never more than a mile away from land. The nearest land is one mile straight down."

11:30 **That's not a very comforting saying.**

That's an old saying I've heard. "You're never far away from land. It's straight down."

Did they teach you about that before you embarked on board ship? About the rules of engagement at sea and how you would sink or swim?

No. They never...Because we were in

12:00 Flinders in the middle of winter, those who were down there in the summertime had to pass a swimming test. They had to dive into the pool fully clothed and then undress in the pool. I'm afraid I would have failed that test.

How common was it for a seaman like yourself not to be able to swim well?

Oh I don't know.

12:30 They had plenty of life rafts onboard the ship so if the ship did go down they had plenty of life rafts that would float off anyway. And we never thought of it really. There were things you didn't think about. If you don't think about it you don't worry about it. That was the main thing.

What did you worry about? What was the

13:00 **your scariest moment on board the Australia?**

Well that night when the torpedo hit there. The funniest thing on the ship was when I first went on board the ship.

What happened?

I was given the job as lookout up on the bridge - looking for aircraft. And a big pelican flies across the island and I yelled out "Aircraft!" and there's this

13:30 big pelican. And one of the officers there said, "Don't worry. They all do it." First bird you see you call "Aircraft." That was the funniest thing.

It was a big pelican though?

A big pelican.

Was there...You mentioned you lost one man on board the Australia?

Yes. He was an electrician and he got electrocuted.

What happened on that occasion?

Well they buried hem

14:00 at sea. They sewed him up in canvas and they put him in the thing down there, and during the night I was one of those who had to stand guard over the body. I think it was about every half hour they changed who was standing by the body. That was the scariest moment because that night

14:30 I had a lot of thoughts that night. That was the only thing that really upset me that night. Seeing the body lying a few feet away from you and the chap had been electrocuted.

Why had he been electrocuted? Do you know the story behind it?

He was working on some of the machinery there. See on board ship

15:00 it is all direct current, not alternating current like in a household. If you touch something, handle it or actually grab it you can't let go. See with the alternating current if you touch something it throws you. But the other one is direct current and he probably wouldn't have had a chance once he touched it.

How close

15:30 **were you standing to his body all night? What was the situation?**

Oh, not all night. It was only for half an hour. His body was there and we were only eight to ten feet away. That's where we were standing.

Had you seen a dead body before?

No. I had never seen a dead body before that.

Even though he hadn't been killed in action did that make you think about war and what you were doing?

16:00 It didn't seem to worry me that much. Just the thoughts that were going through my head all night, and imagining things. But other than that it was... As I said that's the only time that we lost anyone. I had plenty of... One of my friends I went through with, he got washed overboard in the Great Australian Bight. I heard about that and

16:30 I was glad I was on a big cruiser that way. The smaller ships...when you get into a storm on the smaller ships, it is a lot more rougher than the cruisers. So it is a good thing that I was made 'cruisers only'.

What did you think about that night? Why was that particularly moving or frightening experience?

Well...

17:00 You see at that stage I had just turned eighteen. I had just turned eighteen and never experienced anything like that before. You are there alone. There is no one else about for half an hour until someone else comes to relieve you. They didn't let you stay there all night, sort of thing. It was four hours on duty and on that night they

17:30 had someone to come and relieve you, and it was only that one. And the next day we had to line up on deck and we buried him at sea.

Was that an emotional sea burial?

Yeah.

What happens in a sea burial?

Well you just... The minister or the padre...we used to...

18:00 On the Shropshire they had a Catholic priest and a Church of England minister. I don't know what they had on the Australia but one of the clergymen said the service. And they lift the body and slide it into the sea.

How do they lift the body and slide them into the sea?

Well possibly they

18:30 put it on a board and they just raise the board and let it slide off sort of thing.

What musical accompaniment does this have?

Oh ..

Is there any music onboard a ship?

Oh they've got the band. They've got bandsmen on the ship. I can't recall having any music. I think it was just the service.

Can you recall any times on board any one of the ships you

19:00 **sailed on where the band was playing?**

Yes.

On what sort of occasions would a band play on board a fighting ship?

Oh, on certain occasions like on the Shropshire.... I never struck it on the what's a name. They played the band a couple of times on the Shropshire and also we had concerts. We had a concert on the Shropshire there once, and one of the stewards

19:30 used to play the piano accordion at the Tivoli. He could make it nearly sing. We had those kinds of nights, entertainment nights, and some of the bandsmen would play. It would probably give them practice too. And then when we marched through Melbourne, the band led ahead playing the marching music.

20:00 That was the only time we ever used the band after the war in Melbourne. They marched through Melbourne.

Were the bandsmen ordinary seaman or did they have other roles as well?

Well they were bandsmen. They had their own titles as bandsmen, but they were ordinary seamen, but that was part of their own, as far as I know. They were part of their own... See they... I don't know what

20:30 duties they had onboard the ship, but there was still plenty of duties that had to be done. The officers had their stewards and things like that, and there were that many cooks onboard, and the sickbay tippies, and things like that.

Back on the Australia... Was the Australia a happy ship?

It was happy, yes - while I was on it. As I said I was only on it for twelve

21:00 months...Under twelve months I think it was.

How many of the crew...It's a huge crew onboard a cruiser. How many of the crew did you know or have something to do with?

Well in my own section....like on the Australia, in my own section I suppose there would be about forty or fifty, and among that forty or fifty I would have made friends with five or six of them. Really good friends. In fact one of them, Jim Tervace,

21:30 he is living over in Western Australia. He was a Western Australian on the ship, and he and I used to play a lot of cards together.

What was it about him that made you two particularly good mates?

He was a card player. We played five hundred. Five hundred or crib...no, not crib, euchre. And he was a good partner. He knew cards just as good as I did.

Did you play much cards before the war?

22:00 Yes. I can first recall, before I went to Sydney, I must have only been about four or five, my father used to have card nights and some of his friends would come in. They would play five-hundred. I knew how to play five-hundred before I was seven years old. And what they would do, if someone wanted to go to the toilet or something they would let me play their hand out for me. So I would have to play their hand out.

22:30 I sat there and watched them play, looking over someone's shoulder all the time, and I knew how to play when I was about five or six. I could play five-hundred.

Did you ever play for money?

For a prize but not for money.

What sort of prize did you play for?

Oh, cups and saucers and things like that. Oh no, not on board ship. On the ship I don't know what we played for. Another chap and I when we were on the Shropshire

23:00 we won the tournament. They had a knockout tournament. And we won the knockout tournament. But I don't think we played for prizes. Just the pleasure of being the five-hundred champion.

Was there any gambling on board ships in the navy?

There may have been but I didn't know of any. The only thing I know was there was plenty of grog making.

23:30 **Did you drink at the time?**

I never drank.

So tell me about the grog making. What was that about?

Oh they used to get the coconuts and put a few sultanas in the coconuts. And also, they used to make a brew. They had bottles of stuff as well as the coconut juice, which they would drink when it was fermented. And they also made some moon... because one night at sea there were some explosions, and the bottles were going off just

24:00 underneath the bridge, and you could smell the grog. No one owned up to owning the grog.

Was there an official rum ration or beer ration on board ships in the navy?

Oh yes there was when the supply ships came up. It was mainly when I was on the Shropshire because we'd have crates of beer that would come up.

24:30 And for threepence we could buy a 750ml bottle of beer. Today that's about three cents. We had it while it lasted and when it ran out that was it. There was no other. Then we were only allowed one bottle per day. When I was twenty one we saved up our beer ration for about a week,

25:00 and had a party for my twenty-first.

Did you ever get drunk?

Only the once.

On that occasion?

That was the occasion. My twenty-first birthday.

Which ship were you on there. Was it the Shropshire?

Yes. Up in Tokyo Bay.

And the war had just ended?

The war had just ended.

Well come back to that but it sounds like a happy day, or an interesting day.

It was in interesting day. Interesting night.

Just while we are still talking about the Australia,

25:30 **was there any tradition or anything particular about the Australia that happened only aboard that ship that you remember during your twelve months there?**

No. Nothing. Only that we used to go ashore at Cid Harbour or Palm Island. We went ashore there on leave. Day leave it was. They put the big

26:00 pinna down. It was a big motorized boat. It would hold about thirty or forty people on it. And you'd get on board that and they would take you ashore and pick you up later in the day. Just before dark they would pick you up. That's where I started the collection of all the shells.

What would you do with your day's leave there?

Oh I would just wander around the island. On

26:30 Palm Island I bought myself a boomerang. I've still got it there. A handmade boomerang that I bought there. I've still got it in my thing. I talked to the people on Palm Island.

Who were the people on Palm Island?

Oh there were Aborigines on there and white people.

27:00 And most of the time there would be a pack of cards somewhere so we would get stuck into a game of cards onshore. We enjoyed ourselves there. The only trouble if you went onto Cid harbour was you had to take a bottle of water with you because there was no drinking water there, and you couldn't drink the salt water. There was oysters on there...beautiful big oysters on Cid Island in the mud.

27:30 Mud oysters, and at that stage I didn't like oysters. I used to help a couple of my mates there who liked oysters. I used to help them search for oysters in the mud. And it wasn't until after the war that I learned to eat oysters.

Were there any sailors who didn't make it back to the ship on time?

Not on the Australia. On the Shropshire,

28:00 there is a different story there I can tell you later.

You can tell us now. What was that story all about?

Well we went ashore on the...just before we went to Leyte. The Yanks had loaded on the ships. They were stationed on the island of Manus. And they were loaded and they were shipped out to Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea. We went ashore this day and we were playing round this reef,

28:30 picking up the shells and stuff like that. And they forgot to send the pinnas back for us. Come eight o'clock that night a lot of the men were absent without leave. They were supposed to be on duty and they realized that no one had gone to pick up the shore party. So there was a lot of WAS DOUBLE

QUOTE CHOOK s. The Yanks had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s there and they were running wild on the island, so we lit a fire and got a few of these WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, and threw them feathers and all

29:00 into the fire and then we had roasted WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK . It was something to eat.

What did you think at the time when the pinnas didn't come back for you?

Oh they must have forgot us so we'll have a good time, so we did that there, and eventually they came and got us. We had to light coconuts to guide them into where we were. It was in the dark and they got us back on board, and then we had to take a course of Atebrin

29:30 because of the mosquitos. But it was good and a bit of fun.

Was there ever any fraternizing with women on these shore leaves?

No. Only in Tokyo after the war. That was the only time we got ashore - and in Manila. At Manila there were women there but I was never... I was only a youngster at the time. I wasn't

30:00 interested.

But sailors onboard a ship together must talk about that sort of thing a lot, surely?

Oh some of them do talk about their what's a name. But at that stage I didn't have a girlfriend so I had nothing to talk about. People talked about their wives and things like that, and their girlfriends.

Were you ever homesick on board the Australia as an eighteen year old?

No. I didn't get homesick because, what's a name. As I said,

30:30 there was only the aunty and the cousin that was there, and my own family, like the brothers and sisters. Over the years I didn't have much contact with them until after the war. But that was alright and.... Whenever I got shore leave, twenty-eight days leave, I'd either

31:00 go to my sister's place at Maitland or up to Macksville. I had a sister on a farm up there - so either there or at my brother's farm. So I used to spend my time around the three of them...like for the twenty-eight days.

Were you ever lonely onboard the ship?

No.

31:30 Too much going on.

Can you explain what the camaraderie on board a naval vessel is like?

Mainly on the Shropshire. What we used to do when we were off duty, we would get into one of the radar offices, where the radar set was, and there would be about five or six of us

32:00 there, and they used to tell yarns for hours. One night we invited the Padre Roach, the Catholic priest, and one of the boys pretended to be an atheist just to get him going. It was so successful that a few nights later we invited Craven Sanders, the Church of England Minister along and did the same thing. We thought it was great. But I

32:30 saw Father Roach on the fiftieth anniversary in March, and I was talking to him about it. I said he wasn't an atheist, he was an agnostic. And he recalled the night well. After fifty years he could still remember the night in the radar office.

What would the minister do faced with a supposed atheist? What was their reaction to that?

33:00 They started to argue a little bit. I think after a while they realized what was going on. But they had a good time. In the navy we got block chocolate, what we used to call 'Kia'.

Kia?

K-i-a. It is only a block chocolate, and you scrape it and make drinks out of it with hot water. And that's what we used to have

33:30 when we had this... You could get it either from the canteen...you could buy it from the canteen. That's what we had to drink. No alcohol. Mainly you had alcohol when you were in harbour. You never had alcohol at sea.

Is 'kia' a particularly well known drink in the navy?

It was on the Shropshire.

34:00 It was a hot chocolate drink. That's all it was but that's what we called the block chocolate.

What were general rations like onboard ship?

Very good. Good meals. Excellent meals on the Shropshire, especially after the supply ship has been. Roast pork, roast

34:30 chicken or turkey for a while. You'd get fried eggs and you'd get scrambled eggs, and when it got down to boiled eggs you'd walk down the mess deck and you could smell it. You could smell that the eggs were starting to go off. But when we were in action stations we got either bread and bully beef, or bread

35:00 and boiled eggs. That was our action station meals. Up in Leyte and that, that's all we got to eat. They were brought to you. No one went down to the mess deck when you were on action stations. It was brought by the cooks and the stewards.

You were on radar by the time you were on the Shropshire. Can you tell me about when the call came through to volunteer for radar school on the Australia?

Oh that was on the Shropshire., "Anyone's who's good at maths.

35:30 If they would like to do a radar course." And I was good at maths so I went down and saw the officer. And he held this mirror into a clock in front of me and he said, "What's the time?" I told him the time and he said, "What's the time?" and he did that about half a dozen times. He said, "You pass." That's all they did and within a few days I was on a ship headed back to Sydney to do my radar

36:00 course. This was up in Milne Bay.

Where had you been just prior to this?

We'd been out in the Coral Sea and then we were up in Milne Bay. And Milne Bay was a depot. And I'd been ashore and one of my cousins' husbands in the air force, I went to see him. He was in the control tower of the airstrip at Milne Bay.

36:30 I went ashore and I got in contact with him. And when he found out I was going back to Sydney he said, "I can make arrangements for you to go by flying boat back to Rose Bay." Oh right. I had to go back onboard and ask them permission to go there. But they wouldn't let me go and they asked me who my contact was. I said, "Oh no. My cousin's arranging it for me. I can't give his name to you because I might get him into trouble."

37:00 They didn't do it for me but they wanted one of their officers to take the flight back to Sydney.

So you never got to go on that flying boat?

No. I never got to go on the flying boat.

What was the situation like at Milne Bay at that time? Was it before the battle for Milne Bay or...

After the battle for Milne Bay because they had the airstrip there and that was our base. When I was on the Australia and the Shropshire both, we used Milne Bay as our base.

37:30 **Did you land there much? Did you have shore leave in New Guinea?**

Only twice at Milne Bay. Only a shore leave twice at Milne Bay. See they kept changing their base. See Cid harbour was our base for a long time and then the next one was up to Milne Bay, then Manus Island and then Leyte. They were our bases.

What was your impression of New Guinea when you had shore leave in Milne Bay?

38:00 Muddy. Mud everywhere. Because of the amount of traffic they had all the roads were churned up. There was no bitumen and being in the tropics like that, the rain... All the four wheel drives and that would just chop the roads up. There was mud everywhere.

Were the battles still raging further north?

Buna and Gona and all that. My brother was in

38:30 those actions up there at the time. And it wasn't...It was later that we did the invasion of New Britain. This was earlier, before that.

I think we'll just stop there just before we start talking about radar too much.

Tape 5

00:33 **Can you just talk about how you transferred off the Australia? What happened at the end of your service on the Australia?**

After I volunteered to do the course, in Milne Bay they put me onto an American liberty ship to go to

Sydney - well actually to go to Newcastle. They were supposed to be going to Sydney but they ended up in Newcastle.

01:00 **The Australia?**

I came off the Australia and onto the American ship. There must have been about forty or fifty Australian sailors on this ship. We were down in one of the holds of the ship. It was unloaded. It was an empty ship riding very high out of the water, and we got as far as... just outside Ballina in New South Wales. One of the American sailors at the top of the hatch

01:30 yelled out "standby for collision". There was a big bang and when he said that everyone stood up, and the next minute we were all sprawled out over the deck of the ship. What had happened...it was about three o'clock in the morning, pitch black. There was a tanker going north and we were going south, and those ships didn't have radar. If they'd had radar they would have picked each other up. And the war being on, no lights.

02:00 One ran into the other, and the American liberty ship rode up onto the deck of the tanker. Neither got sunk, but there was a bit of damage to both ships. So then...because they didn't know what the damage was, instead of going to Sydney, they went to Newcastle to go to dry dock. And we went into Newcastle to catch the train from Newcastle down to Sydney, and then to Rushcutter's Bay.

02:30 **What's a liberty ship like?**

It is a welded ship, an American liberty ship. All done by welding. There was no rivets in it. And they were made quick smart by the Americans and it was just a welded ship. They were nearly all cargo ships. They mass produced them over in America during the war.

03:00 **Did you feel safe on a liberty ship?**

Yes, we felt safe until we had the collision, and then they said "standby to abandon ship", because they didn't know what the damage was. So we had to stand up on deck in the pitch black alongside the lifeboats. Then about half an hour later they told us that everything was okay and go back to where we were billeted.

03:30 **Did you have friends from the Australia or did you come alone?**

Two or three others had also volunteered to do radar on the Australia. We were there plus a lot of other sailors going home on leave and things like that.

Any other stories of travelling down on that boat that you can relate?

Well not for travel. But going back up to Milne Bay after...

Perhaps on that boat?

On that boat?

04:00 No we just went back into Newcastle and that was it. It was just that one night when we had what they called a collision at sea.

Were you sad to leave the Australia?

Not after I joined the Shropshire. I liked the Shropshire a lot better.

But at that time?

Well by leaving it it was a new adventure for me. That was the way I looked at it. I was going to do the

04:30 course and I had heard a lot about radar and what it can do and about how good the radar is. And the Shropshire had a good radar name on the Australia. The Australia had radar on it but it wasn't as efficient as what they had on the Shropshire because the Shropshire had only just come out from England with all these thirteen different kinds of radar sets on it.

How many different sorts of radar sets were on the Australia?

05:00 I don't know because I wasn't connected with radar on there. All I knew was there was a big radar mast - the 282 set on top of the mast, and so I knew later what that mast was.

And when you were on the Australia did you know what the mast was?

I knew it was just a radar aerial. That's all I knew. While I was at sea you'd be seeing it swinging round and round. Like doing the 360 degree revolutions.

05:30 **At that time did you know what it did?**

We knew it was for aircraft, and that's all I knew. We never got any lectures on what radar would do until I did the radar course, and then I found out. They gave us a lecture on how radar was formed, which I told you about. And also how the

06:00 beams are. It might only be a twelve and a half degree angle beam for a directional beam, but they've got a way with some of those aerals of limiting the direction in which the beam goes... for accuracy.

Just a couple of other little details about the Australia before we go. Did the Australia have a mascot?

A mascot? Not that I can recall. The only mascot I

06:30 can ever recall was down at Flinders naval depot. They had a big bulldog there, and he wanted his pot of beer every night. That's the only time I can remember a mascot.

Whose was that?

I don't know. Just for the thirteen weeks we were down at Flinders naval depot there was this bulldog in the canteen of a night. And every night someone would buy him a beer and put it in his drinking thing. And by the end of the night he'd be wobbling all over the canteen.

07:00 **How was the radar school? How did you find that?**

Very interesting. It was out at Watson's Bay, up on top of the cliff looking out. And we had the things there and we... I forget how long I was there. I was there for a couple.... I have records somewhere of how long I was actually there. We went to these classes and

07:30 had exams. The last exam I had was ninety-seven and a half percent pass, so I was very interested. And a lot of it... with the radar plotting, you've got to know maths pretty well because you've got to work out how fast the plane was going and what direction it was travelling... And you've got a

08:00 big chart, and every minute you put down where the plane is. Then after three minutes you are expected to be able to tell them what speed and what direction the plane's going in. So I could do that pretty efficiently, and that's why I got such a good pass.

Radar was pretty secret sort of gear wasn't it?

At this time yes.

Were you expected to take some kind of oath of secrecy before you did this course.

08:30 We didn't have to take it there, but we were told that, what we learned was to stay with us, sort of thing. It was on the secret list because I don't think the Japanese had radar. That's why the Australian ships could outplay them with the help of radar.

And how did they

09:00 **train you on the radar?**

Ah, well you were sitting down in class having the lectures and then they would put you on a radar set. You got the controls there while they were looking on, and they controlled it all, and then after a while you had to do it on your own. It's like a computer set. You've got to know what keys to hit, and how to

09:30 move things around on a computer. Well it's the same on the radar set. As I said, they had the grass there and all these little blips, and you had to know what the little blips meant, and the size of the blip. We used to follow all the ships going in and coming out of Sydney Harbour. And we used to plot them, their course and what speed they were going out there. And that was part of the course.

10:00 And after a while you'd say there's a ship there and it looks fairly big and they tell you it's a ten thousand ton ship, or it's a little coalier or whatever it was. And after a while, with experience you get to know the size of the blip and the distance of what it represents. That's on shipping, and then with the aircraft, the height

10:30 and the size of the blip is the height of the planes and the distance. So it was complicated, but it was very interesting.

It must have been magical to you?

Yeah. It was very very enlightening.

Can you describe that radar set and what were the major controls and how it worked and what it looked like?

Well

11:00 first, when you were on the one for gunnery, you could see the radar screen. You'd have the target. It was a blip. A high blip on the thing. And with the shells, you'd see these little dots going across the screen, and there would be a splash when the shell exploded and sent up a sheet of water. And you had a handle with a thing there and you'd wind that,

11:30 and that was fifty or seventy-five yards short or over. And you'd tell the gunnery control that the shell landed fifty yards over. So then they'd ring down and when the shell and the target was there together,

you'd say "hit" and then they'd know they'd got the right

12:00 range.

Did you train on those out at Watson's Bay?

We were trained on it but we didn't have the blips going across. I learned that when I went onto the Shropshire.

So you can actually see the shell going through the air?

That's right. Yes. Like little dots going across, and when it hits the water, the spray coming up from the

12:30 shell exploding is registered on the radar, but only for a second so you've got to be quick to get where it was. So what I used to do when I was on that part of the set, I would always have it about fifty or seventy-five yards short, sort of thing. Because nine times out of ten they were always short rather than over. I'd have it there and you only had to move it a little bit to find out how

13:00 over or short it was.

What were you moving?

A little handle that had a cursor on the screen, at the front of the screen. It wasn't part of the radar... Well it was part of the radar set but it was on the outside of the radar set. You had to wind this handle over or under to find out whether it was short or over.

The radar is emitting quite a bit of radiation. Were you ever trained or given any

13:30 **instruction in the dangers of standing close to the radar beam or the emissions, where it is coming from?**

Only to keep away because it was DC [Direct Current]. I got hit by a radar set once but it was only the back of my hand. I had a scar on the back of my hand for a while where I got hit with it. I was chipping paint. When they paint the ship they always knock a lot of the paint off, and then paint it, but a lot of paint had got knocked off behind the radar set which was about that far off

14:00 the wall. I had a little brush and I was brushing it out and the back of my hand touched the thing, but I closed my hand that way. If I had have been pushing this way, sort of thing, it might have grabbed me and probably electrocuted me. It was only the back of my hand that got hit with the radar, or the power of the radar. But that's the only time. I got a phone call many years later wanting to know did I have

14:30 anything from the radar, with all the radar I had in me. The only thing is the fingernails. From all the radiation your fingernails... See the little marks on the finger? That's from radiation. You can get that from x-rays, having too many x-rays. But I haven't had any ill effects from radar and radiation.

While you were in Sydney did you take some leave?

15:00 Yeah. Often. I got twenty-eight days leave on several occasions. And we had leave. I had twenty-eight days when I was on the Australia, and on the Shropshire, about three times I had twenty-eight days leave.

What about when you were down here studying at the radar school?

You had the night off, until such and such a time. And I used to go home to my Auntie's at Paddington. I would

15:30 stay in Cascade Street.

How was your aunty?

She was good. That was before she got sick, but she was well. I liked being there and she liked having me there. More or less she considered I was her son rather

16:00 than her nephew.

What did you call her? 'Mum' or ...

No. Aunty.

How was she coping with the death of your uncle?

She accepted that I had joined up. She knew that there was a war on so she just accepted that I had enlisted. She said at one stage there, she was glad I was on a big ship not one of those little ships there

16:30 because she knew I got seasick that much, so she was glad she knew that at least I was on a big ship. It was not so rough.

Was that the last time you saw her?

Yeah. It would have been about the last time I saw her. When I came back next time she had already

passed away.

Did you have a feeling that she was not well when you left that time?

No I didn't. I don't know what she died of. I've never seen the death certificate or anything like that, so

17:00 I don't know. But she was a fair age though. She'd be well up in her sixties I'd say.

When you finished your radar course you were posted to the Shropshire. ..

Yes. The Shropshire.

Did they ask you or did they tell you where to go?

They sent me to Brisbane.

But did you have some choice in the matter? Did you not want to go back to the Australia?

No. No choice.

17:30 It was just that I was posted to the Shropshire.

Did you know about the Shropshire?

I knew she was there to replace the Canberra. That's all I knew for the time being. But they sent me to Brisbane and then from Brisbane I was onboard the HMAS Broome which was a corvette. She had

18:00 to escort a Dutch submarine all the way up to Milne Bay. They used to have exercises. The submarine would submerge and then the Broome had to try and find her. When they found her they would drop a hand grenade overboard representing depth charges. But the Dutch submarine had the IFF, the Identification Friend or Foe on so they knew

18:30 that she was a friendly one. So the skipper of the Broome got the submarine to switch off the IFF for a while. He did one charge like that, and later on he dropped a depth charge to try and get some fish. He tried to drop a depth charge to get some fish but never got a scale.

While you were on the Broome?

While I was on the Broome.

And depth charge fishing. Can you tell us about depth charge fishing?

Oh quite illegal.

19:00 **It seems it's also very extreme. How much does a depth charge weight? How much TNT?**

You want to get some fish so you drop the depth charge and put the boat over the side, and when the fish come up they just float on the surface for a while. But they never got a fish. So I don't know what happened.

Why did they do that fishing?

19:30 They probably wanted some fish meals for a while. But we did have...We did have some fun on the Broome going up through the barrier reef. Sharks used to follow the ship and they used to use the Bofor guns for target practice, and try and get the sharks. So what they did one day...there was some rotten meat on

20:00 board the ship, so they got a big hook and they put one of these paravane wires onto the hook and they threw some rotten meat over and the shark grabbed it. Then they lowered the paravane thing and the hook went straight into the shark's mouth virtually. It was a sixteen footer, and they winched him up and got there with a meat cleaver and cut his belly open and cut

20:30 the hook out of his mouth, and the other sharks just tore him to pieces. It was very exciting but I would have hated to have fallen over. But it was one of the funny things that happened. So it was very enlightening how they did it. They can make things any time they like. One of the blacksmiths made the hook out of steel so

21:00 it wouldn't bend. It was a big sixteen foot shark, and they got him.

You had blacksmiths on board?

Yeah. It would be a blacksmith, maybe one of the engineers. He would be a blacksmith in the work he would do. Being a bush boy my grandfather and my father used to do a lot of blacksmithing. That's probably why I called him a blacksmith instead of one of the engineers.

What was your job on the Broome on the way up there?

21:30 Passenger. Nothing. Just a passenger. I had no work. Nothing to do. Just enjoy myself all the way up to Milne Bay. I used to sit out there and watch. I would see the Dutch submarine submerge and then they would go on the Azdec trying to find it. You would see them throwing the hand grenade over and giving

a little 'phoomp' as it went off. The Dutch submarine would

22:00 come to the surface and there would be a few lights flashing to show how close they were, and things like that. We were spectators really.

Why did you have to escort the submarine, do you know?

Well they both wanted to go to Milne Bay. And it also gave the Broome practice on finding submarines.

22:30 **Did you know why you were going to Milne Bay at the time?**

Oh to join the Shropshire.

And can you tell us a bit about where the Shropshire came from and it's history.

Well it's a county class cruiser, about ten thousand ton. Six-hundred and twenty-eight feet long I believe, and a crew of about eleven hundred. Now, it had eight eight-inch guns. Four sets of double

23:00 barrelled four-inch guns for the anti aircraft, and also surface. It had thirteen Bofors guns, and at the end of the war they put rockets on it, but the rockets were never used. The eight-inch guns were used as anti-aircraft guns. There was four turrets at each quarter of the ship. They would lay one barrel

23:30 to explode at ten thousand feet and the other barrel to explode at five-thousand feet. When the Japanese planes came in, the radar would be set and the radar would automatically fire the gun. And in theory the shell and the plane would land at the same spot. I did see one day, while I was off duty a Japanese plane come in. He must have been doing about

24:00 200km/h. The shell burst in front of him. The plane went straight over backwards straight into the sea. The concussion of the shell exploding in front of him stopped him in mid flight and threw him over backwards. It worked not only in theory but in practice. It saved the Shropshire several times, those anti-aircraft guns. In fact Tokyo Rose used to broadcast

24:30 to the troops, and she reckoned the Shropshire of the Australian navy was using gigantic flame throwers to knock down their planes, because when the eight inch guns go off they are fired by cordite, and when the gun goes off there is a big black smoke of cordite and the flash comes out. So the Japanese thought we were using flame throwers. Gigantic flame throwers. That was the report we heard on

25:00 the Tokyo Rose, the Japanese report. So that was exciting for us.

She was Royal Navy, ex-Royal Navy is that right?

I don't know who she was. The Tokyo Rose.

Sorry, the Shropshire.

Yes. Ex-Royal Navy. When the Canberra got sunk the British gave Australia the Shropshire to replace

25:30 the Canberra because see, the Perth got sunk up in Sunda Straits, up around Malaysia somewhere.

Yeah. That's right.

And Australia only had the Canberra and the Australia and the Hobart, As far as I know they were the only cruisers Australia had left at this stage. When the Canberra got sunk they only had the Hobart and the Australia..

26:00 And so they gave Australia the Shropshire to replace the Canberra.

Where were you when you heard the Sydney had been sunk?

Still in Sydney. In Sydney before I joined. I'm pretty sure it was before I joined. Round about the same time, anyway. I don't recall actually where I was when the word came through.

How did that affect you?

Oh,

26:30 I didn't really think about it that much because, as I said I can blank a lot of things out of my mind.

How's that?

Just don't think about things. Just shut it up. Shut up shop sort of thing. Not to worry.

Have you done that always?

I've done it for donkey's years.

Since you were young?

Yeah. When I was young. 'In one ear and out the other' is the old saying.

27:00 No. If you worry about things you'll go grey a lot quicker.

That's true. Did you worry about things a lot during the war?

I didn't worry.

But you said you had to shut things off.

I shut things off, yeah. Shut it off.

So there were things to worry about.

Oh I suppose.

27:30 When all those suicide planes were coming at us, that was a pretty harrowing experience. As I said, in the fighter direction where I was involved, it was half hour on and half hour off, because you were going flat out all the time. On our half hour off we'd go out and watch the action. See all the anti aircraft shells bursting

28:00 in the sky, and all the planes and that - and the planes coming straight at the Shropshire. Then the eight-inch guns would go off and you'd see the planes shot down. We were lucky that sometimes the plane would be knocked down and it would go into the water before it got to the Shropshire. But then there was a funny saying because you see, the Australia got hit about five times with the

28:30 suicide planes, and there was a signal came from the Australia to the Shropshire. "You knock em down we'll catch them for you." And that was one of the signals that was sent supposedly from the Australia to the Shropshire. Just someone having a bit of a laugh at it I suppose, on the Australia.

Tell us a bit more about that particular action. Where was it and...?

That was at Leyte.

29:00 When the Americans landed at Tacloban on Leyte Island that's... The first day we got there we bombarded the shores but no resistance, nothing from the shore. A few days later the aircraft came and all the suicide planes came down and they were crashing on to American ships. As I said, the Australia

29:30 got hit five times. And the Arunta and Warramunga, the Australian ships, we never got hit by any suicide planes but they tried to hit us. And in fact we were lucky. One of the guns, or two of the guns we had on the Shropshire, were eight barrelled pompoms. They had about a twenty millimetre shell. And when there was no action they always had them pointing at the sky. This day

30:00 a Jap plane dived at the Shropshire out of the sun and they just fired the gun and blew him to smithereens, about two-hundred feet above the Shropshire. We had petrol all over the ship and bits of the plane all over the ship. One of the mines... They reckoned he was carrying mines not bombs. One of the mines went off just off the ship. That was a bit of a harrowing experience.

Where were you when that plane

30:30 **was coming towards the ship and the pompom was going off?**

I was on duty at the time on the fighter control.

What was the fighter control?

That was where the radar operator was on the headphones to me, and I was marking the board which was towards you. I'd be marking this side so you could read it... all the different planes that was coming in. Because all the near action...

31:00 the first few miles you couldn't do much. We were reporting all the aircraft coming in from out of the area and passing the word onto the American Fighter Control. Then they would notify their planes of where to go sort of thing, to intercept the Japanese.

Could you see the kamikaze planes coming in at you?

Yeah. I've seen several.

While you

31:30 **were plotting though?**

Not when I was plotting. While I was off duty.

But when they were coming in you must have known they might be kamikaze planes.

I knew they were in the area, that's all.

What were you feeling as you were plotting these planes coming towards your ship?

Nothing. Flat out working. You are on the phone. The operator of the 282 set was on the phones. Joe

Barrington was what I think his name was. He would be passing on the message

32:00 to me that once the planes were at a certain range they weren't worried about them. They were worried about the planes that were coming in from outside a certain area. We would be tracking those planes from outside the area and passing the information on to the American aircraft.

How many planes were you tracking coming in?

Sometimes you would be tracking half a dozen at the same time. See, sometimes

32:30 you are tracking the enemy planes and also the friendly planes trying to intercept them. And the Identification Friend or Foe, IFF as they called it, you could tell which of them were friendly and which of them weren't. The ones that didn't have a signal on them, we treated those as enemy aircraft. You'd be reporting to another ship which had charge of the aircraft in the

33:00 aircraft in the sky - where to go, and how to intercept and things like that..

Your position was underneath the radar table writing on this thing?

On top of the radar table. It was a round table and the officer would be standing where you are, and I'd be on this side and I'd have to write all of the reports in on there - about what direction they were going And in a minute's time I'd put what direction they are in then, and in the third minute with my slide rule

33:30 I would have worked out how fast the plane was going and what direction it was travelling.

And you were doing this on a slide rule which was quite a complicated little instrument. Your hands are shaking at the time. You'd be under some pressure if you get this wrong.

After a while you get to know it. I didn't use the slide rule a lot of the time. If you've gone five mile in five seconds that's so and so.

34:00 The more proficient you are at the job, that's why they wanted people who were good at maths.

This was your main job on the Shropshire?

My main job. Yeah.

Before you got to the gunnery radar?

Mm

Can you tell us a bit what this radar room or this control room looked like?

Well it was just a room. I suppose about the same space as here.

Perhaps you could tell us how big it is because the camera can't see how big this room is.

34:30 About fifteen by fifteen I suppose. Oh, and off there is where the captain slept - his sleeping quarters. And straight on top of the table was a hole in the roof, and the officer on the bridge could look straight down onto

35:00 the map I was drawing. But they had that there and there would be the officer and two other blokes. One on the radio because the officer would give the message and the radio operator would relay the message on. And I'd be doing it on my side and then the officer would be telling the one on the

35:30 radio what to do....you know, what direction and all that. He'd have earphones on, but he didn't have the microphone. He was passing the message on to the main ship that was looking after the aircraft. He'd pass it on.

Were you ever frightened down there?

Well the only time we had a bit of fun in there

36:00 was when the plane got knocked out and we had all the petrol on the ship and we could smell all the petrol fumes on the ship. And they said no smoking on the upper deck over the loud speaker. The captain sent his messenger boy from the bridge down to tell us not to smoke. One of the other blokes was in the room, Titch, and he misunderstood what was said and got out a packet of

36:30 cigarettes to give him a cigarette. Titch never lived that down for a long time. It was a bit hairy at the time. We could see the funny part of it.

Were you smoking in the radar room?

No.

Did you ever smoke?

Oh, I smoked for a bit. When I was on the Aussie I smoked for maybe a month or so. I didn't like it so I gave it up.

Can you tell us about Titch? Who was Titch?

37:00 Titch was the son of the local barber. I went to school with his brother. He was also from Paddington. He was the elder brother of a chap I went to school with, Bruce. I went to school with Bruce. We ended up on the same ship together and he ended up on the same duty as me. He was one of the blokes who was in there at the same time I was. He was on the same shift as me.

What was his job?

37:30 I think he was on one of the radio sets. We had the radio there and the receiver and all that. There was three or four of us on duty at a time, but the officer never changed. He didn't have a relief.

Who was your officer at that time?

Major....no, Lieutenant Major was his name.

Did that ever get confusing?

38:00 No, it never got confusing. It is how names sometimes can throw you.

Who was the captain of the Shropshire?

We had several different ones. There was Brace Gurgle. There was Nichols. Mainly when it was in action it was Nichols. He was an English officer.

38:30 He was a very proficient man. I never spoke to him personally but he came into our office a couple of times. He'd look down through, onto the desk, and he was in the office a couple of times talking to Lieutenant Major. It was just a nodding acquaintance; I suppose you would call it. Another time I passed him going to the upper deck. I was coming up as he was going down so I had to make way for him. Officers have right of way.

39:00 So that's about the only time I ever had anything to do with the captain. We also had a Commodore who was above the Captain. Commodore Collins we had, and we had Crushly the VC [Victoria Cross] winner from World War I. He was the Commodore at one stage. You see the captain of the ship is not the main one. There is the Flag Officer of the Australian ships. Sometimes the Australia had it. Sometimes the Shropshire had the

39:30 high ranking officer on, and Collins from the Sydney, was the commodore at some stage on the ship. I saw him at a distance but never...I spoke to a few of the other officers at times. In the course of your duties we had to talk to them. The officers in the radar room were pretty good.

40:00 We missed out on a lot of duties scrubbing decks and things like that, especially when we were in action stations. In action stations the ships just went dirty, but then at times you'd be on...not on red alert but on standby sort of thing, and normal duties would be then carried out till the radar picked up enemy

40:30 planes, or something like that, and then they would close up their action stations straight away. The other scary thing that happened to us - I've seen it in movies - but it actually happened to the Shropshire. On our way to Leyte we hooked a mine on the paravane. And it got tangled. It didn't cut free it just got tangled. All that night

41:00 you could see where the mine was breaking the water. You could see the foam coming about fifteen twenty feet away from the side of the ship. And we didn't alter course all night, because if you altered course... we didn't zigzag any more until daylight, and as soon as we zigzagged the mine cut free. Some of the American ships behind us blew it up. So it actually happened to the Shropshire, we fouled a mine.

41:30 So that was a scary thing. I went up on deck and you could look over the guard rail and about fifteen or twenty feet out there was a stream of water flying out.

That would focus the mind wouldn't it? We might have to stop and change tapes.

Tape 6

00:30 **Right. Reg. Was the Shropshire a new boat when she was received into the Royal Australian Navy?**

No, she had been in service. I don't know when she was commissioned. There is a book about her in the Rockdale library. That's where I got most of my stories out of the book. I copied a lot of the things here. Got dates and a lot of that out of it. I couldn't remember what dates

01:00 because you weren't allowed to keep diaries. Some did but they were illegal during the war. But the actual commission...She had been in service for many many years before she was given to Australia. And in the end it was

01:30 sold for scrap after the war. Over near Taronga Zoo there, it was tied up to that wharf for many a day,

and in the end they scrapped it because they found that her mast had cracked during the war in that big typhoon that we were in. The mast must have cracked and we'd had a cracked mast. You wouldn't want the mast toppling off in another heavy sea like that.

How long had she

02:00 **been with the Australian Navy when you boarded her?**

Under twelve months, about six months I imagine. I don't know when they took her over. It was after the Canberra got sunk they sent a crew over to England to pick her up and bring her back home, but I wasn't lucky enough to be part of that crew.

02:30 **Where did you join the Shropshire?**

Milne Bay.

How did you get up to Milne Bay after your radar course?

By train to Brisbane and then by HMAS Broome from Brisbane to Milne Bay.

Thank you. Can you remember your first view of the Shropshire?

Well I had seen her before. Like when we were in convoy with her, when I was on

03:00 the Australia. We were in convoy with her as part of task force 74. I'd seen her there but the first time I really got close and on board was at Milne Bay.

What was the reputation of the Shropshire?

A fine radar ship. Well the Yanks didn't appreciate it until later in the war just how good she was, but in the end,

03:30 in the Leyte campaign the Shropshire reported ninety percent of first sightings of enemy aircraft because of the long range we had in the radar.

But before that, when you joined her, what was her reputation?

A good ship with plenty of radar on it. I'd heard that when I was at the radar school. The reckoned the Shropshire was the most up to date one in the Pacific at the time, and

04:00 if I got to the Shropshire they reckoned it was a pretty good ship to be on. As I said, the Yanks called us Hopeless and Helpless until we went into action because they thought we only had one or two propellers, but the Shropshire could keep up with the American destroyers. When I tell you about the battle of

04:30 Surigao Strait, I can tell you, we could keep up with the American destroyers.

Why did they call you Helpless and Hopeless?

Because we looked so cumbersome. Big long ship and that old fashioned. They thought their modern ships were a lot better than ours, but once we got into action they found it was slightly different.

Can you take us through the Shropshire from the stern

05:00 **to the bow?**

Right. Well at the aft end, below decks.... The aft part of the ship is the officers quarters and the officers mess deck and...not mess deck, they call it ward room. They were flash. Then you come forward a bit and it's about three decks below the top of the ship, you go down and as you go forward there is different

05:30 mess decks they call them. Mess deck is the wrong name. The cafeteria is actually the mess deck but they still call them mess decks, where you slept. In past ages you ate there too but when I was on it you had your own eating quarters which was actually the mess deck, but the living quarters was right throughout the ship. When you got midships that's where

06:00 you ate your meals, and on the first deck under the level was the sickbay, which was right underneath two four-inch guns. Well the four-inch guns were dual. Sickbay was straight below those, same as on the Australia. The Australia and the Shropshire were both, what the English called county style cruisers. Ten thousand tons and

06:30 six hundred and twenty-eight foot long .On normal cruising speed they carried enough fuel to go round the world, they reckoned. When they are going flat out she would really pour the smoke out. At one stage they were doing over thirty knots, which is about forty-mile an hour. That's moving through the water.

07:00 The other decks... there is sickbays and when you get down there's the CO2 [carbon dioxide] room where they have all the bottles of CO2 gas. Incidentally one blew one night and they thought it was being torpedoed. There was an explosion during the night and over came the signal to close all

watertight doors. We later found out that it was one of the CO2 bottles that had just exploded down there. It did no damage to the ship but it just exploded down there.

07:30 What was the CO2 for?

I don't know. Refrigeration more than likely. I guess anyway, refrigeration. They had refrigeration on the ship to keep all the food stuffs and that. And that's what they'd have there. They had all the oxy bottles there too. If they ever wanted to do the welding and things like that they had the oxy bottles too. I've seen them in action

08:00 using the oxy bottles. But I imagine the CO2 bottles were for refrigeration. Also down there, there was all the radar officers and when you go down the lower decks there was the... where the fighter control was, where the information came from the radar sets down to there where the gunnery officer was and all his crew.

08:30 That was well below about waterline. Up the top they had the fighter direction turrets. They would have the officer there and the crew up there and they would have the turrets facing the targets that they wanted. The information was sent down there, and if they wanted to fire the guns they would press the trigger to fire the guns but the guns wouldn't go off unless the ship was perfectly level.

09:00 It must have stabilized, or something. But the ship had to be perfectly level because if you imagine the ship is firing about seven mile away and if the ship is not perfectly level it will either be over or under. It must have been on gyros or something like that, the ship had to be perfectly level before the guns would actually fire. That's the big eight-inch guns, but the four-inch weren't like that. They would just fire at the targets and

09:30 that was the eight-inch. As I said the sickbay is usually on about the second deck from the top. The officers' quarters are at the rear end, near their wardrooms. And one of the radar offices was down there as well. The radar set is up on the deck but all the crew is downstairs where all the information comes down.

10:00 That hut down there is where we used to meet of a night and swap yarns and things like that. Also while we were down there, while we was up at Manus, they decided to make a rhyme to 'God Bless them All'. I happen to have a copy of that. I just found it recently and put it on my

10:30 computer. We took months doing it and I don't know whether there are any other chaps who...There were about five or six chaps who were involved in it. We wrote the words and the choruses. It was quite funny then and quite entertaining to make this out.

Can you give us a bit of it please?

Not off memory, but it was in that copy I gave you earlier.

11:00 How did it start?

"Oh bless them all..." There was something about the chief petty officers and the 'hooks' which were the leading seamen. We called them 'hooks'. And the same as the song Bless them all with naval terms in it. "The Shroppy and...The Pride of the

11:30 Ocean..." and things like that. There were several verses in it. Later on - which I didn't get a copy of it; we wrote another parody of a song. And that was Pistol Packing Mama but we called it "Bofors Packing Shropshire".

Can you give us a bit of that one?

No, not that one. About all I can remember is writing the second parody on a popular song. That was our pastime up at Manus.

12:00 Did you have any ones that stick in your mind that you could recite for us?

Oh I don't think. I never learned the poem. When I found the copy I just put it on the computer.

Ok.

That's about the lot of the what's a names.

Tell us about the armament, the anti-aircraft armament on the Shropshire?

There were four twin four-inch guns. So there

12:30 was eight four-inch guns as anti-aircraft guns. Two eight barrel pompoms as I previously said and thirteen Bofors. But that was all the anti-aircraft. And we used the eight-inch for anti-aircraft too. That was about the only ship that used their main armaments for anti-aircraft. You can imagine an eight-inch shell bursting against a four-inch shell, so we knocked down a few planes. And as I said, the Australia said, "You knock them down. We'll catch them."

13:00 Did you know about kamikaze planes at that time?

No not until they hit us. They started coming in. The first, as I said it was about two days, a day and a half or two days after we arrived there, before the Japanese planes started to come.

This was in Milne Bay?

No, this was...We never saw an enemy plane until we got to Leyte.

- 13:30 We went right through all the campaigns. We were in about eleven landings where the troops landed and we bombarded before we got to the Philippines. We didn't have any guns fired at us or any enemy aircraft.

That was the major role of the Shropshire at that time?. Bombardment? Shore bombardment?

Bombardment for troops landing or troops ashore wanting support.

- 14:00 We'd go in and blast them.

When you were first on the Shropshire what was your main job?

First of all I was down in the... where the fire control is downstairs. I was on that. That's where I learned about the overs and unders with the shelling. I was on that for a while and then

- 14:30 they shifted me up onto the fighter control where you have the enemy aircraft. And that was my main job, and once I had that one I stayed there until I got my discharge.

Tell us about the first time when you were on radar gunnery operations when you were firing from the Shropshire?

Yes. It was a practice shoot. One of the American ships

- 15:00 was towing a target. About half a mile just behind us was this target and you could see the target on the radar. That was the first indication I had of the overs and unders. You could see the little blips going across which were the shells and you would see it land and then you had a microphone which went to the main

- 15:30 officer in charge or one of his offsidars there, whether it was over, under or left or right. They would then make the adjustments. We had a good gunnery officer because later on when we were at Borneo at Balikpapan we had to fire at an oil well on the reverse slope of a hill. Can you imagine trying to get a shell over a mountain

- 16:00 and on the reverse slope. And the first shot he hit the target. The spotter plane said he'd never seen shooting like that before. We heard that on the radio. You would hear the spotter and all he wanted to know was when we were going to open fire. Well it was the gunnery officer working out the distance and everything like that, and he got it first shot.

How could you see it over the hill? Could you see your target over the hill?

We couldn't see it over the hill but the American plane was up,

- 16:30 one of those small planes. He was spotting. He told us where it was and you have a reference map with all the grids and that on it. The plane told us where the actual oil well they wanted to hit was on the grid, and they worked it out from there. But they'd have a reference point, a mountain or something like that or a hill. They would have a reference point and then they'd say so

- 17:00 many grids past that point. And we'd have the map and they'd work it out from there.

What was the first bombardment that you took part in?

Dutch New Guinea. The first one yes, that was up at Arawe in New Britain.

- 17:30 It was just before Christmas 1943 and then the troops landed at cape Goucester and the next bombardment was Cape Goucester on Christmas day. The troops landed on Christmas day and then we came back and had Christmas dinner on the fifth of January.

Can you tell us about that bombardment on Christmas day?

Well it was just a matter of standing out to sea. And as I said, we had no opposition. We just

- 18:00 bombarded the Japanese and there was no opposition, no aircraft, no shore guns, nothing. They were more or less sitting ducks, and we were firing at them all the time. This went on all the time. All up through Dutch New Guinea, up to Sansapor which is on the end of New Guinea. Vanimo, Aitape and Paup. All those places we bombarded for the American soldiers to go in.

- 18:30 Then we went to the Hulmaheras, which is half way to the Philippines from New Guinea. We bombarded there and once again no opposition and Australian troops went in, and also the Americans and the Australian air force was there at Moratai.

- 19:00 It was just too simple we thought. If this is war, what is it? Until we hit Leyte we didn't know what war

was.

You snagged a mine though. That must have been pretty...When did you snag the mine? When did you hit that mine?

We never hit it. It got fouled on the way to Leyte. We were on the way to Leyte and it fouled the..., I think it was the port paravane.

19:30 Anyway it was dragged. It was a fair way off the ship but it was close enough anyway for us. Once we got up to Leyte it was alright.

What's it like being on a ship when you are bombarding the shore?

Very noisy, and today they have probably got ear muffs. We had no ear muffs or ear plugs.

20:00 That's why I've got a disability pension for my deafness.

Weren't you down stairs in a room away from all the noise?

No, there was only an open door to the bridge and there are guns all around us going off. If you shut the door you could still hear the guns.

20:30 I don't know how the blokes on the upper decks got on. So you'd hear the ding ding and then the guns going off, and if you were anywhere near the upper decks you would have to put your hands over your ears. But I did have a.... I know on one engagement we fired over three hundred shells.

21:00 **This was? Which engagement was that?**

One of the landings.

Do you remember which one?

No. I don't know which one. It might be in that story I wrote somewhere. I wrote that story over twelve months or so ago, and every now and again I break in and spot it in the thing. And then I've got a copy of a book called 'The Shropshire'

21:30 and I've got a lot more information out of there, including dates of when things happened.

At the time how informed were you about how the war was going?

We were normally told, or by scuttlebutt. The rumours were getting around that we were headed up to Sansapor which was in Dutch New Guinea and that we were going up there for bombarding. So we

22:00 heard all these things. One night on the Shropshire they ran into a floating log and damaged one of their propellers so they had to wait until we got back to Sydney, go into dry-dock and get the propeller fixed. They made temporary repairs, the divers and that. We had divers onboard the ship and they went over in their gear and inspected the propeller and it was a bit rough and the aft end of the ship would vibrate a bit

22:30 because propeller was out of alignment. So it was fixed up when we got back to Sydney. We usually got back to Sydney once every six months anyway.

Did you have an airplane on the...

No. Not of the Shropshire. Only on the Australia. There was no plane on the Shropshire. We had torpedo tubes but they were taken off before we went to Leyte.

23:00 We took our torpedo tubes off because they weren't much use to us. We had no opportunity to use them. But there was one thing - when we was coming home on leave once, we went to Bougainville on the Solomon Islands and they offloaded most of our ammunition into an ammunition dump out

23:30 in the jungle. And the Australian troops there, with their trucks...we brought ashore the ammunition and it was loaded onto trucks and taken out to the dump where they were storing all the ammunition. In between loads - they had the old vines there and we would be Tarzan swinging around on these vines they had out near the dump where they were putting all the ammunition in.

24:00 Later on that ammunition, the ammunition ship picked it up and brought it up north for us when we were running short of ammunition.

How did they take all the ammunition off the ship?

Oh they had cranes there and later they would put it into barges. And then the barges go ashore and they take it off and put it into trucks, a couple of ton truck, then just

24:30 through the jungle, out to where they were storing it.

Why did they take all the ammunition off the ship?

Well to take all the ammunition back to Sydney, which was about a week...They didn't take the lot off.

They must have known there wasn't much likelihood of any contact with enemy shipping. They didn't take the lot off. They just took some off...

- 25:00 most of it off and stored it there and later on when we needed it, an ammunition ship would go into Bougainville, load it up and bring it north for us. It would save them going all the way to Sydney or Brisbane or somewhere to pick up ammunition for us. We would get it a lot quicker that way. Sometimes, some of those engagements, especially the battle of Leyte or Surigao Strait we used that much ammunition -
- 25:30 four-inch, eight-inch. Sometimes after the air raids you would go there and there would be a big pile of the Bofors shells or the pompom shells lying all over the deck. They had to sweep them overboard to get rid of them. That's where some of the blokes would take a few as souvenirs, and I was lucky there, and when I come back after
- 26:00 the war a friend of mine saw them and he said, "Oh I've got a friend who does, you know, the plating that they put on them. Chroming." So I got them chromed for nothing and it's a good souvenir to keep.

As you were doing these beach bombardments were you able to watch from outside at any time?

Yes. I could watch if there was

- 26:30 no air raid. Until we got to Leyte we stood outside and watched all the bombardments because there were no aircraft within range. No enemy aircraft. So their own planes were up there.

What was the most memorable bombardment that you watched?

Lingayen Gulf. The

- 27:00 American planes dropped these napalm bombs. They'd burn everything in sight. They were just tar, kerosene and just one big sheet of flame goes out and burns everything in its sight, and then we were bombarding as well. And then the rocket launching ships, they were more or less
- 27:30 little ships that went in there and they had all rocket fire. They were firing these rockets. Before the war I used to go over to the showground with my brother and watch the motorbikes out there at Paddington. You'd hear the motorbikes revving up and that's what it reminded me of - when we used to go motorbike riding at Sydney Showground. But they made a noise, and that was the
- 28:00 one occasion, only one occasion we ever got shelled. While I was in Lingayen a shore battery opened up on us, and once again a shortened over, and we changed course and then gave a full broadside on the target. It was the railway line. We think it was a gun on rails, a gun on the railway line that was firing at us.
- 28:30 We silenced it anyway, and that was the only time we ever got shelled.

Was that the first time that you'd come under fire?

First time we came under fire was the second day and a half after we landed at Leyte when we were bombarding Tacloban.

Did you know that you were heading for a far more difficult operation when you were heading

- 29:00 **for Leyte?**

When they told us...When we were on the ship it was the middle of the convoy. There were ships all the way to the horizon in front and ships all the way to the horizon behind us, and they said it would be bigger than the landing in Normandy. So that was enough for us to realize it was...We'd heard what D-Day in Normandy was. We'd heard what

- 29:30 that was like and seen films on it, usually when we were home on leave. And we knew this was one time we would see heavy action.

When was that?

October '44 I think it was. And it was

- 30:00 the first enemy plane we had ever seen was about two days out. A lone Japanese plane spotted the fleet and the Americans... they wasted that much ammunition on that one plane it wasn't funny. You'd think there was a real squadron of planes because every ship was firing at this one plane. It was like a curtain of fire, and the Yanks
- 30:30 use too much ammunition I reckoned. They just fired willy nilly just to fire the guns I reckon. They weren't too accurate at times, and at other times there was that many shells going off at the one time, they blew them to bits. It was interesting to watch that type of thing, but the only other time
- 31:00 when we were in the sea battle, these shells coming from the Japanese Yamashiro. When we did the belly dive. That's the only other time that...I wasn't actually scared, but it was a bit of a hairy time I

thought.

Can you...This was a fleet action?

Fleet action.

Into Leyte?

Part of the American 7th Fleet we were. Task force 74.

31:30 That was the Nashville, Phoenix, Chicago and a lot of the other ships were part of this fleet.

As you were running in did you have your battle ensign up?

We'd have the big ensign, like the navel ensign, and also the Australian flag. One of the biggest Australian flags I've seen. It was a huge flag when they put it up, and the battle ensign.

32:00 The Australian Blue Flag.

How did that make you feel to see that flying when it was up?

Good.

What do you mean?

It was good because all the Yanks around us and there were these four Australian ships in amongst them. General Macarthur... if it was an American action, he'd say the Americans did it. He wouldn't say Australians. He wouldn't say Australians; he'd say the Allies did it. Same as New Guinea.

32:30 When the Japanese got turned around, it wasn't the Americans, it was the Allies. He wouldn't say the Australians beat the Japanese.

Did it make you feel proud to be there at that time?

Oh yes. Good that we came through without a scratch, that was the main thing.

Did the Captain talk to you about the significance of what you were going to do?

He addressed the crew on the loud speaker all throughout the ship,

33:00 before we were going to Leyte. He told us what to expect. He gave us a good talk over the intercom.

What did he say?

That we were part of so many ships that was going to Leyte and there were so many American troops to be landed. And that there were some other Australian ships up there, some mine sweepers and the Westralia and

33:30 the Manoora. There were already up there as part of this fleet. There was more than the four Australian ships in the convoy. Actually the Australian mine sweepers went in and swept some of the channels into Leyte two days before the big ships came. The Japs should have been prepared because with their aircraft there they knew that someone was minesweeping their waterway.

34:00 But they didn't catch on.

How long had you been on the Shropshire at this stage?

About eighteen months or so.

How much home leave had you had during that time?

I think about three times we came home and had twenty-eight days leave each time. About three times I think it was.

34:30 And after Leyte we came home and had another twenty-eight days leave and then we went back and had the battle of Surigao Strait. No, we had the battle of Surigao Strait before we came home, and then we went to Lingayen Gulf to the landing on Luzon which was the big island of the Philippines, and that's when most of the action happened.

35:00 We didn't have the number of aircraft against us. The Japanese ran out of suicide planes before we ran out of ammunition. But at one stage the Japanese had captured a couple of downed American planes. They'd just loaded them up with bombs and were using them as suicide planes. And word went out that all American planes had to keep away from the ships.

35:30 And this day one American plane got jumped by the Japanese, and he flew down amongst the ships and we shot him down. We shot one of our own down.

Who shot him down?

The Americans and the Australians - we were firing at him as well.

Which ship claimed the...

I don't know which ship claimed it. There was that many firing. I don't know who would claim it. But the pilot recovered. He was wounded but...We had the speakers on

36:00 in our room and he was screaming over the radio, "Stop your firing! Stop your firing! I'm friendly." But he was given instructions not to go anywhere near the ships because of these Japanese who had captured American planes. They were captured and they would suicide onto the ships.

Where would they capture the planes from?

Probably shot down or something like that. They weren't damaged that much and they'd do them up and then they'd

36:30 go out.

Can you tell us about the first time you encountered aircraft attack in Leyte.

Yeah well. The first time when we reported the planes coming in a couple of hundred mile away. No, they weren't a couple of hundred - they came from about two hundred mile away and we'd pick them up anywhere up to one hundred and fifty. Up to one hundred and seventy-five was the extreme range of the radar. So the airfield was over in Luzon

37:00 Island, which is a couple of hundred miles away and they'd come down. Once they were within range we would report them and the aircraft carriers never came into harbour. They were standing well out to sea. And then they'd send the planes out to intercept them.

Had the Shropshire established its reputation at this stage?

Yes. That made the reputation. Leyte made the reputation.

But before that they just didn't believe you. Is that right?

37:30 Yeah. What was the name they called us later on? J bird was our call sign on the radio. We got a lot of praise from the things for all the radar reports on sighted aircraft.

You'd been doing some training...Had you been doing any training with the Americans before you went into Leyte?

Oh yes. Only the

38:00 what's a name - the gunnery shoots. That was the only thing and the planes would fly over with these sleeves. They would drag them behind them. Like for anti-aircraft fire. That's the only times we'd be doing any practise with the Americans.

Do you remember seeing or being told of these planes coming towards you at that time?

No. There had never been any planes.

38:30 **In Leyte, coming into Leyte?**

There was one...

Do you remember having to plot those on for the first time.

Yeah. That was the first one. The Betsy. Once it got near the ships, it never had a chance. It never did any damage. It was shot down before it could do any damage. It was just a reconnaissance plane. They probably sent the word back to say they had spotted a big fleet.

39:00 We had no opposition until we got into Leyte attack moment. That was the first opposition about a day and a half after we bombarded. But Macarthur, he was on the Nashville, which was an American battleship, and he went ashore and we were only about half a mile away from him when he returned. He said "I shall return," and we were with him when he

39:30 returned.

Can you describe seeing that?

Yeah. Well, it's all a lot of boats. When the Americans went ashore, it was safe by the time we went ashore. All the Japanese were pushed back a few miles. He made a big fuss going ashore. Him and all these other boats going ashore, and from the landing ships.

40:00 And we couldn't see him but anyone with glasses could. We'd saw all the boats going in. He was amongst them and the Yanks...wherever they went they made a show. Real showmanship. But I got on alright with them as far as personnel were concerned, but they were always better than anyone else.

40:30 So they reckon.

Didn't you think you were better than anyone else?

Well we had better radar. We would throw that up at them. Who did all the reports of the aircraft coming in? The Shropshire! J Bird! I was proud to be a radar operator on the Shropshire because it kept you busy and if you are busy

- 41:00 you haven't got time to think about what else is going on, other than what you are doing. And I think that is a lot of the reason why you don't crack up. The wife reckons it took me seven years after I came home before the...I used to jump in my sleep and that. Nerves. Seven years from the time the war ended I got over it.
- 41:30 But it meant I'd be asleep and I wouldn't know I was doing it in my sleep she said. Often I have kicked her lying in bed. But it was good that way.

Tape 7

- 00:33 Let's see, there was the Australia, the Shropshire, the Hobart at one stage.

That's an interesting point. Before we go on we'll talk about that on camera. How does that make you feel that people don't generally recognize that there were Australians fighting in the Philippines?

Well that's the...Well it should be in Australian history but it's not. See the battle of Surigao Strait, hardly anyone has ever heard of it. There was

- 01:00 sixteen Japanese ships, and fifteen American and two Australian ships in that. And the Arunta, the Australian destroyer was even in charge of one lot of boats going in. In the end he was told to get out. He fired his torpedos more or less at two thousand yards. And the American ones, they fired their torpedoes and shot through, and he was left on his own to face the Japanese
- 01:30 ships. He fired all his torpedoes and he scored hits. Because the others were that far away, it was more or less hit or miss with them.

This was shortly after the Leyte engagement we were talking about a few minutes ago?

No. It was part of it.

At the same time?

Yes. The air force told us that the Jap ships were coming.

- 02:00 We went to intercept them, but it was at three o'clock in the morning we started the engagement. Just after dawn it came through in perfect English that the Japanese fleet had come through the north passage and was attacking the landing...the ships at the landing zone. So we broke off the engagement and went rushing back, and it was only that the Japanese had put the broadcast in to take the heat off. But the damage had been done to the Japanese ships. They had nearly all been sunk, and what didn't
- 02:30 sink got sunk on the way back out.

Was this a landing? What was the Japanese fleet doing?

They were trying to come up to hit the fleet. See, they came in from the south through the Surigao Strait past Mindanao and they came up through the Surigao strait...

I'll just stop while the phone rings.

I was saying that they came down, and the American third

- 03:00 fleet intercepted the Jap fleet going down the other way, and there was a big sea battle up there. It was the American aircraft carriers against the Japanese aircraft carriers. There was a big battle up there, and ours was the only sea battle that happened there.

So this battle that you mentioned that the Arunta was featured in,

- 03:30 **what was the Shropshire's role in the battle of the Surigao Strait?**

We fired over three hundred shells at the Yamashiro and other ships. In fact once again our gunnery officer didn't open fire until about four minutes after the word to open fire was given. The Yanks wanted to know if there was something wrong with our guns. Once again the first shell hit the Japanese ship and put it on fire.

- 04:00 See, so he was that way. They just opened fire willy nilly sort of thing and hoped they hit the target, but with the radar he got the actual range, the directions, what directions we were going in, and it's very complicated. If two ships are moving in different directions and you've got to hit the other ship - there are a lot of complex

04:30 working out to do.

It is also quite a complex operation to have a fleet working together like this. Especially American ships and Australian ships. How does that kind of work in that kind of engagement.

Well we had an American admiral who was in charge of the fleet, and we were allotted a certain position. We had to keep... like the ship was there and we might be five-hundred or seven-hundred meters apart, sort of thing.

05:00 And you had to keep your station, and that was part of our radar work. You had to make sure that you were the right distance away from that ship.

What about communication between the ships?

Well once the action started it would be radio. They had the blinkers and the flags but also they

05:30 had the red light. You can't see it. The one they can blink at night time, and if you've got glasses you can see it blinking.

Right.

They had those signals going too. Yeah. They had the infrared I think they called it, going, and that's where they could communicate.

How long did this entire action from the first engagement at Leyte to the battle of the Surigao Strait...how long did that take?

Oh a couple of

06:00 weeks I think - two or three weeks I think.

And so how much downtime do you have when the ship's engaged in action like this?

Very little. Very little.

What is your role. What are you doing on an hour to hour basis in this kind of engagement.

Well while we were at action stations we were either tracking our planes or enemy planes during the daylight hours. Even during the night time we tracked the planes if there's any around. And when the

06:30 ships closed up to action stations, it was half hour on half hour off, we used to have. Once they relaxed it was four hours on and four hours off. In four hours you would go and have a meal and a sleep and they would come and get you when it was time to change watch. If you slept in someone would come down and wake you up, because they knew where you slept anyway. Then you would do the same for them. They went off for four hours during the night.

07:00 **How long at any one time would the ship be at action stations?**

At Lingayen it was about three days.

Three days with half hour on half hour off? How do you cope with that after a while?

No actually three hours on three hours off and then four hours break was what we did on ours - that was during the daylight hours but at night time you would get time off.

07:30 During the day you would be on and off sort of thing, because of the pressure you were under. Yeah, for three days there were air raids practically all the time during the day and at night time it was tracking all the enemy planes coming in. They were bringing in reinforcement planes and we tracked them to where they went, where they disappeared from, and you would get an idea where the enemy air field

08:00 was, and things like that. We had to track them. But during the night hours we still had to do it, but that was four hours on and four hours off at night time.

Did the fighters and Japanese or your own planes need the daylight to assist in bombing?

We never got attacked in the dark by the Japanese.

Do you know why that was?

Possibly ...

08:30 they couldn't see. Most of the time... I don't remember if there were any moonlit nights or not but I suppose they wanted to see and make sure of their targets. See, and the Japanese up at Lingayen Gulf, they threw drift wood and then they were throwing hand grenades under the ships. At night time you would hear the machinegun

09:00 fire. If someone saw a floating log near the ship they would open fire on it. The Americans would open fire on it in case it was Japanese.

Can you just explain in a little more detail how they used driftwood like this?

Well up in Lingayen there was a fair amount of driftwood. And they would lay with it, and the smaller ships... they couldn't attack the big ships

09:30 because it was that far out of the water...from the deck to the waterline is too far. But the small minesweepers and the other little ships, when they got close in they used to toss hand grenades onto the deck of the ships.

There would be Japanese swimmers on the driftwood?

Yes, on the driftwood, and after the first couple of nights the Yanks, from then on, put machinegun fire everywhere.

10:00 **Did you ever see any Japanese using themselves in this way?**

No I never saw any but I heard plenty of gun fire in the night time. You couldn't stay out on the open deck because of the ricochets. So you stayed inside.

Can you explain...You must have had a fairly good idea of what was happening in the battle, being in the radar room?

Yes. We did. We knew how many aircraft...whether there was twenty aircraft approaching or fifty aircraft approaching.

10:30 Then you'd hear the American pilots saying "Tally ho". They'd seen them and then you'd hear them talking on the radio. "Watch it. There's someone on your tail, Joe."

Who were they talking to?

Pilots talking between themselves.

And why would you pick that up on the Shropshire?

We had several radios and one was tuned into the aircraft. We'd hear the instructions

11:00 going out that were relayed to their command ship, and then we could hear the pilot's reply. That's why the others in our room...those on the radios were there so we could listen to what's going on.

Having such a good point of which to oversee the whole battle did you ever doubt that you would win it?

11:30 Never doubted it..

How did it start off? Was there a point...

We had that much shipping in there and so many aircraft carriers out to sea. Anywhere the Americans went they went in numbers. They outnumbered the Japanese, I don't know, by how many people, but on that island of Leyte they landed I don't know, about two hundred and fifty thousand men.

12:00 And there was only a few thousand Japanese on the island. They blasted them that much by the air and by the sea that they decimated them in places.

How many casualties were there on the allies' side?

I've seen a report. There was a report there of the casualties,

12:30 and the enemy casualties were a heck of a lot more than the American casualties.

Well we don't need exact figures but did you see planes getting shot down on the radar for instance?

Yeah I've seen them with the eight-inch guns getting shot down. I've seen them with the four-inch guns and the pompoms. I've seen the pompoms shoot down a couple of planes.

What would happen when you are tracking a plane on radar and it gets shot down? What do you see in the radar room?

Oh I see nothing there but

13:00 when we did the tracking we weren't tracking within ten mile of our ship. We were tracking further out because once they got that close there is no use tracking it. See, the other radar that is on the eight-inch guns, they have a radar operator and a gunner there. The gunner points the aerial at the incoming aircraft, and the radar operator does his work. And that's independent.

13:30 As I said thirteen radar sets and each radar set... well, it has it's own duty to do. It does what's its meant for.

How would you sum up the duty of the radar centre you were in? What would be the description of that duty?

Well the duty of the 282 which I was involved with, our duty was to... once we got a report from the

operator who was operating the set,

14:00 we'd then start plotting the plane or the group of planes. You could tell whether it was one single plane or a group. Sometimes they'd come in anywhere up to fifty planes at a time. And we'd be tracking them. They'd be anywhere from 100 mile to 150 mile away, and the Americans would send their planes out to intercept them and then you'd hear the dog fights where they met one another. An odd one would get

14:30 passed and we'd have to track that until it got within ten mile of the place. Then the local ships, if they couldn't get anyone to intercept him, would have to shoot him down.

So the Shropshire's role was not just bombardment, it was actually radar as well?

Yes. A radar ship.

But at the same time it was bombarding the shore?

It was bombarding the shore, Yeah. Even the four-inch guns,

15:00 they bombarded with the four-inch guns as well as the eight-inch guns. Once we got there... once the air raid started, it was only the four-inch guns that were bombarding because the eight-inch guns were being used for anti-aircraft.

It must be...I know everyone has their one role and it's easy to do their one job, but it must be hard to control all this from the bridge. How did the captain and the others on the bridge work with all these different functions?

Well each

15:30 section has got its own responsibilities. The captain up there - if he sees a plane coming, or a torpedo coming, he's got to make up his mind how to get away from the torpedo. We were torpedoed a few times and they missed us. I've seen a torpedo miss us by about fifteen or twenty feet going parallel with the ship. I've seen one go past the bow of the ship. But the captain's got to make up his mind if it's coming then he's either got to

16:00 put the engine in reverse to stop the motion of the ship so the torpedo goes across our bows instead of hitting us. That's his duty; to keep the ship, as far as he is concerned, in a safe position while the rest of us, like in our section we had to keep contact with all of our planes and the Japanese planes.

How does the radar plotter take into account the evasive action of

16:30 **your own ship when you don't know where it's going to move from one moment to the next?**

Well the captain's got to make up his mind. There's hardly any radar used on that part. There's no radar used on that part. The only radar the captain of the ship uses is when we are travelling at night to keep ourselves safely away from any other ship in convoy with us. We might pick up an island or a log. The radar can also pick up a floating log.

17:00 It's got to be high enough out of the water to create...a good operator can tell.

But when you are tracking the planes at one hundred and fifty miles, is your ship moving?

Yes we're moving.

And does that affect your readings on the plotting?

Yes. We're moving at a certain speed and the operator tells us what direction the plane

17:30 is going at that moment, and then in a three minute lapse of time we were supposed to be able tell the officer in charge what direction they are flying and what speed they are doing.

What if the ship changes direction within those three moments? What happens then?

Oh it hardly changes. In three minutes it hardly changes direction.

Your cruiser couldn't turn like a destroyer obviously?

18:00 No. It couldn't.

How long would it take to change direction in a cruiser like that?

Well when the typhoon was in, it took seven miles to do a 180-degree turn. So she was really rough that night. But normally it won't make 180-degree turns - only in emergencies.

18:30 See it took seven mile to make a big U turn. They don't turn on the spot sort of thing. They go right round.

Were you close to the Arunta during this...

Yes. It wasn't far off us. In fact when we left Leyte to go up to Lingayen Gulf a suicide bomber hit her and killed fifteen of her crew. But the damage wasn't great and she

19:00 just carried on and she was up there at...The damage wasn't had, it was only superficial I believe but there were fifteen men killed on the Arunta.

You were the only two Australian ships in the fleet at the time?

No. The Australia and the Arunta. When we first went to Leyte there was the Australia, the Shropshire, Warramunga and Arunta. But when the Australia got hit five times in

19:30 Leyte the Warramunga escorted her home to Sydney for repairs, and the Warramunga never got back to us in time for the Lingayen engagement. The troop transport ships were the Westralia and the Manoora and the Wangpo. There were a few other troop ships that had troops on.

20:00 They were in the engagement at Leyte and then a couple of mine sweepers, the Gascoyne was one and they swept the channels into Leyte for us.

How do troop ships take part in this sort of engagement?

They carried troops from Dutch New Guinea up to the Philippines and then they have the landing barges on which they'd off load the troops and they'd

20:30 go ashore that way.

Are they able to defend themselves?

They just had machine guns and probably Bofors. They had some protection but not like the Arunta or things like that. They had a lot more fire power. The destroyers had some fire power but they were dependent on the other ships to do the majority of

21:00 the defending.

Was there a special relationship between the Australian ships within this fleet?

Which one's that? The English?

Within the...

Task force 74...Well we got on alright together. I know the Shropshire, at one stage when we were at Manus...for a case of whiskey we bought a

21:30 a jeep off the Yanks. We brought it back to the ship, loaded it on the ship and painted it blue. Our number was C34 so they painted C34 on the front of the jeep, and when they came back to Sydney they used to drive it round the streets of Sydney. This jeep for a case of whiskey. That was a good joke that was. I went ashore at Manus to one of the places where they

22:00 used to get the stores. Oh it was a quagmire, like all those tropical places. Too much rain and those four wheel drives...those big army trucks. They would just churn the mud up.

Before we finish talking about this battle situation, how did you deal with the fatigue in that kind of intense operation?

If you...

22:30 sometimes you can snatch half and hour here and half and hour there., The night time you could get some rest because there was respite from the planes, but day time...like during those three days it was weary. But you got a few hours sleep at night. At least you got four hours

23:00 sleep or three and a half ours sleep during the four hours you had off. Either from midnight to four am or from eight o'clock to midnight. You'd get a bit of sleep then if you were on or off.

How did that constant concentration take its toll on the crew's relationships?

Oh there was a few blues in different sections. Frayed nerves and a couple of punch

23:30 ups but none of our radar mob was involved in that, mainly the other ones. They took to it. But we were alright with it.

Was there anyone whose nerves were a bit shot from that kind of thing?

Not really. Not really. You never noticed anyone go off the rails

24:00 as they say.

Did it happen from time to time?

It could have done, but not anyone I know. One bloke who used to sleep on the other deck went down with TB [Tuberculosis] and they had to ship him back to Australia. But he used to sleep out in the open

24:30 on the ship. If it rained during the night he didn't bother getting out of his sleeping thing. In the

morning he'd just get up and he was a fool unto himself, we reckon. He didn't look after himself. He was there to sleep and he'd sleep in the rain and all.

Were there any other physical problems that the crew suffered during this time?

Not really. The only thing that I didn't like...because some of the

- 25:00 stokers down in the engine room suffered from heat exhaustion. They collapsed from heat exhaustion, so the order came through that we had to take four of these salt tablets. The order came through that everyone on board had to take four salt tablets a day. And now I'm not fussy whether I have salt or not when I came home. I've gone off salt. That's the only thing I didn't like about it was these four salt tablets every day that we had to take. But one thing too, every time... we became pincushions. Every time we went back to Sydney we'd have some new crew on, so the first day out we'd have to line up for needles. Typhus and smallpox...irrespective of whether you had it last time, three months ago or six months ago you had it again. We become pincushions.

- 26:00 Not that we didn't like it, but we could have done without all these needles I reckon.

When you did get leave after this sort of engagement what did you do to try and blow off steam?

Oh go back up the country there on the farm. Help on the farm for a while. Milk cows and things like that. We had the cattle. I'd plough or

- 26:30 pull corn or something like that. Something on the farm up there. Then I'd go back down to Maitland, to my sister's place and go and see her. That's where I learned to drive. My brother-in-law was driving a truck to pick up hay round there and I got the job of...I had to drive the truck around while they picked the hay up. I learned to drive on a two ton truck. Never got it out of low gear.
- 27:00 That was the kind of relaxation we got. I can remember one day I went with the brother-in-law into Walls End with a load of hay on. He forgot that there was hay on top, and the hay was taller than the tram line...the tram overhead wires. It blew half his load of hay off and the policemen made him come down and load it back onto the truck again - all this hay on the road.
- 27:30 That was one of the funny things that happened while I was on leave.

How long, when you did get leave, did it take you just to get used to not being on ship?

By the time you got home on the train it used to take...You'd catch the train from Sydney at half past eight at night and you'd get home at seven the next morning. But by then you are home on leave and you just forget about it and enjoy yourself.

Did you have any trouble just adjusting to being on land?

No.

- 28:00 Oh a couple of times you'd be swaying as though you were still at sea. The comment was that you don't walk straight. You walk with a bit of a sway because the ship's rocking and you're going across like that. That's the only thing, and as I said, first day out after being twenty-eight days on leave and twenty-eight days in harbour, you get a bit squeamish and that was it. After that
- 28:30 first few hours you got over it and that was it.

Did you feel strange going back to the farm after having been away? Had you changed when you saw your father and your sister again?

I know my brother-in-law used to like me coming home because I had given up smoking and I used to bring home cartons of cigarettes. He liked to see me come home on leave because ever time I would bring him home a carton of Lucky, Camels or one of those

- 29:00 American cigarettes we used to get on board the ship. And my sister wanted to see me. She sent me photos of her eldest child and said, "Don't forget about this". I had a young niece. She didn't want me to join up because she was the one who reared me because she was only eleven when I was
- 29:30 born, when my mother died. She virtually reared me and was very attached to me.

Was it emotional for her when you came home to see her on leave?

Yeah it was a bit.

What sort of reception did she give you?

Oh a bit teary. She didn't like to see me go again. She would say, "You should have more leave." My other brother, he was in the army. She liked to see him

- 30:00 come home because he was up in New Guinea and he'd seen action a lot in New Guinea.

Do you think your being in the navy had matured you in this short time?

I think so, yeah because I had the first vote when I was seventeen. I voted at seventeen. Not long after

30:30 I went in, there was an election. We didn't know who to vote for so we just got this election slip and filled it out. There was only one name in there I knew, so I voted for him. That was a local man up in the country. I knew him so he got my vote. He'd been in so I thought that would be right.

Had you become more politically aware? How had you matured in the navy?

Well,

31:00 politically... with what they did to my uncle, I had given politics away. I thought if politics is like that then I don't want politics. They did the dirty on my uncle, the Labor Party did. So I gave the Labor Party away. It's the Liberal Party or new Country Party, Nationals, or Independents I vote for. I'm living in an electorate where the chap

31:30 I vote for has never been in because it's a fixed Labor seat, this one.

Did you spend any time in Sydney on leave after your aunt had died?

Only night leave because when I got the twenty-eight days I went straight up to Macksville. See the first twenty-eight days or the second twenty-eight days you go on leave, every other twenty eight days every other night you go on shore on leave. They have it in turns.

32:00 And then when you go on shore you've got to be back by next morning. You either come back during the night or if you've got somewhere to stop you can stay there the night. I either stopped with my brother or with the aunty. I remember one night a few of the mates wanted to go ice skating, so we went down to the ice rink just up from

32:30 Central railway. There was an ice rink up there. And I was going good, first time on ice. I was going along alright and this young girl came up behind me and she couldn't stop. I just put my hands out and I went straight down. I split my eye open. My sailor's white front was red with blood. I got it stitched, and the next morning I woke up and went onboard the ship and went down to the doctor and he put a couple of

33:00 stitches in it. They reckon I should have gone to hospital after I did it. I felt alright but I got slight concussion out of it. That was the only time I had been ice skating. I've never been ice skating since.

What was the reputation of sailors on shore leave in Sydney at the time?

Oh, don't trust a sailor.

Why would that be so?

Too many of them were chasing the girls, I think.

33:30 But I was only seventeen, eighteen up to twenty. I had my twenty-first birthday in Tokyo, and I wasn't interested in girls at that stage.

Did you ever get in any trouble on these leave occasions?

No, only that time I was on the sick leave when they wanted me to pay the fare from Macksville to Sydney and the leave pass said I had to report to Sydney. They wanted me to pay the fare. I showed it to some of the soldiers

34:00 there and they said, no, you don't pay. They didn't stop the train to put me off, so I got to Sydney and reported for duty.

After the Americans had returned to the Philippines, did the Shropshire's role in the war change slightly?

It changed then. After Leyte the Yanks appreciated

34:30 and knew what the Shropshire was capable of, as far as radar was concerned, and we had more respect from the American commanders, the Admirals of the fleet and that. We weren't just another number in the thing. We'd earned our place in the fleet.

Did you remain in that fleet for the rest of the war?

Yes. Task force 74

35:00 Then they changed it to 78. We joined a few other ships and they changed the number but we were still part of the American 7th fleet.

And your role was supporting the island hopping campaigns?

Yeah. We did that all the way through. All up through Dutch New Guinea and then up to Morotai and the Halmaheras and then on to Leyte. Then Borneo.

- 35:30 **There's been lots of argument since that those battles might have been unnecessary. That once MacArthur had taken the Philippines then that could have essentially been cleaned up later. And they've said that maybe they didn't need to take place. Was there any talk about that at the time that you recall?**
- No there wasn't any talk about that at the time. But they had to keep driving them back, and I
- 36:00 think the American bombing of Japan itself knocked the Japanese's morale back a lot. A lot of the Japanese... I've heard stories that the Japanese weren't aware that the Americans had bombed Japan.
- The atomic bomb or the bombing in general?**
- The bombing in general. This was before the atomic bomb. That really settled the issue, the atomic bomb. But
- 36:30 they'd do a raid on Tokyo when they weren't expecting it. Their home soil being bombed for the first time. A lot of the troops out in the islands never heard that news.
- And so they never doubted their role?**
- Their role. Yeah I think by leaving Hirohito in power it saved a heck of a lot of lives because
- 37:00 they believed him and when he said for them to surrender a lot of them did surrender rather than fight.
- You mentioned that a lot of the troops in the south west Pacific didn't know that the Americans were bombing Japan. What sort of news would you be getting and how would you be getting it?**
- When our mail comes through sometimes we would get local papers. You'd get letters from home.
- 37:30 I never had a letter censored through my whole time. Whether there wasn't anything in there that shouldn't have been there I don't know. But we had all our mail censored before it was sent. I never heard my sister or anyone say that there were parts cut out of my letter. I didn't mention where we were. I just said that we were on leave and things like that. We never say what actions
- 38:00 we are in, we just give a general idea. We might just say 'We've been playing deck hockey', and my sister is a good card player, because the whole family played. So I might say "I've been doing good at five-hundred" and things like that. That was all you could put in the letters. and until we got to the Philippines there was virtually no enemy action anyway. It was just a free slather for us to bombard
- 38:30 whenever we liked and wherever we liked.
- What was the hardest engagement you were involved in after the Philippines?**
- I suppose it would be Balikpapan. That was after the Philippines and then we went down to Balikpapan. And then we went around to the other side of the island and we bombarded there as well.
- 39:00 I just forget the name of the other place, but we bombarded there as well. And then when we were out patrolling the sea we got caught in a typhoon in May 1944. The ship was doing a great deal of rolling. We got too close to the Japanese mainland - within range of the Japanese mainland planes, so we were told to go back towards Borneo.
- 39:30 **We'll talk about that typhoon because we've sort of moved past it. But we'll move on for a minute because we have to change the tape. So we'll just stop.**

Tape 8

- 00:32 **Right. The biggest storm the Shropshire was in. Can you tell us about that? Where you were?**
- That was in May '44. We were patrolling the South China Sea, and in the storm... on the middle of the ship there is a brass thing with a knob hanging down
- 01:00 and it sways from side to side, and it has all the degrees marked on it. While I was off duty once I went down and had a look at it and it was swinging twenty-six degrees to port and then it would go back over twenty-six degrees to starboard. That is an indication of the roll the ship was doing. At the same time the waves would be crashing over the bows and the next thing the bows could be nearly out of the water.
- 01:30 In fact I've got a photo of the Chicago, one of the American battle ships. In one photo you can see daylight under its bows and in the next it has the water back to the second gun turret. So it was a pretty big storm. A lot of the crew got seasick. I didn't. I got the job of cleaning up the decks on several occasions. Blokes being seasick and they couldn't
- 02:00 get outside to bring it up, so I got the job of cleaning up their mess. There was one good thing about the

storm. When you went down for meals there was always plenty of food. No one wanted it. A lot of them were that sick they couldn't eat so you could have two or three meals if you wanted to. We got plenty of food on that occasion. Mind you we always had plenty of food to eat, but

02:30 on that occasion there was tons of it laid on. On one occasion someone opened one of the portholes to get some air in and the next thing a big wave washed in and washed all around the mess deck. It wasn't funny. It was a storm and a half really. I was going down from one deck to another and as I took the first step... I had my hands on the rails to steady myself,

03:00 and the ship lurched and I went feet first and landed on the deck below. That's why I've got a bad back now. I jarred my back and I had a sore back for a week or so. Being only twenty at the time I was young and silly and I didn't report it. I got over it alright, but in the last ten or fifteen years it's been turning against me. And the DVA [Department of Veteran Affairs]

03:30 won't accept my back as war related, but it definitely happened that way. I still got my pension alright but not for my back. That doesn't worry me. I've still got my pension and that's the main thing. With the DVA you can get your medical and all that with the gold card, so I am quite happy.

How did you prepare for that storm?

04:00 Oh you can't prepare for a storm. The only thing you can do is on the upper deck, they put on wire ropes along the deck, and if you're walking along the upper deck you've got to walk along hanging on to this rope. If a wave happens to come over the top, which they did, even though the Shropshire was fairly high out of the water...

04:30 some of those waves were about sixty foot high and when the bow hit those, the water would come all over the ship. Of course if you were on the upper deck you had a chance of being washed overboard. Of course we never ever lost anyone because of the guard rails on the side, and then they had the safety wires around where you could hang onto if you had to go on the upper deck. But most of the time you could get to where you wanted to

05:00 under... not on the open deck, but in the passageways on the different decks of the ship under the main deck.

Did you go outside on the deck to have a look at the storm?

No.

How did you see it?

Well the only place ...where I was stationed. It wasn't on the upper deck but just above the upper deck under the bridge. We could come up underneath and get into there without going through the

05:30 open deck. You could see there and stick your head out and get a shower and see the waves. I never saw the spray coming over the ship, only off other ships. You could see it on other ships that were in company with you.

Were you ever able to go onto the bridge?

No. I was never on the bridge. I was on the deck below the bridge because that was where I was stationed.

Were you allowed to go on the bridge at any time?

06:00 Not unless you were in trouble and they took you up before the captain - if it was something serious. The only time I got in trouble in the navy was the night of my twenty-first birthday. We used to get a bottle of beer. It cost us threepence which was about two cents. And we saved it up for quite a long while. There were two other blokes from the Nambucca River on the Shropshire,

06:30 and we all saved it up, and with some of my radar mates and the other two we saved up all this beer, and had a party down in one of the radar huts. The war was over so we had this drinking party, and I was fairly full. And going back to the place where I slept, the officer of the day was doing his rounds and caught us just as we were going into the toilet.

07:00 He wanted to know what we were doing out there and I was pretty full at the time so I said it was my twenty-first birthday today and he said, "Go to bed before I see you..." I reckon that was fair enough but that's the only time I've really got in trouble with an officer.

That's a pretty good run.

Yeah. A pretty good run.

Could the radar see weather? Was it that sophisticated?

Yeah. After the war, coming back from...

No, I was thinking of the

07:30 **typhoon. Could you see that typhoon coming towards you on the radar?**

Oh yes, yes, You could see it. Yeah. Radar can pick up rain. When we left Japan to come back to Sydney after the war, we'd say there's a shower approaching and so and so and they'd alter course so they wouldn't hit the rain. In the tropics a lot of the men slept on the upper deck, and we had to inform the bridge that there was a shower at so and so, and if you steered a course so and so

08:00 you might miss the shower. Up in the tropics I've seen rain and say with two ships about 100m apart, it would be raining on the other ship and we would be in full sunshine. I've seen that up there.

What about that typhoon? Could you spot that on the radar?

Yeah. They would have spotted that before we got to it but once you are in it... you still pick up any ships that are in it because it would be pretty rough on the thing.

08:30 But a good operator could pick up the other ships in the rain.

Where were you going then?

We were just doing a patrol. The Japanese had part of their fleet in Singapore and they were heading back to Japan. And we were out there to try and intercept them. The typhoon came and then after the storm was over we got too close

09:00 to China so they said we had to retire back to Borneo.

How long were you in the typhoon for by the way?

Oh it lasted a couple of days I think. Mid May '44 it was. I remember that date. We were in other storms but never like that. That was a storm and a half. That's where,

09:30 I fell from one deck to the other. That's what I remember.

Did you ever think the ship might be lost?

Not really because there's water-tight doors and in storms like that there's water-tight doors even if the ship got hold. It would take a heck of a long while too sink. If a mine hit you, if you ran into a mine or something like that you'd get water in certain parts

10:00 of the ship at the front and the rest would keep it afloat.

Did you ever think the ship might roll over though in that storm?

It was going twenty-six both ways. She was getting over. It never seemed to worry me at the time because I was only twenty at the time. I thought it was a bit of fun because being classed as a chronic sea sickness case and I was cleaning up their mess.

Did anything worry you?

Not really.

10:30 If there was no mail from home I would wonder what my sisters were doing. That's all.

But you did say you suffered for seven years afterward so there must have been something on your mind.

Oh just the tension I think. The tension and the relaxation after the war was over. Doing nothing. You are working flat out all the time then

11:00 after the war was over, instead of four hours on and four hours off you'd have four hours on and eight hours off, and things like that. And you'd only have eight hours a day to work and before you were doing twelve hours in twenty four.

How long were you on the four hours on and four hours off?

Until the war ended.

11:30 October '45 I think it was. From then on, while I was in Japan we used to get shore leave and go to Yokohama. They would put us on shore and we'd catch the train up.

There is just one more engagement I wanted to mention. There is the Balikpapan ones but there's also Surigao Bay?

12:00 Not Labuan. Labuan was the other part of...

What was the big engagement at Sagira or Surigao. What was the name?

Sanzapor. That was right on the west tip of western New Guinea.

Engagement with the Japanese?

Oh you're thinking of the Surigao Strait?

Surigao Strait.

That was a naval action.

12:30 It was the only naval action I was ever in. Sixteen Jap ships against forty-eight.

Did the Shropshire sink any ships?

Well it scored hits at least on the Yamashiro. She was the first one to hit it and set it on fire. Eventually the ship sunk and we shifted targets. A lot of ships were sunk there but you've got

13:00 all ships firing at targets in the area. And once the Yamashiro was knocked out we switched targets then, once she was well and truly alight, they switched targets to other ships. It wasn't just us that sunk her, it was part of the fleet. The Americans lost one ship. The destroyer, the Ommaney Bay got sunk. And nearly all their torpedo boats

13:30 got sunk in - those motorized speed boats I call them. The Yanks lost a lot of those.

How were you credited with the hits?

Oh, on the radar you watched them. You had so many misses and so many straddles. A straddle is a hit when all the shells

14:00 landed round the ship. Some might have been close and others would hit. You could tell on the 285 set, which I was talking about earlier. Show could see those shells go over and you could tell that way. Also you could tell on the visual sight. When they set fire to the Yamashiro with certain shells

14:30 that were sent over to try and set her alight. Once she was alight they put the armour piercing shells in. There are all different types of shells.

Were you able to personally get that from the radar, what you had hit?

Not when we were in the sea battle because

15:00 I wasn't on that set. Someone else was on that set down below where the gunnery control was. He could see it and he could confirm that there was hits. See, at three o'clock in the morning the shells that hit they could see with the glasses. We went out because there were no aircraft in the thing and we were out watching the bombardment -

15:30 until we did the belly dive.

How long were you under continual air attack at this time?

Well there were several days off and on. One you might go an hour and a half and that sort of thing and then you'd get another attack. But it wasn't until we got to Leyte that we just had three days of concentrated air attack. It was all during daylight hours for about three days, and

16:00 at one stage we looked like mother hen. A lot of the minesweepers used up all their ammunition and when an air raid came on they would come in underneath and we'd be firing just over their mast. They'd come in along side of us for protection because they had no ammunition left. That was like mother hen with

16:30 her chicks.

How were your nerves at the end of three days?

At the time it was alright but as you said, it took me that seven years to get over it. At the time it didn't affect me.

How much sleep did you get in that three days when you were under air attack?

Oh at least four hours a night, and sometimes you

17:00 could nap for a while. But during the daylight hours, you got no sleep. Sometimes the air raids would be half an hour apart, but it was continuous. As they said the Japs ran out of aircraft as we ran out of ammunition.

How many planes do you think the Shropshire shot down at that time?

I think it's credited with

17:30 eight planes. That was up at Lingayen. That would be what the eight-inch guns shot down. But to be credited, not like the aircraft... the fighter planes, they've got the one target, but when you've got fifteen ships firing at the one target, fifteen ships can't claim that one thing.

18:00 So our shore ones would be the eight inch guns when the shell burst because there would be nothing else there. You couldn't miss an eight-inch shell going off on an airplane. I think that's where the eight planes came in that we were credited with.

Can you describe watching a plane coming in to attack the Shropshire?

You can visually see it

- 18:30 coming in about fifteen or twenty feet above the water, coming straight towards you. All the ships are firing at it. It gets very hairy for the other ships because the plane's there and the ships on this side are firing at it and what doesn't hit the plane goes over and hits the ships on the other side. But on this occasion when this one came in there I heard the eight-inch gun go off and the shell burst right in front of him,
- 19:00 and he did a back flip. Plane coming in at about two-hundred kilometres per hour and it just went over backwards into the water. They claimed that as a direct shoot down by the Shropshire but when it's a target with fifteen or twenty ships firing at it, anyone can claim it.

Did you see any other planes shot down at that time?

Oh I've seen several shot down. I've seen several shot down.

- 19:30 I've seen movies of the war and all you can see is all the shells going off. The blue smoke in the sky. It's really like that. I've seen a couple of movies where they've shown actual war footages and I've seen plenty like that.

What is the atmosphere like on the boat at that time?

Excitement I suppose you would call it.

- 20:00 You are running high on adrenalin I suppose, and that's why you don't have any fear of it. And as I said, we missed any casualties. If we'd had casualties on the ship it would have been a lot worse I suppose. You see, if I'd been on the Australia, where they lost so many men....because over sixty men got killed on the Australia.
- 20:30 It would have been a different story I think. But the Shropshire was called a lucky ship because she went through the war without a casualty, which is pretty good I reckon. I put it down to the radar because of the amount of protection she had.

How many different sets of radar did it have on the Shropshire?

Thirteen. So, thirteen

- 21:00 different sets. The one I was connected with was for the airplanes at a distance, and you had four for the guns. We also had...There's one there for when you are cruising at sea, just on surface ships,
- 21:30 which was the American one. And you had the four radar sets on the eight-inch guns for anti-aircraft. The thirteen different sets are actual radar sets, but how many different types there were...There would be four or five different types of radar they had.

What were the different types?

- 22:00 One was for air, one was for surface, and the others were different types of air ones for the eight-inch guns. They had the actual gunners pointing the aerals at the planes. They had four sets of those. Four or five different types of radar sets. But four of the one kind that I know of.
- 22:30 We had pretty good mechanics and that there. Talking about mechanics. We had a new chum, a radar operator came in and one of the radar aerals was right above the bridge and it was a dome and it got water in it. So one of the mechanics had to go up and take the water out. A bloke by the name of Kingston.
- 23:00 He was a new radar bloke that was on the ship. He went up with the mechanic and they told him to go down and get a couple of buckets to put the water in. What did he do? He didn't tie a rope to it and take the rope up to do it. He tried to walk up a vertical ladder carrying two buckets. He got half way up and fell down and ended up in hospital. But he was a new chum. If he
- 23:30 had any sense he would use a rope and tie a rope to the handles of the buckets, climb up yourself and then pull the buckets up. But no, he tried to walk up the ladder with the buckets in hand. He got ribbed for a long time after that.

Can you tell us a little bit about the bombardment of Balikpapan?

Well

- 24:00 we bombarded there. We'd go in in the daytime. At night time we'd go way out to sea. We might go a hundred miles out to sea at night time. We were nowhere near the shore at night time. We would come back in the morning and we were always firing at targets allocated by the army. The army would radio and the Americans had a
- 24:30 spotter plane up which was one of the slow flying single planes. We'd fire at whatever target they wanted us to. The first one, the major one was that one I told you about, on the reverse slope. A lot of

the others were just on the shore before the troops actually went in. We would bombard for a couple of days, and then when the troops actually went in we were called upon to hit certain targets.

25:00 And that's how we went. My friend who was at Balikpapan, he told me one night they called in some fire after dark. And we had to fire star shells. We fired star shells and one fell short. They were illuminated and the Japanese were in the dark. So that was the longest few minutes that they ever spent hugging the

25:30 ground because the star shell landed in the wrong position.

Can we just hold it there for a minute? What was the scene you could see from the boat?

Well when we hit the what's a name, we were about five miles off the coast at that time and sometimes we moved into about three miles. We always stayed well out of range of any shore based artillery. We would...when we hit the oil

26:00 well, all you see was this big black cloud of smoke going up about five thousand feet, very distinct. Other than that all you see is the flashes when the shells explode on the shore.

Why were you attacking the oil well when effectively you weren't doing too badly at Balikpapan as far as I know?

Well at that stage when we were going there...

26:30 Probably the Japanese had it ready for demolition anyway and they were shelling round there. Whether it was our shells or the Japanese that set fire to them I don't know. I always thought we'd hit the thing because just after we fired the smoke came up. Either that or the Japanese set fire to them themselves.

27:00 See their concentration of their troops would be round the oil wells, so they'd be pretty safe.

Did you ever get to see or take any Japanese prisoners onto your boat or meet any Japanese?

The only people we had on board were British prisoners of war. When we were at Lingayen the Americans air dropped a troop and

27:30 captured a prisoner of war camp before the Japanese could kill them all - and they brought them onboard the Shropshire. They were skin and bone a lot of them. They were English and they were glad to be on a Commonwealth ship. They were very pleased there. We gave them a decent feed and

28:00 they really enjoyed that.

You're covering the microphone with your hand.

I'm sorry.

Did you meet any of those prisoners?

Oh we spoke to a few of them, a mob of us there did. We talked to a few of them because they all kept coming aboard. And we had a yarn to them and they were telling us that there wasn't a blade of grass for about two mile

28:30 inland because of all the bombardment. It knocked all the trees down and everything like that. It cleared the way to give the American troops plenty of space to get ashore before they met any opposition.

Was that the biggest bombardment you were involved in?

We fired more shells at Leyte than I think we did at Lingayen but there was more

29:00 air bombardment because we was closer. At Leyte we were a fair way off shore but here we were fairly close to the shore and you could see the effect of the bombing.

At Balikpapan how long did your bombardment go on for?

About three days but sometimes you'd only bombard.... At one stage there you'd fire a shell every hour

29:30 during the night just to keep them awake. We'd fire one shell just for nuisance value, to keep them awake. Keep us awake at the same time. With a gun going off every hour you didn't get much sleep. You just got to sleep and the gun would go off. In the book I wrote, which I got out of that book on the Shropshire

30:00 from the Rockdale Library, we had there how many shells we fired at each engagement. The chap who wrote the book must have been one of the writers, as we called them, on the Shropshire. He had the records. He had the dates and how many shots were fired in the book.

Did you know the writer on the Shropshire?

No. There were several writers and there were stewards.

- 30:30 You just kept to your own crew. The radar, we kept together. There was seventy-five of us. We didn't mix with the officers or the mechanics, but we knew them. We more or less kept to ourselves. That's about the only ones, other than the other two boys that
- 31:00 came from Nambucca. One was a radio operator and the other was just a seaman. I'd talk to them a lot. You'd run into them onboard and have a yarn. Other than those two, there was hardly anyone else that I had a chance to make friends with.

What happened at Corregidor?

That was

- 31:30 a simple thing. All we did...We bombarded the island. Once again there were spotter aircraft up and we selected targets. We didn't just have a straight shoot out; we had to pick on certain targets. And we did that along with some of the American ships.

Corregidor.

Corregidor. It is only an island. It is a big mountain of an island.

- 32:00 It was only just bombarding on selected targets. That was all. No opposition once again. Talking about opposition... from the time I joined Shropshire in Australia
- 32:30 we had no enemy opposition until we hit Leyte. Even at Balikpapan and Borneo, we had no opposition. It was only the two campaigns of Leyte and Lingayen that we had opposition. We were very lucky. As they said, they called us the lucky ship and that's probably why.

Did anything else happen of significance at Corregidor?

No.

- 33:00 Nothing of significance. It was a simple action because as I said it was only on selected targets. We were more or less having target practice. We fired where they wanted us to fire.

How were you by this stage?

Oh, I was quite alright. We had

- 33:30 no problems.

I'm sure as a group you were still functioning but individually you had been...

Individually it never seemed to worry me. I just carried on... being young and silly I suppose. I just had to do my duty, and things like that.

Where were you at the end of the war?

- 34:00 I was in Subic Bay, which was one of the last of our... where ships used to gather. And from there we went into Manila. They took a shipment down to Manila and we went ashore at Manila and we looked at all the buildings that had been knocked around by the invasion of
- 34:30 the Luzon island. With the Americans we took Manila. That was where we traded cigarettes and chewing gum for Japanese money - the proper Japanese money not the invasion money. I've got swags of that. For one packet of chewing gum you'd buy that much invasion money, it wasn't funny. And some of the boys, when they got to Japan they passed the
- 35:00 invasion money before they woke up the fact that it wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. The problem was... I got some Japanese notes... I've still got them. They were sold for a packet of chewing gum. That was there. Manila was
- 35:30 like Tokyo. It was filthy. The water had been...Water mains knocked out and things like that from the bombing raids and things like that. It makes you think what the people must have been going through. Japan was worse off than Manila really. In fact, Manila was bad enough.

Where were you when you heard of the atom bomb?

- 36:00 Oh that was either in Subic Bay or it could have been down Borneo. Because it was only a few days after the second atomic bomb that they declared peace didn't they? More than likely it was in Subic Bay.

Can you recall getting that news?

When we heard the news of the atomic bomb?

- 36:30 We reckoned it shouldn't be long now, before the war is over. That was the feeling of the few people I knew on the ship there. And then when the news came through that they had surrendered there was great jubilation on the ship. A lot of shouting and going on that night.

What did you do?

Shouted along with them.

Can you describe specifically how you celebrated?

37:00 Usually when we were in harbour they had the films down below decks, but the war was that far away that they had the films on the upper deck, which was unheard of earlier in the war. To be all lit up showing films on the upper deck. And this group was sitting there together and

37:30 news comes through and there was a great shout and some of the Yankee ships in the harbour were setting off gunfire and celebrating. That's the night, as I said earlier that we saw the blue moon. So Japan surrendered on the night of the blue moon as far as we we're concerned.

Had you seen a blue moon before or since?

I haven't seen one before or since, but the explanation that was given to us was that with the reflection

38:00 of the setting sun on the water, and the vapour from the rotting vegetation going up made it appear blue. So that made them think.

Did you have a drink?

No we didn't have any beer ration. There had been no supply ship for a while. Only, as I said earlier,

38:30 this chocolate drink which we called Kai.

After the elation of hearing this news was there any sense of letdown or of something missing from your life?

No. All we thought was how long before we got home. That was all. Because we were all reservists, we hadn't joined the permanent navy. We had all joined up as reserve

39:00 for the duration. Now the war is over, how long before we get home. That was the main thought. Then we heard we were going to Japan for the surrender. What have we got to go up there for? Why can't we go home? That was the main thing. Then when we got to Tokyo it was a sight that I'll never forget. As we sailed into Tokyo Bay two days before they signed the official peace,

39:30 all the aircraft carriers and some of the destroyers were taken out to sea, and it was like a swarm of bees flying over Tokyo. All the American planes were up because if the Japanese had started something they would have been annihilated really. It was just like a swarm of bees. That's what it looked like. And we did find out later that the Japanese had suicide

40:00 speed boats with ammunition loaded on the bow of the boat, and the idea was to go out full speed and just ram themselves into the side of the ships.

Was that a rumour or was it a fact?

It was a fact.

They were really...

They were prepared for it.

It would have made me quite nervous knowing that these things were around?

No. We never found out about it until weeks later. The rumour got around that

40:30 they had these boats all ready to go. The rumours got there but it was a relief to get up there. We didn't want to go up in the first place, but when we got up there... It was two and a half months that we were up there before we went back to Sydney. But on our way back to Sydney we called into Madang to pick up five-hundred

41:00 Australian soldiers and take them back to Sydney. The first day out, the day we picked them up was a Sunday and we had roast pork for dinner that day. And the soldiers said, it this how you navy blokes get fed. And I said, "Yeah, on Sunday if we've got food." Because we'd been to a supply ship before we came, and by the time we got to Sydney

41:30 with and extra five hundred extra onboard it was down to bully beef.

We might have to stop.

Tape 9

00:44 **Before we go. I want to talk about those troops in Madang but I want to talk about Japan first. What were your first impressions of Tokyo when you went to Yokohama Bay?**

When we went to Yokohama.... We went ashore at

01:00 Yokohama and the first thing I noticed there was these Japanese with their little rice bowls shovelling rice into their mouths. It must have been smoko or something when we landed. And on the wharf was a lot of these Chinese coins. I had been a coin collector from a young age and I got a handful of these Chinese coins. Then we caught the train up to Tokyo. There were a fair few of us.

01:30 We stayed in a mob of about twenty of us. We were told never to break off from the party. Always to stay all together.

What was the purpose of those instructions?

Well the war was only just over. It was only a week since the peace was signed and you didn't know if there were any fanatics around. A sailor on his own could be attacked or anything like that so we were warned to keep in a party.

02:00 The bigger the party the better, they said.

Where did you head for in this party?

Tokyo. We went out to a suburb called Wuedl or Udal I think they pronounced it. A big store was there and you'd go into this big store and there was a big flight of stairs going up with a landing and there was a heavy grand piano on this landing. And one of our number was one of those who could

02:30 play the piano. So there was this baby grand and they were playing Boogie Woogie and all the Yanks were there and you couldn't move. And in the end the MPs [Military Police] came and told us that that was enough. The Yanks were coming in because they heard this bloke playing the music and he got the crowd in. That's where I brought a couple of silk scarves

03:00 with the Japanese money that I'd accumulated in Manila... I bought a couple of silk scarves. Then the main thing is one big chap who was there, he was handing the cigarettes around and one dropped on the ground. You could see all these Japanese around there looking at this cigarette on the ground. And as he walked away from there he just put his heel on the

03:30 cigarette and squashed it. You should have seen the faces. They thought they had a cigarette. After we left they probably scraped the tobacco up and made a smoke for themselves out of it anyway.

Did you stay overnight in Tokyo while you were on leave?

No. We had to be back on board every night. We never stayed overnight. We went up about three times and on each occasion we had to be back at a certain time.

04:00 We had to get a certain train back to Yokohama to be picked up.

How long was the train ride from Yokohama to Tokyo?

Oh I forget. About a half hour or something like that.

Did you see much of the countryside in between?

No. There were houses all the way. But as I said there had been fire bombs, incendiary bombs and there was hardly a house left standing and only a few chimneys here and there

04:30 scattered across the countryside. So when the war was over and they started to rebuild, they had pretty good clear land to start building on again.

Did you have any contacts with the local population that you recall?

The only thing is that one day we were going on the train up there, and there was a Japanese girl. She was well dressed and a pretty looking girl and all the boys started talking about her, as they would, and as she

05:00 got off the train she said, "Thank you boys very much." She spoke perfect English. On another occasion we spoke to another girl on the train. She couldn't wait to get back to Hawaii. She was born on Hawaii and her parents took her back to Japan just before the war started. So they knew the war was coming, and they went back to Japan before the war. And she said she couldn't

05:30 wait. She was neatly dressed but you could see it was old clothes she had on. No good clothes. You'd see them in the street and you'd see the women squat down, drop their pants and do their business in the street. There were no toilets around. That turned us off a bit when you see them doing things like that in the street.

06:00 And the streets were filthy with the sanitation and everything knocked out. And there was garbage on the streets. There must have been no garbage collection or anything like that. It was filthy. You've seen places on the telly with garbo strikes in Sydney and how cluttered it gets.

06:30 But Japan was a heck of a lot worse than that.

Do you remember the smells of the place?

Yeah. It was on the nose a bit in places.

Can you describe what it smelled like?

Oh rotting vegetation a lot of it. Just the rotten smell. Not everywhere but only in certain places. We went in the back streets a few times and that's when

07:00 you smelt it. But if you stuck to the main streets they were reasonably clean. That shop I was talking...it was fairly clean inside and it had a few things for sale in there. But there was hardly anything for sale in the shops. There would be very little for sale in the shops. I wasn't lucky enough. One of the other

07:30 boys went into a shop and bought a pearl necklace and when he got home to Sydney his wife asked him why he didn't buy a pair of earrings to match. And the jeweller said he would have given him a hundred pounds because they were the genuine pearls. He said it only cost me a few packets of

08:00 cigarettes.

There must have been a lot of American soldiers and allied troops in Japan at the time.

Oh yeah.

Was there anything set up for them to do?

Oh I don't know about the Americans but the Australian soldiers who were there, the occupation force, there was nothing set up for us, only the leave to go up to from Yokohama to Tokyo. No one ever got

08:30 left behind. We made sure of that, because if you missed a certain train back you'd find it pretty hard to get back to the ship. We made it our business to be there on time for the certain train we had to catch at the certain time.

What were the main emotions at those times amongst you?

We enjoyed ourselves when we were in Tokyo but

09:00 I felt pity for a lot of the people who lived there because of what they had to put up with, but then again you would start to think about what the Japanese soldiers did when they invaded a city, and things like that. On one occasion we were in there and a report came in that there was an American sailor who had

09:30 offered to buy a watch off this Japanese and it had his brother's name on the back of the watch. He bashed the Japanese up and took the watch. We heard that tale.

Apart from the little things like stepping on the cigarette did you see any soldiers or seamen trying to rub it in with the Japanese?

No. One section there, we saw

10:00 the bloke selling... If you could bring a carton of cigarettes ashore with you or a bottle of beer or things like that, you could sell the bottle of beer to the Americans, and the cigarettes you could sell to the Japanese, and you could get fantastic money for them. One time we went down this street and the MPs were there confiscating all this

10:30 stuff that was being sold to the Japanese.

They were taking it back for themselves?

The MPs were taking it back from the Japanese after someone else had sold it to them. I don't know whether it was a racket or whether it was fair dinkum or not, but the MPs were confiscating stuff off the Japanese.

Did the provosts have a lot to do in Tokyo at the time with their own soldiers?

11:00 I never saw any trouble other than when we were in there with the baby grand piano - just to clear the mob away. I didn't see any actual provost or shore patrol from the navy in any trouble. No, I don't think there was. Not that I can recall any trouble with servicemen

11:30 in Tokyo.

Had you found this experience of going to Japan a bit exotic despite the devastation. I mean you were still a young man and you hadn't seen a lot of the world?

Well if you see it today or you see it on television... there was nothing there. All you were looking at was burned out buildings and things like that.

12:00 And the people must have been devastated when they fire bombed it like that because they mostly had wooden houses in that section between Yokohama and Tokyo, and when you see it like that it upset you a bit to think that people have got to put up with that. But as I said war is war, and we had to win the battle somehow or other, and that was part of it.

12:30 **Tell me a little more about the surrender celebrations in Tokyo Bay?**

We were anchored I suppose about half a mile away from the Missouri. There was two or three of our... Commodore Collins, I think it was, and Captain Nichols. I'm just trying to think. There were a couple of other officers who left our ship and went over to the Missouri to represent Australia. I don't know who actually

13:00 signed the papers on behalf of Australia, but we saw it on news reel when we came back to Sydney, the signing. We couldn't hear anything. There were just all these little boats congregating around the Missouri and they would go onboard. And that's about all. I think it was on radio. I think I remember there was a

13:30 radio announcement about the signing. It's that long ago and you forget. But we were told who were signing the papers.

Were there any other celebratory gestures. Firing into the air, music, any of that sort of thing?

None of that that I can recall.

14:00 All I know is that once the signing was over we just went back to normal duties, because we had another big storm in there while we were in Tokyo Bay. Not as bad as the other one. To keep the ship in position, we were at anchor and the wind was coming that much that we had to put the engine slow ahead to keep us in position.

14:30 That's how strong the wind was. It kept on dragging the anchor, that sort of thing. And we were kept busy that night keeping the station with the radar because all the ships were a certain distance away from us all the time. So we had to do that during the night.

What was your role while you were in Tokyo?

I was still on radar. Of a night time when you are on the ship there,

15:00 when the storm was on we had to keep station. We had to keep the ships in their right positions, but any other day... I think it was just one night in three that you worked. During the day you did your duties, cleaning out the radar sets and rooms and keeping them tidy and things like that.

Did you know at the time

15:30 **how long you would be there before you got word to go home?**

No, we never knew, but we were about two weeks... They gave all the, what's a name, the occupation force a medal for being occupation in Japan. Because we were only there two and a half months rather than three months we missed out on the medal. Some of the boys were a bit crooked on that.

When you finally got word to go home

16:00 **was there a great feeling of aboard the ship?**

You see they gave you a point system. You had to have so many points based on whether you were single or married. You got extra points if you were married. I had enough points to virtually mobilize straight away. But the Shropshire did a victory cruise. It went to Sydney and then down to Melbourne. Then they went to Hobart and back to Sydney.

16:30 When they got back to Sydney I got discharged.

So when you say you had enough points to mobilize straight away were there other crew members of the Shropshire who had to stay in Japan?

No no. They all came back from Japan. And some left the ship when we got to Sydney, probably the married ones. They had more points than we did. And they said they were going down there. Well, I didn't want to get discharged.

17:00 I was going to Melbourne and then down to Hobart, because I had never been to Hobart. So went down there and marched through Melbourne and I got my photo on the front page of one of the Melbourne papers. While we were down there they had some school girls who came onboard the ship one day. It was 'Mr Hulbert', and I had to sign my autograph for this little schoolgirl. It was on the front page. Not my name or anything. Just the photo.

17:30 It was on the front page of one of the local papers in Melbourne.

Why were you so keen to go to Melbourne and Tasmania?

I hadn't been to Tasmania, and I was going to go down there, and when I came back the points would be ready to go when we came back they told us. They said I had enough points to go out, but I could go down to Melbourne.

18:00 If they had told me the ship was going to England after we came back to Sydney I would have signed

on. They wanted me to sign on for another two years and if I'd have known the ship was going to England I would have signed on for another two years just for the trip to England.

Was it just the trip to England or was it part of the victorious feeling of it all? Did you feel like a returned hero?

No. I never thought of returning as a hero. I was just returning as someone who was glad the war was over.

18:30 **How did you feel about all the fuss then?**

In Melbourne after the march there, and all the fuss they made of us there and down in Hobart, it was... it was good... The people had some appreciation for what the ship had done. The Shropshire had a good reputation at that time. And as far as I know,

19:00 there were no problems with when we were ashore in Melbourne or Hobart with anyone playing up - as far as I know. I know when we was in Hobart they took us out to the Cascade brewery. That's where I first learned to drink apple cider. I got a taste for apple cider out at the brewery. Where ever we went. It was the same in Melbourne. There was a family in Melbourne. When I was at Flinders naval depot...

19:30 because I was under eighteen I had to be billeted out to someone for weekend leave, and this family billeted me out for the weekend - every time I went on weekend leave in Melbourne. And when the war finished I made it my business to go out to where they lived and visited them once again. I wanted to thank them for looking after me when I went down there as a seventeen year old.

Did you ever see your Tasmanian pen pal?

No. She come from Burnie and we were down in Hobart. That's the other end.

20:00 I never saw her, and after the war we didn't write any more after the war was over.

Did you get met when you first arrived in Sydney by any of your family?

No. Once I went ashore I went up to my brother's place at Paddington. And that's the only one there, he and my sister-in-law in Paddington.

Is this the first time you heard about

20:30 **your step-brother's death in Singapore or Malaya?**

I heard about it after I came home. My father told me. I knew he was taken prisoner of war at Singapore but when I came home my father told me that Alec had died on the Burma railway.

Had you lost any other friends or relatives during the war?

No I hadn't.

21:00 Oh, only one bloke I made friends with during my training. He got washed overboard in the Great Australian Bight. Back was his name. I can't remember his first name off hand.

How long did it take you after you got discharged from the navy to settle back into civilian life?

A fair while because I went to Maitland to my sister's place at Morpeth. She was living at Morpeth.

21:30 When I got there I did all these various jobs. I did day labour all over the place. Picking up potatoes anywhere on any of the farms. Tabling millet as they called it. It was a very hot job. And cutting firewood for people. So I did that for a fair while and then I moved back to Nambucca.

Was it difficult to get work?

22:00 **Why were you doing day labour as opposed to getting a full time job?**

Oh I didn't try to get a full time job at that stage. But then I went back on the farm then, on the dairy farm, and all my working life I only had one week off. And in that week I moved from the country to Sydney. I had a job all the time....at the abattoirs, working at the abattoirs,

22:30 and working for a printing society when I came to Sydney.

So the period directly after the war you were in Maitland?

Maitland, yeah.

How long were you there for?

Oh I suppose about four or five months only. And then I went back up to the farm with my brother.

Your brother was running the farm. Was your father still there?

No, my father had built a house on one of the back blocks of the farm

23:00 and he was living out there and the brother was running the farm on his own, milking the sixty odd cows. So I went there and helped him on the farm.

What was the transition like between a cabin on a ship to suddenly all this space on rural Nambucca River?

It was good because I started playing football up there with one of the step-brothers.

23:30 He was on the football team up there so I went and joined up with him up there. I only played football one year, and I can say I've never been beaten playing a game of football. We were undefeated premiers for the year, and then I got married before the next football season and I wasn't allowed to play anymore because I always used to get hurt on the field. We used to play pretty rough in those days. So I was never allowed to play football again.

24:00 **Were you restless at the time?**

I suppose I was, because it wasn't until I went to the abattoirs, well after I was married that I got a regular job. In the meantime I had a banana patch and banana prices went right down. I couldn't make a decent living there. So my cousin wanted me to go and help buy a farm

24:30 between the two of us. I had used my money up that I got from the war to buy the farm, and then we grew tomatoes. One year my taxable income was three pound, which was six dollars today. And that was when the '49 flood was on. So then I went and got a job at the abattoirs which I thought would be for a few months. I was still there...

25:00 I think it was fourteen years, and then I came to Sydney.

Did you ever miss life in the navy?

Oh no not really. I didn't think I would have liked to go back to the navy during peace time. Too strict. They were regimented all the time, sort of thing. As I said, the radar operators on the Shropshire, we had a pretty

25:30 soft time. We were a little group on our own in a big crew. We had to look after our radar sets, and that kept us busy. Occasionally we would have to go out with the ordinary seamen.

Can I interrupt for a second. I just have to move that again.

26:00 **Sorry. Continue. We are on a bit of a slope here. Sorry. Continue. Was there anything you missed about life at sea?**

Not really. Not really. Because as I said, while it was busy it was good but once the war ended we didn't do much. Instead of

26:30 on and off shifts, sometimes you had over a day sometimes, off in between shifts, sort of thing, and you got bored. Being active all the time and there was nothing to do. I've always been someone who likes something to do. So that's how it went those days.

Was

27:00 **that difficulty in just relaxing, is that something that may be linked to the tension of wartime life?**

How to relax? Yes. While we were up there at the time our relaxation was playing cards. Five hundred. And that was our main relaxation that I got. If you weren't playing in a tournament...You'd get a

27:30 a list of everyone who wanted to play five hundred and you'd be in a knock out competition, and if you weren't in the knockout competition it were just playing friendly games against one another, and that was our main form of relaxation. And then deck hockey. I played deck hockey for the Shropshire and I played against a Canadian warship. That's where I got my first rum issue on the Canadian warship. So deck hockey was good, and

28:00 we used to have deck cricket there. I think it was a tennis ball we used. We used to have fun that way.

Did you keep in touch with any friends from the navy after the war?

Only the two that were on the Shropshire from my local town, Nambucca, that's all. The others, most of them were interstate. West Australian and Queenslanders

28:30 and that. There wasn't many Sydney ones on the Shropshire. Not many radar operators anyway.

Did you find it difficult to adjust to life with women and children...other people than just the male camaraderie at sea?

Well it was, I got out and it was three years before I ever went out with a girl when I came home. And that was the wife, and I went to the brother's kitchen tea,

29:00 or the step-brother's kitchen tea, and she was there and when it came time for supper I asked if she

wanted to sit along side of me. Then we started going out together then. That was three years after I got my discharge. Up until then I had never worried about girls.

Were you a good husband in those early years of your marriage?

I think so. Other than jumping in my sleep. The wife got a couple of bumps at times, she

29:30 tells me. I'd wake her up and jump in my sleep. Other than that the funniest thing that happened was just after we were married, in winter time she had a great habit of pushing me over and taking all the bed. This time she pushed me out of bed and I went around onto her side of the bed and got back into bed, and she was thrashing the bed looking for me. She thought I had deserted her. That was the only funny thing that happened.

What was it in particular that made

30:00 **you jump in your sleep?**

I think it was just the nerves. Because, you see, all that gunfire and that. At the time I took no notice of it. But it must have been playing on me all the time. I don't know whether today... if I was in a car accident or something like that today how long it would take me to get over it. See I was doing three years of that kind of work

30:30 and that kind of tension which subconsciously must affect you but physically it has no effect on you. But it must tell in the long run. I reckon that's what caused it.

Were there any particular experience during your wartime career that were the focus of your nerves and the nights after the war?

Well I had a few dreams about the

31:00 air attacks. I had a few dreams about the air attacks but they faded after a while and I haven't had any since.

What would happen in those dreams?

I'd just see the planes coming towards the ships and you'd wake up when the plane would be near the ship. You'd wake up with a start. That's what used to happen.

Do you have any habits or little things that you picked up during your time at sea that

31:30 **you just can't get rid of?**

Oh only one thing I got rid of. I started to smoke and I gave it away because I didn't like it. But no other habits. With regard to the drinking, I drank very little other than when I had the twenty-first birthday but even now I might have a whiskey.

32:00 You see some of those bottles? They've been sitting there for two or three years. And I think the bottle of rum I bought lasted about ten years, so no coffee royals now because I haven't got any rum. So I've got to get a bottle if I want to start drinking coffee royals again.

Did you ever get any naval tattoos?

No.

Was that common in the wartime navy?

No. Not common.

32:30 **Looking back at the war now, from this stage in your life, how do you feel about what you did all those years ago?**

Well seeing I came through it unscathed, I'd go through it again. You know, if I was a seventeen year old again, I'd go through it again. Mainly because knowing that I came through with no casualties other than that electrocuted chap...

33:00 really, you didn't know you were at war other than when the air attacks was on. Most of the other times you relaxed at sea, and so knowing I was going to come through I would do it all over again. If I did it all over again I would have bought more of that real Japanese money in Manila.

33:30 **How do you feel about war in general these days?**

It is necessary. You can't have dictators. And I reckoned Australia had to go to war because we don't want terrorists. I read in the news this morning where they picked up some terrorists. They were up in the North Shore here somewhere. That was only in the news this morning.

34:00 I was listening to it and we can't have those type of people around. They were trying to...The saying was... They said that they should have an Islamic State in Australia in the next hundred years. One of the head blokes came out here and said that. So you've got to stop that sort of thing. Australia

34:30 is a free country and it should stay free in my mind.

How do you feel about the threat to freedom that you helped stop? Do you still have strong feelings about the Japanese?

I've never spoken to a Japanese. Oh yes I have once. One of my daughter's friends married a Japanese girl. I've spoken to her a couple of times. That's the only Japanese I have spoken to

35:00 since the war. I've never had the opportunity or the inclination to go back to Japan. That's the only one. The wife of one of my daughter's friends.

Have you ever wanted to travel to those places you saw in the war ever again?

I wouldn't mind going on a sea voyage. I've often thought of going on a cruise, but my wife can't sit for too long.

35:30 If she sits for too long her legs start to swell up and she's got to lay down a lot. Today she has been sitting up so long that it could affect her. But if you go on a sea voyage you've got to sit around a lot on the upper deck in the sunshine. I'd go on a sea voyage but I don't think the wife would.

Have you talked about the war with your children?

36:00 You tell them the funny things that happened. You don't tell them the serious things. They've heard it I suppose a few times, about the time we did a belly dive when the Yamashiro was firing the tracer shells at us. But other than that you...anything funny that happened...like the time I spotted an airplane that turned out to be a pelican. Things

36:30 like that. That's all I've told them.

Why just the funny things do you think?

The serious things...I've more or less kept to myself over the years. There has been other serious occasions but you don't like talking about it. I don't anyway.

Have you changed in your attitude now? I mean why are you talking about it with us now?

Well DVA asked me to talk

37:00 with you, and I owe DVA a lot of money because of the things they have given me. Being on a service pension you get free medical, free dental, free travel. In fact I've got a free pass so I can go on the train anywhere in Sydney...and the busses. So that's money to me, I don't have to pay, so

37:30 therefore the DVA has paid me, not in money, but in kind. So I owe them something and they asked me to volunteer to give the story to you, so I did it.

Well I'm glad you decided to give us eight hours hard work today. The last thing I'd like to do. The archive will be around for a hundred years hopefully, because we are keeping this for the future. If you had to say anything to Australians living in the future is there any particular message that you

38:00 **have, looking back on your life and your experience in the Second World War?**

Keep Australia Free. That's the main thing.

Can you elaborate on that? What do you mean by that?

Well if someone's trying to take us over in force, repel them. We have been bought out because a lot of the firms today, you don't know who owns them.

38:30 New Zealand owns a lot. America owns a lot. Japan own a lot. They couldn't beat us at war but they can beat us at money, by buying us out. I reckon any foreign company shouldn't own any more than forty-nine percent of any company that's in Australia - the other fifty-one percent should be Australian owned. That's my view.

39:00 And mainly look after yourselves and look out for Australia.

A good point to finish it on. Thanks very much for doing this today Reg.