

Australians at War Film Archive

Patrick Bridges (Irish) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/499>

Tape 1

00:30 **Pat I was wondering if you could start with us this morning just with a brief introduction of yourself starting with your childhood?**

Well I was born in 1922 in Coffs Harbour on the north coast of New South Wales. We shifted to Sydney when I was four. I

01:00 was educated in Sydney and the Burwood Christian Brothers. Left school at fourteen because of the Depression years, and worked on the New South Wales government railways as a junior clerk until the outbreak of war. Well I had to wait twelve months because the war had been going for a year before I was old enough to join the navy. Which I did - joined the navy as soon as I turned eighteen, and then went away to war.

01:30 And that sort of put a stop to my childhood straight away. I finished being a teenager then.

And so can you just tell me a little bit about your wartime experience?

Wartime experience? Well I joined the navy on the

02:00 2nd of October 1940, and by the 10th of December the same year I had been trained as a submarine detective in Sydney, had a couple of weeks leave and was on my way overseas. By the 10th of December, there was a group of us trained as specialists and we were on our way to England. Our draft was stopped in Cape Town

02:30 because they found that there was another group of people in front of us that were already in England. So our draft was stopped in Cape Town and we were sent from there to Durban by train and from there up to the Middle East. And we all went on loan to the Royal Navy. They were short on specialist submarine detection, and we were supposed to be specialist after a couple of weeks training,

03:00 and we all went on loan to the RN [Royal Navy]. So I was the only Australian I know in ships for the first eight or nine months of the war, well my war service anyway. And then after that I got transferred back to Australian destroyers and I was with my own people then.

And can you tell me a little bit briefly about your experience - where you were and what you were doing with

03:30 **both the RN and the Australian Navy?**

Well in the Middle East, we arrived there in early 1941, just in time to be involved in the supply of troops to Greece and Crete, well Greece mainly. Of course that turned out to be a fiasco, and we had to bring the troops out of Greece and Crete and I

04:00 was involved in that for the main part of the evacuation. Until the ship I was on got smashed about and we were brought out of the evacuation part of it for repairs in Alexandria Harbour. From there I got transferred back to the Australian Navy and we were involved in the supply, well what they called the

04:30 'Tobruk Ferry Run'. When Tobruk was a garrison we were involved in, the ship I was on was involved in supplying ammunition and food and everything, supplies to the garrison in Tobruk. Used to take stuff in of a night and bring wounded troops out and they called that the 'Tobruk Ferry Run'. Well of course after that it was mortar

05:00 convoys, and the whole thing was a bit one sided because we didn't have any air cover. See we had no air cover at all over there, well everything belonged to the other side you know.

And then once you finished with the Royal Navy?

05:30 I did my turn with the Royal Navy and then I was transferred back to the Royal Australian Navy, back to

on Australian destroyers, the N class destroyers. And after we did the evacuation of Greece and Crete and various other jobs in the Mediterranean we came out into the Indian Ocean and joined the eastern fleet. And that's where we were, well actually we didn't make contact with the Japanese fleet but that's where we were.

06:00 There wasn't any actual contact with them, but they were not far away from us because they sunk the [HMS] Prince of Wales and [HMS] Repulse, just off Colombo which is just off Sri Lanka. And we were based there and in the Indian Ocean. And then up and down the east African coast, and then eventually around South Africa. That's where I spent a lot of

06:30 time, most of 1942 in the Indian Ocean. Then we got back down to South Africa at the end of the, when I left, the last ship I was on in the Middle East, the Norman, we were transferred to a camp in South Africa for a trip to come home. Right back home in Australia in June '43 after two and a half years overseas.

07:00 **I was wondering Pat, what we might do is go back to the beginning now, because that was a nice introduction as to where you were and what you did. And we'll start asking some questions about bits and pieces. So I was wondering if you could tell me perhaps, from your childhood, what memories you have, you mentioned you had to leave school at fourteen so I guess what memories you have of the Depression?**

07:30 I can vividly remember the depression years. We lived in Lidcombe and I went to school in Lidcombe, and I can remember soup kitchen, well they used to bring big milk containers of soup up and you all used to have a cup, all used to have a cup of soup at lunch time. My Dad worked on, he had eight children and he worked on

08:00 most of the storm water drains and canals around Lidcombe and the western suburbs. And I think he worked, depending on how many children were in the family, they worked so many weeks on and so many weeks off depending on the size of their family. We grew all of our own vegetables. And I can remember we used to sell newspapers to the butcher shops

08:30 or the fish and chip shops. Grow parsley for the butcher shops to put in their window, to dress up their meat displays. Collect manure at the local bakery. Sell that to the local gardeners, anything for a few bob because money was very, very scarce at that time. And with eight kids, I was number three out

09:00 of the eight. Poor old Mum. I don't know how she did it but, someone went short, and I think she used to be the one that used to go short. She went without so we could have things. It was a tough time but we all survived, and I think we're all better for it. In today's day and age everything is just laid on. And I think people do expect a little bit

09:30 much. When we came out of the Depression what we didn't have we didn't miss. Simple as that.

When you left school what did you do?

I went into the New South Wales government railways as a junior clerk. That was after a couple of piddling jobs. I wanted to be a jackeroo, and I remember

10:00 I went to a property down near Boorowa. Supposed to be a station hand - I lasted about ten minutes I think. Mum sent me a fare to come home and sit for the railway exam and I grabbed it and came back to sit for the exam, so I wasn't a farmer. So I finished up as a junior clerk on the carriage work

10:30 on the railway and I stayed there until I was eighteen at least, and then I was allowed to join the navy, you know. I had to get Dad's permission then. And then towards the end of my navy career, towards the end of the hostilities, I went back to the railways, but the walls seemed to get closer together.

11:00 I give it away and went back to sea. Completed twelve years naval service.

When you are growing up in a family of eight kids, I guess what did you do for entertainment if there wasn't much money around?

Well we had to make your own entertainment. We used to build bonfires. That was a big thing -

11:30 bonfire night. Building the bonfires. Build billy-carts. Of course fight with the other kids around the streets. Have billy-cart races down the street in front of the house. We had to make our own entertainment. We didn't have a radio then. I remember we didn't even have a wireless. And there was no such

12:00 thing as TV or anything then. So what we did we made ourselves. We used to have a little club. If you had any money they'd buy a bottle of creaming soda and a packet of biscuits and we'd all have a beno in someone's shed - that was our club. And then later on when I got to be a teenager we used to go dancing.

12:30 But family-wise you just had to make your own entertainment.

I was wondering Pat if you could tell me I guess what you knew about World War I or Gallipoli, or any of the people who had served in the First [World] War?

Yeah my Dad was on Gallipoli. He was with the 7th Light Horse. He joined from Canowindra as a matter of fact.

13:00 He didn't join under his own name - he joined under his stepfather's name. And he used to speak of Gallipoli, and the time he spent in Egypt. As a matter of fact he got skittled on Gallipoli, and was in-valeted home. Didn't talk a lot about Gallipoli, and whether he was the cause of me joining the navy, I don't know.

13:30 I don't think that had any influence on me joining the services. But when I got the opportunity here in the last year that was my eightieth birthday present - a trip to Gallipoli from my own daughters which I grabbed with both hands. And it was a very harrowing experience. Not so much harrowing...very well put it this way it was hard work

14:00 mentally and physically. Because it was freezing cold at the dawn service and you can't help but get involved in the spirit of the thing, but it was something that I always wanted to do so I did it.

So he didn't talk much about the war or...?

Who, my Dad?

Your father.

Not a lot. I don't know whether he was involved to any marked degree,

14:30 because as I said he got a piece of Turk shrapnel in him and when he was in-valeted home I think that quietened him down. He just mentioned it that's all.

Can you tell me Pat when you heard that war had been declared -

15:00 **the Second World War?**

I was still a clerk, a junior, and a lot of my mates joined up straight away because they were older than me, and I couldn't do anything until I was eighteen. As soon as I was eighteen I got the papers and followed my Dad around until he signed them. And away I went.

15:30 I was eighteen and six weeks and then I was in the navy. I was only a kid - I wasn't a hero, just something that you, everybody else was going. It was an adventure so away I went. But I have no regrets.

16:00 Frightened the hell out of you but that's all a part of the business.

How great was the sense of Australia as part of the Empire and going to fight for England?

Well that didn't, as I say, King and country - that was the last thing in my mind. It was an adventure. We had just come out of a Depression, was

16:30 something new and my mates were going so I thought I'll go too. I think that was ninety-nine percent of the young fellows at the time, that was their impression. King and country and Empire - I don't think that played much part in it at all.

How great was the pressure on a young man to join the services?

Well there was no pressure on me - I volunteered. See there was no such thing as conscription in those days, the early days.

17:00 Might have come in a bit later on. But there was no conscription in the navy or the air force, only the army. So if you went you volunteered. You just wanted to go. There was no pressure from anybody as such. Well I never noticed it because, it might have been, after on after the war progressed but see I was away for the first three years of the war.

17:30 I was away overseas and I don't know what it was like in Australia because I wasn't here.

Why choose the navy?

Well it's strange you should ask that. I remember going down to Woolloomooloo to the recruiting centre. There was two or three recruiting centres there - army, navy and air force. And I went into the air force and they said, "All we want is cooks and stewards."

18:00 Well that wasn't in my mind - I wasn't going to be a cook or a steward, so I walked out of there and I walked into the navy recruiting centre. They said, "Have you got your intermediate certificate?" which I had. And I had been warned before that if you had your intermediate certificate you could become a submarine detector. So when they asked me that - did I have my intermediate certificate and I said yes,

18:30 I was in. And after the short training period I become a submarine detector and that was it.

Why did you want to be a submarine detector?

Sounded good. But as I say you had to have, you were tested. You

19:00 couldn't be tone deaf or anything like that. You couldn't be tone deaf or colour blind or any, I don't know what the colour had to do with it. But they tested you for tone deafness and aptitude and that sort of business. I don't know why I picked up submarine detection, there was so many other things I could have been doing, but that's what I finished up doing. And that's what I did for all of my navy career was submarine detection and

19:30 underwater weapons and all of that sort of thing. I finished up instructing after many years of course.

What was your family's reaction to you joining up?

I don't think Mum, I can't remember. Poor old Mum. Well I was the first out of all of them see? See, there was six boys in my family

20:00 and five of them in the services, but I was the first to go. I had two in the army, two in the air force and me. I was the first to go and then later on the other brothers followed me into the services, but I was the only one that went into the navy. I suppose, I used to write to Mum regularly but

20:30 I think, me being away in the war probably played on her mind a lot. But anyway, we all come home. Someone was watching somewhere. They talk about fate. I don't know what it is but I come home and so did my other brothers. Some of

21:00 them have passed on since but they all come home out of the war. So it must have been a strain on Mum, but she wasn't the only one - there was a lot of other mums like her.

Where did they go, your brothers? Where did they serve?

Ron, the one older than me he went into the air force, into the army. He served in the Northern Territory and

21:30 then in the occupational forces in Japan and Korea. Vince, the one in the air force, he served in Darwin, flew out of Darwin. He was a navigator. Frank, he was in the air force for a while, right at the end of the war. I don't think he got tangled up in it and then he transferred to the army. But I was the only one, well

22:00 Ron and I were the only ones that were really overseas you know. But Ron was in Japan for six years. I was over there, I met him over there. I was over there with the occupational forces on one of the ships I was on. And we met up in Japan after the, during the war, well after the war with the occupational forces. And it was good. I could get all night leave in Tokyo because I had somewhere to stay - I stayed with my brother.

22:30 How much contact did you have with each other during the war?

Very little, very little. Mail, that was a premium. I remember once we went for three months without a letter. Three months without mail coming to the ship I was on. I can remember it vividly. By accident one letter come to

23:00 someone on board. Come from another ship, was redirected. We had no normal mail for three months. So the chap that got the one letter he took the personal part of the letter out and pinned the rest of the letter up on the notice board and we all had a letter. We all had mail then. And then when the real mail did come, I think we got about

23:30 sixty-eight bags of mail on board and there was letters everywhere. They all catch up. The mail wasn't too bad - it's just when you're on a ship and you're moving about they've got to try and trace where you are going or where you've been to pick up the mail. Of course in my diaries I'm always writing home to family

24:00 and girlfriend. I didn't get to the girlfriend did I? I wrote to her religiously. I wrote to her a couple of times a week I suppose. When I come home she went, she had joined the air force and married an American marine. So I wrote a lot of letters for nothing. But that's the way of the world.

24:30 I think all the romance was only one sided and I think it was all on my side not on hers. Anyway she married an American. I've lost all track of her. I've often wondered what happened to that girl. But you know - what sort of life she finished up living. But I've got no regrets. There's a girl in every port you know. I've never been in every port.

25:00 Was it a worry while you were away? I've heard that people did worry about the Americans at home?

Well I was single. It didn't worry me. I think during wartime I didn't see much of it - broken marriages - because it was something I, didn't affect me at all.

25:30 It may have in our absence because with the influx of Americans during the war, well you get all sorts of stories but personally it didn't affect me. Only that this girl I was keen on she went the other way and well that was it.

Can you tell me Pat,

26:00 **just a little bit about I guess your first day? You've told us about your enlistment day, but the first day in the navy when you turned up at training or you...?**

I can remember the first few days, the first week or so, we never had a uniform. I can remember drilling in civvies [civilian dress]. The little parade around outside the anti-submarine school at Rushcutters Bay.

26:30 We did a bit of field training there and then we learned the basics of submarine detection in classrooms. Did a couple of trips out on Sydney Harbour on an old tug boat that was fitted with submarine detection just to learn the basics of it. But

27:00 things happened so quick that there was very little training and you were gone, gone on the ship going overseas by the 10th of December. So from the 3rd of August to the 10th of December there's not much training, there's not much time. There was, I think we had a couple of weeks leave in that.

What exactly were you learning about submarine detection?

Well submarine detection is basically all

27:30 based on sound. And you've got to learn to differentiate when a sound is transmitted out from underneath the ship and it is echoed back, that's how you find the submarine. And you learn how to differentiate between the different sounds. You've got to differentiate between pitch of sound - that means between high sound and low

28:00 sound. If you're tone deaf you're gone. That was one of the basics you had to have some sort of, you didn't have to be a master musician but you had to differentiate between sounds you know. Then they teach you how to

28:30 discover, different things how you can pick between say a submarine and a shoal of fish or a shark or anything like that. Whether the sound you're listening to is moving - if it's going from left to right, or going away from you or coming toward you. You're trained how to do that.

29:00 But we learnt the very basics of it and the rest you picked up as you went along. And that's what I had to do when I first got into the Middle East. My job was on an old RN Corvette. The Hyacinth. I was the only Australian on her. That was interesting.

In what ways was it interesting being the only Australian?

Well

29:30 I was an eighteen year old Australian - knew everything, cocky young Australian kid, in amongst these Englishmen and they put me in my place very rapidly. Of course I found out I didn't know a lot after all. But after that, after the initial you know, you work in with them and they weren't too bad. And I made some good mates among them. A little Irish fellow,

30:00 we used to go ashore together and get on the scoop, get into trouble. But as I say you made the best of what you could.

Did any of the English give you a hard time being Australian?

Oh yeah well as I say I think I might have brought it on myself. Because as I say as an Australian eighteen year old you know everything, or you think you do. But you find out

30:30 very rapidly that you don't know much at all. Of course I had Don Bradman [iconic Australian cricketer] in my corner, they had Len Hutton [English cricketer] and Harold Larwood [English cricketer]. They used to push that down my throat. But a lot of it was only in fun of course. But I soon realised where my place was in the pecking order.

31:00 **What was the difference I guess between what you had seen in the Australian Navy and then in the Royal Navy? The way they set themselves up and behaved?**

31:30 Well the navy is the navy. It doesn't matter British Navy, Canadian Navy or Australian Navy. But the Australian Navy, I'm talking about the lower deck people, when I say lower deck you know just ratings, the feeling of comradeship was different. Or maybe I saw it through different eyes when I was with

32:00 the RN, but then I was with the Australian Navy I was with my own people, and I suppose when you are with your own people you feel different. There was no animosity but there was just the feeling that I was a foreigner, if you could call yourself a foreigner. But I was with different people. When I got back with my own people it was a different story altogether.

32:30 The whole atmosphere changes.

I've heard that the British forces tend to generally be more formal?

Well of course in the navy it's different. See you hear stories about diggers,

33:00 Australian soldiers and Pommies [English] and the lack of discipline and all of that. Well the air force I

don't know much about, but in the navy the discipline is the same. You've got to toe the line. You've got to do what you're told. The attitude of the middle ranking people, like the

33:30 NCOs [Non-Commissioned Officers]. That was different. I found... well I might have brought a lot of this on myself. I found that the senior sailors, they seemed to be more straight-laced in the Royal Navy than they were in the Australian Navy

34:00 and the discipline wasn't all that different. But maybe it was my approach or the way I read it, but the discipline from the senior sailors in the Royal Navy,

34:30 they used to come on a bit heavy at times. You know I suppose because I was only a kid, as soon as I was chastised for anything they were the worst in the world. But I think that's human nature. But I survived.

When you joined the navy what was the hardest thing to get used to?

35:00 Oh the discipline I suppose - being told what to do and when to do it. Discipline - it's hard to adapt from city streets, but it doesn't take long to adapt to it. But other than that I suppose you miss your family, and I suppose you get homesick.

35:30 When you're sailing out of Sydney heads and see, that's the last thing see, sometimes I guess you are wondering when you are going to be home again. So that was it.

Can you tell me Pat,

36:00 **I guess when you found out you were heading overseas?**

I was chuffed. Gees I had been sitting in an office for a couple of years as a clerk pushing figures around, and then I was away. I wasn't going to war. The war part of it you don't even think about - it's the adventure. Somewhere new, you were going overseas. Overseas. When I was a kid going overseas was like going to the moon.

36:30 We had an opportunity to go, on a big liner with twenty-four other kids. Well 'round about my own age I think. I think there was one younger than me. Something you never dream of, going overseas. Soon changed our minds when we got there.

Where were you hoping to

37:00 **go?**

Well we were on our way to England. And might have been just as well that we didn't get to England because the North Atlantic and the Russian convoys, some of them had a heavy time you know. Well we had it bad enough in the Mediterranean. But if your number's up it's up. I had a mate follow

37:30 me overseas, one of my school mates. He followed me because he knew I joined the navy, I joined the navy in front of him. So he joined the navy and got sent to the HMAS Sydney and I never seen him again. So if you're name's on it, if your number's up.

38:00 Is it luck or? Hard to say. Someone might be watching you. I think my poor old Mum's prayers might have helped too.

To have five boys away and all come back is quite amazing.

I don't think it did her health that much good because she died when she

38:30 was in her sixties, and I'd say the worry of us outlaws away. There's a photo of them over there. That's two of the boys there.

Where was the first port that you stopped in?

Durban. After we left Australia we went straight from Fremantle

39:00 to Durban. We spent a couple of nights in Durban and went around to Cape Town and then we learned in Cape Town that we weren't to go to England, so we came back from Cape Town. From Cape Town across to Durban in a train and then got on a troop ship to the Middle East, and that's when we all went on loan to the Royal Navy. They were short of the so-called specialists, so we all went on loan

39:30 to the Royal Naval ships in the Mediterranean. That was just as the, we arrived there just as they started to take troops into Greece. That didn't last long. Had to bring them out again.

What did you know about the war that was going on?

40:00 Very little, very little. At that stage I don't think there was too much interest in it, as I say the war, the actual war and the fighting. It didn't seem to cross our mind at all. It might have with some other kids, but it was the adventure. Getting killed or hurt - that was the last thing on my mind.

40:30 It was the adventure, somewhere new.

Does that seem like a bit of a, I guess a crazy thing looking back?

I suppose it is. You do crazy things when you're eighteen that you wouldn't do now. But you think you're invincible at eighteen, nothing could happen to you. People say,

41:00 "Were you scared?" Well I think you're too young and silly to be scared. And anyway at sea in action you're too busy to be scared. It's just a feeling that, you're too busy doing something you know. At sea a ship's company is a combined unit, and if one of the unit doesn't do his job well then it might affect the

41:30 whole lot. So it's just a whole team. Work as a team and not as an individual. You might be scared after the event but it's a bit late then.

We might just stop for a moment Pat because we have just come to the end of our first tape.

Tape 2

00:31 **Pat you mentioned earlier on that discipline was one of the hardest things that you had to face when you joined the navy and you also mentioned that you felt like you were a bit cocky when you went overseas, and that you knew everything. Can you just explain what you felt it was that you knew?**

01:00 Well when you're eighteen you don't know as much as you think you know. And I suppose I was a brash Australian kid at eighteen. And tried to show how brash I was and it didn't work. They soon pulled me into gear.

What would you do?

01:30 Oh you'd, I suppose I'd buck at some of the orders. I know a couple of instances I come back late from leave, adrift, thinking of some excuses. You'd get punished for it, your leave stopped, or extra work.

02:00 But I suppose that was the hardest part - to adapt from a free and easy life at home, I suppose there'd be discipline at home because with eight kids there would have to be. But it was a different sort of discipline. But as I said you think you know everything but you don't know everything at all, and there are people that know a lot more than you.

02:30 And they tell you so very rapidly.

Well we'll go on to talk about your specific jobs and tasks, but before we do can you just describe, apart from the jobs that you had to do, what else did you learn about life from the navy?

I

03:00 learnt that you grow up quick. You grow from a boy to a man in a matter of days, especially in action. Your whole outlook changes really. I suppose it's because you're living in a different environment. You're living amongst men all the time. I've always said that you lived in such close proximity

03:30 to other people that if the bloke next door to you had a headache you feel it. See you're cramped in, two hundred men in a confined space. Well the whole attitude, you've got to adapt to the conditions that you're living under.

04:00 Might be different in other forces, it wasn't easy in the navy but you adapt and you make some strong friends and you make some great friends. Because as I said earlier their life might depend on you and your life might depend on them, so you've got to work that way.

04:30 There's no beg your pardons - you've got to give it your full attention, especially in action you can't afford to digress - that's your job and you've got to do it. Whether you think it's right or wrong or what you do it. And that's where discipline comes in - to do it and do it at that time. It might sound strange to you, it means something

05:00 in the long run. That's, people think say marching around a parade ground mightn't mean much in actual warfare, but it's all basic training and discipline to learn to do what you're told when you're told. And that's the whole thing behind the whole lot. And well at eighteen it's a culture shock I think -

05:30 the difference between civvie [civilian] life and service life. When they hit you with this discipline you think, "What the hell's going on," you know, but you soon learn the reason for it.

And in what way did you feel like you were losing your freedom so to speak?

Oh well

06:00 it wouldn't be a loss of freedom actually. Although I suppose it would be because you go where you're told, you don't go where you want to go, you go where you're told to go and do what you're told to do.

- Whereas in civvies street, the whole thing's changed. That's where you
- 06:30 learn the way to address it - do what you're told when you're told.
- Well you mentioned that you felt like you had it belted out of you?**
- Oh that was, not actually physically belted out of you. I think it was more an emotional thing. That you're, you've got to learn to toe the line and do it quick.
- 07:00 So that's the change in your attitude, how it comes in a hurry you know. It's something that doesn't grow on you a little bit at a time - it's something that hits you quick. And it's a culture shock I think, the whole basis of it.
- Well you just mentioned earlier that you did receive some punishment?**
- 07:30 Oh I was always in trouble. For only minor things, nothing. Like coming back late from leave. Might be a half an hour late but, might have got on the grog [alcohol] somewhere with your mates and have missed the boat. And that's something that, when I say you're punished, you might have leave stopped. So the next time there's a mob go on leave you have to stay behind. You might have to do
- 08:00 extra work. Extra hours work, you know. It's nothing you can't handle. I mean there's nothing physical where they're flogging you, no actual corporal punishment. It's just something that you bring on yourself. You always reckon you're getting a raw deal but that's just human nature I think.
- 08:30 Everybody is wrong except you. But you take it, but I wasn't always in trouble. The main time was when I got on the RN ship because I was brash, I was young, I was silly. But I grew out of it.
- 09:00 **Well I was wondering if there was ever a time when you felt like you went through some sort of initiation into the crew or...?**
- No, no. There was never such sort of thing. I suppose they treat you like they treat all newcomers. They're wary of you at first, but there was nothing to wary about me because I was only a rat. There was no such thing as initiation
- 09:30 ceremonies - they accept you. They know you've got to do a job, and whether you do it properly or not that's up to you. But with regards to breaking you in or, no you just become part of the ship's company and that's it. Just part of the team.
- 10:00 **And when did you really feel like you were one of the boys?**
- Oh it didn't take long, didn't take long. See you're speaking now of when I was with the English navy? Oh only a matter of weeks and you work in. And the living conditions on the ship I was on were fairly basic. And it wasn't a real good seagoing ship -
- 10:30 it was rough as blazes. People seasick all around you and that doesn't help you at all. Luckily that was something I was never guilty of - seasickness. But you soon adapt and learn to live the same way that they do. The food might be a bit hard to take, especially after Mum's
- 11:00 home cooking. But once again you either eat it or go hungry.
- And what did you know of the British Navy?**
- Not a thing, not a thing. Well I didn't know much about the navy at all when I joined. I joined
- 11:30 the navy because, it might have been the little white hat or the bell bottom trousers or whatever. But a school mate of mine from just up the road from where I lived, and he might have had some influence on me joining. He mentioned submarine detection and I thought, "Well that'll do me," and that was it. But knowledge of the actual navy itself - I never had a clue
- 12:00 until I really got into it. Then you learn. But it's something that I never regretted. I met some marvellous people and made some marvellous friends. Lost a lot of friends too, but that's life. Especially in wartime, you've got to be a bit philosophical about it I suppose.
- 12:30 **Well growing up in Lidcombe you mentioned that your father wasn't really the reason that joined up in the navy. I'm wondering if there was a person or something that put the idea into your mind?**
- Not that I can say yes to any one person. As I say we had just come out of the depression and I had been in an office,
- 13:00 and there was other people I knew, kids around me going away to war. You know might have been army, navy, air force. And I thought, "Well I'll have a go at this." It was just a change I think. The difference from the dull, well any office I suppose there is a routine. The people where I worked they treated me like I was the greatest hero in the world
- 13:30 when I went away to war. My old boss he wrote some wonderful letters to my Mum after I had gone. She kept them for years. So I can't say that any one person convinced me to go. Although it might have

been subconsciously because my Dad was away there. He always said he scratched his name on the top stone of the Pyramids of Giza.

14:00 And me and a mate I can remember vividly - we were on leave in Cairo. We climbed around the pyramids looking, striking matches in the middle of the night looking for some names. And there is a squillion names there. In white suits. You should have seen us when we got back to Cairo. God we were a mess. You do some stupid things. I think when you get in the grip of the

14:30 grape it don't help though, I can tell you. Anyway....

Well I've always really liked the navy uniform. How did you feel putting on the white?

It's different now. It's a different navy now. Oh I thought I was the ants pants. Little white hat and bell bottom trousers, twenty-one inches across the bottom of the trousers.

15:00 And you're sweet. Oh you think everybody is looking at you. But in those days it was such a change from the ordinary civvies suit, anybody in uniform, you know didn't matter. Once I got into the navy uniform there was no other uniform like that one, didn't matter what they wore.

15:30 That was it for me. Of course then I changed. As I progressed through the years I finished up with a peak cap and brass buttons and all that see, I was promoted. But oh that navy uniform it was something, and I thought I was the ants pants at eighteen.

Well can you tell me,

16:00 **as somebody who hadn't had any experience of the navy, what it was like on your first ship, and what was your first ship?**

My first ship, first seagoing ship was the HMS Hyacinth, an English Corvette. And as I said earlier I was the only Australian on it. As a submarine detector, specialist. It was hard,

16:30 hard to adapt in the first instance, but you had to do it. Your living conditions, as I said before you're living in one another's pockets. Your meals are fairly scratch a scratch can - especially if you are sea running or in action. And

17:00 on a ship during the war, in action, there is not much time for niceties. You are too busy doing what you've got to do you know. You haven't got time to think about much at all but what you're doing. And I think before someone said, "Are you scared?" I was too damn young and silly to be scared.

17:30 You think you're impregnable, but anyway I'm still here.

And what did you know about a Corvette?

Nothing, absolutely zilch. I never knew there was such a thing in the world. See we had very little time to learn about anything from August to December and then we're on our way.

18:00 **Can you describe the ship then to me?**

On the old Corvette there was crew of about eighty, I think there was a crew of about eighty on the crew from memory. It was one of the original flower class Corvettes I know that. Similar, if you ever saw

18:30 a movie called the Cruel Sea there was a ship in it called the Compass Rose. Exactly the same of type of ship I was on. Mast forward of the bridge, living quarters forward. They'd roll on a wet handkerchief. Not a real good

19:00 sea ship. When I say a sea ship, in heavy weather, very rough. Not a, there was no speed about it. I think top speed was about fourteen knots from memory. And it was different when I came back to an Australian ship. I went straight onto a destroyer.

19:30 That's, they're the fast one - thirty-eight, say thirty-five, forty knots. It's a difference of. And when I went from the Royal Navy to the Australian Navy I went straight to people that spoke my language. There was no accents about anyone who was around me. See when you go to the British Navy you've got a different accent from everyone. Whereas the Australian, everybody spoke the same.

20:00 But Corvettes, I didn't know a thing about them. I soon learnt.

And what did you learn about the Corvette?

As I said I learnt that they were a rough ship. Sturdy but rough seagoing ship.

20:30 And I learnt later on that there were better ships to go to, to go to sea on. But when you learnt, as I say you learnt what a Corvette was, well I never knew there was such a word when I went to sea.

I've heard from other navy men that their first ship is like a mother ship. I'm wondering if you

21:00 **had that same kind of affection?**

No well, you'll nearly always find that with sailors, they're a funny mob. Your last ship is nearly always your best ship. And in my whole navy career, I've never shipped on anything bigger than a destroyer and I've always considered myself a destroyer man.

21:30 And in a destroyer you know everybody. There's a crew of say two hundred or something. You know everybody, by their name. The bigger the ship the more people the less people you know personally. And you feel like a destroyer ship is a closely knitted group of people you know. Even the skipper from the officers right now, you get to know them.

22:00 That's why I call myself a destroyer man you know. I'm proud of it. But you're always, they'll always say, "Which is your best ship?" and you'll always say your last ship.

Well we'll go on to talk about your time after the Hyacinth, but perhaps you could go on to tell me

22:30 **a bit more about what the purpose of the Corvette was?**

Yeah, I left the Hyacinth in about August 1941 in Haifa in Palestine, it was Palestine then. And got the train across the Sinai Desert to Alexandria and was put in a transit camp there waiting for another ship. And

23:00 that's when I went from the Royal Navy to the Royal Australian Navy, went back amongst my own crew to the HMAS Nizam, an N class destroyer. And I was on Nizam for the Tobruk Ferry Run, eight months. And water convoys in the Syrian campaign. Greece had just finished then, the evacuation

23:30 of Greece and Crete had finished by the time I got to the Nizam. We came out of the Med [Mediterranean] into the eastern fleet in the Indian Ocean. That was sometime in 1942. So from, all the time, the whole time I was overseas I was only on three ships, the Hyacinth, the

24:00 Nizam and the Norman. They were sister ships, Australian destroyers.

I would like to hear more about life after the Hyacinth, but before we do that, I understand while you were with the Hyacinth you were near a fairly big explosion nearby?

24:30 Oh we were in Piraeus harbour in Greece, Palm Sunday 1941. The Germans declared war on Greece that particular day. There was an air raid on Piraeus harbour, which is the main seaport for Athens. They bombed the harbour and one of them, they bombed an ammunition ship. We didn't know it was an ammunition ship.

25:00 We were only moored oh say a hundred and fifty yards from it. It burnt for hours and we just watched it, you know. It was just another fire. We didn't know it was full of ammunition. And then at midnight it blew up, the whole ship blew up. Sunk eighteen ships in the harbour. A full sheet of the ship side swept across our bridge, killed our navigating officer.

25:30 Broke all of our mooring lines. Set fires, sunk eighteen ships in the harbour. There were barges full of ammunition floating around the harbour, on fire, blowing, exploding. It was like Dante's Inferno. As a matter of fact they buried the navigator the next day, off the... There was another couple of ships but they got out

26:00 of the road, they must have known. Whether they had a preview of, there was a couple of cruisers in there but they got out before the explosion. They were there for the air raid but then they got out before this ship blew up. The Clan Fraser I remember that. It played hell in the harbour. We were only a hundred and fifty yards away. Knocked our, smashed our bridge, and well we all got knocked about a bit. And then

26:30 instead of going back to Alexandria for repairs, to repair our bridge, we had to stay there in Piraeus and surrounding ports to evacuate the troops. So we were still seaworthy, just our bridge was smashed about. That was one of the many times. See we had no air cover.

27:00 We had no aeroplanes at all. Every aeroplane that you see belonged to the other mob. And they used to pound us unmercifully all day, until it got dark and they couldn't see us. And then as soon as it became daylight again they'd be back out at it. And at sea, you don't go anywhere. You're the target, you're it. Whereas on land you've got a bit of a chance I suppose, whereas at sea

27:30 you're the target. And it's not the most pleasant thing to do, dive bomber coming at you, you know. But that was one of the many times, close call.

In that explosion then did you know what had hit you?

No, no. As a matter of fact we were watching the fire. We didn't know there was

28:00 ammunition on board. Wherever it was it burned and burned and it got to the explosive point and then boom away she went. I remember I was up on the bridge watching the fire I think and then all of a sudden bang. And the navigator was not far away from me on the other side of the bridge, and

28:30 it just swept across the bridge, this sheet of steel, and took him with it. And we found him out on the jetty underneath this sheet of steel. Killed him poor fellow. Lieutenant Humphrey, I remember him. But you just say, "Poor bugger," that's all you say. You can't let your emotions get in the way because you've got too much to do.

29:00 So that's it. You learn to live with it. People think, you're not callous, you're not being callous at all when you see death like that. If you let it get at you you wouldn't be worth a crummet if you let it get to you. So it's not being callous - it's just being practical. I know it sounds funny but that's the way it is.

29:30 But that was one of the many times you know, you, that's war. Especially war at sea - it's not the most pleasant place to be. I suppose war anywhere, but at sea she's fairly compressed.

And when that ship blew it would have

30:00 **been a fairly big explosion too?**

Oh yes. As I say we were only at a very close proximity, in Piraeus harbour. Not a very big place - not like Sydney Harbour with docks all around it. I think it sunk eighteen ships in this little place. And we were, as I say a hundred and fifty yards

30:30 away. Broke all of our mooring lines, the force of the explosion broke all of our mooring lines. We were lucky to get them tied back up and get back on. But then we thought, "We better get out of here." The powers that be, the skipper - "We better get out of here." And we tried to get out through the harbour through all of these floating barges full of ammunition blazing and blowing up. It was like cracker night with a vengeance. Well they sunk mines in the harbour

31:00 and we had to go back and sweep for mines in the harbour. It was a bit hairy there. That was, anybody was in it. The [HMAS] Perth was in it, one of the Australian cruisers was in Piraeus at the time but it got out of the harbour before the

31:30 Clan Fraser blew.

I'm also wondering if you saw any loss of life, any bodies in the water?

Oh we saw floating around, a Greek sailor was ready there. The next day after the explosion blew we went back into the entrance of the harbour

32:00 minesweeping, and there was bodies floating around and you think, "Poor bugger." People are lying dead all around you after the explosion. We were mad keen on a Greek policeman's helmet. It was a beautiful helmet that policemen used to wear. And a Greek policeman got skittled in the explosion and

32:30 there was a race to see who got his hat. A souvenir. I never got it, I ran second.

Yeah it sounds like now looking back, maybe it sounds pretty crazy to be just thinking about the helmet.

33:00 You can relate nearly every day in life that you look back on and you think why the hell did I do that? But at the time it didn't seem, but you do things every time I suppose. If you thought about it for a while, if you stopped and thought about what you were doing you would never do it. A lot of things you do instinctively without even thinking, spur of the

33:30 moment things. I think any heroes are spur of the moments things. If you stopped and thought you wouldn't do it anyway. Because if you stopped and thought you'd think, "Well this is crazy." Any heroic act I think is more spur of the moment than thought.

Well that's a very serious action having to be involved in. What were you thinking

34:00 **of your enemy at that time?**

Well people say what? They've got a job to do, they're trying to do their best I suppose. They think they're doing the right thing by trying to kill you, you think you're doing the right thing by trying to kill them. So it's six to one half a dozen to the other. Who's right and who's wrong - it never

34:30 crosses your mind I don't think. They've got a job to do - they're trying to get you, you're trying to get them. People have said, "Have you got any animosity towards the Germans?" They're ordinary people. The Japanese - they're ordinary people. Maybe the way they were indoctrinated was different, and their methods of doing things are different.

35:00 But I never thought about it much you know. You had a job to do and that's, you tried to do it to the best of your ability. Might sound strange but that's the way it is. I didn't have much to do... see POW's [Prisoners Of War], they might have a different outlook on life, because they lived different and they were treated different to me see? I can only speak

35:30 as I was treated.

Well you mentioned that when you were at sea you felt like a target. Were you feeling like a

target in that explosion?

Well see, the actual air raid had already finished

36:00 and they had gone. But the ship that was hit was still burning, it was just another fire. Look at the fire and it looked nice. But then we didn't know what was burning would eventually explode, which it did. So it wasn't the sort of thing you were getting prepared for. Bang, it just happened.

36:30 **And then I believe you mentioned you were required to go and evacuate some troops?**

Oh yes, yes. We stayed in Piraeus harbour for a little while, minesweeping as I said, because they dropped mines in the harbour too. So we stayed minesweeping, and then they started to evacuate the troops out of the different ports in Greece.

37:00 They were taking them down from Greece to Crete. And we were in a little place called Nauplion, and that's where my ship was involved in the evacuation of Dr Weary Dunlop and his nurses, out of a little place called Nortlia. I can remember that vividly too. A big liner, the Austar Prince ran aground there and we tried to tow it off.

37:30 And got the rope, the towing rope wrapped around our propeller. Luckily they got it freed, because the next morning they blew the Austar Prince out of the water. We were only hanging on by one line. Soon as dawn came the air raids and they came and blew the Austar Prince up. But we got away that night. We was taking the troops back to Suda Bay

38:00 in Crete, and then while we were in Crete they sent us back to Alexandria for repairs, because we had no, the bridge was all smashed up. So we missed the actual, we had just started to see the evacuation of Crete when they sent us away. Back for repair. Must have been room for us in one of the docks in Alexandria, and so we got fixed up there.

38:30 And then went back to sea again, and by that time the actual evacuation of Greece and Crete was over. Then we went, had other things to do then. Running the Tobruk Ferry Service.

Well I've heard, particularly from 6 Divvy [Division] boys that they relied and depended on the navy. What did you know of the 6 Divvy?

39:00 Well I've heard it said time and time again, "Thank God we had a navy because we had no air force in the Middle East." There was only us and the army, and they were that thankful that we were there to take them out of Greece you know. But it was chaos, it was absolute chaos. The amount of ships that were sunk during the evacuation, I just don't know the number. But you'd see

39:30 the ships coming in from the trip to Crete, and you'd look over and count and say, "Well what one's missing this time," you know because I had mates all through the Royal Navy fleet. Out of the twenty-four, we all went to RN, I don't know how many mates I lost during that. See no air cover.

40:00 As I say we were a sitting duck.

So can you just explain, you say you lost of RN mates?

No Australian fellows.

Oh sorry.

See as I say there was a crew of twenty-four of us went away, all specialist. And when we got there we all went on loan to different RN ships.

40:30 And that's when I say when they were coming back from the evacuation, there'd be different ships missing, and you'd think, "Which one of my mates is gone now," you know. I think eight of us came home out of the twenty-four. But that's war.

41:00 **Well I think that our tape is coming to an end so we might stop there for a minute.**

All right I'll go and put the kettle on.

Tape 3

00:31 **Pat I was wondering if you could tell me, we know from your description that you've seen a lot of action with air raids, but I was just wondering if you could tell me the first raid you were in?**

The first time I ever seen, well we experienced air raids in Alexandria prior to being, going to sea. On an escort going from Alexandria

01:00 to Greece, up to Athens, and a ship in the convoy got hit. And I can remember vividly a big cloud of orange flame coming out of the stern of this ship and my stomach started to turn over and I don't think

it settled down until midnight. That was my first actual experience. I don't know how far away we

01:30 were but we were in a convoy and we were escorting. But after that it was every day it comes, because we had no air force and they had it all they had all of the air force, everybody knows that. But it changed, it changed later on. Because it had to. But it's not the most pleasant experience - air raids at sea because you've got nowhere to go, you're it.

02:00 But you've got to be philosophical about it I suppose and say well if your name's on it that's it. You see ships getting sunk all around you. They're just the unlucky ones, you can't do much about it.

When the convoy was attacked what would it do?

Well you try and disperse or try and make as small a target as possible,

02:30 but you've got to keep going. Your main course has got to keep going where your destination is. But you've just got to try and fight them off. Most of the ships, even the cargo ships we were escorting they had some kind of guns on board and they were trying to fight them off as best they could.

03:00 And you'd try and shepherd them out of the road and try to protect them with anti-air fire as best we could. But you can only fire so many guns, and they bring a lot more planes than you've got guns and that's the trouble. And some of them get through and some don't. And we had a fair amount of success with anti-aircraft fire, but not near enough.

03:30 **What kind of guns did the Hyacinth have on it?**

Very antiquated, basic. Not a lot of, not compared with other ships. An old four inch on the focsle. Some anti- Vickers machine guns on the wings of the bridge. I think that was, not much at all, not much protection compared with some of the

04:00 smaller ships we, not much anti-aircraft protection at all. So you took your chances. It was different when I got on to other speedier ships with more heavily armed ships. I remember when we first went into Tobruk harbour there was captured Italian anti-aircraft guns. They had

04:30 captured them from the Italians and I think we took a couple of them on board. Mounted them on board. I think they were Breeders now, I'm trying to remember the brand of the gun, but we must have got the ammunition for them as well. So we mounted them on board in addition to what we already carried.

05:00 You've got to be well equipped for those, especially if they're dive bombing you know.

We've heard from people who have been in bombing raids on land, that you can tell sometimes where the bomb is going to land and...

Half the time you can't differentiate between the screams of the plane

05:30 coming down at you, especially dive bombers. The scream of the plane and the scream of the bomb. So you don't know which is which. But you'd have to be pretty spot on to know where the actual bomb is going to land. As I say at sea you're the target, and you know that you're the target

06:00 because they're aiming at you. And you're doing your best to get out of the road, you know. Dodging and weaving. So it's not the most pleasant place in the world.

What would you be doing during a raid?

Well my job in the early part of the war was ammunition supply, supplying the guns. We weren't supposed to be near actual firing of the guns see, because of the

06:30 hearing, because our job depended on our hearing. Acute hearing. For submarine detection it's all hearing. So our job was ammunition supply, and you just had to keep the ammunition up to the guns. So I don't know whether you'd feel any different trying to shoot back at them or not, whether that'd give you a small

07:00 sense of security or not I don't know. But that was my particular job on that particular ship. When you go to a different ship you might get a different action station, some part of the business.

What did supplying the ammunition actually involve? What did you...?

You'd be getting it from ammunition lockers and passing it on to the men loading the guns. Like a chain, just passing

07:30 the ammunition from where it's stowed in the ammunition locker, just passing it on to the men who load the guns. Loading and firing the guns, just keeping the ammunition supply up to them.

I was wondering, considering you were seeing ships sunk around you, did you have a plan for what you would do if the ship was hit?

08:00 I don't think you thought about it. Oh there's ways of getting off the ship. They had lifeboats, and

everybody had a lifeboat station just in case, but it's something you don't think about. You just don't think about it. You're too busy. As I said earlier you haven't got time to think about what could be - you've got to think about what is happening at the time.

08:30 I think you'll find that that's in most instances anyway. They say, "Were you frightened?" and I don't know whether I was or not - I was too busy doing things.

I wonder during those times, was there anyone who couldn't cope?

Oh yes, oh yes, I've seen people in the actual ship I was in go off their head

09:00 and be carted off in straightjackets. Just couldn't hack it. Just how it affects people differently you know.

How did they go off their heads?

Probably just couldn't stand it. Just completely lost it and had to be what do you call it?

09:30 Mollified and doped. And put in a straightjacket. I've seen them carting them in a straightjacket. But it just affects people different ways see? You just shake your head and say, "Oh well poor bugger,"

10:00 just go back to what you're doing. If you let it get at you the whole thing, the whole structure of the thing would collapse if you let it get at you. Because you're so dependent on the bloke next to you, you know - in a team. Well it's the same in any organization. The air force - you're dependent, bombardier's dependent on the pilot and the same in the navy.

10:30 As they say you've only got a mate watching your back.

Given the team you're describing, how important was your captain?

Well he's like in anything you've got to have someone in charge. If anything goes wrong, the buck stops with him,

11:00 but then conversely if anything goes right he cops the kudos. So six to one half a dozen to the other. But everybody as I say is in a team, and you've got to have someone in charge who delegates authority down through different departments. Might be an engineer officer in charge of keeping the engine going. A gunnery officer in charge of the guns.

11:30 An anti-submarine detector officer in charge of all the anti-submarine equipment. And so it goes on. But eventually the whole thing comes back to the captain - he's the boy. But if things go wrong he's the boy that's got to cop it, not that they do but sometimes they do. He cops the flak.

12:00 The buck stops with him.

I've read that if a crew doesn't like their captain it just doesn't work?

Well I think in human nature that you'll get someone you don't like somewhere. But there's not much you can do about it. You've got to wear him and he's got to wear you. It cuts both ways.

12:30 There's not much you can do about it once you're on the ship and if you don't like what's going on well that's your bad luck. Especially in time of war, you don't say, "Well I don't like this I'm going somewhere else." You stick where you are put. So personalities they have to take a back seat.

13:00 Because there's not much you can do about it.

Well what did you think of the different captains you were serving under?

Oh well see they were way above me. I was only one of the troops. But I found them not bad fellows, good seamen, good disciplinarians.

13:30 And they were prepared to take the flak if it was sent their way. But see there's a fair gap between officers and sailors in the navy. It's not as though you are living in each other's pockets, because the sailors are at one end of the ship and the officers are at the other end of the ship. In the army you might be all in the same foxhole.

14:00 In the air force, well the officers are in the same plane as the pilot or whatever it is. But in the navy there is that, you wouldn't call it class distinction, but there is definitely a distinction between the officers and ratings yeah. But it's all part of the (UNCLEAR).

14:30 That's life in the navy. Not something you go looking for - it's there, you don't have to look for it. Some would get power drunk, that's human nature too. They take it too much on themselves. Of course that doesn't wear well with the ordinary sailor who is

15:00 never wrong if you can get out of it.

I've been told that when on a ship naval officers have some ways of coming up with ingenious punishments?

Ingenious punishments, that's, they've heard every excuse known to man.

- 15:30 If you can come up with an excuse sometimes you get out of it. They're that amazed that you could come up with something that they've never heard of it before. Overall it's, you had to, to get really savagely punished you had to commit a fairly savage breach of discipline. But ordinary, say if you come back late or drunk
- 16:00 or the usual routine, it's stuff you've got to wear. There's no physical flogging, no cat of nine tails you know. If you deserve it you get it. So, I suppose well some of them would have been hard done by. That's life again. Someone would have a dry rub somewhere.

16:30 But if you break the rules you get punished accordingly.

You let us have a look in your diary, and the word adrift featured a lot?

Well when you get ashore and you get on the grog and you lose track of time, and your leave expires at a certain date and you miss the last boat back to the ship,

17:00 it causes a little certain amount of consternation because they have got to come looking for you. And if you're adrift or over leave you are in trouble. And that's happened to me before. You get snoop full of grog and get into a beer joint somewhere, and there is plenty of revelry and song and you think, forget the time

17:30 and pay the price.

Do you remember any of the excuses you would try?

Oh I tried them all. Missed the boat, but they've heard them all. Of course you couldn't say your wife was having a baby when you're three thousand, on the other side of the world.

18:00 Had to have some gooduns. Adrift. That was my main drama when I was with the RN. A little mate of mine we used to go ashore and we would forget the time. We'd be having a good time somewhere and miss the boat, or miss the Gary. Gary - that was a horse drawn taxi.

18:30 Consequently we'd be staggering back up on board, half an hour late, was still adrift. They were fairly savage when you got back on. They say a time that meant. Oh sometimes your ship was on sailing orders too. That meant your ship had to be prepared to go at a minute's notice. And if some of your crew is adrift, well you're going short-handed, and that's a no-no.

19:00 What would the punishment for being adrift be?

Extra work, work after hours while everybody else was knocked off. Stopping your leave and while the rest of the crew is on leave you've got to stay on board and do extra work. Oh and then the more serious the crime the more serious the punishment. Could finish up in cells. But no actual

19:30 physical punishment. When I say physical punishment, not like the old days where they'd lash you or anything like that. That went out with the blades. But mainly extra work and the stopping of privileges such as leave. Sometimes docking your pay, not often.

What was the extra work?

20:00 Oh you might have to be washing paint work down, or washing saltwater, or chipping paint work, cleaning up, scrubbing decks, cleaning out your lifeboats. Oh hundreds and hundreds of things they'll find something for you to do.

Were they a deterrent?

Yeah I suppose they would be a deterrent

20:30 in some sort of way. But if you can get away with it good luck. You know but if you get caught you just wear it. I don't want to sound as though we were always in trouble, but it happened. With me it might have happened more than other people. But especially in the early part when I was young and silly.

21:00 After that you get a bit long in the tooth and you get a bit more shrewd and you learn to dodge these things.

How old were the rest of the crew around you?

Well in years I would be one of the youngest because I had just turned eighteen. I'd say on the RN Corvette I was on I'd be the youngest

21:30 by far. When I got to the Australian destroyer I was still, you know I was only one of the kids. So I was, I didn't have my twenty first birthday until I came back from overseas.

22:00 I wonder Pat if we could talk a little bit about the evacuation in Greece and Crete? I guess before heading towards the evacuation, what did you know of the war that was going on the mainland?

Not very much. We knew there was a war on, because we had taken most of the troops there. We had

only just taken them on and landed them on Greece. And we were only there a matter of weeks

22:30 and we were bringing them all back. Because in the early part of the war the Italians were the Greeks on the Albanian front, and the Greeks were winning. I can remember being in Athens, in the city of Athens and the Greeks would have a victory on the Albanian front

23:00 and they would have a march through the city. And it seemed like everybody was in a uniform. To try and cross the street, you might have to wait half an hour to get across the road because of the marches. But then the Germans declared war. They weren't in it, in that particular area. That made a difference altogether, because they had the might, they had the power. And their

23:30 Panzer divisions swept down through Greece and we didn't have the strength to stop them. So we had to get out. And that was a major operation too - to get the troops out. We got them as far as Crete and then we had to ship them out again. From Crete down to Alexandria. Wasn't very pleasant you know,

24:00 once again no air cover.

Can you tell me Pat the process of evacuating the troops?

The process? Well you did it whenever you could wherever you could. In my particular case see we didn't have a hell of a lot of room to carry troops,

24:30 because we weren't that big. We used to ferry what we could from the mainland of Greece down to Crete, unload them, and then unload from the bigger ships back onto the jetties. So they could get ashore. But night time was the best time. See you tried to get as far away from the mainland

25:00 in dark because in daylight hours you were closer to the enemy airfields you know. More chance of getting action. So we worked like as fast and as hard as we could to get the troops on board of a night. It wasn't always successful. See it's on my diary where we run into a landing barge in Nortlia harbour

25:30 in sometime around, I think it was full of troops then. We don't know we lost, we never found them anyway. Things happen in the dark. We brought Dr Weary Dunlop's nurses. I don't know if he was on the actual ship, but we brought a lot of his nurses out of Greece, from Nortlia. He mentioned it in his book.

26:00 One of Weary Dunlop's books he mentions the old ship the Hyacinth.

What was it like having nurses on the ship?

We didn't have a clue who they were. They were all in army grey coats and tin hats, they were just people. Hurry on, and we'd have the occasional epithet. I'm sorry this voice would come out, and - "Hello what have we got here?" We didn't know they were nurses.

26:30 But that was a load of, with soldiers it didn't mean a thing to them. But they were good scouts. Not that we had a lot to do with them because we were too busy doing other things. You couldn't associate with them because we were trying to get them sorted out and get them ready to go ashore.

What was your actual job during the evacuation? What were you doing?

27:00 Just part of the ship. I was still a submarine detector - that was my basic job. I had to work watches you know, so many hours on and so many hours off. Around the clock. For a long, long time for years I did four hours on and four hours off. Around the clock four hours on and four hours off. That's with earphones on. And then in my four hours off you might have to work the ship you know, cleaning up the ship. So it was full on.

27:30 But see oh it could have been anything with the actual evacuation. Apart from listening for submarines you're trying to keep yourself alive.

Did you have much interaction with the troops and the nurses being evacuated?

Not a lot, we didn't have a lot of time you know. You might get to talking to them and you'd hear them say, "Thank God we've got a navy," because we was helping them out.

28:00 But you didn't have a lot of time. Oh occasionally you'd run into someone you knew. Someone from, I mention it there somewhere in my diary that I ran into someone from my old hometown somewhere along the track. He's trying to get out and so were we. But not a lot of interaction you know. Because as I said we were too busy.

How long was the trip from Greece to Crete?

28:30 Well it all depends what speed you were doing. Fourteen knots, oh I can't remember now, but it was only a matter of hours. But I remember going, when we first took off going to Greece, we were passing the island of Crete, first time I had seen snow actually - there was snow on the mountains in Crete. And you go to dark, Crete would be there, and you'd

29:00 wake up in the morning, in the daylight and Crete would be just there. You could only go as fast as your slowest ship, which is only about three or four knots. It seems to take forever. But your whole convoy could only go as fast as your slowest ship. But only overnight, it wasn't that far. Too close for comfort

with the German troops,

29:30 or the German air force, the Luftwaffe.

I've read just in bits about the Greek campaign and Crete that it was just a mess having to evacuate the troops. It wasn't an orderly?

Oh no it wasn't an orderly withdrawal. Because there was

30:00 the amount of action that was coming from the other side. They were chasing them all away. But we weren't involved in, personally I wasn't involved in the landing part of the evacuation. All we were interested in was getting them on board and getting them out of the place. And how we did it was our affair you know. We did it as best we could with what we had and the ships we had. A lot of them couldn't get out

30:30 and they were captured. But that was no fault of ours you know. It was the same in Crete. A lot of them couldn't get out and they come off with other means and got captured again.

What could you do for your ship not to leave troops behind?

Not much. Once you're loaded you could only take so many. You did the best

31:00 you could, you put them anywhere you could place them. Standing, lying, walking anywhere. But as I said it was only a matter of hours before you were back into Crete. So you got them on the best way you could and got them off the best way you could as quick as you could. There was no comfort involved. Oh you made them as comfortable as possible but you put them everywhere you could you know.

31:30 **I guess I just imagine on the ship, doing so many evacuations yet knowing you had to leave so many behind?**

Not much you could do about it.

I just want to know how, if that affected the morale of the ship?

I don't think so because you can only do what you can do you know.

32:00 Like in every, in all walks of life you've got to have a winner and a loser and if you lose there is nothing you can do about it. But we done everything we could possibly to get them off. There was just no... You can cut this bit.

32:30 **That's ok, and I guess evacuating from Greece to Crete, where did you evacuate from Crete to?**

From Crete back down to Alexandria. See Crete is closer to Greece than it is to Alexandria, and the main losses weren't from Greece to Crete, they were from Crete to Alexandria, the main ship losses. Once again because they had, the Germans had airfields in Greece. And they had airfields in Crete.

33:00 The parachuters come down just as we were leaving Suda Bay harbour. You could see them coming down and we were getting the blazes out of the road.

How much of a difference would it have made to your job, or to the navy's job if you had had air cover?

Well oh the whole thing would have changed. We

33:30 wouldn't have lost half as many ships if we had had air cover. Because that was our weakest point. We had nothing, not a thing at all. Not any aircraft at all. And see they had supremacy of the skies. They had everything in their favour.

I guess we've talked a lot

34:00 **about the air cover in the war from above but what was going on from your position and the threat below the surface with the submarines?**

Oh there were submarines all the time, it's just something you can't see. That's why we, oh the Germans had submarines and the Italians had submarines, so we were on the alert all of the time for those. Had to be.

34:30 So while they were watching the skies all of the time for air raids, there had to be somebody listening for submarines all of the time. We had no, well I don't think we had many submarines in the Middle East. I don't think they were involved because it was too busy, there was too much traffic. During the evacuation there wouldn't be submarines involved. Too much traffic - because it would be hard to differentiate between ours and theirs.

35:00 And you had to know where to, see it was such that, any Allied submarines they generally knew their position, where they should be and if you heard a submarine, well you knew it wasn't yours and you'd attack.

I guess just given your description of the air raids and the noise, how hard was it to concentrate on the noise listening

35:30 **for submarines?**

Well in the later type of submarine detection gear you were in a padded room and the door was that thick, like a fridge door, you know the big freezers? So it was sound proof. All you could hear was the noise of the bombs around the ship, plus the noise that you were sending out. In the early days it was pretty hard because you had no protection at all.

36:00 Half the time you were out on the open bridge, and all you can hear, apart from the guns going off you were trying to listen for submarines as well. So it was difficult but we still had a certain amount of success. But that mightn't be in the middle of an air raid when there was too much other rubbish going on.

Can you describe for me, I guess you've mentioned the sound of the bombs falling around you,

36:30 **what some of these noises sounded like through your headset?**

They seemed to be amplified a hundred times you know. Well any noise under the water you could hear through your earphones. If it's a bomb going off close to your ship it'd lift your earphones off. Wasn't the most pleasant sound in the world, because the louder the sound

37:00 was it meant the closer the bomb was to your ship. And then of course if you dropped depth charges, you had to take the earphones off if they were attacking because the noise will get you and knock your bloody earphones off. So you sort of lifted them off and then carried on.

I guess I just wonder Pat, you know being on the earphones when ships are going down,

37:30 **what were you hearing of the noises below the water?**

You can actually hear, of course you can hear the depth charges and the bombs going off. You can also differentiate, you can hear a submarine breaking up, actually the force of the water underneath it, you can actually hear the break-up noises of a submarine after it's been attacked

38:00 and sunk, you can definitely hear it.

What were those sounds?

Oh like a crackling sound, you're taught to listen for. You know the different sounds. You could hear another ship's propeller along side you. You could hear it going around. It was that sensitive to noise under the ship. So

38:30 that's the whole business, that's the whole process of this submarine detection. The sound and how vital it is to be able to pick one sound from another, but that's what you're trained to do.

I'm just wondering how hard it was to concentrate on all of the sounds and pick out individual ones?

Well that's training again. Training.

39:00 See you could be listening and you could hear the sound of a torpedo coming towards you. Because of the sound the torpedo propeller makes. You could hear the slow beat of a transport ship in the next column of the convoy, because you hear the slow beat of the propeller, because they're huge. Then you can hear the quickened beat of a destroyer escort alongside you. It's just something you learn to do.

39:30 When you get a real sharp metallic echo back you think, "Hell, that's something down there." And you could train on that particular bearing. You can estimate how long or how big the underwater object is. It's all training again, so it's just something that you get used to.

40:00 **You mentioned that your training was very brief?**

You learn on the job, you've got to. But basically you learn the sounds, you've got to have acute hearing. Bit late for me now isn't it? But you trained. I can remember part of the training that they have a single string violin,

40:30 and they could shift the bridge of the violin and they would hit one side and then hit the other and say which is the higher note. And you've got to differentiate. And then they put it right in the middle and you've got to say, "Well that's the same," or "That's a little bit higher than that." And if you can't do that well you're no good. So that's practice again.

41:00 **I just wonder was there anything, what was one of the most unusual sounds you heard?**

Oh I've heard submarines breaking up. You can hear a whale whistle. You get an echo back of fish, shoals of fish. That happened once in the invasion of Madagascar.

41:30 You got an echo back of what they thought could have been submarine, dropped a small charge over the

side. And the biggest fish we got was a two hundred and sixty-eight pound groper, so it must have landed fair on his head. So that, see you've got to learn to differentiate between all of the different sounds. You could talk to one another. Say if I had a mate on

42:00 another ship he could send messages in Morse and I could pick it up.

Tape 4

00:34 **Pat it's very interesting to hear about your role with the Hyacinth and the evacuation. I was wondering if you got a chance at all, and you may not have, to talk to any of the troops you were evacuating?**

Oh not to any marked degree. Not to any, as I say the time

01:00 factor had a lot to do with it. By the time we got them on and got them settled it was nearly time to get them off again. It wasn't that far, as I say it was only a matter of hours between when they were loaded and unloaded. So it's not as though we could converse with them and get their feelings. So no actually there wasn't much interaction between. Only the occasional one that would say,

01:30 "Thank God we got a navy," we're out of it you know. So it wasn't as though we had time to stop and have a bit of a yarn. Of course you had your own work to do as well. Wasn't as though it was like a picnic.

I was just wondering, you know how a buzz goes around a ship really quick. I was wondering if there was any buzz coming from the troops about the Germans or the Italians or...?

02:00 Not that I noticed. There may have been, but not that I ever knew that you could get a rumour on how things were going in other words. No I can't say I ever experienced it to any marked degree. There might have been an occasional word but nothing of any consequence.

02:30 **And I also understand that, and you might like to tell me if this is true, that the Hyacinth was credited with sinking a sub?**

Yes, yes we were credited with sinking one in the eastern Med. No I don't know if it was before or during the evacuation or after. I just can't remember. We sat over one, supposed to be

03:00 an Italian mine-laying sub in the eastern Med, I think it might have been most of the day. I don't know how many charges we dropped. As a matter of fact I was on watch at the time that we found the sub. Of course all day you had your watch changed, but I do believe that the Hyacinth was actually credited with the actual kill of the submarine later on in reports you know. We could see

03:30 debris and oil on the surface which helped a bit. But see, they get cunning - they can pump oil out from a submarine from underneath and they think, "Oh well you've got it." That's one of their tricks of getting away. But it was defiantly credited to the Hyacinth as a kill.

Well I was just wondering if because you were on SONAR [Sound Navigation and Ranging] if you ever encountered or picked up?

Oh yeah you picked...

04:00 I was on watch when we found the thing. As I say I was there for most of the watch but then you get relieved, someone else takes over. But I was on actual watch when we found it. I can remember that because I think, I think there was someone came on board later on, some dignitary or someone in charge and congratulated us.

04:30 I know it was a sort of semi-official thing. Whether he congratulated me personally or not I don't know, I can't remember. But I consider myself part of the team that found it and eventually sunk it. It's a team effort anyway. The skipper gets the kudos and you do the work.

05:00 It sounds odd. That's life in the navy, we had one hero - that's him.

Well how or in what way did that claim or that success boost morale on board the ship?

Oh you're all, definitely if you shoot down an aeroplane everybody cheers. Well you've just killed someone. Everybody cheers, not fun. Same

05:30 as you sink a submarine - everybody cheers. You've just killed someone. But that's not in the back of your mind. The thought of killing someone, as I said earlier you kill them or they kill you. That's your job. You're trained to kill people it's as simple as that. You're trained to kill people. It's not the most pleasant thing to say

06:00 I know, but if you don't get them they get you so what's the answer? If you have qualms about it you wouldn't be there. In hindsight you think, "What the hell was all this about?" But at the time you don't even think.

Well you've just mentioned that

06:30 **you were on watch when the sub was found, but you were relieved. Can you just take me through the different watches? I believe there's a colour coding according to the watches, like red watch blue watch?**

Oh yes you're only on a listening, you might only be so many hours at a time, otherwise you'd go completely bananas you know. So you stay on and when your time is

07:00 finished, you hand over - even in the middle of an attack. If it was someone more senior to you well he takes over from you to carry out over the attack. But there has got to be someone on the earphones all of the time, so as soon as your watch is up you just hand the earphones to the next fellow and he just carried on doing what you were doing.

So what was red watch?

Well red watch, see there might have been three watches.

07:30 Doesn't sound like that, generally only two watches, red and blue. So you work four hours on watch, four hours off watch, right around the clock. Later on you might do four hours on and eight off. It's different. Different ships different watches. Depends on how many you've got on board see?

08:00 **And I'm wondering also what type of illnesses or injuries you might have had on the Hyacinth?**

I got bowled over in that explosion in Piraeus harbour. Only got knocked about, mainly got knocked off my feet with the force of

08:30 the explosion. Hurt my shoulder a bit and that came back on me later in life you know. Years later I got a bad shoulder, but nothing of a death threatening nature. And I remember I went on to the York in Suda Bay harbour in Crete and had a boil

09:00 carbuncle on my neck lanced. And we were coming out of Crete heading back to Alexandria harbour passed all of these ships. We had no bridge - it had just been blown up in Piraeus Harbour. The bridge was all smashed about. Here's me standing on the upper deck with my neck in bandages and you swear it looked like the retreat from Moscow. No bridge and

09:30 a boil on my neck, I remember that. Went on to the York, the HMS York. It had been bombed and it was sitting on the bottom of Suda Bay harbour. But there was enough of the superstructure out to allow them to have their sick bay, so that's where I went to get this boil lanced. Must have thought, "Look at that hero," even though it was only a boil. But to look, to see the rest

10:00 of the ship, we was a mess because it had all been smashed about in the explosion.

I was also wondering if there was ever a time that you were asked to be armed on board or to carry a revolver?

10:30 I don't think they'd trust me, I could have shot myself. No, no I can remember once, this is years later, one of the ships I was on was in dry dock. And when you're in dry dock you're not allowed to have one bit of ammunition on board, otherwise the dockyard

11:00 people won't go near you. And I had to escort the paymaster into the city to collect the payroll. I had a revolver and not a round of ammunition. I don't know what I was supposed to do - say, "Bang you're dead." I'll never forget that. I was the paymaster escort, side-armed and not a round of ammunition.

11:30 We weren't allowed to have it on board. But I wasn't a marksman. They didn't trust me with a revolver.

Well you've just raised something that I would like to ask you about. What was your pay rate?

I started off as an ordinary seaman,

12:00 I think it was about five or six bob a day, five or six shillings a day then. But I was getting Australian, when I was with the Royal Navy I was getting Australian rates of pay in sterling. And it was a marked difference. I was getting more money than some of their senior ranking because of the difference in the.... And I always had money, because it was not as if I was broke.

12:30 And I was always very popular, I was a, money meant nothing to you then. I used to make out, I think you used to make out an allotment to your folks back home, and they take some out of your pay and put it aside. But over the years I progressed through the different ranks, and look I couldn't remember within

13:00 when I paid off in 1952. I wouldn't have a clue what I was getting but it started off about five or six bob a day and that was big money then. Now, good luck to them. They go to war now and they get danger money. We weren't getting any danger money or any of this.

13:30 **Well perhaps then you could tell me when did you first hear the buzz that you were going to be leaving the Hyacinth?**

Well I'd applied - whether I'd had enough of all this multi-cultural, not multi-cultural, multi-lingual,

14:00 I was busting to get back amongst my own. Well that was my main aim to get back amongst the Australian fellows. About a fortnight before I sort of got a rumble, "There's another bloke come on board to relieve you." Well that sort of give me some indication. And that was in Haifa when he came aboard. I don't know

14:30 whether I left the same day, but it didn't take me long to pack my gear and get ready. And they put me on a train and I come back across from the Sinai Desert back to Alexandria and that's where I picked up on an Australian destroyer. So they didn't give you a lot of time you know. Well I didn't take much time, I didn't take any couching. When I got the news that I was going, the buzz as you call it.

15:00 Strange you should talk about that because the Naval Association here in Orange, the newsletter is called 'The Buzz'. I'm the 'buzz merchant'. That's called the buzz. That was the general rumour - the buzz. There used to be some beauties flying around too. I got my hair shaved off once.

15:30 Someone found some clippers on the mess deck and three or four of them right shaved right to the, and the buzz came around that we were coming back to Australia and everybody buy hair restorer to make their hair grow. Took us two and a half years to get it back. Had it grow many times like that.

Well before we talk about the Nizam,

16:00 **you've by now spent a bit of time on leave in Alexandria and you have been to several different ports - Haifa, Syria, Crete. What was it about the different cultures that you were coming into contact with that maybe was strange for you?**

Well

16:30 strange in the sense that the language was different of course. Egypt, I couldn't hack Egypt at all because their cultures are different. The kids, you know, flies all over their eyes.

17:00 Haifa - a lovely and clean place, a different sort of people. Although that was before, there was no such place as Israel, there was no such animal as Israel. I can remember because everything was still Palestine, we visited Palestine. It might have been old but at least it was clean. Greece, clean. People more like, just look like you and me.

17:30 In Egypt different - their clothes were different, their speech was different, their food was different and their sanitation's different. And that's the main thing that you see differences with. Not so much the culture shock. It don't take you long, as long as they've got somewhere you can go and have a beer, you're not worried about culture.

18:00 It's... but that was the main things I noticed, the differences. Especially in the Arabian, in Cypress, fairly clean in Cypress. You haven't got to that in that book yet. That was another place we nearly got killed. But Egypt had

18:30 nothing going for it. Some parts were alright but we didn't see them.

Well can you describe to me then a typical shore leave?

Shore leave? The first thing you do in shore leave is you go and get a feed. You go to the nearest eat out joint - steak, eggs and chips, that was the, if you didn't have steak eggs and chips there

19:00 was something wrong with you. That was the main, as soon as you got away you went and got a feed at a club or a café or something. And then you'd have a couple of grogs, and then if you read through that diary, how many times I have been to the pictures. I seen every picture. You just seen a picture and when the picture was over you went back aboard. Unless you got really on the scoop and then you get into trouble.

19:30 But relaxation, there wasn't that much, only what you made yourself. It wasn't as though you could go sailing on the harbour or something. We used to swim. I've pulled up in the middle of the ocean, miles from anywhere and the pipe hands to swim and you just dive over the side. You can't put one foot on the bottom.

20:00 Used to swim in Alexandria harbour, swim in Piraeus Harbour, swim in Haifa. We used to have a lot of fun in Haifa. Of course you visit the Holy Land, and sometimes there is organised tours, it all depends how much time you've got there. Some church organizations would say alright we'll take some of the crew up to see the Holy Land and away we go on a bus.

20:30 But food and grog, what you wanted in two words.

Well I'm also wondering if there was any attraction to your sailor's outfit by some of the local girls?

Well there was that many of them. There's that many sailors, they were everywhere, especially in Alexandria because that was the eastern fleet. There was French sailors, English sailors, you name it

21:00 they were all there. But I don't think that was much of an attraction. When we were in South Africa later on, a couple of years later that might have made a difference because we stood out like a wart on your nose you know. We were sort of a novelty. But not up there in the Middle East. Anyway we didn't have a lot of time for the Egyptian girls anyway. Greek girls were nice.

21:30 When they were young. When they get older they get a bit you know. But the Greek girls were beautiful girls. But at eighteen I never knew what it was about.

Well perhaps now you can tell me what class of destroyer was the Nizam?

N class destroyer. They used to go

22:00 A B C D right through the alphabet. N class destroyers was, Australia had on loan, they were actually on loan to the Australian Navy I think. There was the Nizam, the Norman, the Powell, the Nestor and the Napier, and the Napier he was the captain, he was the boss. They were a beautiful ship. As I say I'm a destroyer man, always have been.

22:30 And there's nothing like a destroyer to me. You can have all the big ships - battleships, aircraft carriers, but they are fast, sleek, good to look at. Good, easy to manoeuvre, plenty of punch, plenty of power and plenty of armament. But still any ship at sea, especially if there's a sea running it's uncomfortable

23:00 but these weren't too bad. Compared with some of the smaller ones. Once a destroyer man always a destroyer, and that was N class. They've still got associations, N class destroyers associations in Sydney, but it's a bit far away from here. They convene and everything. But then I went on from there, later on in my navy career I went on to more destroyers -

23:30 a tidal class and they were beautiful, beautiful ships. If you can say a ship is beautiful, I used to love them. You can say I'm a destroyer man.

And why or in what way were you made to feel so at home on the Nizam?

Straight from an English speaking,

24:00 as you know you get different dialects in an English speaking ship. You get Scots, Welsh, Geordie, Irish. You go to an Australian ship and everybody is talking the same language so you feel straight away that you know the bloke next door. You probably do anyway - he might be from the next town. Being the only Australian on an English ship I was a fish out of water for a while you know.

24:30 Because you had nothing in common. At least on an Australian ship at least you spoke the same and you probably followed the same football team or cricket team or something, and that's where it starts. So you're home straight away, apart from the language of course. That helps.

And where were your quarters?

In the focsle.

25:00 Quarters, you live in a mess you're like sardines. You sleep in a hammock, I'm going back to that particular era. Now they've got bunks and sheets and pillow slips and pyjamas and God knows what. Used to sleep in a bunk, sleep in a hammock, and the hammocks would be slung, there'd be no distance between you and the bloke next door to you. The hammock would be there and you'd be there.

25:30 Your clothes got kept in a locker. In those days they were a locker that you sat on along the edges of the ship or the side of the ship. And the mess deck it ran fore and aft. And one side of the seat was the lockers and your clothes was underneath that and the other side was just an ordinary stool. So things were fairly cramped. And as I said earlier

26:00 if you had a headache your mate felt it you were that close to one another.

And was the Nizam a happy ship?

Yes. Under the circumstances I never struck, occasionally you get where something might go wrong and might upset someone. But all in all

26:30 I think they were happy ships, if you can say a ship is happy in a time of war. You know the circumstances might change things a bit. It's not like peacetime though when it's only a cruise. But when you're out there fighting for your life I think happiness don't come into it - it's self survival.

27:00 Don't get me wrong it's not as though, well sailors grizzle wherever they are. There is always something wrong somewhere, but as a whole you couldn't say that it was an unhappy ship.

Yes because you went to the Nizam in?

'41.

'41.

27:30 And I was on her until about mid '42 when we come out into the Indian Ocean and we were with the

eastern fleet, and along there somewhere I think it was in Colombo I was transferred off the Nizam on to the Norman - that's a sister ship. So I was still with the Australian.

28:00 And from then on we spent most of the time in the Indian Ocean around South Africa and in the southern Atlantic Ocean. It wasn't the actual action we struck in the Mediterranean. We wasn't in action at the same, because there was no, very little air raids. Although

28:30 they did have an air raid on Colombo but not when we were there. We were at sea somewhere when the Japanese put an air raid on Colombo, we seen the mess when we come back into Colombo Harbour. But there was a lot of activity, there was naval activity around the area but we wasn't involved in it. We were only just gone or just coming or just been there. Although we were involved in the invasion of Madagascar, that was right down

29:00 later on. But that was only a, there was nothing in that. The Vichy French had Madagascar and they didn't offer much resistance and we weren't involved in any hand-to-hand fighting or anything like that. There were air raids, but not like we had already been through. Nothing like that, that was all gone then thank God.

29:30 **Well going back to September, August, September I think you joined the Nizam. Japan wasn't in the war at that point in time?**

No there was no such thing. They, I don't know when Pearl Harbour was I can't remember. See we come out of the Mediterranean and they had just started

30:00 to rebuild or build up the forces when they pushed them back along the desert. We were escorting an escort and aircraft carrier that was bringing aeroplanes that were coming from England. They were coming around the Cape, and we were bringing them up, escorting the aircraft carrier to Port Sudan in North Africa.

30:30 And they were assembling and that's when they were starting to get ready for the push back up the desert. So I suppose we were reasonably busy but not like the caning we copped in the previous twelve months. It was sort of like a holiday after that.

But still the Nizam was

31:00 **involved in the Tobruk area?**

Oh yes the Nizam we did the Tobruk Ferry Service for nine months. And of course that was another story. No aircraft at all. We used to start our run from Mersa Matruh. We'd load up with stores. See Tobruk was a garrison, completely surrounded by German troops. All they had was the port - the Allies or the Australians. And we used to load up

31:30 with supplies of food, ammunition start our run at Mersa Matruh to be in Tobruk harbour by midnight. Unload our stores of ammunition, take on wounded soldiers and be out of the aircraft range by dawn the next morning. Everything was time scheduled and we did that for eight months.

32:00 What was called bomb alley, what they call bomb alley. There was a lot of ships sunk up there too. I lost a few mates there on the [HMAS] Parramatta just outside Tobruk harbour. Once again thank God we've got a navy. I could tell you some hairy stories about Tobruk too. I've got a photo of Tobruk harbour here somewhere.

32:30 **What's the most hairy story?**

Unloading in a sandstorm one night in Tobruk harbour. We couldn't, we pulled up alongside an Italian liner that was sunk, and it was lying on the bottom. Coming in on a sand storm, and we couldn't light a match in there because of the blackout. Run into the side of this San Giorgio and ripped a big plate of

33:00 steel out of the bow. And of course light everywhere, and I think we got rid of the stores. I don't know how we got out of there, because I can remember I was supposed to be out on the boats well helping to unload stores. I was down there sitting on the mess deck with a mate of mine, I remember him like yesterday. Merv Fruke - that was his name.

33:30 And we were into a bowl of crispies. We weren't supposed to be there. And this all of a sudden, crash and crunch and half the ship's side torn out when we run into this ship in a sandstorm. That'll do me. Oh we did a lot of trips there.

34:00 **What was your typical run?**

A typical run? Load up with stores, ammunition stores, some troops. Start our run, an ordinary cruising speed as far as Mersa Matruh. Then it was timed from Mersa Matruh to Tobruk Harbour, the entrance. It was timed that you would get there right on midnight.

34:30 Went into the harbour, found your way in. Unloaded your stores, took any people that were being relieved from Tobruk or wounded, took them on board. Then went like blazes at the same speed back to Mersa Matruh then slowed down because you were out of the range of the enemy bombers then see?

35:00 That was the typical run and that went on for months and months. And you didn't spend a lot of time, we did early, early when I was on Hyacinth we called into Tobruk harbour once when I was on Hyacinth. That was in daylight we could see a little bit. But not on the ferry run because it was done at night.

I was also wondering if

35:30 **you were doing the same job on the Nizam as you were on the Hyacinth?**

Basically yes. Much more updated equipment. The equipment on the old Hyacinth was very, very basic. What they call SONAR now very basic. And as the war progressed and they improved their

36:00 SONAR gear so it was improved on the ships, and you just had to learn as you go. Learn to handle it. But now in present day, what used to fit in a box would now take a whole room, things have progressed you know. Whether it's a good thing or a bad thing, I suppose it's a good thing. Make it easier or make it simpler,

36:30 but that was my job. SONAR.

And what type of attack did you come under?

Where?

On the...

Aircraft only. Occasionally they'd try and get us with E Boats. Had to watch out for E boats or U Boats, but we had too much

37:00 speed for U boats. Especially on the destroyers. Then we were escorting a convoy to Malta. Once again was an island, they were on their own. We had the old, the whole of the eastern Med fleet was escorting the Breckonshire. She was full of aircraft fuel I think. For the planes in Malta, and we were

37:30 attacked by the whole Italian fleet. Battle fleet. And that's a funny sensation when you can hear fifteen inch shells whizzing over your head. You think, "Well we've got to get out of here quick." So we got out behind a smoke screen and went for our life. And that was, Malta convoys. We didn't get many of them but

38:00 they had more trouble with Malta coming from the other end, coming from the western Med then they did from Gibraltar end. There was two ends, Malta is in the middle. They used to bring in supplies from Gibraltar and also supplies from Alexandria, the other end. We were on the Alexandria end. Part of the eastern Med fleet, and that wasn't a happy place to be either. Because

38:30 they used to try everything. E Boats, U Boats, planes, you name it.

And in your sort of recollections what did you feel like was the worst?

39:00 As regards?

Attack?

Well I think it's a combination. Apart from being, my time in action on Hyacinth of the evacuation of Greece and Crete, we weren't subjected to air raids like they were later on,

39:30 on the destroyers say on the Tobruk Ferry Run or on the Malta convoys. So I'd say the Malta convoys were the most hazardous if you could say. They seemed to be at us because of what we were trying to do, to supply Malta and they used to come at us with everything they had. I think Malta convoy would nearly take the cake.

40:00 Because they were trouble. There was other trouble but nothing what they used to try and do on the Malta convoys.

Well you, between the Hyacinth and the Nizam you suffered attacks from both the Italians and the Germans. Was there a notable difference between their approaches?

40:30 Well put it this way, the Italians their hearts weren't in the war at all. They were conned, they were absolutely conned. I can remember going into Tobruk harbour on the old Hyacinth and saw a big green patch on the bare desert, and that struck me. A lovely lawn, there in the middle of nowhere. And all of a sudden the lawn got up and moved. It was thousands

41:00 of Italian prisoners in a greeny coloured uniform. They were just there. As I say their heart wasn't in it. Now that's not to say their navy was the same as their army, because it was different people. Their air force well they were backed, as soon as the Germans come into that part of the war they sort of stiffened

41:30 the Italian attack, put more backbone into it. The Italians really and truly their hearts weren't in the war at all. They had to do what the Germans would tell them. But that was my observation of it. Their high level bombers, they were good, but as soon as...

Tape 5

00:32 **This morning we've been talking a lot about Greece and Crete but I was wondering if you could tell me about the Mediterranean. I guess you hear a lot about it as a peaceful sea?**

Well I seen the peaceful blue Mediterranean that rough that it smashed the bows in on an aircraft carrier. It was that rough. And so don't get carried away with its

01:00 flat and calm. And yet at other times I have seen it that smooth that you could see the reflection of another ship alongside of you in the water. So it's like a chameleon, but normally it's not bad. But it can get rough. And get rough in a hurry you know. So don't get carried away with the peaceful blue Mediterranean - she can get rough at times.

01:30 But as I say we concentrated mostly on the eastern end, from Suez Canal right through to Malta. And the rest come from the other, the western Med fleet, which was a different entity you know.

What were the roughest parts in I guess between Malta and the Suez Canal?

Weather wise or?

02:00 **Yeah and was there a particular area that was really calm or...?**

Oh no it could get rough anywhere. You know you couldn't say that any part of it, it just depended on weather conditions and they could change overnight. I've seen it, coming back from Tobruk, back along the Libyan coast, it was that rough that, we had Australian troops on board and we hit a freak wave, or a freak wave hit the ship and washed

02:30 several soldiers over the side. We lost, I don't know how many soldiers. See they were fully clothed with overcoats on, they had no chance. As a matter of fact one as he was going over the side, his leg must have hit the guard rail and someone picked a leg up and threw it over the side with him. He'd gone you know. So you couldn't say any particular part.

03:00 It's been rough up off the Syrian coast, and yet other places as I say, up around the Turkish coast, around Cyprus was sometimes as flat as a millpond. So you can't pick it.

What could you do with someone overboard?

Try and save them if you could. We, we just happened to hit a

03:30 freak wave, and I think from memory they were soldiers on the upper deck. We were bringing them back, they were out in the open, and this freak wave hit us and away they went. But as I say they were all fully geared and overcoats and things like that. We had no chace of getting them. So what do you do? Shrug your shoulder and keep going.

04:00 You try if you can look for them but if the weather is too rough you've got no chance.

How do you, I guess as a crew and as an individual not let that get to you?

Well as I say if you let it get to you, all these little, well I wouldn't say a thing but if you let it get to you, you wouldn't last ten minutes. There's things that, just the same in any of the armed forces, if you let these things get to you

04:30 you may as well go home. You're no good. So it's just one of the things you've got to live with, part of the deal I suppose.

I was just wondering, back to the Mediterranean, how would the weather conditions affect your job?

Oh it doesn't matter how rough it is on the surface,

05:00 it certainly makes it uncomfortable, if you're out. On the old Hyacinth I used to operate from an open position up on the bridge. Well if it's rough weather you're copping, you have no shelter or very little shelter. Whereas in later destroyers we used to operate from a little cabin, soundproof cabin right down in the bowels of the ship. And you didn't feel as much of the motion

05:30 of the ship. But rough weather didn't affect the sound at all. It still goes through the water. It was just being uncomfortable that's all.

How often would you get seasick?

Something I've never been guilty of, never been guilty of ever, and that's a long time. There was a couple of times I was frightened to yawn.

06:00 But being actually seasick itself I've never been guilty of it. I've seen chaps that seasick prone - one chap as soon as we used to leave harbour he'd go out on the upper deck and he wouldn't come back in below decks until we got back into harbour again. Another mate of mine went away with us, he was perpetually seasick.

06:30 Soon as the ship left the harbour he used to be seasick. And he was all set to be sent home, set ashore, for that particular reason and the ship he was on, the Duno, got blown up coming home from Crete, so he got sunk in an air raid, poor old Ron. He was absolutely useless, no good to anybody not even himself. I remember that, but that's how it affects people.

07:00 I've seen people wish they were dead, but it is something that never has affected me. Touch wood I suppose. I could go to sea tomorrow and be as sick as a dog, never know.

And you mentioned that when you moved off the Hyacinth to the Nizam and other ships, your sound boxes down in the bowels of the ship. I just wonder how

07:30 **fresh the air was down there?**

You could cut it with a knife. It was sound proof, that was the idea, and there was supposed to be vents. In the hot weather it used to get that hot, we used to plead with, there was another position you could operate the sound gear from up on the bridge in the open air, and we used to nearly plead with them to let us get out. Sometimes

08:00 I'll never forget once, to make it sound worse, we turned the heater on down there. It was nearly killing us, and the officer in charge came down to check up on us and he leant on the radiator and it was still red hot, so we didn't get, we weren't allowed to operate from that position. We thought we'd fudge a little bit, make it hotter than it was, but he accidentally leant on the radiator so we

08:30 didn't get our wish. It wasn't, you could cut the air with a knife though. On the destroyer there was two on watch at a time. You had your mate and sometimes he'd have a bit of a sleep while you, you'd have to be careful that you didn't go to sleep either because just continual noise in your ears, the same sound all of the time. It was very easy to drop off you know.

09:00 **How did you maintain your concentration?**

With a great deal of difficulty. You think of all things. I used to play the mouth organ while my mate was listening. I remember, Billy, he died just recently, he'd be, you'd write letters home, or you know talk to one another. It wasn't the easiest thing in the world to keep your

09:30 concentration. Especially in these cramped conditions. We were right down in the stokers, and sometimes you could hear, you know, if there was a submarine about you could hear a torpedo going through and you would wonder who the hell it was aimed at. You know you could actually hear the torpedo coming at you in the water. It was the nicest of sounds you know.

10:00 Especially when it wasn't your torpedo - it was someone else's having a go at you.

Was there ever a time when you really just wanted to be off that ship?

Trouble was if you were off that ship where else would you be? That was your home. That was your home, where you lived where you slept where you ate. If you wasn't on that...

10:30 If you got a bit of shore leave and could get ashore and play up and have a good time so much the better, but that happened infrequently. As you read in the diaries, at the latter end of my stay overseas I had a ball because we spent a lot of time ashore. Well most of the time I was ashore I was in a transit camp waiting to come home, waiting for a ship to come home. I was in the band, the concert party. I was having a ball. That was the good time of the war.

11:00 **Would you like to tell me a little bit about the concert party and the shows you put on?**

When I left the Norman - that's the second of the N class destroyers, we found that we were shipped down to Durban. And there was a fair crowd of Australians waiting to come home. Here we are waiting for a ship waiting to come home.

11:30 See there was no direct route at that time between South Africa and Australia. It was coming from Colombo up that way, and consequently there wasn't a great deal of shipping traffic, and there wasn't a great deal of ships about to actually carry us, so we were just waiting in a place, in a transit camp outside of Durban called Pietermaritzburg. That's a city in South Africa.

12:00 We were under tent, under canvas there, and we were there for that long, we were there for nearly four or five months. And of course being there that long, all the other RN people who were coming in and out because they were going back to England or going back up the Mediterranean, we were stuck there and naturally we finished up with all of the P jobs about the place - all of the fancy jobs.

12:30 And I finished up in the band, playing the drums in the band and I finished up in the concert party because I was a bit of a hoofer from way back. And with this South Africans Women's Auxiliary, they had their own concert party and they latched on to me or I latched on to them and everywhere they went for a concert I used to go. I was part of the co... But it was, except from the living conditions,

13:00 we were living in tents which was a bit rough. But the rest of it, compared with what we'd just been through, twelve months before or two years before, it was heaven. But we still wanted to come home.

We used to apply about once a week. We'd say, "When are we going home?" They'd say, "There's no ships." "Well," we said, "we've been long enough we could have built a ship to bring us home." We came right from

13:30 Durban straight around the circular route to Adelaide. That was the first port of call when we came home. And it was lovely to see Australia again you know, something never thought of. When you go you think, "Well it's like this." I remember when I first left Lidcombe

14:00 I said to Mum, "I'll be home in a week or two, you know, this will all be over." It wasn't though. It was a long time. It took me two and a half years to come back. And yet people, good luck to them, they go to the Gulf for three months and everybody comes out and cheers. But that's different circumstances of course. That's how we lived.

Well who were you putting on the concerts for?

Oh the troops, other troops. Used to

14:30 go to hospitals, military hospitals. And this one girl she had a dancing school, one girl in the concert party. And I used to spend a lot of time there you know with practice and rehearsal. I think from memory her father owned a pub, and that was welcome. They were lovely people, the people in South Africa.

15:00 I found there was two classes of people. When I say... not in a derogatory term. The English people in Durban were much friendlier than the Dutch people or the Dutch element in Cape Town. But the Anglicised people we got on, they'd treat us like kings. They'd come to the ship and take us home for meals and take us out on picnics.

15:30 Much better than the Boer element in Cape Town. It was only just the way they, of course we mightn't help. I don't think the 6th Division helped when they were in Cape Town going to England. I think they played merry hell they nearly wrecked the place. And of course we were a little bit after and

16:00 Australia's name was a little bit on the nose you know. I don't think that helped our cause at all. Overall it was alright but you always got that feeling you know.

And so what would you do, you say you were drumming and dancing in the concert party?

Oh dancing, acting the goat, part of the skits and sketches and I used to dance with a couple of the girls.

16:30 They had tap dance routines you know. Oh I had a ball, but then they had their own sort of dance band in this camp we were in, and if the normal drummer was away, I remember he went and I took over. I was the drummer in the dance band. We used to play at the local hall in Pietermaritzburg for dances and balls. They'd supply the grog and we'd supply the music. It

17:00 was great fun. It was a good war that part.

How long would it take you to put these shows together?

Oh I'd say we might rehearse for a month, one a week for a month and then go away and put it on. Then after the dance, especially at a hospital or an officer's mess, they'd supply the grog after it was all over. Oh that'd do me.

17:30 Do you remember any of the skits or the jokes you were in?

Oh no I can't now. There is that many of them. See I've been tangled up with concert parties ever since, and I think a lot of it overflowed from one to the other. See I was in the old Cudal Musical and Dramatic Society for years and then when we come into Orange I was with the Orange Theatre for years. Just acting the goat.

18:00 I like to make people laugh. If you can't laugh life's not worth living. That's been my theory anyway. But fun, so that was the good part of the war.

How would you I guess make people laugh before you were in the concert parties and you were on the ships?

You'd try to. You try to. Sometimes it is a bit hard when things are a bit rough.

18:30 Even as a kid I used to be in concert parties. Learned tap dancing as a kid you know, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and just carried on you know. But I think I've got a bit of a reputation for telling a yarn or two. And it sort of goes with you. Once you're stuck with that it's a bit hard to unload you know.

19:00 Were they stories of things that had happened to you or just things that you'd...?

Oh no, skits and rhymes and sketches. As a kid I was tangled up with a vaudeville circuit in Sydney, only as a kid, and you know you learn things and pick up things as you go along. Add to them and take off, and adapt it to the circumstances.

19:30 **What were some of the things that you learnt on the vaudeville circuit?**

Oh poems and skits and sketches and songs. But they always say to be a good storyteller you've got to have two things in your favour - a good memory and an audience with a bad memory. So one works hand in hand with another. If you haven't got a good memory... am I still playing up with that thing?

20:00 I can see her nodding there at the back.

Did you have any favourite skits or little poems?

No, I better quit while I am in front.

Do they get a bit...?

Oh no nothing raunchy. But that's the idea - make people

20:30 laugh. Nothing better than a good belly laugh.

How much did that I guess help you through a lot of the hard times?

Oh well as I say if you drop your bundle you're gone. If you stopped and thought about things, if you concentrated or thought about

21:00 the bad things or the hard things or the tough things you wouldn't last. So you put them sort of to the back of your mind. They're there I suppose but it's not the sort of things you concentrate on because you've got other things to do. But anybody who says they weren't scared, they're probably fools. You're probably scared, but after the event. Because during the

21:30 event you were too busy doing other things. So how can you be scared at the same time? People would think you were mad if you weren't scared. At eighteen you're impregnable anyway. I said that before too.

I'm just wondering Pat; you've mentioned humour as a way of getting through, and in your diary you mentioned going to Mass a lot?

To?

To Mass.

Oh yeah

22:00 if I got a chance. Well that was the way I was raised. It was no effort you just went. I've been to Mass in some funny places - out in the desert, on a block of wood, on an aircraft carrier hanger. Anywhere at all they could set up away we'd go, away'd go the RC [Roman Catholic] church parade, no effort.

22:30 It was just something I had always done.

How important was having that faith during the time you were away?

Well I suppose it must play some part in the way you think, the way you were brought up. I didn't ever,

23:00 I was no saint don't get me wrong. I used to suffer from headaches - my halo was too tight. But I suppose it's just the way that you've always been since you were born, how you were brought up and how you carried on. And you just carried on doing it that way. Some people might have thought it was a load of nonsense but I didn't. It was just the way I felt and the way I believed. It didn't cost anything.

23:30 Might have helped I don't know, probably did. Somebody was watching me somewhere. What do you put that down to? Luck? Could be, anyway. When you see blokes getting skittled all around you, ships getting sunk all around you, you think, "Well when's my turn." But here I am.

24:00 **How long would you be, I guess when you were in the Mediterranean or when you left, how long was the longest period you were at sea for?**

At sea without touching land? Oh could be a couple of months. You used to refuel at sea - pull up alongside another ship or a tanker and you can refuel while you're still going along.

24:30 You used to get to the stage when you'd run out of fresh meat or bread. And if it was an aircraft carrier with you they had a bakery on board and you'd get what you could from them, what food you could from them. And just keep going you know. And mail - we'd rather get mail than food sometimes. I'll never forget once when we got that sixty odd bags of mail,

25:00 I don't know, they used to send me newspapers from home you know. I can't remember how many letters I got. It might say in there how many letters I got, from Mum and all my rels [relatives] and the girl that used to write to me that married a Yank [American]. Probably see her name pop up in there. As a matter of fact my youngest daughter is the same name - Anita.

25:30 But it used to be good to see the sight of land occasionally, get ashore and stretch your legs. People say they find their sea legs and then they can't find their land legs when they've get there. I never got that.

You still roll like a sailor. Still think you're at sea.

26:00 **How would you, I guess would people become very restless when you were away for months at a time?**

Oh sometimes, but there was nothing you could do. Especially at sea sometimes if you were in harbour they might be able to put on a film or something, and have a film night. Or you might be tied up next to a bigger ship that had film on and that'd break the monotony a little bit. Might have a band. Some of the bigger ships

26:30 had their own band. You know military band. Anything to break the monotony. Otherwise, you just stayed on the mess deck and wrote a letter or went to bed.

I was wondering, I guess you mentioned before, and it is a reputation of sailors that they did have a girl in every port.

27:00 **I was just wondering how often I guess men on the ship would form relationships when they...?**

Well I suppose like any red-blooded male you like the companionship, you know, after being cooped up with men forever, for months at a time. Anything to break the monotony.

27:30 Same with any serviceman I suppose. And especially in a time of war, you don't know whether the next moment's going to be your last. I don't know whether the friendships last - some of them do. And then some of them do grow into some form of relationship and then after that they blow up, and that's just part of human nature, part of life. But I never,

28:00 I was that keen on this girl, whether, anyway it didn't happen. So a wasted effort. Yeah I wrote to her regularly. You can see it in the diaries there. Regularly wrote to Anita. Of course I kept in contact with dear old Mum. That's all they look for, especially

28:30 when I was overseas for so long. They look for the mail of course. And I had a system of, we had a chap on board - he was a cartoonist. He was very clever with a little pen. And he used to draw on the envelope say a little Egyptian figure, like an Egyptian man or something, and Mum always knew where I was. Because Dad had

29:00 been there you know. Instead of saying, because they probably censored everything that you said, but that was my idea. She had some idea where I was.

You hear often that when Australians did, you had the negative experience of Cape Town of the 6th Division having been there before you, but in North Africa that the Australians are remembered from the First World War.

29:30 **I just wondered if you had people who...?**

No the Australian fighting man always had a wonderful experience in both world wars - in World War I and World War II. Especially the, well the navy did end up all over and so did the boys in the air force. And the army boys, they were always well thought of with the other troops.

30:00 They might have been a bit, what do I say? Rowdy or not toeing the line as much, but they still got the job done. And they were always well thought of with the other troops. I don't know whether the officers thought that much but there was never any animosity, yeah.

30:30 **You told Kathy [interviewer] before about, I guess the routine when you would be on shore leave in the different ports, but I just wonder if there was a port you liked particularly, especially out of all the ones in the Middle East or North Africa?**

Well we spent more time in Alexandria, Alexandria

31:00 and Haifa. That's where we spent the most time. Greece, we weren't there long enough. We did get to see a lot of Greece - you know a lot of the ruins where they're having the Olympic Games now. I've been in most of them sites. But the other places we got to know so well, we were in and out of there all of the time. Alexandria, it wasn't much of a port,

31:30 just a sailors port you know we could get a feed and a drink and go to the pictures and that's all we could do anyway. Other than that there wasn't much we could do. Could go swimming if we wanted to, but socialising - didn't have time. There wasn't any one particular port, until I got to South Africa and then that

32:00 was a different kettle of fish in Durban. It was nearly back in the real world again. Because the war hadn't touched South Africa at all, not the land part. There was ships sunk around the South African coast, but nothing on land as such.

What kind of souvenirs would you pick up in the ports?

The most thing I sent home was tea. You could buy tea

32:30 in Colombo, in Ceylon. You could buy tea in boxes. And I don't know how many boxes of tea I sent home. Because tea was at a premium - you had to have coupons. Coupons never affected us at all, but poor old Mum... I don't know how many boxes of tea I sent home. We used to have canvas clothes, and I used to cut the canvas clothes up

33:00 and sew the box up in canvas and put Mum's name and address on it and send it home sea mail. Well if you got souvenirs in all the places you'd never carry it around. I wasn't a souvenir hunter at all. Just keeping myself out of the trouble was the main thing.

Did you eat much of the local food in the ports?

33:30 Not if you could get out of it. If you could buy in a café as I said, steak, eggs and chips. I think that was any serviceman if you could get it would get steak, eggs and chips - you can't do much with that. So we dodged the local tucker [food] as much as we could. But the beer that was different. Beer's beer wherever you go.

34:00 Some's bad... there's no bad beer - some's worse than others, and some's better than others. Spirits, I was never a spirit drinker anyway. When I was with the Royal Navy they used to get an issue of rum, but I was too young, I was underage. I was only eighteen, but as I was getting Australian rates of pay in sterling,

34:30 I always had friends who used to supply me with their issue of rum, so it cut both ways.

What was the worst beer you ever had?

Hot beer, I think in Aden. I think from memory some of the beer in Aden was... you couldn't drink it. But as I say, no bad beer - some is better than others.

35:00 **I was wondering, over morning tea, just to get onto a more technical topic, you were telling us about the process of minesweeping, and I was just wondering if you could explain for us again the minesweeping activities?**

Well see there is all different types of mines. Some's magnetic. With magnetic mines it's caused by the magnetism when the ship is being built.

35:30 There is a certain amount of magnetism in the actual hull, and that triggers the mine that's underneath it. Otherwise, some are, there has got to be impact. You've seen the mine with the little spike on them? If you touch one of the tips on the end of the mine there'll be an explosion. But the one we used to sweep for magnetic means with this what they call the double L sweep, and you trail it behind your ship. And the actual live part

36:00 of the sweep was way behind you at the end of this big long sausage thing and you switch on the power and if there was any mines in the immediate vicinity it would trigger them and set them off. And that's why I say when we were in Piraeus harbour there wasn't enough room to just ride the ship around - we had to stay in one spot, and get the end of this big round thing and drag it around with a row boat. And leave it in a little corner, and if there was a mine there we'd

36:30 get the hell out of the road, wave our hand and they'd turn the power on and blow the mine up and they'd shift the thing out of the way. Then you get all different types of mines - you get acoustic mines. We had a funny looking thing on the bow of the ship. It made a noise, what they call an acoustic, a rattle. Made a hell of a noise. We had it, but that didn't last long,

37:00 it wasn't real successful that one. Then they had limpet mines - was caused by pressure. They dropped a lot of them in the Suez Canal. A lot of limpet mines in the Suez Canal. See there is not a big depth of water in the Suez Canal. So they used to go along there with a speedboat, high speed power boat, create pressure, but at the speed at which it was going it would be way, way away before the pressure hit the mine and exploded it.

37:30 We seen them doing it a lot with pressure mines in the canal. They used to drop mines out of, parachute mines. But see some of the load mines if they were moored, ones with the spikes on them, some of them break away and they could be floating anywhere. Many a time you'd spot a mine just running free. Well if you hit one of them at night boom you're gone.

38:00 That's the risk you run, but you don't think of that when you go to battle, go to bed and hope for the best. So minesweeping that was part of it. Not so much on the destroyers, but the old Corvette we did a bit. You know you've got to do it because as fast as you're sweeping the mines up the other mob is landing them. Especially on the outside of Alexandria Harbour, there were minefields everywhere.

38:30 Some we laid ourselves for our own protection but others we had to sweep. Boring job but you've got to do it you know.

What could you hear of the mines?

Sometimes you could hear them. It wouldn't echo back as much as a larger object like a submarine, you get a good solid echo back. See the idea of sending sound out through the water, it hits something and echoes back to the ship. Well a mine which

- 39:00 is only say so big, you wouldn't get half the size of, but if you're in a minefield you might get a lot of little ones. So these are the things you've got to learn to distinguish about. Might get onto a reef, underground reef. But then if your target's not moving well it's not going anywhere. These are the things you're working out all of the time.
- 39:30 **Was there ever mishaps in the minesweeping?**
- Oh yes it was a dangerous job. Mines used to get tangled up in the sweeping gear and accidentally blow the back end off a ship. That wasn't a real, but we were lucky in that sense - the type of minesweeping we did wasn't as dangerous as some you know. Still bad enough. Anything that goes bang you've got to be very careful of.
- 40:00 **Something I just wanted to ask with the Tobruk Ferry Run or with the mine sweeping - did you realise at the time how important the jobs you were doing were?**
- Oh I don't know whether we realised the importance of it. It was just part of your job.
- 40:30 If you were sent out to do something you did it. You didn't think about how important it was. I suppose in the back of your mind it was there. Doesn't matter if you're escorting a convoy if it was more important than bombarding the perimeters of Tobruk. But when you're actually firing a gun, or when your ship's firing a gun it's a lot, it would appear it's more like war than escorting a
- 41:00 convoy to Greece. You know you're doing something. But it's all important in the long run, part of the caper. So what's important and what's not you know? You think you know, well I suppose if you stopped and thought about it, you'd start to prioritise then. Something you don't do.
- 41:30 **That's great Pat. Our tape is just about finished so we'll stop there.**
- And someone else will have a shot.
- Yeah we'll swap over and...**

Tape 6

- 00:31 **Pat you've talked a lot today about doing the Tobruk Ferry and about doing evacuations without any air support. I'm just wondering if you can tell me about the support that you received from the rest of the convoy?**
- Well the only support you got from the rest of the convoy or the escorting ships was their
- 01:00 firepower. Their anti-aircraft firepower - that's the only support you could get, and from what you sent up yourself. Naturally the ships you were escorting, their firepower was limited because they're not men of war - they're freighters. Some of them were armed to some degree. But that's the only support from the ships you were escorting, the ships
- 01:30 you were in company with. And you tried to send up umbrella air power just to, but the planes still get through it you know. They had some internal fortitude those bomber pilots. They'd come down through merry hell to get at you. And you on the other hand, you were working overtime to get at them. But that was your only source of protection - what you sent up yourself, and what the other
- 02:00 bloke was sending up alongside you. It's not as though you could call up on something from somewhere to say, "Well go away." That was the only deterrent you had - what you could send up yourself.
- Yes you've described the Hyacinth as a Corvette being an escort ship, whereas the Nizam was a destroyer**
- 02:30 **with a slightly different function. Could you tell me more about the destroyer's role?**
- Well you could start from, a destroyer's role was a fleet, it worked in conjunction with the fleet as a fleet like a fleet escort. When you've got major ships, capital ships, aircraft carriers, cruisers, aircraft carriers, battleships, well they've got to
- 03:00 have some protection, like submarine protection. That was a destroyer's main job - submarine protectors. Whereas in a convoy everything is slower because you can only go as fast as the slowest ship you're escorting and that was, you're protecting them from submarines. It depends on what the
- 03:30 actual convoy, or what you're escorting, You wouldn't send a Corvette out to escort a battleship, put it that way. But you'd send a destroyer, because of its speed, manoeuvrability, its firepower, its anti-submarine business. So it's a difference on what job it has to do.
- 04:00 You wouldn't send a boy on a man's errand, put it that way. But they all had their job to do. Of course the destroyers as I said, much more manoeuvrability, power, speed, and much better protection for an actual fleet. Whereas

04:30 a Corvette see was like a workhorse, just as simple as that.

And can you tell me what was it exactly about the destroyer that appealed to you so much?

Speed, after coming from the Corvette, comfort, companionship. Safety - I felt safer on the destroyer because of its manoeuvrability,

05:00 its fire power. I felt safer on the destroyer because I was among my own kind. And, as I said before, once you get on a destroyer, if you've ever been a destroyer man that's your main priority. On bigger ships, you're only a face in the

05:30 crowd. See in a ship's company of eight hundred, a cruiser you might have eight hundred people. Well you wouldn't know the bloke next door. But in a destroyer you're that close-knit, say two hundred people - you get to know everybody and the whole atmosphere is different. The officers are different. Don't get me wrong, they're still officers but they get to know you and you get to know them. Whereas in a bigger ship they're in a race apart

06:00 because of the number of people. But they're looked after and it's just that way you know.

And on the Nizam what was the general word amongst the boys about how the ship was being run?

Oh good we, oh you did grumble wherever you go. Something's wrong somewhere - that's human nature. But by and large,

06:30 they were a good mob, real good mob. But as I say I was back amongst my own kind and I wasn't looking for any trouble, and I never found any. I think I had one blue. Was it on the Nizam or the Norman? But the big bloke in charge of us he put a big pair of boxing gloves on me and the other fellow and we had it out on the focsle. I don't know who won. I don't think anyone won in the finish. But as regard to actual

07:00 fisticuffs [fights] - very rare, very, very rare. If there was a blue of any sort it sorts itself out and if it doesn't sort somebody else would sort it out for you. The mob would soon put you right. Any bad eggs amongst you they're soon found out. The biggest problem on any ship and in any service is thieving. That is the greatest crime

07:30 of any. Thieving from your mates. That is the very worst of any crime in any of the forces I think. Especially at sea. See if a man dies at sea the very first thing they do is auction all of his gear and send the money home to his widow. So that's the sort of fraternity you live in. Different to the other forces because you're living so close together.

08:00 And did you experience on any of them ships any thieving?

Not that I can, I can't put my finger on anyone in any one instance. I don't think I can. I've heard of it but I can't say I've experienced it in all of my time at sea.

08:30 Not even pilfering you know, thieving that was definitely a no-no. I think that's the worst crime of any at sea that I have known of, that I've heard of. Of course you have a growl at your might and there's a few words said or something, someone might pinch the butter or something. But that's all in a days work.

09:00 Two hundred men living in harmony for months on end - there's something wrong, there's got to be a growl somewhere. I've just forgotten.

Well I'm just wondering if you can tell me when you joined the Nizam how you felt looked after being amongst your own kind?

Well the whole atmosphere is different. It's hard to describe. The atmosphere, going amongst your own, just being there,

09:30 they accept you and you know you're going to be accepted once you get amongst all of your own countrymen for a start. The differences, not that I got crucified by the English people on the, I suppose, I got

10:00 what I deserved, but it's hard to explain. Once you're amongst your own the atmosphere is different and you feel different. It's just human nature I suppose, but that's the only thing I can put it down to. The camaraderie might be different. Their outlook on life might be different

10:30 and you might have a mate that you went to school with on the same ship, played with the same football team and that's how it works you know. Whereas before you were a complete stranger.

Well I'm also wondering if you felt differently about the war when you joined the Nizam?

No, no. I had a job to do and that's what I tried to do.

11:00 It's hard to put your feelings into words. About the war, well the war was still the war no matter where you were, whether you're on an RN ship or. When they're trying to kill you they don't want to know what brand you are, whether you're Australian or Englishman you're the enemy same as they are the

enemy so you just carry on,

11:30 do your job the best you can you know. But as regards to putting a sense of difference in feelings, I don't think you could put anything on it that way.

Well in what way did you think it was Australia's war?

Well I never ever thought about whose war it was. To be truthful, King and Country, I think I said that very early,

12:00 was the furthest thing from my mind when I joined the navy. I was a kid. I was young, it was an adventure, my mates were going so I went too. But as regards to King and Country flag waving, sorry it was not even part of my makeup. Of course but when you get over there, you're embroiled in the whole thing, well your outlook changes to a certain degree I suppose.

12:30 But I wouldn't go out and wave a flag just because it was me. So that's the way I felt and the way I still feel I suppose. If you're looking for, not that I'd go out and start a war myself just for the fun of it. No it's hard to put your feelings into words you know.

13:00 But patriotism was not part of my makeup. But once I was there, not that you'd walk away from it, but you wouldn't walk into it either just for that reason.

Well you've talked a lot about yourself as somebody who wants to make people happy. When you were in the explosion with the Hyacinth and then later with the Tobruk Ferry Run,

13:30 **how did you cope with fear? And I'm also wondering was there a need to hide your fear from others?**

I don't know whether your fear shows. When I say, whether

14:00 you shake or you want to run away, well you can't run away and hide because there is nowhere to run for a start. At my age now I'd probably actually feel fear, actually feel scared. But then I can't honestly say that I was terrified. After the event maybe, but while it was actually happening,

14:30 you're too busy to stop and think, "I should be frightened." You're too busy fighting a war to do things manually. Physically, mentally, you're doing something. If you were sitting there just listening to it, it might be a different story, but if you're involved in the actual battle itself. Whether the same goes for all

15:00 services I don't know. Whether a bomber pilot when they're shooting flak on him or another aeroplane comes diving in on him, whether he feels the same. He's trying to get away and he's trying to fight his war. When he's actually hit and been parachuted down, then he might feel something, I don't know. But I can't say that it did affect me. Not that I, I might have been too thick-headed to be frightened.

15:30 But it's just the way it affects different people I think. See fear is a funny thing. I could be more frightened walking across George Street. But as I say, after the event. When I look back and see what happened what I wrote down I think, "You're mad." But at the time you just keep going. That might sound a

16:00 bit far fetched but that's how I felt. You just, as I say you just haven't got time to think about it. You're just too busy doing other things. If you dwelt on it well I think you're gone. If you let it get to you. I was no hero.

16:30 And another thing, if you thought about things before you did them half the time you wouldn't do them anyway. That's what, in action anyway. You do it because it's there you've got to do it, it's your job.

Can you tell me about a funeral aboard ship?

One of

17:00 the most mournful things you can, a burial at sea. I've been to plenty of them. They generally sew the body up in canvas, and that's not the best, half the time they get the bosons party that work with canvas and needles and that, sail makers and that. They make

17:30 sure they've got enough rum so they're not realising what they're doing. And they sew the corpse up, and they put it on a mess stool and the captain or if you got a padre on board he reads the service or the captain does if you haven't got a padre. At a certain part of the procedure they just lift the stool up and the body slides off and it's weighted at one end,

18:00 probably with a dummy shell. And it's weighted so it just goes straight to the bottom. But it's like a funeral anywhere, but a funeral at sea is, whether it's the service, what they say. I just can't remember now. I've been to a lot of funerals in eighty-one years. But a funeral at sea seems to be different somehow. I guess it's the same thing but it seems to be different.

18:30 And when they say they commit the body to the deep, that's it. And you just carry on. Seen a lot of that over the years. People getting killed. That's life anyway.

Well I'm wondering looking back on that time in the Med and South Africa if there was a

saddest

19:00 **time for you?**

A saddest time? No I think the hardest time was when I got word that the Sydney was sunk with all hands and my schoolmate was lost. I think that was the hardest part to take because we was such good mates as kids you know. We grew up together,

19:30 we chased girls together. And then I joined up and he followed me. He said to my poor old Mum, I joined up to follow me overseas but he only got as far as the HMAS Sydney and it was sunk with all hands. And that sort of knocked me around a bit but you just shrug your shoulder and say, "That's life."

And where were you when you received that news?

Oh God knows. Somewhere in the Middle East when we got word the

20:00 Sydney had been sunk. It was a bit harrowing but que sera sera. Whatever will be will be. But then, during the evacuation of Greece and Crete as I say earlier you'd see ships, the fleet coming back in bringing troops in and there'd be one ship, what's missing today? Well there's another mate gone

20:30 you know, poor bugger. As I say if you let it get at you you're gone. Whether that's the same with all the forces, I'd say it would be, it'd have to be. If you let it play on your mind you may as well go home.

Well you've described today a lot of details about times that you were under fire.

21:00 **And then you've also talked about the more monotonous times when you're not actually under fire. Can you tell me what sort of activities you'd get up to, to pass the time of day?**

At sea? Well if you're not at action stations

21:30 you're on watch. See there is someone on watch doing something right around the clock. So you might have working on for say four hours and then have eight hours off, or four hours on four hours off depending on the size of the ship. Well for your four hours on watch you know what you're doing - that's your job. Well in my case it would be submarine detector,

22:00 listening for submarines. On my four hours off if I did have any other work to do on the upper deck I'd be doing my washing, writing letters home, sleeping. So it was not as though you could go and have a game of bowls or a game of cricket or something. So your activities were restricted. Letter writing was the biggest thing.

22:30 Letter writing and then I suppose reading letters that you had already read seventeen times. But that letter that I said, the only one that come after three months, that was a strange feeling. They just took the personal part out of the letter and put the rest of the letter, the one letter that we got after three months, put it on the notice board. Everybody had mail you know. We didn't have a clue what they were talking about but it was mail that had come on board.

23:00 I remember that. We were somewhere in the Indian Ocean at the time I think. Then when it did come. But that's how you fill in the time, that's right around the clock. Naturally in the middle of the night you're trying to sleep if you can, but if you're on watch you're doing something.

And how important was a poker game?

Oh we used to gamble like

23:30 sixty. Gamble playing, not too much poker. We used to play blackjack. We had another name for it too - Fras, they used to call it. And then there was organised things you know. Gambling was supposed to be illegal. They used to have what they call Tom Bowler - that was bingo, that was organised by the ship's company themselves.

24:00 We used to play Ludo. That was the funny part. The Ludo dice was about this big and the thing, you used to tip the dice out of a bucket and the Ludo board was out on the upper deck. You'd walk around the numbers - they were huge big things. Sometimes they'd have, I've have been to a couple crossing the equator. That was in the very early days. But

24:30 one stage in the Indian Ocean we were backwards and forwards across the actual equator all day. Backwards and forwards, zig-zagging across it. But amusement at sea is very, very restricted. There is not much you can do. Read if there was anything to read. Write letters.

25:00 See you couldn't have movies, not on ships my size, because we didn't have the room. They had to be in out of the weather. Gambling, a bit. I used to borrow money and go broke and then start again. What else could you do? Put it in a sock.

25:30 Socks don't float. But as I said I enjoyed every minute of it if you can say you enjoy being at sea. I've never regretted one moment of my time at sea. Especially at the end of the war, when the war finished, that was a different kettle of fish all together. Because I decided to study then,

26:00 and go up grades. I wasn't taking orders I was giving them. I finished up a petty officer see? With brass buttons and a peak cap and all that. I was married at the time. I was still married in the navy. And I decided, well you can't take Mum and the kids to sea so I thought, "That'll do." I did twelve years '40 to '52.

26:30 **Well where were you at war's end?**

War's end I was in Bougainville in New Guinea. Actually on Bougainville Island. VP day [Victory in the Pacific] we were getting towed, we had run aground on a reef outside, on Bougainville and we were being towed across from Bougainville to the New Guinea mainland by an American tug.

27:00 And I can remember it like it was yesterday. It was as rough as anything. We were getting the hell beat out of us. It was only on a little ship - a hundred and ten foot long. And we could hear people shouting about VP Day in Los Angeles and then we'd switch over and they were cheering in Martin Place in Sydney. And we were getting the hell beat out of us in the rough seas you know. But that was where I was when peace was declared. I finally got to Sydney and I was discharged because I only signed up for the war.

27:30 Went back to the railway where I was a kid, got my old job back. I was only there a matter of months and the walls were getting closer together. So I said, "Hang this," I went back to sea. I was still single. Had a couple of bad romances - one married a Yank, that was, I blame that anyway. But I went back to sea and decided to study

28:00 and made something of myself. During the war I didn't give a damn, all I wanted to do was get home, but that was the difference. But peacetime navy was different altogether.

Well perhaps you can tell me a little bit about your role in BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force]?

BCOF, yeah I went up there on the [HMAS] Arunta, a Tidal Class destroyer.

28:30 It still had a submarine detector. I'd went back and did another course and became a higher submarine detector - that means you're in charge of the equipment on board. Went to Arunta, went to Kure, and

29:00 Hiroshima, Nagasaki. I was there just after the bombs were dropped. And the place was absolutely flattened. There was nothing there of any consequence. A few old wrecks of buildings, I think part of it is still in Hiroshima. Nagasaki was wrecked. We were only there as a peace action you know. Just showing the flag.

29:30 Did a trip across to Hong Kong and around to Tokyo. I was the only one that could get leave. My brother was in BCOF. He was up there for six years. And because he was in stationed in Tokyo and we called at Tokyo I was able to get all night's leave, you know stay with him in the barracks where he was staying. That's the bloke here in the army in the middle.

30:00 But there was no, I suppose... "What did you think of the Japanese?" someone asked me. Once again they were doing what they thought they were doing, and we thought we were doing what we thought was right. It's just the way you look at it. They were very subdued. They, that atomic business that stopped them in their tracks.

30:30 They knew that if they tried to carry on they'd just wipe out Japan, bit by bit. Only took two bombs and I saw the result of that and I've been back three times since, been back to Japan. My daughter is with the university in Tokyo, doing a masters degree in Japanese. We had a little Japanese girl staying with us. She was an exchange student lived with us here for twelve months.

31:00 But as a race of people they're just ordinary people to me. Gees if you held a grudge... As I say it might be different for prisoners of war - they were treated different. But I had no physical contact with the Japanese as such during the war. Never even seen one I don't think. Could see where they were on Bougainville,

31:30 because that's where we were patrolling see? See where they had been. But people say, "Do you hate the Japanese?" or, "do you the this?" What's the good of hating people it don't hurt? It don't do you any good either. But as I said they never affected me in the way that they affected other people.

32:00 I can only, as I found them, very subdued people at that time.

And what job were you doing yourself at that time?

Still the same - I was in charge of the submarine detector gear and what they called the echo sounder. The skipper we had was mad keen to have, with the echo sounder you had it going and you knew how much

32:30 water was under the ship, it used to tell the depth of the water. And any time you used to go in or out of a harbour anywhere you used to have this darn thing going, and I was in charge of it. And by some stretch of imagination it carked it [broke down], and I thought, "I'm in trouble now." So I stripped it down and, very technical little piece of machinery and it was stripped inside - the gears.

- 33:00 Was stripped, so this huge workshop, still on the wharf in Kure, huge. They could build the biggest battleship afloat right in Kure. So I found two discreditable looking people, showed them the little piece I had and they nodded, "Oh yeah." So it took me an hour or two hours later back to the ship they come with the exact replica of what I had given
- 33:30 them. Exact replica. The little canvas tool bag, straightened up a shaft that had been accidentally bent somewhere in this machine. Two cigarettes each. I was the most popular man in the world because I got this machine. It didn't do me, all they did was found these fellows and give them two cigarettes. One was a Japanese nautical engineer, and to look at him you wouldn't feed them they had nothing, in rags. And the other
- 34:00 was a professor or something. That was just how lucky I was to get it done, because there was no spare parts in Japan. But that was my main job - keep that part. As regards to submarine chasing, well, that was in peacetime you know, very little. We still had to work it you know, but we weren't looking for submarines.

And what part of

- 34:30 **the coastline were you patrolling?**

Well we were moving around. We were in the Sea of Japan. That's where the big Yankee, American base was in Sasebo. We were based there and then we went down to Yokohama. We did a trip across to Hong Kong, and then come around to the other side of Japan. Tokyo and Yokohama.

- 35:00 No, no. We were with BCOF for about four months I think so you couldn't say we were stationed in one spot for any length of time. I think it was mainly showing the flag you know. The presence was there, of course the Yankee presence was not until after the war. And they were just starting to rebuild.
- 35:30 There was absolutely nothing of Hiroshima, it was flattened. Then we went down to Nagasaki and it was nearly as bad. But that was BCOF.

Well you've just reminded me. I was going to ask you, what kind of contact did you have with the Yankees

- 36:00 **throughout the war?**

In the Middle East nothing. None because they weren't involved in it. In South Africa none. In Australia one married my girl, that set me off. In New Guinea limited. Around Bougainville the Yanks had a big base in a place called Torokina. We didn't have a lot

- 36:30 of contact with them at sea, because they didn't have, very little naval presence in Bougainville because it had all passed on. When things were all starting to quieten down and the war had moved away from us you know. The main part of it had gone. But then in, a little bit to do with the American Navy
- 37:00 in Japan, in BCOF. But other than that not a lot of contact with them at all you know. We used to love the clothes they wore. They were outfitted in beautiful clothes - you know the jeans and shirts. Deal. We used to come to all the, I can remember there
- 37:30 was Japanese rifles, you could see them if you pulled in at some little port, you could see Japanese rifles on the floor of the harbour. We used to dive down and get them, polish them up and sell them as Japanese, especially on the merchant ships, on the American merchant ships. They'd take them as souvenirs. Oh we used to, cigarettes, bot [beg] cigarettes off them. They'd

- 38:00 drink anything, the American soldiers, they'd drink cold kerosene. Well that's I took a dozen bottles of whiskey - I bought it at Coffs Harbour on my way north and I took it. I think I might have paid about thirty bob a bottle, and I can't remember what I got for it. I think it was about thirty dollars each bottle. American greenbacks see? Oh I made a fortune. Sent it
- 38:30 home to Mum. I don't know what happened to it. Trade anything, anything that was grog. But that was, as I say actual physical contact with them other than that very little, the Americans.

- 39:00 **Well that's kind of interesting because I've heard from others that the Yankees had a bit of a reputation.**

Oh overfed, oversexed, over here, overpaid. Yeah over everything yeah. Oh well that, I didn't see a lot of them when I was home. Actually they had moved on, the bulk of them see arrived in Australia while I was still overseas.

- 39:30 And by the time I got back in mid '43 all, there was still a few about, but all the bulk of them had moved on to further north. So I was lucky or unlucky, seeing whichever way you want to look at it. We did catch up with a few of them when we got to New Guinea, but they'd still moved on because the war had gone further ahead see?

- 40:00 But they were brash talking, so that's about it, that's typical. I've got nothing against them except one married my girl. That, I never forgive them for that.

Yes you were a very dedicated writer.

40:30 Oh you noticed? She was a good sort too. Well I thought so. I went to school with her as a matter of fact. The same train. She lived in Auburn, I lived in Lidcombe, the next station. Poor old mate Bill he used to come along with me.

It sounds from your

41:00 **descriptions that she sort of broke your heart?**

Oh I bounced back. I suppose it did knock me about a bit. But you know even to this day, I knew that she had a daughter even before she got to Australia. I knew her daughter's name - I saw her in hospital when she had the baby.

41:30 And I knew the bloke she married, well I knew his name. And I found out from the air force record, she was in WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force], she was in the Australian WAAAF. But I often still wonder what happened to her. Whether her marriage was a success or whether it blew up. Or did she die or...? You don't know. It's just one of these things.

42:00 Not that I can do anything about it.

Tape 7

00:30 **Pat I was just wondering if you can tell me, you've told us about coming back to Australia the first time and arriving in Adelaide. I was just wondering if you could tell me you'd been away for some time?**

Two and a half years.

I guess what being back in Australia felt like for you?

What we noticed mainly when we stepped ashore in Adelaide was the accent of the people, the Australian girls you know

01:00 as what we were used to when we were overseas. Especially the last two or three months in South Africa, their accent, they've got a very strong accent, and how different it sounded from the Australian girls when we got home. Naturally, I think we spent a night in Adelaide. And then we were shipped across to Melbourne to Flinders Naval Depot. And then on the train back to Sydney.

01:30 I can remember arriving in Sydney with my kit bag and hammock, and I was met at Lidcombe station. I must have got home from Central station on the train to Lidcombe. Servicemen never paid on the railways then, during the war - you just went and got on the train and got off the train.

02:00 And I was walking home with my kit bag and hammock, trying to, and I met a kid from up the street and he decided he'd carry my hammock. And I was walking a little bit further along and I met my sister in law, my eldest brother's wife, and she had a little granddaughter or grandson.

02:30 So she walked the rest of the way home with me, from the chemist. I met her at the chemist. And I opened the front door, and my Mum was most incensed that my sister in law met me before she did. Half Lidcombe would have met me before, but because my sister in law saw me before Mum did. I seem to recall, when we first left the Norman - that's the last ship I was

03:00 on - I sent them a card or a telegram that said, "Don't write we're coming home." I didn't know we were going to wait there for nearly six months for a ship. And of course they hadn't heard from me and thought, "Well where the hell is he? He hasn't, he's coming home but when?" And they thought all different things, because ships were getting sunk in the Indian Ocean, and poor old Mum, I think she'd come home from a holiday and had people running around like headless fowl because

03:30 I was coming home. Six months later I come home. So it took some of the shine off it. But I had a good leave and then went back to do more sailing, studying more submarine detection gear. That was my gear.

How did the changes in technology make your job easier?

Oh markedly. The original anti-submarine gear I used to work on, on the old Corvette,

04:00 you could fit in a decent size suitcase. And then it got into bigger things and bigger things, and now in modern day technology, it takes up rooms of stuff. But in those days if anything went wrong you'd try to fix it yourself. Now if anything goes wrong you just pull it out and put another bit in. Everything is encapsulated you know. So technology made it, oh the things they could do

04:30 that we couldn't do. They can even tell how deep a submarine is now. They can nearly tell what the captain's name is. Yeah technology has made a difference to naval warfare especially, you know, with

weapons and all that sort of stuff. They don't fire guns they fire rockets.

What was the, I guess you were learning at the school. What were

05:00 **you learning?**

Learning different techniques. They'd improve on the different types of sets. See when we first went away the sets we learnt on were very basic. There was, and I mean very basic. And then they improved the mechanised stuff and you had to learn how it worked and why it worked.

05:30 You just had to keep up with the times actually, but that's still going on to this day. But oh they lose me now. The basic idea of the sound is still the same, that's the very basic idea of submarine detection. SONAR - that's still there but what you do and how you go about it, that's completely different now.

How much had you heard about the war with Japan while you were away?

06:00 Not a great deal. Not a great deal. I don't know where we were when Pearl Harbour was on. Of course we wanted to come home - it was in our own back yard. We were in the Indian Ocean. I've got a funny idea we were around Colombo somewhere, what they call Sri Lanka now. Somewhere around there because we were based in Trincomalee and the Jap [Japanese] fleet come across to,

06:30 they sunk the Prince of Wales and the Repulse in the Bay of Bengal. Well that's not far away from Colombo. I don't know where we were at the time, but that was done by aircraft carrier, they sunk them. Then we were over towards the Nicobar Islands going over towards the Bay of Bengal,

07:00 bombarding with the rest of the fleet. It was mainly patrolling but we didn't find much thank God. Either they had been and gone or we were too early or too late, but that's the way of the world. Then we got tangled up with the invasion of Madagascar which is down off the coast of Africa. It's the same, the weather there.

07:30 You mentioned the peaceful blue Mediterranean. I've seen the Indian Ocean that smooth that you could see the reflection of the ship next door to you, you could see it in the water beside you. Flying fish fly up on the deck. But then on the other hand I've seen it that rough you know, smash things up. You'll find it in there, that diary, how rough things

08:00 could get you know. Couldn't stand up, and crockery down everywhere. Spent a lot of time on the east coast at a place called Mombasa in Kenya. There was a navy base there, Colombo, and then down to Durban of course. And around the cape and up the west coast of Africa as far as Walvis Bay. That was mainly looking for sunken

08:30 survivors of ships that had been torpedoed in the south Atlantic. We picked up a lot of survivors there.

The survivors you were picking up - were they from merchant ships or navy?

Merchant ships. See you weren't escorted in a lot of cases, they were travelling on their own. You were sitting ducks. Especially for raiders, in the

09:00 south Atlantic especially you didn't know what you were going to find. But there were a lot of survivors down there off the, off Cape Town and the South African coast.

Did you talk much to them - the people you'd rescue?

Oh, I say this word, this poor Salvo's they weren't in any fit state most of them. Most of them could have been

09:30 at sea for days, on a raft for days and covered in oil. Just picked them up and got them to the nearest port as quick as you could you know. Get them into hospital.

I just wonder of all the different jobs you were doing as a ship - the sweeping and the ferry runs and the

10:00 **evacuation and now this rescuing, was there one that stood out as the most satisfying for you?**

I think if you could put it down to satisfaction it was getting our boys out of Crete, Greece and Crete. Because they were fighting a rearguard action you know. They were definitely outnumbered, outgunned, everything.

10:30 And to think we could try to help them get out and get away, well you think well you're doing something. But even apart from that I suppose, when we was even a little bit in front it gave you a certain amount of satisfaction. But as they say, you know you shoot a plane down and you see the plane

11:00 fall and everybody is cheering, well you could have just killed someone. You sunk a submarine, everybody is cheering. You've just killed someone. Is it a way of letting off steam? I don't think you're happy that the man's dead. Just that you're winning. It's hard to explain you know.

Just coming back to Australia and then heading off

11:30 **for the war in the Pacific, how did your view of the war change? You mentioned because it was in our own backyard?**

Well I wasn't involved in it to the degree that I was right in the front line. As I said before we were only on a little patrol boat, a hundred and ten foot long, ninety ton. And the war had, the main thrust of the war had gone on. And where we were in that particular place

12:00 was more or less a police action. Keep showing the flag and keeping things in order, but as regard as major battles like Coral Sea Battle and all that, the ship I was on wasn't in it. Couldn't fire a pop gun much less get involved in that sort of business. We had arms on board but... Oh there were Japanese on the islands we were patrolling but we didn't come in contact with them you know.

12:30 They were probably hiding from us any rate. We didn't go ashore looking for them. The Americans were just about finished in Torokina and Bougainville, and the Australians were taking over. And I can remember, I don't think the American soldiers told the Japanese that they were going and the Australians

13:00 were coming because the war started again when the Australians got there. But the Yanks were so well equipped - they had their equipment, and their food, and their clothing was all top grade stuff. And we had, we sort of not.

13:30 But we couldn't do any better ourselves. I suppose we could have but we didn't have the weather for it anyway, and nothing mattered to me. See money was no object. Any chance we got we bought new gear.

I wonder just before, I would like to talk about the end of the war and coming home. But the, you went to quite a few unusual places

14:00 **and very exotic places some of them. I'm just wondering if it fitted the sense of adventure you had been looking for?**

Oh I don't think so. The most exotic place now is the Maldives Islands. It all in all the tourism and tourist attractions and it was nothing when we were there. Just a, I think there was an oiler there, a tanker that we could pull in there and refuel.

14:30 There was nothing, not a soul. I wonder, there was some habitation on. They've changed the names too. I don't know what they call them now. But it was very nice, very exotic if you could call it exotic. But nothing in New Guinea was exotic in those days because half the time there was spoils of war anywhere, lying anywhere. Even when I went back, when I was sixty-five

15:00 to Manus Harbour, I went back up there to work on a mission station with Rotary. Went up there with the Rotary and there was still relics of war and you were kicking them out of the road everywhere. Even on the beaches. So that's sixty years after, you'll still find stuff lying there in the jungle.

15:30 And that's only one place - she was a big war.

Can you tell me a little Pat about coming home when the war ended?

The war was finished, peace was declared, only the other day sixty odd years ago - fifteenth of August. I know because we were in Alexis Haven. I think I told you when the war was ended we were being

16:00 towed along, we were on the slipway in Alexis Haven. It was my birthday. We got an extra share of beer. We'd already got some from the Yanks. I got as rotten as a pear. Wrote a letter to my poor old Mum on toilet paper. Rolled it like a note. She kept it for years and years. She kept it and she read it out to me -

16:30 "I better stop now Mum I can't see the bloody paper." I was as blind as a bat. Gracie Fields was appearing at a troop concert just further down, but we didn't worry about Gracie Fields. We got extra rations of grog for VP Day and we all got on the turps. And then we got, actually we got carted all the way back from New Guinea to

17:00 Brisbane. And that's where the ship we were on paid off and I got the train back to Sydney and when I arrived back in Sydney I got off the train at Central Station. We had been in the jungle for that long, I had army boots on, white gaiters, jungle green trousers, jungle green shirt, a white sailor's cap and a yellow face. I had been taking

17:30 that Atebrin you know, the anti-malaria stuff. Come right through my clothes, through my singlet, through all me. Yet the girls in the air force in Townsville, they were looking for Atebrin. They reckoned if they took the Atebrin they wouldn't get sunburnt you know and they'd tan. But I was yellow and that's how I walked out of the train at Central Station.

18:00 My brother in law, my brother met me and here is this sailor in all of this gear. We got, it wasn't long after that that I paid off but as I said I went back in, back to sea.

Can you tell me about, I mean you've mentioned already that you felt the walls were closing in at the railway, but what were some of the difficulties you

18:30 **had settling back into civilian life again?**

Well one failed romance - I think that might have been the trigger. And I enjoyed my time at sea, even though it was open wartime. You forget all of the bad parts and you try and remember the good parts.

19:00 And towards the end of the war when things weren't as nasty for me in my particular case, we'd been in the backwash of it all. And I thought, well I was single, no ties, and I thought, "Well hang it. If I go back I will study and make something of myself," and that's what I did.

19:30 And the job I was in was a fairly backwater job you know. I was working for the chief mechanical engineer at Redfern Station. Wasn't the most pleasant job. It was a job. If I had stayed there I don't know what I would have done. I got engaged to a girl in Coffs Harbour. All she was interested in was

20:00 the bellbottom trousers and the suit of navy blue. That blue up. So that could have played some part in it too, I don't know. And the strange thing was when I did come out of the navy, the first thing I did was get an office job in the naval stores in 1970. But I had settled down a bit then, married, and my eldest girl was born. It was a different kettle of fish you know. You look at the

20:30 world through different glasses then.

Is there something you missed most in those weeks when you were out of the navy? Was there something out of the navy during the war that you missed most?

Oh I, not that. Might have been, might have been the mateship

21:00 that I missed somewhere along the track. It's hard to put a finger on the exact reason why. It's a culmination of a lot of things, or a few things. But I didn't regret it. I might have finished up a minister for the railways or something if I stayed there. But that wasn't my piece of cake. But I had a good job, permanent job.

21:30 I could have stayed the rest of my life in the railway if I had wanted to. But I decided not to, went back to sea and never regretted a day of it. Made some good mates, still got some good mates. And now I'm still tangled up in the Naval Association. They made me a life member, and a Meritorious Service medal. It's all on the wall out there. You'd swear I was the only one here.

What were you hoping to do when you rejoined the navy?

22:00 Hoping to do? Go back to sea, get amongst mates. But there was an ulterior motive to some degree, because I had been just on the one level for so long I just said, "Well I'll do something about it." So I studied and went up one level. And studied again and went to another level and made something of myself.

22:30 Instead of taking orders I was giving them in the finish. I finished up the chief bosons mate on a frigate. That was my last seagoing ship - the Condamine. I was the chief bosons mate on the ship. And also in charge of all of the submarine detector gear. Seamanship. You had to be a seaman first and then a specialist

23:00 gunnery, or whatever it was but that was my caper.

Well I was wondering Pat, just to go back to the time you spent in Japan with the occupation forces. What was your role and the role of your ship in?

Only, like only a police keeping force. I think mainly to show the flag. We weren't involved in any action. Although the action was

23:30 just after I come back from Japan - that's when Korea was on. And some of our ships were involved in the Korean campaign. But our part in the occupational forces was purely a police action. Show the flag, don't get involved. And that's what we did. Visited different ports around Japan. And we spent

24:00 Anzac Day 1940 something on a parade ground at a place called Hero. Just outside Hiroshima. The army parade ground there, the army was well entrenched then. Snowing like blazes. We were in our ordinary naval uniform and the snow was going down the back of our collar, I remember that. And all the army bods on the parade

24:30 they were in great coats and gloves. We nearly froze. God it was cold. It was snowing, Anzac Day parade in Hero. I forget what year that was. '46, 7 or 8 I can't remember.

What chance did you have to see either Hiroshima or Nagasaki?

Oh we were based there, see Kure and Hiroshima is right next door to each other.

25:00 We didn't get a lot of time ashore there, but what you did you couldn't do anything. There was nothing you could do. Was a little bit different in Tokyo. Tokyo was still, there wasn't a lot of damage in Tokyo, not like the other places where they dropped the atom bomb. It wasn't the place then that you'd go sightseeing or anything. Although the army had camps

25:30 there then and places you could go. But we didn't get involved at all. Just stay on the ship, go ashore and get on the grog.

As you I guess advanced up the ranks through the navy how did your responsibilities change?

26:00 Well you get more responsibility, you're loaded with more because you're giving orders. And you go down through the chain of command you know. You've got to know what orders to give for a start. And seamanship is the basis of the navy, especially for a seaman like myself. You've got to be able to handle a crew

26:30 you know. That was my job. Detailing them of what to do, when to do it, how to do it. Not so much the policeman side of it but the actual work on the ship. See the chief bosons mate he's in charge of the upper deck and the cleanliness and all of that part of the ship. And then they've got another senior rating that's like a senior policeman. He handles all of the bad people, anything that

27:00 goes wrong he's in charge of that. But it grows on you, but I was never one to say I told you so because I'd been there. And once you come up through the ranks you look at the world different. Some people take it the wrong way. They get power-drunk. Doesn't help, doesn't help at all because you've been there and you know what's on the other end.

27:30 **How many adrift eighteen year olds did you have to look after?**

Adrift eighteen year olds, not very many actually. You'd always try to help them out of trouble if you could. Sometimes they'd cut their own throat and you can't help them then. But you help them out - the less trouble they get into it makes it easier you know.

How could you keep them out of trouble?

28:00 Oh very funny ways. You didn't see things or you turned your back on things, or you don't notice the time, oh lots of things. I'll never forget I was in charge of the duty watch at Rushcutters Bay. The big naval depot in Rushcutters Bay. Lights out, I was going through the dormitory, "Righto lights

28:30 out fellows," and I could hear this giggling and I thought, "Hello." Under one of the bunks one of the local ladies of the night. "Out you come darling." She got out. And I said, "How did you get in here?" Someone said, "Over the fence," and I said, "Well that's the way you're going out." How can I? And here's me legging this woman up over the fence to get her out of the depot,

29:00 over the barbed wire. I could have sent her out of the gate. I said, "No you're going out the way you come in." I could hear this and I thought, "God what am I going to do with her?" Yeah one of the local ladies [prostitutes] from the Cross [Kings Cross], I'll never forget that. She found her way into the depot. I could hear this noise.

29:30 I was going around making sure everything was closed down for the night.

I've heard before from people in the occupation forces, especially senior officers, about having to rescue young men in trouble in brothels or...?

Yeah I can tell you stories about that too.

30:00 I was in charge of the shore patrol in Nagasaki. And there was a big house of ill fame, a huge big one. And my job was to get everybody out of the place and get them back to the ship on time so there was nobody adrift. And that's not the most pleasant job in the world - going around, opening a door and slapping someone on the bare backside saying, "Right you're out." You get some very nasty

30:30 remarks passed at you. Oh I've been in some dives in my life, over the years. God, makes you shudder.

Was that quite a regular job that you had to do?

Oh that was part of it, the shore patrol. If you got nailed for shore patrol you had to go and make sure they got into, they weren't supposed to be there in the first place.

31:00 But you get that. You weren't the most popular man in the world you know. I've been called a few nasty things in my time.

Is there one situation that just stands out as the craziest?

Well we used to do some terrible

31:30 things. Oh you couldn't lie straight in bed. Used to deal. See when we first went to Japan, saccharine - they couldn't get any sugar at all the Japanese, and saccharine tablets they were at a premium. A jar of saccharine tablets you could almost name your own price. But I wrote to the brother who had been up there before I was going and I said, "Well what is good on the black market?"

32:00 and he said, "At the moment, knitting wool." They couldn't get knitting wool. So normally your hammock is about that round when you lace it up. You could hardly get your hands around my, because it was full of knitting wool. I forget what I got for it, but I came home, my little, my place of work on the ship, I had a fairly big space below deck where my submarine detector gear was - it was chock a block full of

32:30 dinner sets, tea sets, you know all in boxes. That's where they stored them all. I think my daughter has

still got two Morataki bone china vases that I brought home. I used to have Satsuma tea sets, dinner sets and you'd trade, anything at all you'd...

33:00 That was the main thing then. They had nothing. It wasn't completely gone, you know. They had nothing except for this. They are masters of the art of crafting chinaware. That Morataki and Satsuma that was beautiful stuff. Whether it's the same as what it is now I don't know. But that's what it was then.

33:30 But that's what they mainly used to get you know. And the boys would say, "Well I've just got a dinner set where can I put it?" and I used to hide it down below. That was towards the end of my navy career then.

What evidence did you see - because I'm assuming that a lot of the men that you served with had probably served in the Pacific

34:00 **during the war - did you see any evidence of hatred towards the Japanese or...?**

Not from the navy mob, not the navy mob. See because some of the boys that were taken prisoners of war off the Perth and some of those other ships, a lot of them got killed going to Japan. They were on a Japanese ship going to Japan that got torpedoed by the Americans. They didn't know it was full of POWs.

34:30 But there was very few POWs that I had come across, you do now after the war in like Legacy and those places. But I didn't have any physical contact with POWs. As I say they fought a different war to me, they were indoctrinated and different to me. But they were trying to kill me and I was trying to

35:00 kill them. There was no animosity it was just the job. Seems strange to say that. But that was their job and it was my job to do the other thing. You see other people, of course being a POW and being treated like a POW, like some of them can't blame them for being that way.

35:30 **You mentioned that you thought the Japanese had been indoctrinated, and you hear that a lot. But I just wonder if you thought as an Australian serviceman there had been any indoctrination of any sort?**

Not to the same degree I think. See that's in their religion. That's how they're born and they're trained. And it's how they're even raised.

36:00 See the rising sun and everything, that's part of their bibles. Whereas we believe what you believe but you don't get to the stage where you go and shoot people. So the Germans, now they were indoctrinated by Hitler, and the Italians by [Benito] Mussolini. He got sucked in and they didn't want to fight. They were sucked in and they were fighting me, and they were trying to kill me, and I was trying to dodge them and kill them.

36:30 It's as simple as that.

You mentioned when you left the navy the second time you were married. I was just wondering if you could tell me when you met your first wife?

Yes. My first wife come from Cudal. My brother was up here in Orange.

37:00 He was working as a slaughterman for a local butcher - he had his own abattoir. And my poor old Mum she decided to come and visit my brother who lived over in Edward Street, and she said, I must have been on leave at the time so I said, "I'll go with you." So we arrived up here and my brother used to visit these people at Cudal. They were on a sheep stud and they used to grow turkeys.

37:30 My brother used to drive a big livestock wagon at one stage and they used to go around the different farms getting turkeys for slaughtering for Christmas. And he said to Mum and I one day, "Would you like to come out and meet these people?" So out we goes in the car and that's where I met my future wife and went from one thing to another so away we were. So I arrived in

38:00 Cudal on leave. I got the bus out there, there was no, in an old bus. And it was a gravel road out from the actual town of Cudal to the farm. And I thought, "How am I going to get out there?" My brother in law was working in the butcher shop in Cudal and he said to me, "Here Pat use my bike." And here's this sailor in a navy uniform, riding along a country gravel road. You could hear the phones going

38:30 party line - "Where is he now, where is he now? Where's this sailor? Where's he going?" And so it went on. And after I got out of the navy I worked in Sydney for a while and we lived in Sydney for a while but then I got the opportunity to come to the country with the employment service, based in Orange. And I thought, "Well my wife's people are out here," so we came out here and that didn't work out, because they sent me

39:00 away to Dubbo. Most of the time I was based in Dubbo, supposed to be based in Orange, relieving around the area but, so I give it away. And got into local government. I was with the local shire here for thirty odd years. I was the paymaster. So I didn't go far, I stayed around. But I haven't regretted it. I think it's a lovely town. You get to know everybody,

39:30 because I'm in so many damn things.

Did you miss the ocean at all moving up here?

No not after a while. You think, "Oh that's it." As I say I could go to sea tomorrow and get as sick as a dog. I've been overseas since, but mainly air travel you know. Decided you can't take it with you, even if you turn it into travellers cheques.

40:00 So we had a look around but, anyway all the money in the world can't buy good health. Haven't got your health you may as well go home.

Have you been back to some of the places that you were during the war?

Back to Japan three times. I'd love to go back to the Greek Islands. Not to the mainland, the Greek Islands. Mainly because it's so pretty,

40:30 but the mainland itself didn't appeal to me - Athens and Piraeus harbour. That's about all. See I didn't get to England at all during the war. It was after it was all finished we went over there. England and Ireland I'd go back tomorrow.

41:00 Would you have ever been to places like Haifa and Alexandria had it not been...?

No, no never think of that you know. Haifa. Alexandria, no, although some people like to go and see the pyramids or sphinx, I see it all for nothing. They paid me. And the Holy Land and South Africa and Africa all over.

41:30 Kenya and Japan. Hong Kong, China. I suppose it does get in your blood a bit. You like to travel.

That's wonderful, thanks very much for that Pat. We're just at the end of another tape.

You finished?

We've got a little bit more if that's ok?

Tape 8

00:31 **I'd like to start off Pat by asking you about your diary and why - because you kept a very close diary every day while you were away for two and a half years - why was that diary so important to you?**

Well I don't know. One of my friends I used to go to school with, we used to knock around together, bought me a diary when

01:00 I first joined the navy. Bought me a diary for 1941, and I thought well while I was on the ship going overseas I started it, and I just kept doing it. I don't know why - there was no reason for it. You are not supposed to keep a diary at sea. In the navy especially during war it's just not on. Because if you're caught or captured or something they already, might be

01:30 disclosing secrets - not that I knew of any secrets. But anyway I kept it. And when I finished that year I went and bought another one. But anyway I just kept it on. There is not a lot you can say in such a little, diaries that big. You haven't got a lot of room to write. So that's why it might be encapsulated you know. Might have been a hell of a lot you couldn't put down. But then I,

02:00 my daughters were always at me to put it into a book form. Especially my number two daughter. She's mad keen on all this book rubbish. So we got to the stage when we got a computer that we put it on, what the hard disk or hard drive or something? And it's still on the hard drive now. You only have to press it and the whole lot comes out. So we took the hard drive around to one of the printing works here and they set it up in book form and

02:30 that's where it is now. And every one of the nine kids got a copy. And there is even a copy in the, what's the name of the Catholic school in Bathurst? Catholic Girls school? They've even got, I don't know how it got there but...

And how did keeping a diary that you knew was illegal, how did that help you?

03:00 Well I don't know whether it helped me - it was just something to do. Something that you get into a routine and you're ready to go to bed and you just sneak off somewhere and just fill in your days, what you can of it. But I don't think there was any malice attached to it. When I say that, you know I wasn't trying to hide anything. It was just that I started it and I kept going.

03:30 But as I say it was illegal if it was all boiled down. But I still kept it. I don't suppose I was the only one who kept a diary during the war. There's a lot of other people did. Whether they can tell more than I can I don't know. But mine was mainly where I had been and what had happened during. So there she is.

04:00 And all the grandkids, they've got a copy of it, and they think it's Christmas. God, they all think their

Pa's a hero.

You've mentioned a couple of times that you don't consider yourself to be a hero?

No, I was just an ordinary fellow, nothing special about me. Just an ordinary sailor trying to do a job as best I could.

04:30 And to stay out of trouble, and I think that's ninety-nine point nine percent of any servicemen. You'd be an accidental hero if you were. But as I say in the navy, very few sailors are heroes because if it happens on board a ship, the powers that be, the people that run it, the captain he takes the can and he also takes the kudos. If there's anything goes wrong, so it cuts both ways. And you're too

05:00 busy to worry about medals. Might be alright after the event that you can show your grandkids. Mostly them that you can see are only campaign medals where I've been and different campaigns and different theatres of war. No heroes about it at all.

But still you played, whether as an individual or as a member of a

05:30 **crew, you played your own part in helping Australia win that war.**

Oh yeah well every serviceman did to a degree. There are different degrees of help. What you do? And as I said I might have been one of a crew of two hundred and fifty blokes. Well they're all striving for the one end. To get home and get out of it. But how you get there is another story, and what you do to get there is another story.

06:00 But heroism - it's accidental. No-one sets out to be a hero I don't think - it just happens.

Well how satisfied were you when you returned home that you received due recognition for your service?

I think I was quite happy just to get home,

06:30 get out of it you know - at that stage. Because I sort of contradict myself because I went back to sea. But it was a different set of circumstances - there was no one trying to kill you then. I think you're pleased that it is all over and that there is no more killing you know, and no more destruction. It's such a waste,

07:00 war. It's such a complete and utter waste of manpower, human lives, material. Just blown up for what? You know this is all happened after, when you sit back and look at it from a different angle, you think, "What the hell was it all about?" Someone's greed or someone's lust

07:30 for power or what? They forget the cost in human life. That's life I suppose. It's been going on since time in memorial.

We've heard from a lot of people we've talked to that they didn't really get a chance to talk about it much when they got home. I'm also wondering whether you had any

08:00 **nightmares or...?**

Oh, I can remember my first wife, I can remember it like it was yesterday. We had a Mickey Mouse clock someone bought us as a wedding present. You know where the hands go around for Mickey Mouse? And poor old Mickey Mouse used to be on the table alongside my bed when we slept in the house in Lidcombe, and I don't know how many times Mickey Mouse got knocked over. Used to wake up in the middle of the night.

08:30 The wife used to say, "What are you up to now?" Whether that was an after-effect or what I don't know. But I never went to a shrink or anything, just grew out of it. I suppose there is still a time that you might have some sort of a reaction, but nothing of any consequence. But it affects different people in different ways. Like death affects people in different ways.

09:00 As I say if you let it get at you you're gone a million.

And you did see some fairly horrible incidents.

Oh you see death all around you.

09:30 I was from here to across the other side of the street, a little bit more, from a British battleship that blew up and disappeared in two minutes. Eleven hundred lives just like that. What can you do? It was torpedoed straight into their magazine. The Barham. We picked up two hundred survivors, what was left of them, and the Hotspur picked up two hundred. It's all in the diary.

10:00 And when you're picking up half a body out of the ocean and trying to, you just let it go. You're only looking for the full ones, if they are alive. Dead bodies floating around you in Piraeus harbour, it must affect you somehow I don't know. But as you say as regards to nightmares and so on, I suppose we all suffer from them to a certain

10:30 extent. It depends on what you had seen and done. Just try to forget.

Well you and your experience of war was very connected to listening to sounds. I'm wondering, I can't imagine what the sound of a battle might be like.

11:00 **How did you or what was your experience of it like from that point of view?**

What in action? Well it all depends on where you were and what you were doing. See if I was in action in certain places I would have the earphones on and that would deaden a lot of the actual sound going on around

11:30 me. And if I was down, but if you were up on the upper deck or near a gun, well you can imagine the noise of a gun going off, and not one, but guns going off all around you and bombs landing in the ocean all around you. It's just chaos. We were sitting on a reef outside Cyprus harbour, sitting on a reef, high and dry on the old Hyacinth. Couldn't move -

12:00 we had run aground. And the German bombers found us, and we could not move one inch. And you could hear the planes coming down and you didn't know whether it was the scream of the plane or the scream of the bomb because they'd make the noise, the whistle, and that's not the most healthy sound you can hear. But I am still here. They dropped all around the ship. We were weeks shovelling the mud off the upper deck where it had blown up onto the ship.

12:30 But the noise, its just chaos you know, but you've got to live through it. Then when it's all gone you get ready for the next one. Because, especially over there, there is always one around the corner. Was not another "Well that's the last air raid we'll see", there was always more coming. That went on for months, months and months. And not

13:00 as though it was every now and again - day after day. Especially on some of those convoys, there was just no let up, from daylight to dark. Bombing, bombing, bombing. Whether they were having a go at you, if they couldn't get the ships you were escorting they were having a go at you, picking off the escorts themselves.

And you just mentioned picking up half a body out of the water. When was that?

13:30 When the Barham got blown up they lost eleven hundred people and there was bits of people everywhere. And the lifeboat that you sent out to pick up survivors, every boat that you could float you sent away looking for people. And they were all around you. The battleship has just been sunk and you're picking up

14:00 people that were lucky enough to have been blown off there or blown into the water. You're looking for live ones. Dead ones are no good to you, because you can't do anything with them. And half a body - I've seen that many a time. That's all you could see was floating, the rest was gone.

Still alive?

14:30 No, no. We buried a lot of them at sea, what was left of them at sea and got the rest of them back to Alexandria harbour as quick as we could. That's only one incident - it happened all the time.

15:00 **Do you think, and you've implied it a little bit from what you talked about today, that because you saw so much carnage that you had to cut off from it?**

Well it's the only way to keep going. You've got to divorce yourself. If you keep harping on it or thinking about

15:30 it you'll get yourself in a real state. But you've got to shut it out of your mind. It's there, but you don't dwell on it. Because if you dwell on it you're a gone goose. I think anybody well tell you that. You know pilots - if they think they're going to be shot down they may as well not go up. Same as a digger he's, you don't go looking for it but it just happens to you.

16:00 It's just a fact of life. With me anyway I just try to shut it out. Some people just can't take it. I'm no hero as I said but I try to blank it out if I can. But over the passing years too, you mellow and it fades, but I can always refresh my memory what happened because it's all written down. Not that I want to.

16:30 It's only there for the kids to read. I don't care what they do with the diary now. I've run my race.

Well I'm also wondering if now you find that there are any sounds or sirens that trigger memories?

Not now, not now. There used to be. I can remember years ago

17:00 in one part of our tour, where were we? In Alexandria harbour when the manual man made submarines they used to have little flog men come in under the, and they'd put limpet mines on the ships in the harbour. And they attacked Alexandria harbour and for days after that, for months

17:30 after that you couldn't drop a spoon or anything on the - everybody would be up and running heading for somewhere, that's how it. But that gradually faded. But now, well I mean that's sixty years ago. Something's got to fade hasn't it over the years. But then you, they say, "Well do you like talking about it?"

18:00 Well it doesn't hurt you to talk about it now. Might have once, but you mellow.

Well yes there is talking about it now with sixty years reflection, but I'm wondering when you finally left the navy how do you think that both your wartime and your navy career sort of changed you?

18:30 Well I suppose it changed my whole outlook on life because of being involved in the whole thing in the first place. Physically very little, although I'm starting to pay for it now. Mentally, as I say

19:00 early in the piece it affected me a little bit that way but it's faded now. But my whole outlook on life, you'd say it had changed because of the things I had seen and done. Apart from what I had never seen as a city kid sitting in an office, that's just what happened.

19:30 And how you get tangled up in it.

Well I'm wondering - if there was a young man or a young woman who came to you for advice about going to war, joining up for the service, what would you say to them?

Well there is a classic example. My grandson just there. I went crook on him because he joined the air force instead of the navy.

20:00 As a career in peacetime I'd recommend it to anybody. But not, nowhere in war would you try to send anybody. These scuffles they are having, they're not wars they're police actions. But for any kid to take on a service career in peacetime they learn discipline. That's the whole thing in life. If

20:30 the kids, if any kids these days they learn discipline and they learn to do what they're told when they're told. Within reason - I don't mean to go overboard. I think they finish up better kids. Of course as I said if there is a war on where people are getting killed you'd never send anybody into that sort of business. But if I had kids, my grandkids, there's one, gone already. There he is there. He's in the air force.

21:00 And he's having the time of his life. But it might come if a blue starts and he gets tangled up, but that's the risk he runs. But I wouldn't advise him to go if the war was on. I wouldn't send anyone. I wouldn't send my worst enemy. But there he is, and he thinks Pa's a hero.

Well now I just need to ask you a very sailor-specific

21:30 **question.**

Hello.

I'm wondering if like others have told me you got any tattoos?

Yes. I knew it would come to this.

And what are your tattoos of? Can you describe it?

22:00 **It's on my right forearm. Hong Kong 1946. On both shoulders - a little map of Australia, RAN in one and N in the other. Don't ask me what the N's for - it was my girlfriend's name. I was too shrewd to get the full name. Put the initial - now it stands for nothing. N for nothing. But the RAN stands for the Royal Australian Navy. So that was my tattoo.**

22:30 **And if you ever see a little bloke in Melbourne, he's got exactly the same tattoo at the same time, ashore in Hong Kong. And that's all, and no other ungainly ones anywhere, no that was it.**

Well that's actually quite restrained of you.

Oh naturally I've seen some beautiful works of art. I was in hospital, or in a rest camp in Alexandria after we

23:00 come out of Crete, and there was a chap in the hospital he had a full crucifixion across his back. It was a beautiful thing. It was a work of art. He used to be out sunbaking and all of the nurses used to be out taking photos of his back. It was well done, you know. But God knows how long it took to do it. Some say you've got to be full [drunk].

23:30 I might have been I don't know. They say you're marked for life, well gee I've been carrying this face, I'm still marked for life. Nothing strange about it. Tattoos. A lot of, terrible lot of sailors haven't got tattoos. Sometimes, a lot have too of course. I don't know whether it's supposed to make you a man

24:00 or what. Didn't make any difference to me. So now you know, my darkest deepest secret, that's all.

Thank you for sharing that with me.

Funny, I went to a lady doctor and she was very interested in tattoos. She even took photos of them. I thought, "God, taking a photo of a bloke's tattoo."

24:30 I better sing out to Nan to put the, how much further have we got to go?

Just a couple more.

I'm getting thirsty.

Do you want a sip of water?

No, no.

Well I'm just wondering, you are quite musical, and you've told us about your contributions to concert parties. I'm wondering if there are any songs or any particular pieces of music

25:00 **that are very memorable or close to your heart from your navy days?**

Not really. I love music of any sort, can't read a note. Could never read a note of music. But anyone hits a wrong note I can tell you. Three of my four daughters can sing like birds. My first wife couldn't sing a note, couldn't sing a note in tune. My eldest girl can't sing a note. The three girls sing three part harmony.

25:30 But I went into the concert parties here in Australia for the kid's sake. Not to push them into acting or music, but to lead them in. That's why, I went and they came with me. That's why I stayed on, you know. But I don't think there's anything - I just love music. That was in the days of the Andrew Sisters, and big bands, when music was music. Not today. All they've got is noise.

26:00 And lyrics they might say the same three lines all through the song and that's it. Sometimes I might hear a song and, oh my God. This local radio station the noise, like a... but anyway the kids love it but not me.

I'm just wondering if there was a sea shanty that was a favourite?

26:30 Some of the sea shanties, navy boys do funny things with the lyrics. They do some really funny things. They adapt it to suit themselves. But nothing of consequence. This "Ho ho blow the man down" that's way back, that might be the old sailing days but not for the navy.

27:00 There was nothing, not of any consequence.

Can you remember a song?

Can you remember a song? I can remember lots of songs. The Andrews Sisters I used to love.

Well I'm thinking particularly of a song that maybe the sailors adapted the lyrics.

Oh dear. I'd have to think about that.

27:30 Poems they used to adapt. So many songs they used to sing. "King Farouk, Queen Farida, give her back she's..." That was the Egyptian song. There were all, I think one was the actual, if my memory serves

28:00 me correctly, one of them was the Egyptian National Anthem. And some of the ways that used to be sung, and the words, and the words they put to it about King Farouk- he was the monarch, not fit for printing. No.

I'm sure I can't really be shocked.

28:30 No it's not the sort of thing that I could. Honestly not that I could put a name to you know. Songs.

No particular song that was associated with either the Hyacinth or the Nizam?

No, no. Not like today. Every football team's got a song. You never had a theme song.

29:00 That just wasn't on anyway you never even thought of that, so your ship didn't have a special song.

What about some favourite jokes or favourite ditties?

Favourite jokes or favourite ditties. Gee whiz. I always tell the story about when I joined the navy

29:30 how it appears to someone else when I first joined the navy and I first went in and they said, "Can you swim?" I said, "Haven't you got any ships?" Then I went before the doctor and he said, "How's your bowels?" And I said, "I don't know, I haven't been issued with them yet." Then he said, "Are you constipated?" and I said, "No Catholic." He said, "Don't you know the King's English?"

30:00 And I said, "Is he?" I've been telling that sort of story, not once but a thousand times at different functions. Gets a laugh. And so you get a line of patter you know. You build to it or take a bit off it. How you travel overseas and how the different customs overseas. How the French, I was in France and a bloke

30:30 come up and kissed me on both cheeks. I was doing up my shoes at the time, if you get the picture. Yeah I was in an African port and the custom there if you visit the chief in the mornings you kiss him on the heels, that's the custom. You visit him at night you kiss him on the back of the neck. You stay away at

31:00 lunch time. See? That's the sort of thing you say. But there's a line of them when you're travelling, just to break up the monotony.

It is interesting to hear that one of the first questions you were asked was "Can you swim?"

Marvelous how many people can't swim when they first join the navy,

31:30 it's marvelous how many people can't swim. One of my jobs during my career was instructing down at the big Flinders Naval Depot, and the trainees, the cadets, had to swim the length of the swimming pool in a duck suit before they passed out, before we let them go. And that's not the easiest thing in the world to do in a duck suit. Marvellous how many couldn't swim. Marvellous how many people are colour blind.

32:00 That was one of the things when I first joined the navy they flicked this little confetti book over to me and I had to pick numbers on it. But I think they must have been clutching at straws when they got me. I must have been the bottom of the barrel. Yeah when the bloke said, "Don't you know the King's English?" I said, "Is he?"

32:30 They think, "What have we got here?"

We've heard from army boys about how they had nicknames for each other, and that was really quite important for them.

Well I only had one nickname in my life. One nickname, I think that was handed down from my Dad. It's written on one of the little cards I've got there - Irish. Because my name was Pat. My Dad used to call me Irish. My brother Vince, the

33:00 air force bloke, he still calls me Irish. And one of the chaps in Legacy with me, he was on one of the ships with me in New Guinea, he still calls me Irish. So that's the only nickname I ever had. Probably a few foul ones too but that was the only nickname I ever had.

And was that nickname used during the war as a sailor?

Oh yeah, yeah. Not to any marked degree. That's if they ever called me any nickname apart from my name.

33:30 **Well you've mentioned that mates were really important to you. I'm wondering was there a particular mate or a couple of friends who stand out from those days?**

Well I still keep in contact with one of the boys I shipped with in Bougainville in New Guinea. As a matter of fact he phoned me the other day. He's behind

34:00 Jupiters Casino in Queensland. He shifted from Orange. He lived in Orange here with me for years. He was in Legacy with me, the Naval Association with me. He still contacts me. But there is that many, see in twelve years you make so many friends you know it's hard to pick one in particular out.

34:30 But before the war, the one that went away and got killed on the Sydney, he was a good mate. He was a schoolmate and we planned we were going out set the world on fire, but he got killed. That's how that, that's what happened. But you can't compare it with the army when you're in a battalion and you're fighting side by side. See you might be on a ship for two years and then shifted to another ship,

35:00 then go to another ship. And you make friends with all of them and, if you try to pick one out, it's a little bit awkward.

Well looking back to all of those years ago I'm wondering if there stands out a proudest moment from your wartime navy service?

35:30 The proudest moment? I don't think, I can't think. I was just proud to come through it, pleased to come through it. Something to take pride in - doing your job

36:00 and doing it to the best of your ability. That's all you could say. But as regards to anything outstanding as I said I was just ordinary. There was nothing flash about me, nothing outstanding. I was just one of the troops doing my job and being in the right place at the wrong time or the wrong place at the right time. And being lucky enough to come home.

36:30 And to sit here and talk about it.

And why is it important for you to remember your story and pass it on to others?

I think it's important to pass it on so that kids in the future, and that's what you're trying to do to keep some record of just what can go on and has gone on over the years. And keep permanent record and hope to God it doesn't happen again.

37:00 You wouldn't wish this on anybody, and that's what you try to impress. But see we're only very little fish in a big pond, and we've got to get that message across to the powers that be and that's a big ask. We know what we want, but these people that do all of the sending they don't know themselves. You notice that? They're always sending someone else. They're not in the front line.

37:30 But that's what people join the forces for. That's their ultimate aim, that's what they're trained for - trained to kill people. But as I say, no pride, no you wouldn't say you were proud of anything - just satisfied with the job you did.

38:00 I suppose you could say proud to be a part of it. That's all you could say. That's one very little fight, little frog in a big pond.

Well we're coming to the end of our session today. I'm wondering if there is anything else that you would like to say, or if something that you feel like we might have

38:30 **forgotten?**

I don't think so. I think you've wrung me dry. There's things I've probably told you that I haven't told anybody else. But it's the way I feel and I don't make any bones about it. I suppose you can say I was proud to do the job I did. I did it to the best of my ability.

39:00 That's about it. And if I can affect anybody in the future so be it. And if I can help anybody in the future by showing them just what can happen, what did happen, well I'd be doing something worthwhile. Now she's tapped you on the shoulder, you're gone.

39:30 I'll tell Nan to put the billy [kettle] on.

Thank you very much for speaking with us today. We'll turn the camera off now.