

Australians at War Film Archive

Lindsay Money (Len) - Transcript of interview

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**Some parts of this interview
have been embargoed.**

The embargoed portions are
noted in the transcript and video.

Tape 1

00:46 **Well then the first obvious question is when were you born?**

Now that's an interesting question because when I was born on the 5th of August 1916 according to my

01:00 birth certificate I was already two days old. It says the 3rd of August 1916 so I use that to my advantage because it meant that I could retire two days earlier so, but then that's another story it never got that far.

And where were you born?

At a little hospital at Glen Huntly went by the name of Vermadore Hospital there. I'm not sure

01:30 whether one of my mother's sisters, a maiden aunt was still connected with it. She had been associated with it presumably, no, well now I come to think of it it would have been before her time because she was an AIF [Australian Imperial Force] nurse in the First World War and so she would have been over in France when I was born most probably but

02:00 a friend of hers was the Matron of the hospital, the name just slips me now, Nurse Stanwood so that hospital then was on the corner of Grange Road and Glen Huntly Road. Years later it was shifted round into Booran Road in Glen Huntly and changed its name to Devon Hospital

02:30 and two of our children were born there and also various other nieces. I had no immediate...

And what were your parents' names?

My father was Robert Tate Money. He was a second generation Australia. My mother

03:00 was Winifred Frances Hughes Smith, an unusual name of course but her father was a sea captain ship owner working mainly out of Melbourne trading I don't know how far around the Pacific but up as far as China. The nurse who was, I mentioned, was a

03:30 war nurse 1st AIF, she was actually born in Hong Kong. He had his wife accompany him on most of his voyages so that at least two of the aunts were born at sea or in harbour out of Australia. I'm not sure when he came

04:00 to Australia, round about the 1850s I think. My maternal great-grandfather came to Melbourne round about the 1830s.

That's very early.

Yes, yes. He had a most important job in Melbourne. He was a Cooper making beer barrels for the breweries.

04:30 The business was carried on, carried on by my grandfather. I remember going to his cooperage which used to be in Melbourne up near where 'The Truth' newspaper office used to be in Wills Street up north

of La Trobe Street for anyone that's familiar with Melbourne geography.

Well that's really interesting to have that

05:00 **sea tradition in your family?**

Yes. Another sort of little interesting facet one of my great-aunt's daughter of the, of Robert Tate, he was on my father's mother's side, no sorry

05:30 daughter of my great-grandfather Alexander Money who was the Cooper, Margaret, she was one of the first students at the Methodist Ladies' College when that founded. I forget the date that that began but that's all in the history anyway. When the school started I think she was about five

06:00 years younger than the principal who established the school so...

Well that's very, this is all part of your, the history work that you've done is it, in writing your...

Yes.

autobiography, that's terrific stuff.

Oh that's not into the autobiography part of it. That's on the family history research that I've been trying to do yes.

And well how many children in your family?

I had a brother and sister,

06:30 twins that were 13 and a half years older than I. They were born in February nineteen hundred and three so they're all...

Well you must have been brought up like an only child then?

To a large extent yes, and of course spoilt rotten I realise that now. I didn't realise it at the time but yeah.

Well what was it about your upbringing that you think now that

07:00 **you were spoilt rotten?**

Oh just because I turned out to be such a poisonous little brat.

We'd love to hear an example of your being a poisonous little brat?

Well the best one that comes to mind was my sister Alice, I don't know how it was that she offended me one day.

07:30 I was in a particularly nasty mood so I called her 'Sue', that was the most horrible name I could think of at the time and I kept it up so I always called her Sue. The result, the final result was that throughout the family she became known as Auntie Sue and I'm sure that some of my nieces would probably

08:00 have to stop and think, maybe only briefly but if you spoke about Alice they would say, "Oh yeah, Auntie Sue," they, so if that's not poisonous enough tell me.

Well why did you think Sue was such a horrible name?

I don't know but I I hope you don't have Sue as a second name.

Well

08:30 **I was wondering also about your education. Where did you go to school?**

Well first off at the state school in Grange Road, Glen Huntly, that was only a few doors up from where we lived, a block and a half to be precise. Up until the, what they called the 'Qualifying Certificate' in the sixth grade then. From there I went to the secondary school high school at

09:00 Mordialloc and went up to as far as the Leaving Certificate at Mordialloc. To do Leaving Honours had to transfer to Melbourne High School and this was in the heart of the Depression years so the first few months after the new school year started I was going around looking for jobs. Came home one day and proudly announced

09:30 to my parents that I had scored a job. I was going to be a pageboy at the 'Hotel Australia' because they had a nice little uniform with a, if I remember rightly, a red or a golden coloured pill box hat. My parents were horrified, I wasn't allowed to do that so they rushed off and got me an interview with Mr Searby who was the Principal, Melbourne High School so I started at Melbourne High

10:00 the second term rather than the first term, had to catch up there. I managed to get one subject, Leaving Honours in one subject, so I didn't do that the second year. The following year I did more leaving

honour subjects and collected a few more honours subjects so...

Well I was just taking you back now to your primary school years,

10:30 do you have any particular memories of your primary school years?

Oh got a few that even go back further than that. One of my earliest memories would have been around about 1920. Our two families, our family and the next door neighbours, went for a holiday, would have been at Christmas time I think, down to Mornington which was quite a long way away

11:00 in those days. Almost a day trip to get there and my pal next door that we grew up together, Wal Essard, we'd been down and seen people catching fish from the pier and this sort of thing. When the holiday, the week or so, was over we came home and the next day Wal and I decided

11:30 we would go back to Mordialloc and catch our fathers' tea so Wal hunted round and found a pot, been a paint pot I think, and we thought we'd use that for bait because in the bottom of the can there looked as though there were worms there which I think must have been dried paint on the bottom on the tin so we hiked off up to the

12:00 Glen Huntly railway station, jumped on the next train that came in, took off down. I'm not sure whether we got off at the next station, Ormond, or whether we went even further than that but we got off there. Anyhow somebody took us under their wing and found out where we came from and they hurtled us back to Glen Huntly Station. Somehow or other we were taken back home and that was one of my earliest memories about the things but then it

12:30 would have been about 1922 I think, I was about six years old when I started at the primary school, Glen Huntly. Can't remember very much about it except I can vaguely remember one day when I was probably in the infants class and

13:00 I got up in front of the class and sang a song to entertain them. I think it was probably 'Look for the Silver Lining' or one of, but anyhow.

Well what were your teachers like?

Oh they varied. Some of them had a reputation for being rather strict and, you know, disciplinarian. Others they were mainly women

13:30 teachers that I had. I don't think at the state school I don't think I ever had a male teacher. The seventh and eighth grades at Glen Huntly seemed to be the prerogative of the male teachers except the Headmaster, Mr Jenkin, who was rather famous in Glen Huntly school, he used to come in and

14:00 take us for nature study and special subjects like that at times and if we ever produced any work that was worthy of mention Mr Jenkin used to come and stamp our work with the school motto. Had a rubber stamp which I think it probably had the name and number of the school

14:30 but it had the motto around the, was a circular stamp of course, had a motto around it, 'Live pure, speak true, right wrong,' was the motto of the state school. I wasn't sufficiently outstanding as a pupil to get a motto except one day in about the fifth grade,

15:00 we had a, had to draw a pastel drawing and they plonked a Granny Smith apple down in front of us and we had to draw this in green pastel and highlight where the light was shining on it with white and all and, lo and behold, when they had a look at it Mr Jenkin

15:30 decided that was good enough to give me a motto so I got that but generally my work was too untidy, I, my writing left a lot to be desired. Although I generally managed to finish up if not the top of the class at least the top of the boys. The girls often used to outstrip me but I used

16:00 to generally finish up in the first three or four in the class. A bit of a handicap really because it came fairly easy to me, I didn't have to study so consequently I became rather lazy, got a bit of a shock when I did the Leaving Certificate examination, we examined in five subjects.

16:30 To get the Leaving Certificate in those days we had to pass in five subjects and to matriculate you had to pass the five subjects at one examination. The supplementary examination, if you failed and had to sit a supplementary examination, that counted as part of

17:00 the main examination but to get your Leaving Certificate you had to at least pass three subjects in the primary examination and no more than two in the supplementaries. When the results came out I found that in geometry and algebra, which were two of my best subjects, I'd failed so I had to do those in the supps but again

17:30 not really studying but I passed them in the supps so that I qualified for matriculation as well as getting the Leaving Certificate. To just get the Leaving Certificate without matriculating you had to complete it in two examinations. I was slightly in error of the first one. It was two examinations you had to complete

18:00 your five subjects in. For the matriculation the supplementaries and the primary examination counted as two separate examinations. For the Leaving Certificate the supplementaries were counted as one

examination so that you could get your Leaving Certificate by passing three subjects one year, two the next.

Well your parents must have valued education to allow you to go on to secondary education?

18:30 Well yes but because of the Depression, subject to some sort of a means test, you could go on and do secondary education and be exempted from the school fees. The fees weren't particularly cheap in those days. It cost two pounds a term,

19:00 four dollars in today's money but in the Depression four pound, two pounds was a bit hard to come by sometimes.

Well how many of your mates at primary school went on to high school with you? Was Mordialloc the closest high school to you? Were you still living in Glen Huntly?

No, well Melbourne High School was probably the closest but that didn't take pupils

19:30 from grade six. It only started at the third form at Melbourne High School. Mordialloc started at year seven so that we were virtually, if we were wanted going on to secondary education after the sixth grade, well Mordialloc became almost obligatory. From memory

20:00 I think there were no more than about half a dozen boys from Glen Huntly that went to Mordialloc.

Can you remember if any girls did?

The only girl that I can remember that went to Mordialloc she didn't actually go from Glen Huntly although she'd been at Glen Huntly school

20:30 prior to the opening of the South Caulfield State School which was, I think it was in Bundeera Road, South Caulfield but because she lived on the western side of the railway line all the students that lived that side of the railway line they were transferred to Bundeera Road School. Elva Carr who later became one of the almost original police women

21:00 in Melbourne, she finished up as a senior sergeant, she went on to Mordialloc. I don't remember any other girls from Glen Huntly, mainly because I was more interested in Elva than any of the others probably.

Well what was high school like after primary school?

Oh it didn't really appear to me to be much different

21:30 except that they included subjects like French, geology, algebra and of course woodworking and metalworking. Apart from that it was just, appeared be the natural thing to do, go on,

22:00 was a bit sort of a higher standard in the community than the state school. See most kids in those days didn't go beyond eighth grade. If you went to high school well you were more or less practically on your way to be able to go to university perhaps.

22:30 What were the teachers like?

Oh generally speaking they were pretty good. Some were not exactly a dead loss I suppose but they weren't particularly brilliant at controlling the children. Course we used to take advantage of those people.

23:00 What did you use to do?

What?

What did you do to take advantage of those teachers?

Oh, used to sit up at the back of the room and talk and carry on. In one form our form room was in one of the science rooms. There were four rows of benches, four on each side of the

23:30 room. The boys had sufficient numbers to fill up four benches. The girls only managed to fill three, so I and a couple of other of my cronies we used to inhabit the back bench and we'd carry on. One particular teacher, he knew we were up to no good and he used to

24:00 try and catch us out so he knew if we were sitting on the right hand side of the class, he'd swing round that way to catch us. When he became too adept at trapping us that way we used to shift over to the other side, sit behind the girls so that if he turned round, came around to the right, he had to go that much further until he got used to us being on that side and he'd

24:30 come round from the left so then we used to shift back round to the other side, so that was one way we used to take advantage of 'em.

Well I was wondering about your sporting activities at school?

Never indulged much in sport at Mordialloc because I wasn't good enough to get into the the cricket or the football team. I wasn't able

- 25:00 to run fast enough to be in the athletics but after I went to Melbourne High School I got involved in rowing because by that time I'd joined the Naval Reserve Cadets. Got into rowing and also lacrosse because the captain of the lacrosse team was a pal of mine who I knew from Glen
- 25:30 Huntley but he went to Coburg High before he transferred to Melbourne High so he picked me in the lacrosse team and apart from playing in the school competitions we used to also play in the Saturday afternoon lacrosse competition open, I think there were about five or six divisions there
- 26:00 and of course the rowing, we used to take part in various regattas including Henley on the Yarra and the Maribyrnong. After I left Melbourne High School, because I'd been in the rowing crew at Melbourne High School had a year's free membership of the Melbourne Rowing Club so I
- 26:30 was in the Lightweight Championship Fours for the Melbourne Rowing Club in, I think that probably would have been 1935. Later on I can dig the trophy out that I got for that and let you have a look at it.

Fine, great. I was just wanting to ask you a little bit about your memories of the Great Depression?

Well,

- 27:00 can't remember such a great deal about it because to me it just seemed like a natural thing. We grew up with the Depression, we knew things were a bit tough and that. Money was hard to come by. By the time the Depression came about my parents were operating a
- 27:30 knitwear factory and making all sorts of knitted garments for the Flinders Lane traders with varying degrees of success. I rather fancy that a lot of their work they never got paid for eventually, in the toughest part of the Depression, because a lot of the
- 28:00 firms just went bung, there was nothing you could do about it. In those days there was very little welfare government assistance. Even the dole was unheard of. That became, came later in the Depression years. I think they used to get something like two pounds a week if they turned up and managed to
- 28:30 attend for work, they didn't actually have to perform very much. The main thing when they arrived at a job was they happened to get hold of a shovel to lean on. There was lots of things like that I think went on because something had to be done to at least give people some opportunity
- 29:00 to have some sort of an income.

Well did you know anyone personally who was out of work who had to get the dole eventually?

Not that I can put a name to although I'm sure that quite a few of the ones that I

- 29:30 can think of probably were on the dole but well, come to that, when the knitting factory ran out of work well my father was out of work too but he never went on the dole. He mortgaged the house
- 30:00 and lived on the mortgage that he'd taken out until later on I think until part way through the war when he went back to his original trade as an engineer and was employed by Rualts who used to be in
- 30:30 Burnley. He got a job there although he was over the age for employment probably but he got a job there in the maintenance division and so then he had a regular income from there until finally when they decided that he was well over 65 they'd have to
- 31:00 dispense with him and he went, qualified for the pension for a while.

Well he must have had a very long period without regular employment?

Oh yes, yeah yeah.

Well how did that knowledge affect you?

Well I suppose it made me rather

- 31:30 reluctant to try and change jobs. Once I got a steady job I sort of stayed with it. After I finished Melbourne High School or maybe for a month or two I got an appointment as a junior teacher, Education Department
- 32:00 although I had applied, I'd entered for a Commonwealth Public Service examination but I was a fair way down the list. I wasn't appointed in a great deal of hurry so I applied for a teaching job and that came through and then I was advised
- 32:30 by the Commonwealth Public Service that I'd been selected and got an appointment at Easter time in April to the Commonwealth Public Service and I was appointed to the Defence Department and finished

up as a clerk in the Navy Office. Well having

33:00 already enlisted in the Naval Reserve I thought, well this was an ideal job. I was in both ends of the navy. I was at Navy Office and I was also a serving member of the force. That went well for oh about four or five months until the Secretary of the Naval Board,

33:30 a George Lionel McAndy who was fairly well known in the naval circles in those days, he sent for me one day and told me that he'd learnt that I was a member of the Naval Reserves and he pointed out that I would have to resign from the Naval Reserves because as

34:00 a result of the Depression, when the Depression hit, all three defence departments brought in regulations that the civil employees the Defence Department would not be eligible to serve in the militia or the Air Force Reserve or the Naval Reserve. Well by 1936 when I joined the service the air force and the army

34:30 had lifted that embargo but the navy hadn't so when Mr McAndy told me I'd have to resign from the Naval Reserve I went back to my office and wrote out a request to be transferred to cadet biochemist with the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories which had been, I hadn't known much about it before I'd entered the Public Service but then having

35:00 studied chemistry at school I thought that would be an ideal job until I got the navy job so I wrote out an application and the next or the following week's 'Commonwealth Gazette' that came out was notifying and advising that applications could be received for transfer to cadet biochemist so I put

35:30 my application in about a fortnight before the notice came out in the 'Gazette', didn't know about it. Anyhow that was successful and I joined Commonwealth Serum Laboratories on the 10th of November 1936. I can remember that date because it was the day before Armistice Day so

Well it was obviously then very important for you to remain in the naval reserve?

Oh I was

36:00 dead keen on the naval reserve at that time, yes.

And can you tell us at what point you joined as a naval cadet, is this right?

A naval reserve cadet, yes.

Naval, right.

Yeah.

And when, how old were you when you joined that?

16 and a half. You see, the adult forces you had to be 18 to go into the adult force but from 16 to 18 you could be

36:30 a cadet. The same in the army and the air force, they had their cadet services too and back in that early part of the history the cadet services were part of the actual reserve forces. They were part of the militia, part of the air force and part of the naval reserve.

37:00 It wasn't until after the war that they were split off and became separate entities there. They still serve as a sort of a entry, well part, you don't have to be a cadet to go into the naval reserve or the militia to start with but a lot of us did.

Well what prompted you to join then as a 16 and a half year old?

Mainly because

37:30 one of my friends from the scouts who, I met him because I represented our troop at a wrestling competition and he had joined the naval cadets so, oh well another pal and I, we decided we'd go along and join it too and be with him so we went down there on the 16th of February 1933,

38:00 we joined the cadets.

And were these school friends or were they friends that you'd...?

No they were friends from the scouts. One of them had been in the same scout troop, as I transferred over to another troop the same time, but the other one I met him as a wrestling opponent

38:30 **Well you'll have to start to tell us what exactly you did in the cadets?**

Well to start with in the cadets at that time you had to join as a communications branch cadet, either signals or wireless. It wasn't

39:00 until about 1937 or so that they extended it and they accepted seamen cadets. I don't think they were any other branches that had cadets I'm pretty certain that the engineering branch, the stokers, there

were no cadet stokers or

- 39:30 sick berth or any of the other specialist branches so I joined as a signal cadet partly because I'd started learning Morse code and semaphore signals in the scouts and found that interesting. Maybe I had a bit of a what, ability in it, I
- 40:00 don't know but anyhow I went in as a signal cadet then stayed in the signal branch when I went into the senior reserves.

Tape 2

- 00:31 **Len, you talked about being in the scouts. When did you join the scouts?**

I would think it would have probably been about 1924. The cubs to start with, the age range for the cubs was from eight till 12 so I joined what was then the 1st Glen Huntly Scout

- 01:00 Troop, probably because their meeting was in what used to be called the rifle club hall which was along, almost alongside the Glen Huntly Railway Station and by that time my parents had their knitting factory in Glen Huntly Road so that the scout hall was virtually only around the corner from their shop in Glen Huntly Road

- 01:30 so that was the closest scout troop anyway. Later that became the 5th Caulfield Scout Troop but from there our local Congregational church, one of the senior members of the church there started up a church scout troop which

- 02:00 first off was the 3rd Glen Huntly Scout Troop. 1st and 2nd Glen Huntly were really branches of the 1st Glen Huntly troop and the 3rd was the Congregational church one. That went for a few years and the members dwindled off a bit so I transferred from that to the,

- 02:30 was then the 9th Caulfield troop and the lad that I mentioned earlier, Wal Essard that lived next door to us in Grange Road, he was in the 9th Caulfield. That was at the Methodist church in Grange Road so

- 03:00 worked my way up, I became a patrol leader in the scouts there, then later on just before I joined the naval reserves another lad and I transferred from the 9th Caulfield to the 18th Caulfield troop which met more or less on the other side of Caulfield from where we lived and it was from there

- 03:30 that I met this friend, Graham Don, who was a member of the Naval Reserve Cadets that we went and joined the naval reserves from there.

Well what did you enjoy most about your scouting activities?

Oh some of the camping excursions we, one year we went to Gilmore Camp at Gembrook

- 04:00 not sure whether it was Easter time or whatever, was a big Jamboree on. All I remember of that was that it rained the whole time we were in camp and we just about got flooded out of the tents. Had to dig ditches around the outside of the tents to try and stop the water from getting in and drowning everyone but we

- 04:30 found out why it rained. We discovered that if you sang 'Annie Laurie' on a Friday then it would rain and we made that mistake, we sang 'Annie Laurie' on the Friday.

Well how did your experience in the scouts compare with your experience in the Naval Reserve Cadets?

Well to some extent they were a bit similar

- 05:00 partly because a lot of the time in the scouts was spent in signalling exercises and tying knots and lashing poles together and making bridges so that you could cross streams. We never had to cross any streams. No doubt the experience would have come in handy for some of the people. Well then

- 05:30 when we, when I got into the naval reserves and of course I was in the signals branch and a lot of the time there was spent in Morse signalling with flags and lights, not so much buzzer, that was the telegraphists side of it and semaphore signalling all of which have gone pretty much out of fashion these days in the

- 06:00 services but it more or less just seemed to flow on fairly naturally from what I'd been doing in the Saturday afternoons in the scouts.

Well were you paid?

After you got into the senior reserve we were paid at the rate of four shillings a day and from memory

- 06:30 I think six hours' drill, two hours at a night or three hours on a Saturday afternoon, but six hours'

attendance would count as one day so if you did four days for the half year well then you'd finish up with 16 shillings for the half year.

07:00 Also there was an annual Musketry Parade where we went down to the Port Melbourne there was a rifle range at Port Melbourne in those days. Course the reserve force that I joined was based at Port Melbourne. There was another depot at Williamstown, great rivalry between Port Melbourne and Williamstown.

07:30 I came down one Saturday afternoon to do a drill parade there at Port Melbourne and when I arrived there I was informed that the communication branch had to go down to the rifle range for the annual musketry test so I was a cadet then so I went down and fired off, I don't know how many

08:00 rounds we fired at the targets down there.

Was it live ammunition?

Live ammunition, oh yeah, you couldn't score unless you hit the target so after the shoot was finished I was informed that I had topped the communication branch. There was a prize of five shillings. I was a bit worried about whether I should accept that because in my opinion that made me a

08:30 professional so, but I accepted the five shillings anyway. I was assured that that wouldn't count as infringing my amateur status because I used to play the, in lacrosse or amateurs and that was another thing but that was one of the highlights of my career in the reserves I suppose.

And as a cadet

09:00 **what was the time commitment that you made?**

The time?

The time commitment to the cadets how many hours a week did you have to commit to that?

Well that depended because the reserve depot was open for training from Monday to Thursday nights. You were at liberty to attend as often as you liked, you couldn't go more than four nights a week,

09:30 and also on Saturday afternoons. Well depending on how enthusiastic you became you could do one night a week. One night a fortnight was sufficient to keep you classed as efficient but then most of us would attend at least one night a week or if there was anything special on

10:00 we'd come down extra nights. For instance we paraded a ceremonial guard, there were competitions between the various services and the army units. Once a year they had a sort of a not so much a sports combined thing but

10:30 they had a, it included a guard performance where you had to march and go through rifle drill and all sorts of things like that. We from Port Melbourne we always entered a guard in the competitions and we also had naval field gun competition where Port Melbourne and Williamstown depots used to compete against

11:00 each other. The naval field guns there was a, I don't know whether they'd call it a crew, guns crew of I think from memory it would amount to 18 or 19 sailors. A petty officer in charge was captain of the gun. There was an ammunition limber, had two ammunition

11:30 boxes on a, well a man-hauled dray sort of thing and then that was towing a 12 pound field gun behind it and the competition roughly consisted of you'd start off from the starting line have to run down with the

12:00 18 man crew pulling the combination of limber and gun. There were two men handling a pole which pulled the limber and there were two drag ropes with eight men on each side, four on each side of the rope, they had hand grips that they could pull the thing.

12:30 Had to run down so far, either take the gun and limber over a little wall maybe three or four feet high. You'd have to take the wheels off the gun and limber to lift them over the wall, then you'd put the wheels back on, run down a bit further, unhitch everything,

13:00 turn the gun round, load it up and fire however many rounds they told you to fire then you had to retreat so either back, either over the wall or through a gap in the wall, again have to dismantle the gun and limber then to make it a bit more interesting part the way along the thing you'd

13:30 have to change the wheels between the gun and the limber, take the wheels off one, put 'em on the other. Well at Port Melbourne we never actually maintained a permanent guns crew. Williamstown used to keep a permanent guns crew, or as far permanent as they could, and keep the same one from year to year so they

14:00 became pretty good. Consequently they used to usually beat Port Melbourne until one year one of our bright sparks had a brainwave. When you were changing the wheels on the gun and the limber the correct drill as laid down was that you'd take the wheel off the limber, somebody'd hold the limber up

while the wheel was off,

14:30 two men would take the wheel down to the gun, take the wheel off the gun, put the limber wheel on the gun, bring it back, change wheels both sides. Somebody thought, "Well now, we can speed this up. Instead of doing that we'll take the wheels off both gun and limber at the same time and we won't take 'em down, we'll spin 'em and bowl 'em down."

15:00 So they worked it out that the gun wheel would come down one way and the limber wheel would go outside it so that they wouldn't crash into each other so they changed both wheels together. Consequently we got about a minute or two ahead of Williamstown so we beat 'em that year so...

Oh that's very inventive.

That's was we were quite proud of that actually.

15:30 **The one thing that I wondered about was, you know when you said you could go up to four nights a week did you have different activities on each night?**

Yes, because at least one night we would spend in the signal school. Another night we would do our guard training. Another night we would do the field gun work. Saturday afternoon and

16:00 also Sunday morning, which didn't count as an official parade, that was usually devoted to boat work. We'd either row the big heavy cutters and whalers or usually on the Sundays we would rig masts and sails and sail around Port Phillip Bay or Hobson's Bay really. We'd sail over as far as Williamstown, sometimes we'd go as far as Altona.

16:30 **Well that must have been fun?**

Oh yeah it was, yeah. Sometimes the commanding officer, well the naval officer in Charge, Victoria, Commander Loudoun Shand he was a keen sailor. He would come out with us and those days we used to usually go as far as Altona but we usually always had a full crew for the boats there.

17:00 **Well your night sessions how many hours would you be spending there?**

Well most times I suppose I wouldn't do more than two nights a week until in 1936 and 1937 when I started to go for my commission then I'd

17:30 spend up to the four nights a week.

And was that three hours a night or what?

Two hours a night.

Two hours a night okay?

Yeah, eight o'clock till 10 o'clock at night and of course back in that time we never got free rail transport to attend the drills. We used to ride our bikes from Caulfield to Port Melbourne round about

18:00 1937, I s'pose it might have been then they started issuing rail warrants so that we could travel free to attend the drills.

Well apart from your involvement there what other social activities did you engage in?

Oh well in those days I used to go to Sunday school,

18:30 church at the Congregational church in Glen Huntly and not too much in the church choir but attended the church pretty regularly and then once a year there'd be the Sunday school anniversary concerts and things. Also

19:00 around about approaching Christmas time we used to entertain some of the children mainly from Collingwood which was a very depressed area in those days and we used to have the kids from there out, oh from memory I s'pose it would have been about 30 or 40 of the Collingwood children used to come,

19:30 we'd give 'em a decent feed, a party sort of thing. I can remember one episode there where the children were down sitting at the table and one little kid, one of the girls was serving the table, she plonked a big bowl of jelly in front of him. This was, you know, late in the meal, of course

20:00 this little kid just looked up and he said, "Mrs, I couldn't." He'd had it by that time.

Well I'm wondering too as you were growing up what did you know about World War I?

Well I thought I knew a fair bit about World War I

20:30 because one of my mother's, well no it was a cousin actually, the first one that comes to mind his real name was Henry Pearce Davey. I think they may have been involved with developments down the Frankston, Balnarring, Dromana

- 21:00 area, I'm not sure whether Davey's Bay is named after them but I suspect it may have been but in the family we called him 'Bill Barlow' or 'Barlow Bill' and I imagined in my younger days that he may have joined the army under the name of Bill Barlow. I haven't checked up on it but
- 21:30 that's a surmise. Well I remember him coming home from the war and because he was a member of the family I knew we won the war and I can remember if anyone, if ever I met anyone I was told that they were Germans, I used to immediately put them on the spot and identify 'em as
- 22:00 whether they were really Germans or not by asking them my famous question, "Who won the war?" If they said, "Germany," well they were Germans but I knew we won the war. I had another two of my mother's half- brothers served in the AIF and of course her sister, her half-sister Sarah,
- 22:30 Sarah Bennett Smith maiden lady, was an AIF nurse.

Did she ever talk to you about her war experiences?

No, I think she may have told one of my cousins a bit about it. He wrote a book which, well when he never finished it and it was never published, but he changed all the names but it was basically about our Smith

- 23:00 family and I think she may have told him a bit about the war because it starts off, his book, saying that one day when he was at his parents' residence down in Brighton Road that this maiden aunt was telling him about
- 23:30 the family but no, 'Aunt Sally' we always called her, not Sarah.

So you didn't ever actually hear any stories of any of their war experiences?

Not first hand, no. I have been told by one of my friends who worked for the same company,

- 24:00 not sure whether it was a trustee company or insurance company, where one of my uncles worked. He was in the AIF too, there were two brothers, he told me that this Roy Smith got a Military Medal or something like that. I haven't got round to trying to check up on that yet because
- 24:30 as far as I've, what little I've tried, it's a bit harder to get details of the First World War than it is for the Second World War.

And also as you were growing up what did you know about the British Empire or what did you learn at school about the British Empire?

Well yeah it was the Empire in which the sun never sets. I don't know you know

- 25:00 the British Empire were those parts of the world map that were coloured red didn't really learn much more about it than that. Our British history never got up further than the Boer War really. We were taught, told a little bit about the Boer War but mostly it was back in the 12 and 13 hundreds,
- 25:30 yeah.

Well when you went you went as a biochemistry cadet what year was that again?

Pardon?

When you went to your position as a biochemistry cadet what year was that?

I started the CSL [Commonwealth Serum Laboratories] in 1936 10th of November 1936.

Well at that period had you been aware of what was happening in Europe?

- 26:00 Not much. At that stage we were brought up thinking that Hitler was one of the best things that had happened for Germany. I can remember one day at Melbourne High School an Austrian, whether he was an Austrian Government representative,
- 26:30 but he came and spoke to the senior students at Melbourne High School and told us what good things Hitler was doing for Germany and of course at that stage Germany was more popular than the communists. They, it wasn't until the Second
- 27:00 World War was becoming pretty well inevitable that Germany started to fall in our estimation.

And what did you know about Japan?

Very little except that they were able to copy almost anything. One anecdote that was around

- 27:30 was when somebody wanted some cheap cups and saucers and things from Japan so they sent a sample over to the Japanese to copy and they decided they wouldn't send a really good cup, they found one that had a handle broken off so they wrapped the handle in tissue paper and put it inside the cup
- 28:00 and ordered so many thousand cups and saucers which were duly delivered and as you know the cups all arrived with the handle inside wrapped in tissue paper. I can't vouch for the truth of that but we

accepted it as gospel because we knew it had been well publicised that the Japanese fighters

28:30 suffered from night blindness or poor night vision so that they wouldn't be able to fly their aircraft at night and all sorts of things like that which we soon found out were slightly exaggerated.

Well where did you get your news in the 1930s, how did you get your news in the 1930s?

Well mainly from the newspapers.

29:00 It wasn't until about 1933 I suppose that we even had a radio. We had a gramophone with vinyl records and things like that, probably one of before vinyl was introduced of course, the old Bakelite type records. We didn't tend to get very much news from the records.

29:30 **Well we'll just talk a little bit about your job then as a biochemist, yes, as a biochemist?**

Yeah well we were classed as biochemists but we had to train in both bacteriology and biochemistry and I found maybe I was better at it but I was more interested

30:00 in bacteriology than biochemistry so I managed to stick mainly with the bacteriological side of it although until the war began when I went to Commonwealth Serum I was put in charge of the major sterilising equipment

30:30 which consisted of a bank of autoclaves which would more or less correspond to pressure cookers. Water was heated to boiling and when the steam'd pushed all the air out of the vessel then the exhaust valve'd be closed and the steam pressure increased

31:00 which also increases the temperature. As the pressure goes up the temperature rises because you've got to boil more water to maintain the pressure so the, it has to work at a higher temperature and the higher temperature kills the bacteria more effectively. We had, I had about half a dozen of those autoclaves, about four

31:30 steamers where anything was just heated in flowing steam dry air sterilisers, a couple of those which were electrically heated and all the equipment used throughout the laboratories which had to be sterilised used to come through me. I had also had three large,

32:00 almost about as, a quarter of the size of an ordinary kitchen room, again steam heated which could take large equipment. Everything that had to be sterilised used to have come through me there and each day anything which had been used for culture work or had been

32:30 contaminated or organisms had been produced in it and it had to be, all had to be killed before the material was disposed of. Well that had to be put through and sterilised too so that was a, didn't realise at the time, was a fairly big job. I had that for close on a couple of years

33:00 I suppose and one thing that I used to sort of pat myself on the back for when they decided to shift me out of it, it took three blokes to do my job. They appointed two mature men as laboratory assistants with a cadet biochemist more or less in charge because the cadets were part of the professional

33:30 staff so before I was taken off the job I had to train the three of 'em too but up until that time I'd been doin' it on me own.

Well where did you go then when you...?

From there I went into what was the Serum Concentration Department where blood that had been collected from the laboratory animals, mainly horses and

34:00 cattle which were used to produce the mainly, well diphtheria, antitoxin, tetanus, oh I suppose various other ones, they were the main ones that come to mind, the blood would be collected, the serum which is the liquid part of the blood separated from the solids and then

34:30 concentrated by treatment with various salts that precipitate out the albumen and globulins out of the serum. The active constituent which contains the antibodies is part of the albumen portion of the blood so I was still a cadet biochemist and assisting the senior biochemist

35:00 who was in charge of that department which later on was expanded into Serum Fractionation Departments, I forget what else but by that time the war had intervened and I'd severed my connection with Serum Laboratories for the duration so...

Well did you enjoy the work there?

35:30 Largely until I, well I got a bit tired of it when the war came along and the Serum Laboratory was going to be declared an essential service so that nobody would be released to go to the war but these things take time.

But I was wondering also when you

36:00 **were employed as a biochemist were you required to do any studies at university?**

No, at that stage the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories ran their own training program. We had to qualify for advancement we had to pass the inter -departmental examinations in both bacteriology and biochemistry

- 36:30 at both the grade one and grade two levels. To advance beyond a biochemist grade one we had to pass the grade one examinations and then to guarantee further advancement we had to do the grade two. These were generally taken two or three years apart but
- 37:00 I hadn't completed those prior to the war. I still hadn't done the required preliminary technical college subjects of inorganic and organic chemistry which they required before they'd let us sit for the departmental examinations. The war came in before I finished those so when I
- 37:30 came back after the war I was still a cadet biochemist although we managed to be granted payment as a biochemist, special exemption you see, so when I finished my tech school examinations then the next year I did the grade one bacteriology biochemistry
- 38:00 examinations. The following year I did the part two's which I'm not sure whether I was the first or the only one that did them in sub-, you know consecutive years but then later on they started sending the cadets to the university and they were getting, well they finished up with BSc [Bachelor of Science]
- 38:30 degrees which the best I ever managed was the Associate Diploma of the Technical College.
- Well that sounds fine. I'm wondering where you were when you heard the announcement that the country was at war, can you remember?**
- Well that was on a Sunday evening so I was at home listening to the wireless so
- 39:00 I probably without much delay contacted the naval reserves because at that time I had my commission, already had it for 12 months. I was promoted prior to the outbreak of war and I was assured by the commanding officer of the depot that I would be called up, that if the laboratories
- 39:30 weren't going to release me he'd promised me that he would arrive at the gates of the Commonwealth Serum Laboratory with an armed guard of at least 12 men and would arrest me.

Tape 3

- 00:31 **Lindsay where were you when war broke out?**
- Now how do you mean?
- When war was declared.**
- When war was declared was on the Sunday night so I was at home. We were living in Baroda Street at Ascot Vale then.
- And who was there?**
- Oh my wife and my young son at that stage I only had the one son
- 01:00 then. We were home taking things quietly on the Sunday night.
- And what were your reactions on hearing war declared?**
- Well first thought was well you know I'll soon be at sea in the navy. At that stage wasn't aware that Commonwealth Serum Laboratory was
- 01:30 going to be declared an essential service and that things might be a bit difficult but when it was hinted from the, from CSL that they were not prepared to let me go I wrote approximately about a page or a page and a half foolscap
- 02:00 letter to the Director pointing out that the job I was doing there in my opinion could be performed by anyone brought in off the street and given about a week's training and being told what to do and how to do it, that they'd be able to do it equally as efficiently as I was doing it whereas I'd
- 02:30 spent at that stage the best part of five, five and a half years being trained for the navy so I doubt if it had much effect on the decision to let me go because I was called up and in, mobilised before anything had been declared essential services so that there was no possibility of anyone blocking
- 03:00 our call-up.
- Why were you so keen to go to sea?**
- Bit hard to say I suppose except that my grandfather and uncle were both sea captains and

03:30 you know sort of the sea appeared to be in our blood to a certain extent.

But why were you keen to go to war rather than work on the home front?

Well because I'd already joined the naval reserve and obviously if a war came the reserve were going to be involved actively so

04:00 wasn't a matter of whether you were keen or not you'd already signed up and agreed to go wherever and whenever called upon.

Well what did your wife think about the declaration of war?

I'm not really sure. She didn't seem to be actively opposed. She took it as a matter of course

04:30 I think. Partly no doubt because her father was an AIF veteran from the First World War, he was a Gallipoli veteran. He subsequently died in 1922 as a result of his war service because he'd been badly gassed and

05:00 his lungs gave out so, but she was a soldier's daughter born in England. Her mother was an English girl when they were married so just happened more or less, just came natural then.

Now earlier

05:30 **you spoke a bit about Hitler and how in the early '30s it was perceived to be a good thing for Germany, Hitler and Nazism so could you talk about how that changed during the '30s?**

Well it mainly changed after the outbreak of war and you know Germany was a

06:00 an enemy nation, Hitler was the leader so he more or less became the embodiment of anything wrong with the enemy forces you know.

And what did you know about Hitler?

Well practically nothing. Learnt more about it

06:30 partly due to war propaganda I suppose but...

But I mean the declaration of war wasn't a big surprise was it or was it?

Not completely. It would have been more a surprise had it occurred in 1938 before,

07:00 can't even remember the British Prime Minister now that was...

Chamberlain?

Chamberlain, yeah, came back waving his piece of paper where he'd achieved peace in our time. The main advantage of that was it gave us an extra 12 months to get ready for it.

07:30 **Well and did you feel ready to go to war?**

Yes, yeah not realising how bad it was going to become before it became better 'cause we were confident, we were all confident then.

In what way?

Well because

08:00 we couldn't envisage that we were in any great danger of being defeated. That came later but...

And I'm just wondering, I mean your wife's got this little baby, how was she feeling about the idea that you might be away for a long time?

Well personally never expected to be away all that long because to start with

08:30 we were assured that we'd be home by Christmas but they didn't say which Christmas so no, well that was just part and parcel of the deal I suppose, we were called up so you know.

So how did your call-up arrive?

09:00 I think I got a notification from navy office that I was to report to HMAS Cerberus, Flinders Naval Depot on the 16th of, or probably report to Port Melbourne on the 16th of September and from there was directed to go to

09:30 Flinders, ostensibly to do a fortnight's gunnery course but there were 12 of us Naval Reserve sub-lieutenants appointed to this particular course. We were all being appointed to the armed merchant cruisers [HMAS] Kanimbla, [HMS] Arawa and

10:00 Moreton Bay. Arawa was originally one of the bay liners, the National Government fleet. I'm not sure which one it was whether she was the Largs Bay or the Esperance Bay or one of those but she and

Moreton Bay were built to the same design. The Kanimbla was

- 10:30 a newer vessel. They'd been built under what was called the 'Admiralty Charter', where the British Admiralty paid a percentage of the cost of building the ships which gave them the right to commandeer the ships in an emergency or war situation. They were each
- 11:00 to be armed with seven six-inch guns, which had originally been designed as secondary armament for some of the battle ships, which would be mounted between decks which limited the elevation that they could apply to the guns to increase the range
- 11:30 and these guns were put on specially strengthened positions in each of the ships. I believe that the material to install the guns was carried in the ships wherever they went so that when they were called up they could put into any British Naval dockyard and be
- 12:00 readied to take the guns. Our guns in the three that were outfitted in Sydney they were supplied from the Spectacle Island armament depot in Sydney. They were all about Boer War vintage. The newest one that we had in Kanimbla had as its date of manufacture nineteen hundred
- 12:30 and two but they were practically all brand new guns. They had only fired their test rounds about four or six shots out of each gun more or less to prove that they were workable and then they'd been put into mothballs until they were installed in the ships. Most of those guns
- 13:00 where they had the royal cipher stamped into 'em they were marked VR for Victoria Regina. Our nineteen hundred and two gun of course was marked ER for Edward the Seventh so, but when we got down to undertake this gunnery course at Flinders they
- 13:30 had no guns there of an equal vintage. They didn't know, virtually didn't know anything about the types of gun. The gunnery instructors there assured us that if we had a misfire in the guns that we couldn't go through the procedure to get the guns back into action which involved
- 14:00 opening the, not the actual breach itself but part of the breach which virtually had a blank cartridge in it which when you tried to fire the gun the blank cartridge would be fired off and that would set off the main cordite charge in the gun and the gun would then fire
- 14:30 and we found out when we got to examine the guns, when we got to see them, that the gunnery instructors were not correct, that you still could open it up and put a fresh firing tube in and carry out the current drill for dealing with a misfire so virtually when we got to Flinders
- 15:00 we knew as much about the guns that we were going to be issued with as the gunnery instructors that were trying to teach us. We came away I think, the 12 of us that went down together down to Flinders, came away not knowing any, really any more about gunnery than when we arrived at Flinders then we, from there we were sent up to Sydney to join the three AMCs [Armed Merchant Cruisers].
- 15:30 **And when did you find out what your posting was to be?**
- Well first of all while I was at Flinders doing this course I got the official appointment that I was being appointed to HMS Kanimbla. Because it was commandeered by the British Admiralty we were commissioned as ships of the Royal Navy and were HMS rather than HMAS
- 16:00 and seeing as the, as Kanimbla was a family ship with my uncle as captain I was overjoyed that I was going to Kanimbla. When I arrived at Kanimbla, came on board and as we were being received on board the first lieutenant was allotting us our, what was to be our
- 16:30 duties and when I stepped in they just said oh well I'd be assistant signallers officer. One of the earlier arrivals in the ship was also a sub-lieutenant but he belonged to the sea-going reserve because he was a junior mate in one of the
- 17:00 coastal companies here in the merchant service. He'd already been appointed as signallers officer so they detailed me to be a sig assistant. At that stage nobody associated with the ship had any idea that I had any experience in signals. It just happened purely by chance that I was assistant signals officer.
- 17:30 Later on a few, couple of weeks later than that the Sub-lieutenant Doyle, who was the one that was supposed to be the signals officer who didn't know anything really about signals, he applied for leave to go and sit for a merchant service mate's, first mate's examination, first or second mate's examination
- 18:00 so he left the ship, so therefore I became signals officer there which suited me because I was interested in signals. They didn't know it but it suited the ship because I knew a bit about signals although we had a chief deck and a chief telegraphist to actually supervise and control the work of the signals staff
- 18:30 but at least I thought I knew what they were supposed to be doing and was able to take an active part in the running of the department.

So tell me about the uncle who had been captain of the ship?

Oh yes Fred. He'd served in the AIF in the First War where he'd lost an eye

19:00 but somehow or other this didn't stop him from going back to sea after the war finished and he joined Mackawaithes McEtherins and was their senior captain, therefore he got their best ship to be in command of so that when Kanimbla came along he was peacetime captain of Kanimbla. He turned over with

19:30 the ship originally to go to sea, I think probably as navigator, I'm not sure, but it happened that in the meantime it may have been partly due to his service in the army but he'd developed a stomach ulcer so when the navy discovered this that he more or less had to stay within

20:00 50 miles of a cow, they wouldn't let him go to sea in Kanimbla so we were only shipmates together for about a fortnight. He was still in the ship presumably going to be the senior lieutenant or lieutenant commander and go with us but then he never did but practically all the engineering

20:30 officers who were serving in Kanimbla they turned over and continued with Kanimbla in the navy for two or three, at least two or three years.

So how did you feel about your new posting as signals officer?

Pardon, didn't quite?

How did you feel about your new posting as signals officer?

Oh I was quite pleased

21:00 with that. I also had gunnery duties as well but no, well as signals officer I got to see all the signals that came into the ship so that I was able to know a bit of what was going on. As signals officer it was part of my duty every morning to take the signal log for the previous

21:30 day in to the captain although he had been given copies of all the signals as they came in but I still had to go up and take him the log every morning so that apart from the first lieutenant the paymaster and the doctor and the engineer commander I was probably the next officer that had most contact with him. Unfortunately he didn't have

22:00 a soft spot for reserve officers so I finished up not being his white haired boy.

So were you 'Wavy Navy' were you?

Yes yes. I'm glad you know about the Wavy Navy, some people don't.

Well could you tell me what's was there a stigma attached to being Wavy Navy?

As far as

22:30 the permanent navy were concerned there was some. It was not as pronounced in the Royal Navy as I found out after we got up to Hong Kong and been there for several months and I spent a fortnight in an RN [Royal Navy] destroyer. We were, I don't know whether it was peculiar to that ship or the, or to destroyers, we were greeted as sub- lieutenants

23:00 there. That ship made no distinction but in the Royal Australian Navy my experience was that, yes that we were, well we were known as the 'with but afters' because the naval reserve officers ranked with but after the permanent service so apart from being Wavy Navy or Saturday afternoon

23:30 sailors we were the 'with but afters'. Next question.

Well it seems extraordinary because in war time you were performing exactly the same jobs under the same conditions weren't you?

Yes but I don't think that helped to engender affection of feelings between the,

24:00 some of the permanent officers. I think it tended to add to their resentment because it soon became fairly apparent that the reserve officers were called on to do the same jobs as the permanent but to the permanent or some of the permanent officers' dismay it

24:30 was forced onto them that we were able to do, if not as good, nearly as good a job as they were doing and this can breed some sort of resentment you know. If somebody comes in and takes over under you and does a job equally as good as you

25:00 you probably tend to not be too happy about 'em, see what I mean?

Yes, indeed, however it seems to go against the grain of what we think of as the Australian character of being all egalitarian and it's all about the 'fair go' and not looking at rank so much?

Yes but alongside

25:30 that, particularly with the Australian navy in those days, the permanent officers went into the Naval College at the age of 13. They were in an artificial environment the whole time, entire career from there

on and they didn't realise it of course but they

26:00 had an inbuilt narrow view of the world and humanity in my opinion.

Well they would have developed their own little cliquey world wouldn't they?

Oh yes.

All being together all the time and...

Yeah yeah.

Like their own culture almost.

It doesn't exist so much now amongst

26:30 the ex-service people. I belong to the Naval Officers' Club here in Melbourne and so far there I've not come up against any class distinction between the permanent and reserve officers. I haven't really checked

27:00 to see who are the more numerous, whether the so called permanent officers or the reserved in the club. I wouldn't be surprised if the reserves outnumber the others.

So you mentioned that you would have to monitor all the signals coming in and out of the ship. Who would be sending you signals

27:30 **and what would they be about?**

Who would what?

Who would be sending you signals? Who were sending signals to the Kanimbla?

Oh the Headquarters ashore, all the signals'd come through the Naval Headquarters of whatever port we were working out of. In actual fact there was

28:00 a what, an hierarchy you might as well call it of signals. Those signals which were really meant for the the real top notch fighting ships the battleships and cruisers they would have a different distinguishing

28:30 what, address in the signal. When we were working out of Hong Kong we were, all signals which were affecting us were in the N-series. Each signal had its own series number and the N-series they started off N

29:00 and then four-five-three sort of thing so the next one would be N-four-five-four. It was laid down that we were not repeat-, not allowed to decipher or decode any signals other than the N-series but of course that was ignored because everybody was inquisitive to know what was going

29:30 on, commanding officers included, so that we had to have instructions from our captains that irrespective of what series the signals were we had to decode 'em and give him a copy of 'em so we had no option but to do that but so that led to one of my outstanding experiences.

30:00 When we came in after our first patrol from Hong Kong the port orders laid down that before you close down your wireless watch you had to hoist the flag signal displaying the series number of the last message you'd received so we came into Hong Kong and up went our

30:30 flag signal. Well the chief deck looked after all that. I didn't interfere, he ran the signal deck so, and as it happened almost without fail when Kanimbla came into port and the port watch-keeping crew more or less took over from the cruising watchers,

31:00 it seemed that every time we came into port I got the job of being officer of the watch in harbour so I'm on the quarter deck there after we secure to the buoy and I observed a speed boat come out from the Headquarters, steps make its way over to Kanimbla and an officer

31:30 stepped out of the speed boat onto our gangway and I could recognise that he was the flag lieutenant who was in charge of all the signals from shore because flag lieutenants wear aiguillettes, you know the chain gear on the shoulder. The aides-de-camp and the Royal Family wear

32:00 the aiguillettes on the right shoulder but flag lieutenants wear it on the left shoulder so I knew he was a flag lieutenant because he had his finery on. He came up the gangway and very abrupt and wanted to see the signals officer so I admit him, "Oh well, yes sir, I happen to be the signals officer," so he launched in there. "Why don't you read your port orders?" So I didn't know, I wanted to know what

32:30 was wrong, so he pointed out that according to the port orders, in addition to flying this identifying number of the last signal we'd received we were supposed to hoist another set of numbers on a separate signal halyard a subordinate signal to the series number of the last one

33:00 giving the series numbers of the messages that we hadn't received so, "Oh well, that's all right, we've got a full signal log sir," hadn't missed a signal. It appeared that that had only happened once before in

Hong Kong, the flag ship did it once. We were working out there for six months going out on patrol at least every second week and the whole time we

33:30 were out up there we only missed two signals which would be transmitted once from Hong Kong be received at Singapore, Singapore would repeat it back. The next three hours Singapore would start the, transmitting the signals and the signal which had been sent three hours previously would go through the same thing,

34:00 Singapore would transmit it, Hong Kong would repeat it back. They they'd run through whatever signals they had but then the next three hours they'd drop off the ones that had already been repeated twice but we went through the period up there with only missing two signals. Not on the same patrol, on separate occasions so...

Well that's a fantastic record isn't it?

That was pretty good. I wasn't responsible for all that,

34:30 the wireless staff they received those signals.

And in what form did they come, the signals?

Well they were transmitted in Morse code by, you know, dots and dashes, by buzzer over the wireless. The standard rate of transmission for wireless signals was 22 words per minute, a word

35:00 consisting of five letters. The visual signals, which is sent by lamp because of the retention of vision, you can't go that fast. The maximum speed that you can receive or send, well receive a signal by watching a light drops down to 10 words a minute. Somebody had a brainwave that visual signallers

35:30 would need to train in buzzer but wouldn't have to be able to read 22 words a minute like a telegraphist would but they were allowed to or required to come up to 15 words a minute. Similarly the telegraphist was supposed to qualify in reading signals by light but I'm not sure, but they didn't have to read at 10 words a minute. The trouble was that

36:00 those rules were not drawn up by practical signalmen or telegraphists because I, prior to getting my commission, had qualified for advancement to a deck of signals and I could pump out signals by light at 10 words a minute but when I tried to send any faster than 10 words a minute I was hopeless. I'd make mistakes

36:30 and I couldn't even get up to 12 words a minute and I reckoned I wasn't a bad signalman anyway but I'm conceited.

Rightly so I'm sure. So what was the content of the messages?

Oh they could be anything. Directing you to your ship to carry out specific tasks or,

37:00 well it didn't include not as far as I was concerned, didn't include notification of the birth of my second son because that was handed to us when we arrived back in port one time. The chief deck came up with the signals that had just been delivered to the ship to tell me that my second son had been born

37:30 but oh you know at times you could have, personal messages could have come but mostly operational messages of course but one particular one which I'd better try and get in before the opportunity escapes us. In the Indian Ocean when we'd come round we were working between

38:00 Bombay, Durban and Aden, we'd been to Aden, were on our way back to Durban and one of the German pocket battleships was operating in the Indian Ocean. They didn't have any appropriate vessels to go out and put her out of action but she was shadowed by aircraft so we knew where she was and which way she was

38:30 heading but the embarrassing part about it you know, we were about 400 or 500 miles apart but the way we were heading it looked as though we were on a collision course, we were due to meet up with her somewhere in the middle of the Indian Ocean so the authorities ashore decided to try and do something so they originated

39:00 what was apparently a repetition of an enemy report which had been sent by a merchant ship. It was, had the earmarks of this merchant ship having been intercepted by a real warship. By that I mean you know a cruiser or something more effective than our armed

39:30 merchant cruisers and that was broadcast from the shore stations, addressed to all shipping giving, you know, a report that this merchant vessel claimed to have been stopped by this warship, giving the time and position which was somewhere in advance of the German pocket battleship because they were

40:00 pretty confident that the Germans would have been able to understand those reports and if the, whether it was the Hipper or whichever one it was they thought, "Well if she picks this up we'll soon know," which we did because, oh the next thing though, the next time this enemy report was

40:30 broadcast, the report was cancelled so that immediately indicated that although the ship had been

stopped by a warship it must have been an allied warship because a German wouldn't have let her go, so that as far as the Hipper was concerned, when he got these two signals he would assume that there was a British warship in the vicinity

41:00 and he didn't want to meet it, so if he understood the message he would head off somewhere else. Well the next time we got a report from the shadowing aircraft, Hipper had altered and gone away so that saved our bacon on that occasion. Another time...

Tape 4

00:32 **So tell me what kind of communication facilities you had on board?**

Well mainly the big radio receivers and transmitters while we were out at sea but then in harbour everything was done by visual signals. By light or flags,

01:00 semaphore, you know, if we needed to send a message to the headquarters ashore we would call up the shore signal station at the Headquarters who always had someone up on their flag deck keeping a lookout to see if they were being called up by light from any of the ships in the harbour and then you just

01:30 transmit it in Morse code by light or if you are sufficiently close for them to be able to see the semaphore signals by telescope or binoculars, well you'd use the semaphore, just depended, oh yeah.

What's the semaphore, could you describe the semaphore system to me?

Well you

02:00 seem to know a bit about it. Semaphore signalling is based on a system of circles. The seven positions starting from low down on the right hand side and the first circle you've got from A B C. D is where the flag is held directly

02:30 above your head. E F and G down the left hand side. The second signal you keep your right hand in the position for A. You go on from H I and then it gets a bit involved because you miss out J go K L M and N. That takes you to the second circle. Then the third circle you got on with the right hand in the position for

03:00 B which is straight out from the shoulder, you get O P Q R and S then you move round another one, the letters then go T U V and then you get the erase signal and so it goes on until you fill up and you finish up and your last signal you've got

03:30 your left hand down at the position for G and your right hand comes across to the position for F and Z fits in there. Just happens to work out that you get 26 letters and the erase and numerical sign all fit in, so yeah. Once you get used to it it's easy. One

04:00 slight difficulty with semaphore is that you've got to be able to read it if you, as if you're facing the signaller who is sending the signal. That's easy. If you're looking at him from his rear you've got to be able to more or less mentally transpose them so that everything which is, should have been on the right is on the left hand side

04:30 but then in addition to having the hand flags for semaphore you also have contraptions with semaphore arms which are usually long arms on a pivot, you've got two of them after the style of the old railway signals and they're controlled

05:00 by hand levers and like a bicycle chain so that when you put the hand levers in the position for the flags would normally occupy the semaphore arms up above, show that same position so they're also easy to read. At one time the semaphore signals

05:30 used to be the better long distance communication before they had efficient lamps, you could send, they had semaphore stations from the southern England naval ports, they'd have stations up between the port and London so the signal

06:00 could start off from Port Smith, say from Port Smith dock yard, and be received in London more or less in a matter of minutes. Each Port Smith would send it to the first station, repeat it up the line and you know they, however many repeating stations there were between Port Smith and London, they'd get there quickly.

So

06:30 **during the period of your service was semaphore and flag signalling still important?**

Yes, in harbour or if you were in company with another ship, yes because that was your only way of communicating from ship to ship apart from getting close enough to be able to shout with a megaphone because loud

07:00 hailers were at the best in their infancy so you know those, that type of signalling was important. It's not so important now because they use radio telephony but in our days, well you know if the next ship that's within sight if they can hear us so can an enemy ship that

07:30 might be over the horizon, so.

Well why couldn't you transmit a message in Morse code to another ship?

How do you mean why couldn't they transmit it in Morse code?

Well you said...

You mean Morse code by wireless?

Yes.

Because any ship with a radio receiver would be able to hear it and although you

08:00 had various code books that you code up your messages in, well they're not safe because if you send enough messages anybody if they collect enough messages they'll be able to decode them without the book. They can construct the code that you're working from. The answer to that is that you frequently changed the code

08:30 books that you're using but you can be pretty certain that before long the enemy is going to know all your code books just as well as you do. The next step along it is that you code in inverted commas because taking the message and just looking it up in the code book

09:00 that's not classed as coding but you operate on whatever code group you get from the book, you go to another code or cipher book and you operate on the code groups that you have which you know the translation of so you disguise it and I

09:30 always thought that if you did that properly that that's virtually unbreakable but a friend of mine who is now departed was one of the chief code-breakers who got through the secrets mainly of the Japanese codes because he had spent

10:00 time in Japan, was a qualified Japanese interpreter and he was fairly famous in the navy. He was Captain TE Nave who maybe some of you people may have heard of. He finished up in the ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation] crowd of course after the war but he was a very interesting bloke. He was commandeered from the Australian navy, transferred

10:30 into the Royal Navy because he'd served in Hong Kong where, while he was serving in Hong Kong was when he became a Japanese interpreter. He was so good that the Royal Navy wanted to grab him. The Australian navy said, "No you can't have him," but unfortunately for the Australian navy King George the V was our Supreme Commander. He was also

11:00 the boss of the Royal Navy so he directed that Commander Nave, as he was then, be transferred into the Royal Navy which he was but as the war progressed out here he came back and was serving from Australia and cracked all the Japanese codes

11:30 so virtually as quick as the signals got through to the Japanese we understood 'em too. There are a couple of books. One in particular...

I just wanted to ask, you said earlier...

Pardon?

You mentioned earlier that you had to maintain wireless silence.

Yeah.

What was that, what did that mean?

Well that meant that you, the ships at

12:00 sea did not transmit any wireless messages. They just listened to what the shore stations, you see in the China station we relied on Hong Kong and Singapore as the two transmitting stations. They sent all the signals which we would get which we required. It

12:30 was only on rare circumstances, extremely rare circumstances, that we would break wireless silence. If you like I can tell you, give you an instance of that. Again we were coming from Durban, from Aden to either Bombay or Durban and round about midnight we came across a merchant ship.

13:00 Everything was steaming without lights so you virtually had to be fairly close to another vessel before you realised that it was there. So we came across this vessel and the captain decided we would investigate it so we got reasonably close and he ordered us to shine a searchlight

13:30 on the vessel. Well the searchlights that we had were fairly old, they were a bit unreliable. The light

source was a carbon arc and when we closed up to action station we would light up the light but with the shutters closed so that no light

- 14:00 got out of the search light but we would strike the arc behind the closed shutters so that when he ordered us to put a light on the vessel well then we opened the shutters but because these lights were a bit unreliable the, they weren't always in focus so that instead of having a nice
- 14:30 beam of light shining out where we wanted it to there was a huge glare and in the glare the ship that we'd come across was able to discern our funnel. Prior to leaving Aden our commander had gone to the captain and said
- 15:00 he'd found some red funnel paint in the paint locker because in peace time Kanimbla painted her funnel red with a black top so he went to the captain and said it had always been one of his ambitions to serve in a ship with a red funnel. He's originally been a permanent Royal Naval officer so
- 15:30 requested permission from the captain to paint our funnel back to peace-time colours. Well this was all right because obviously once we're out at sea we didn't look like a war ship. We were a typical coastal liner type of ship 10,000 ton liner so, "Yes," the captain said, "All right, you know
- 16:00 that's not a bad idea," and we been using all sorts of disguises prior to that so hands turn to and with great glee painted the funnel red and kept the black top. Well of course when the, this merchant service, I think it was a Dutch ship, when he saw this he immediately called up and sent
- 16:30 his wireless to send an enemy report. They had different significations of the enemy reports as to what type of vessel they were reporting. If it was a real warship they send W W W W. If they suspect that it was a raider
- 17:00 it'd be R R R R, that'd be the first letters that they would transmit so that even if they got sunk before they'd sent more than two letters out the authorities ashore would know or guess what sort of vessel was there so this bloke launched off and sent R R R R and then
- 17:30 he gave a description of the vessel. He mentioned that we, the vessel that had stopped him, had a red funnel. Well we'd left Aden before we painted our funnel red but just at that time there was a radar operating somewhere around the vicinity and the most common description that they gave of this
- 18:00 particular radar was that it had a tall funnel, which didn't apply to our funnel but never mind, had a tall funnel which appeared to have been recently painted with red lead. So that was all right but our captain immediately got on his high horse and ordered the merchant ship to cease transmission, that we were a British war ship, went through all this hoops,
- 18:30 let the offender go on his way, so of course then the Dutchman sent a cancellation so obviously then everything was all right. The only trouble was that the position he gave was about 200 miles behind where we'd already come from. His navigation couldn't have been all that bright
- 19:00 so that was all right so when that had happened then our captain decided that perhaps he'd better break radio silence and let the shore admirals know that since he'd left port we'd painted our funnel back to her peace time colours, red with a black top. We were due to arrive in Durban around about noon
- 19:30 on the Sunday I think it was and of course as usual there was a bit of a sweepstake organised amongst the officers as to what time they reckoned we would berth so everyone was basing their signals on Sunday noon so I, no, I wouldn't have it. We can't arrive
- 20:00 in Durban before noon on Tuesday because the way it was organised I obviously would be officer of the watch on arrival in Durban but the duty watch would have to be blue watch and the only time in the foreseeable future that I and
- 20:30 blue watch would be on duty together was noon on Tuesday so everyone, oh what a hell of a joke they laughed. So anyway the captain sent the signal that we'd painted our funnel red. Despite this we were ordered to return 200 and search for this red funnelled radar. The signals probably crossed,
- 21:00 you know the rest of the story. That delayed us two days, we arrived in Durban at about half past 12 on Tuesday so Sub-lieutenant Money and blue watch were duty watch. Everybody thinks I made this story up. True true true I wouldn't fool you.

So did you win the sweepstakes?

I didn't, I was only a sub-lieutenant on 11 bob a day with a large

- 21:30 wife and small family, I couldn't afford to go in the sweepstakes.

Well look Lindsay I want you to tell me a bit about Hong Kong. What was Hong Kong like in December or January 1940?

We arrived in Hong Kong on Chinese New Year so you can imagine the

22:00 fireworks ashore, had a marvellous reception sort of thing. Hong Kong was a real garrison city you know, what I suppose 80 per cent of the European population would have been service people. Had

22:30 the China Squadron operating there until we arrived. As our AMCs arrived the real ships cruisers and destroyers and all were gradually withdrawn and sent back to where the war was actively being pursued and we took over the duties from there.

23:00 Personally I saw most of Hong Kong from inside the 'Parisian Grill' Restaurant where we used to go to have our meals when we went ashore. Got magnificent European-style cooking there. Those days we weren't interested in Chinese cooking. Never had a Chinese meal up there

23:30 until rece-, well never had a Chinese meal until recently back here in Australia. Either there or the...

What did the town look like?

...either there or the Hong Kong Cricket Club.

What did it look like, I mean was it high rise, was it colonial type architecture?

Well the main high rise buildings were mainly like the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank

24:00 headquarters there, what 20 or 30 storeys maybe, I don't know just how high they were. Kowloon in those days, I never got as far as Kowloon. Hong Kong Island was as far as I got and up to the peak and the peak tramway. That was more or less the

24:30 highlight of our days ashore.

Well it was your first time in a foreign port wasn't it?

Yes. On the way up to Hong Kong we went round visiting a number of the Pacific Islands and New Guinea Harbours

25:00 that had been employed by the Germans in the First World War as bases for their raiders and we had to go and inspect these places to see that, if they were being used for the same sort of activities this time. They weren't but never mind we had to go and look. Now it's a moot point when

25:30 you say Hong Kong was our first foreign port. We didn't regard it as being foreign. It was part of the British Empire in those days. See it's only recently that Hong Kong's gone back to being part of China. They had a 99 year lease on it didn't they?

But was it a Chinese city at that time when you were there, I mean I know it was owned by Britain?

Well it was leased.

But what, who were the population?

26:00 Oh yeah, the far and away Chinese, the dockyard employees the Chinese dockyard employees up there all spoke with a strong Scottish accent because they were working for British engineers who in the main were Scotsmen so

26:30 it sounded a bit strange to hear a Scots accent coming out of a Chinese mouth but of course all the Chinese that we came in contact with they understood and spoke English much better than we spoke Chinese.

And do you think that they regarded themselves as British subjects in the same way that you did?

27:00 We thought so, yes.

Did you regard them as British subjects?

Yeah, a bit inferior to us white people of course but oh no I'm a racist but I can't help it. I was brought up in a bit left over from the 19th century wasn't I?

So Lindsay what were the brothels like in Hong Kong?

27:30 I wouldn't know.

Oh come on.

No, fair dinkum. I know lots of people visited them but in the main we weren't interested. Not us sub-lieutenants we were...

You must have gone for a look?

No.

Well do you think that the sailors of the ship would have been visiting them?

Oh a lot of the sailors frequented them yeah.

28:00 **And was there never any trouble arising from that?**

Depends on what you mean by trouble. A lot of them contracted venereal disease certainly.

Oh well that's trouble.

That's trouble it is for the blokes that get it yeah.

And what would happen to those men?

Well they were quarantined, they were

28:30 accommodated in a special mess deck for venereal patients. Kanimbla it was 'Mess 60' 'cause all the messes have particular numbers. The messes on the starboard side of the ship are all odd numbers, the port side they're all even numbers. Mess 60 didn't qualify as an odd or even number because it was

29:00 down aft under the after guns so it was a mid-ship accommodation so it didn't qualify as even being port or starboard but the, I don't know how far the numbers ran up for the ordinary sailors' mess decks.

So can you tell me a little bit about mess deck 60? What would people say about someone who'd been sent there?

29:30 Oh nothing, it was just taken as a matter of course, it didn't matter. Was a natural hazard I suppose you might as well say.

Well were people afraid of catching VD [Venereal Disease] because I mean there were, you know, this is before penicillin?

Yeah but in those days the only

30:00 way you'd catch a venereal disease is if you went to a brothel. You wouldn't catch it in the ship but I suppose if they stopped to think about it they'd be a bit afraid, but the passions get the better of 'em and caution's thrown to the wind isn't it? I hope some of these things

30:30 gonna be edited out of the broadcast. You don't think so?

Well what else do you remember about Hong Kong?

Oh was a nice port to come back to but of course most of my time in port was spent on board ship. I didn't go ashore all that much. If we wanted to go to the pictures ashore,

31:00 no I'm gettin' mixed up there, I'm thinkin' of Singapore, I don't think we ever went to the pictures ashore in Hong Kong. Our main port of call was the 'Parisian Grill'. The little, there was a little Chinese boy, a doorman, he'd have been about this high I s'pose, couldn't have been any more than about five years old in a page-boy

31:30 uniform. When we arrived there he'd open the door, we'd walk in and if the band was there, if they saw us comin' in they'd play 'Waltzing Matilda'. They knew we were Australians but a lot of other people didn't.

And how was it working with the British with the RAN [Royal Australian Navy]?

Well we weren't working as RAN we were...

No, but working with them.

32:00 Yeah but we were HMS [His Majesty's Ship] so we were under...

No, I meant to ask how was it working with the British navy?

Well we were part of the British navy. Just, well wasn't the question of working with them or against them or anything. We were part of the Chinese, China Fleet so it was, would have been just the same if all the other ships

32:30 up there had been Australian. We were just, carried on exactly the same.

Well did they see it like that, did they, did the British see you as British?

I think so, yeah yeah because I mentioned previously that I spent about a fortnight on an RN destroyer. That happened, I'd have to go away and look up the date,

33:00 was on one of our earlier patrols from Hong Kong just after Germany had invaded Norway and Denmark and one of the jobs when we went out on patrol was to send any Norwegian or Danish ships that we came across to put a boarding party on board it

33:30 and send it back to Hong Kong. On about 11 o'clock at night the first night out of Hong Kong we met up with a Chinese trader the Dah Pu D A H new word P U. I forget what line she belonged to, I'd have to

look that up too but by this time

- 34:00 I was somewhat in disfavour with the captain so I got about two minutes notice that I was to take charge of a boarding party which consisted of four stokers who were armed with pistols. I had a pistol, was issued with a pistol myself. I was to take charge of this boarding party, go aboard the Dah Pu and make sure that she went back to Hong Kong. She was a,
- 34:30 actually a Norwegian ship. Williamson's, I think, was the line that they operated under, so back I came to Hong Kong, turned the ship over to the authorities, the harbour authorities and reported to HMS Tamar which was the depot ship at Hong Kong with my four stoker
- 35:00 boarding party. So the next morning, oh they gave me a camp stretcher to, on the deck outside the ward room mess. I settled down on that for the night after I came back from an hour or so ashore. The next thing I knew was a marine sentry bugler sounding the reveille,
- 35:30 almost in me ear you see played it beautifully, it was a delight to lie there and listen to him playing the trumpet. Anyhow shortly after I was sent for, directed to take my boarding party and join HMS Thrasher, one of the RN destroyers, as a boarding party so they'd have a party they could send away without having to
- 36:00 call on their own crew because they didn't have all that many. In addition to my boarding party was an RN lieutenant from a submarine which was in dock doing a refit, he was given a boarding party of four sailors so that the Thrasher now had two ready made boarding parties before they had to
- 36:30 call on their own crew and the captain there had been out in Australia as a young boy because his father had served a term as Governor of New South Wales. He was Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair and this officer was a RN lieutenant commander and he regarded me as the equivalent of a full blown
- 37:00 sub-lieutenant, told me off to take a watch on the bridge because I was an additional officer there. I pointed out to him that I wasn't qualified, I didn't have a watch keeping certificate. He said, "You've got a ring on your arm, you're a sub-lieutenant, you'll go on watch," so I did but I couldn't have had a better time there. I helped them out a bit because their books, signal books, hadn't been
- 37:30 kept up to date and some of the groups which in their books had definite meanings had been altered so that when they tried to decode some of the signals they didn't always make sense but I knew some of the common groups off by heart, so when particular four figures came up in the code I'd say, "Oh yeah," I
- 38:00 wouldn't have to look it up in the book, a common word, so I made you know quite an impression on 'em there because I didn't always need to look the signals up. I was able to bring some of their books more or less up to date for 'em so they were quite happy to have me even if my captain wasn't.

Lindsay I've lost track what happened to the Dah Pu?

Well it went back trading on the China coast but

- 38:30 the, it was classed as a capture because officially Norway had been taken over by Germany so it automatically at that stage became an enemy vessel but they were quite happy, the crew and the Norwegians, they were quite happy to work with the British so that it just went on as though there wasn't any war, just went about it's business but, you know, more or less under

- 39:00 British control.

So you were quite a bit happier on the British destroyer than you had been on the Kanimbla?

True, yeah yeah. As a matter of fact if I hadn't already had a wife and family I might have ended up in an RN submarine because I could have volunteered for submarine service because I palled up with this

- 39:30 submariner lieutenant and when we came back into port I looked him up occasionally and we had a certain amount of, well, service socialising and I might say we didn't go ashore and hunt up any women or anything like that but get together and have a drink occasionally.

Tape 5

- 00:32 **Len you mentioned earlier that you were out of favour with your captain**

Yeah

On the Kanimbla.

That's right yeah.

Could you tell us why you were out of favour?

I don't really know. I put it down to his general dislike of reserve officers

- 01:00 or reserves in general. On the way over to China he got a fright because he had a mass food complaint one night after the crew had been served supper and in the navy that is one of the danger signals that maybe a mutiny is about to break out. The crew,
- 01:30 or some of the ring leaders in the crew, get together and they decide that they will issue a general food complaint because at supper every evening an officer and the Master of Arms generally, or one of the regulating staff, do the rounds, supper rounds and they look into every mess in the ship and the officer
- 02:00 asks if there are any complaints. One friend of mine was quite a while before he wondered why the officer was asking about pannikin plates. He misheard it. "Any complaints?" So in every mess the leading hand of the mess this evening stated, "Yes," that the food was unsatisfactory
- 02:30 because it came from every mess, this was reported to the captain so, knowing that a mutiny was in the offing, he immediately demanded that the leading hands of the messes assemble in the regulating space, which was originally the movie music room in Kanimbla,
- 03:00 and he was dressed in his mess uniform and he stood on a platform and took the leading hands to task. The next day he had another complaint launched by the leading hands of the messes. Now if you'll excuse the language, the general complaint
- 03:30 on the previous evening, when he'd called them together, he'd called the leading hands of the messes a pack of 'shithouse rats'. This complaint was heard by the captain and was immediately dismissed. He said no such thing. He said that they were acting like a pack of 'lavatory rodents'. Anyhow from then on he didn't press
- 04:00 the leading hands and petty officers like he had been but switched his attention to the reserve officers and because I was the signals officer, had almost the most contact with him, I think I became a convenient whipping boy. He did take me to task over several things at different times. The first one was the evening we arrived
- 04:30 in Hong Kong, it was reported to me when I was the officer of the watch doing rounds that the signalman on the bridge pointed out to me that the ship had developed a list, well leaning over to one side you see. This had happened when, we're not dockyard hands, in Sydney before we commissioned
- 05:00 we were instructed then that we had to rig a plum-bob on the quarter deck mark where it was showing on the deck and the captain and the navigator and various other senior officers trooped off ashore, left instructions that if the list developed any further we were to ring the navigator and / or the captain,
- 05:30 tell them about it. In any case we had to ring the navigator at two o'clock and tell him what the situation was. So I thought that seeing we'd arrived in a fresh port that maybe this was rather serious, so I phoned up the engine room to get the Duty Engineer to see if he was aware that the ship was listing and if he was
- 06:00 doing anything to correct its trim, pumping water or fuel oil from one side tank to the other to bring the ship upright. I couldn't get him on the phone so I left the quarter deck, went down to the engine room to see what he had to say. When I returned to the quarter deck the quartermaster, who had been
- 06:30 there when I went down to see the engineer, he told me that while I was seeing the engineer the captain and the Paymaster had returned from shore. They had come from the dock yard in a sampan, a native boat, come to the port gangway which is not the officers' gangway. They'd come on board. He suspected they may have been
- 07:00 a bit inebriated but anyhow he told me that the captain had taken the deck log book and a night order book which was being used to keep a list of the officers that wanted to be called at certain times in the morning. So I thought, "Oh that's all right, I'll go up and get 'em back from the captain." So I went up to the captain and knocked on his door and went in and told him what I wanted. He went over to his
- 07:30 desk and rummaged around and said he couldn't find them. I thought he'd been drinking and he said, "Oh, get them in the morning." So anyhow, so I went back. When my relief came I told him what had happened, that I had no books to hand over to him but I could actually find the book of night orders, the captain had missed the true night order book. He'd taken this list, so that was there
- 08:00 but I had no log book and, but I could remember if not all most of the people and the time they wanted to be called, so I told this chap, my relief, and obviously if he wasn't happy I'd have to stay on watch so he said, "Oh that's all right Len, you go and turn in, I'll be right." So in the morning when I went to see the captain, he dressed me up and down, I was a disgrace and Lord knows
- 08:30 what, my leave was stopped, I wasn't allowed ashore and I forget what else he thought he was going to do to me. So that was the start of it. Then we got the books back and also after about three days, three or four days, the first lieutenant sent a message through me that the captain thought maybe I'd learnt me lesson and my leave was good again.

- 09:00 So I thought, "Oh well, if they want to stop me leave, I'll stop myself for another few days, which I did every time I got me leave stopped, but I don't think that went unnoticed so it didn't add to my popularity but one thing we went on to another, several times I was taken to task over things that I thought I was being useful and helpful but no.
- 09:30 **Well was it really do you think there was going to be a mutiny on the Kanimbla was...?**
- Yeah there possibly was, I, yeah because they were fed up with the treatment they were getting from the captain.
- So it was not a happy ship then?**
- In lots of ways it was, despite that,
- 10:00 cause I know you know that discipline and good relations spread from the top down but despite all that Kanimbla was an efficient ship and I think that 90, at least 90 per cent of the crew on board wouldn't have wanted to go anywhere else
- 10:30 so...
- So ... well what do you think was the matter with the captain? I mean had he been at sea too long or...?**
- Got to be careful what I say. I've been accused of criticising senior officers before this.
- But you're not in the navy any more?**
- No but it mightn't go down too well with 'em because you know he finished up more or less a
- 11:00 naval hero, he was lost in action. The people that know Kanimbla will know who I'm talking about but I'd better not name him but no I think maybe to my mind his biggest trouble was that for years he had been a staff officer. He'd come
- 11:30 from the flag ship to, as a commander promoted to acting captain to take command of Kanimbla when his real expertise was staff.
- Do you mean staff in terms of administration?**
- Pardon?
- Do you mean staff in terms of administration?**
- Oh staff, yes on the admiral staff,
- 12:00 you know and admiral's adviser and all this sort of thing. I don't consider he was a good seaman but who am I to judge him but, and he had a few disagreements with one or two of his specialist officers who
- 12:30 left the ship, refused to sail with him so got replacements. Our first navigating officer, who I think may have come to take Fred Smith's place, I think Fred would have, if we'd gone to sea with Fred, I think Fred would have been the ship's navigator but after his successor
- 13:00 left the ship in high dudgeon we got an excellent navigator who knew the Pacific from A to Z and he finished up as fleet navigator in the US 7th Fleet when the invasion of the Japanese held islands was taking place and there was a real war going on based on Australia so
- 13:30 by and large we had excellent specialists in various departments of the ship and all in all I don't think there would have been many ships that would have been more efficient than Kanimbla despite that we were about a 99 per cent
- 14:00 reserve crew. They were reservists of one way and another. A fair number of them were what they called 'fleet reserve' who had done their time in the permanent navy, been discharged and then signed on in the fleet reserve so that you could say that they were still professional seafarers. In addition to those we had
- 14:30 a good number of ex-merchant service officers who volunteered for war service only. Then there were the sea going reserve who were merchant service officers who had joined the sea going reserve and did so much time each year training with the navy. Then came us R A and R
- 15:00 officers and the RAN VR which wore the same distinguishing marks as we did but they were really organised as a separate branch but we, when it came to serving during the war, we were all just in together. The, as far as I can recollect the only real full-
- 15:30 time permanent service, active service personnel were the captain the chief gunner's mate and maybe one or two other specialist officers. There was a leading torpedo operator which really means a ship's electrician, he was an able seaman. Apart from that I doubt if there were any more
- 16:00 other permanent service officers. Frank Newman might have been able to tell you more but they were

the ones that come to mind with me so out of a crew of over 300 there's about four or five actual serving permanent navy. Some of the, now the first lieutenant who became the commander, he was

- 16:30 lieutenant commander Royal Navy, retired, I think he was retired shortly after the First World War, I suspect as a sub-lieutenant promoted up to lieutenant commander on the retired list. Then we had a commissioned gunner who wore the same uniform as a sub-lieutenant,
- 17:00 a thick one single thick stripe. I think he may have started his naval career either towards the end of the 1800s with the Queensland navy so he was an old man by the time the war started but the rest, you know there was a handful or more of fleet reservists,
- 17:30 and the rest just boiled down and I put it down that we broke the captain's fond beliefs that the reservists were a pack of no-hopers because one way and another we were pretty good. When we, to digress,
- 18:00 when we were first commissioned and had to go out to do our gunnery trial shoots, the team from Garden Island that came, the gunnery gunner's mate in charge of that who, their job was to record the shots when we fired at the targets, where they fell in relation to the target. When he came on board
- 18:30 the chief gunner's mate offered if anyone'd pay him five quid he'd sit on the target and mark the shots from there. After we came back into port he said he was bloody glad that nobody gave him the five dollars. We just about wrecked the target so it started early in the piece that we demonstrated that we could do a job despite the fact that we wouldn't have been able to.
- 19:00 It come to a point, I mentioned these guns that we had only had a maximum elevation of 22 and a half degrees. To get the maximum range out of a gun you've got to be able to elevate it up to 45 degrees that's where you get your maximum range so originally the guns were sighted to fire five miles as we called it, 10,000
- 19:30 yards. 2,000 yards is actually 80 feet short of a sea mile. A nautical mile is six o eight o feet but to ease the strain on a poor sailor's mental arithmetic abilities we determined that a mile would be 2,000 yards so we could fire our shots 10,000 yards.
- 20:00 From memory I think the distance to the horizon from Kanimbla's bridge which was about 60 feet above the water line, I'd have to look it up in me navigation tables to work it out properly, but I think the distance to the horizon would have been about eight miles. When the Admiralty decided that 10,000 yards the enemy had got a bit too close
- 20:30 they decided to give us heavier cordite chargers so that the guns would fire with a higher muzzle velocity so that the shells would go further. We could then fire for seven miles 14,000 yards. They had to etch and manufacture new dials, range dials, for every gun
- 21:00 so that they'd go up to 14,000 yards but even then we couldn't fire as far as the horizon so we come up against a a German ship you know like the Cormoran who, I don't know how far she could fire her guns but damn sight further than 14,000 yards so we wouldn't have had a hope.

Well did?

They called us, when we commissioned in Sydney, they called us the 'suicide squadron'

- 21:30 because we were, they knew we were outgunned. Not only that we had I don't know how many hundred 44 gallon, empty 44 gallon drums put into the holds so that if the ship was badly damaged and sinking these 44 gallon drums would help to keep her afloat so that if we weren't killed by the enemy's shells we stood a good chance of being killed by the empty drums as they popped up and we were swimming
- 22:00 in the water and the ship had gone down.

Well how did all of you on the Kanimbla feel about that situation?

We thought it was a joke, yeah what was the good of doing anything else? That was the job we had, we just, all right you know.

Well did the Kanimbla ever have to fire her guns while you were on her?

Technically, yes.

- 22:30 Frank Newman has probably told you of our capture of the Russian ship, the Vladimir Mayakovsky. I probably have a slightly different version of that episode to Frank but briefly we received word from
- 23:00 Hong Kong that intelligence had given them word that this vessel, they knew all about it, knew it's name and had left Valparaiso en route for Vladivostok and the story that I got of it was that she was either carrying aircraft parts or aircraft plans
- 23:30 destined for Germany to help in their aircraft production and also 200 tons of molybdenite. Now if you know what molybdenite, it's an ore of molybdenum what at that stage was a vital ingredient for armour-plated steel so

- 24:00 being the captain knowing that my peacetime job was a biochemist he put two and two together and thought I must have known a fair bit about chemistry, you know there's a bit of a difference between chemistry and biochemistry we needn't go into that. So I was invited to his cabin and he gave me a drink and then asked me what was this molybdenite,
- 24:30 why was it important, you know, how useful would 200 tons be? So I told him as much as I could think of about my knowledge of the elements of the periodic classification and what I knew about molybdenum and how I reckoned it'd be vastly important
- 25:00 to Germany to be able to make several thousand tons of armour-plating and our captain, ah our navigator, Gerry Hine, who I've mentioned earlier, with his knowledge of the Pacific, he said, well if it was his job to go from Valparaiso to Vladivostok
- 25:30 that he would head north about Japan. Two ways they could have gone, well more than two ways but the two main ways of approaching Vladivostok from South America would either be to come up through the Sea of Japan between Japan and China or come up through the Hokkaido Passage north of the main Japanese island
- 26:00 between Honshu island and Hokkaido and if he would, had the job he would come through the Hokkaido Passage so he prevailed upon the captain to not worry about the southern approach but to patrol off the entrance of the Hokkaido Passage so we were stuck there for several weeks. Being a diesel ship we
- 26:30 could stay at sea for six months without any problems apart from food. That would have been our main problem. Fuel-wise was no problem. So we steamed backwards and forwards across the approaches to Hokkaido and time went on, we ran out of all sorts of fresh food, potatoes and Lord knows what
- 27:00 and we weren't destitute as far as food was concerned. We still had plenty but not the usual sort of things, so finally the captain decided that, no that the Mayakovsky must have gone through the southern approach so Lieutenant Commander Hines said, "Well
- 27:30 give us until noon on..." pick the day, I don't know what day it was but anyway he nominated, he said, "If it hasn't turned up by noon on Friday, I'll agree he's gone the other way." So about 10 to 12 smoke was sighted over the horizon. By this time HMS Moreton Bay had come out,
- 28:00 her captain was senior to ours, come out to take over the patrol from us but he was a bit further south by the time we spotted the smoke and we headed over to investigate and sure enough it was Mayakovsky so we ordered him to follow us, proceed to Hong Kong. He wasn't too co-operative
- 28:30 so I think we fired a shot to kid him that we really meant business so then his next ploy, he said that he didn't have enough fuel to go back to Hong Kong because only a trading ship and they don't always carry too much, so it was decided that we would tow him,
- 29:00 so they passed a tow line over in not too pleasant weather and then started to get under way and I strongly suspect that at the critical time when the tow line was just starting to take the strain I think that someone in the Miachovsky made an error and rang for the engineers
- 29:30 to go into astern, rather that's my suspicion, I'm a nasty suspicious type. Anyhow the next thing we knew was the tow line, which its own weight would sink it into the water, it came up clear of the water and stretched out almost straight and then 'bang!' it parted. Within a few seconds the lieutenant commander,
- 30:00 the first lieutenant arrived on the bridge where the captain was in charge of everything and quickly report to the captain, "Tow line's parted sir," and the captain, wanting to know how much of the tow line was hanging over the stern, whether he could use the screws, I said, "Yes, number one where..." Quick as a flash the first lieutenant replied, "Down aft
- 30:30 sir." So that was the end of the towing operations so then Miachovsky said, well he didn't have enough fuel to get to Hong Kong and he was a diesel ship. Unfortunately he didn't realise that we were a diesel ship also so we were able to transfer 200 tons of diesel fuel so that he could steam to Hong Kong, if a motor ship can steam, I still haven't worked that one out.
- 31:00 So we proceeded to Hong Kong. Before all this happened Moreton Bay appeared on the scene and said, "Well thank you Kanimbla, now we'll take over the escort of Miachovsky back to Hong Kong." Despite the fact that our captain was junior to the Moreton Bay he said, "To hell with you, he's our capture, we're taking him," and he stuck to his guns. I can say
- 31:30 a few good things about the captain. Because when we arrived in Hong Kong we were HMS serving in the Royal Navy and the Royal Navy at that stage had a rum issue for the crew. The Australian navy ever since it was instituted has been a dry navy. They never had a rum issue in the Australian navy. In the rates of pay in the Royal Navy, for a sailor
- 32:00 elects not to have a rum issue his pay can be increased threepence a day. Well that threepence a day was incorporated into the Australian ratings pay rate. When we got to Hong Kong, captain went ashore, saw the admiral there, said words to the effect, "Well we're HMS, we're serving with the Royal Navy, we

want the rum issue," so he got

32:30 the rum issue for the crew but I reckon they were double dipping. They were getting their threepence a day grog money and if they took the grog issue they got their tot of rum. If they didn't they got an extra threepence a day too so I haven't pointed that out to the authorities. Maybe they'll get onto the trail of all the existing HMS crew members and demand the threepence a day back.

33:00 They might even demand that they buy, if they took the rum issue that they buy the rum and give it back to the navy mightn't they?

They might too.

We'd better keep it quiet and not let 'em know about that.

I think so yes. Look I'm wondering at what point did you go to Singapore?

Well we served from, in Hong Kong for about six months then the British navy decided to take the flag officer from Hong Kong,

33:30 probably on his way back to England, and we got the job of esco-, not escorting them, conducting him, conveying him from Hong Kong to Singapore so for that week when we called, also on the way we called in to Saigon and the admiral, one of his jobs was to try and persuade the French fleet based on Saigon to come with us and join in

34:00 but by this time Germany had overrun France and the Vichy French were in control. The French Admiral in Saigon was a Vichy man so he wouldn't be in it so he never came but for that week HMS Kanimbla was the flag ship of the China fleet.

Well how did you feel about that?

I haven't got that in my notes. It, but that would have been

34:30 about March 1940. You can check up whether that was pre- or post- the collapse of France but if it was after the collapse of France well the Vichy were in control of France anyway.

And what were your first impressions of Singapore?

Singapore in some respects was a better

35:00 port than Hong Kong. It was a far more an outpost of Empire. The main drawback with Singapore was that at that time the Hong Kong dollar was worth one and threepence sterling. Now we were being paid

35:30 Australian rates of pay in sterling so we were virtually getting 25 per cent increase on our pay provided that we collected it on board ship. The allotment that I made to my wife, that was taken out and paid to her in Australian currency but I only let her have the minimum requirement and I drew the rest of the pay in sterling

36:00 and then sent her money by bank draft as I got to various ports. The Hong Kong dollar is worth one and threepence. When we got to Singapore the Singapore dollar was worth two and six but dollar for dollar they'd only buy about the same amount. The Hong Kong dollar would buy as much in Hong Kong as a Singapore dollar would in Singapore.

36:30 So to that extent Singapore was a more expensive place to be getting anything but where we berthed at Singapore was on the other side of Singapore island from Singapore city at Seletar which was where the...

Yes I know it.

You've heard of Seletar?

Yes been there.

Was a big Royal Air Force base there just near

37:00 the Johore causeway and that was where if we wanted to go to the pictures we had to take a taxi across the island to Singapore. I think it cost us about 18 Singapore dollars so you know three or four of us would hire a taxi, go to the pictures, come back by taxi again but it was quite a good place.

37:30 We even went to Raffles Hotel had some of the genuine Singapore gin slings and

Well you were there then, this is 1940 did you meet any of the Singaporeans or the British who were in Singapore, I mean what were they saying about the war then, do you know?

Don't know, no I never fraternised

38:00 with any of the locals there. That came later when we got to Durban in South Africa.

And well I mean how many ships were in the harbour at Singapore when you were there?

Oh no idea. Do you mean just naval ships or all sorts of ships?

I meant naval ships?

Naval ships,

38:30 I don't really know because we were on different duties operating from Singapore. We were on convoy escorts as well as patrol. We never spent a great deal of time in port and quite honestly wasn't all that interested in how many ships were around

39:00 anyway.

Well no I was just wondering I mean how had the war, I mean, you know Singapore was a British colony...

Yeah.

Britain was at war, I'm just wondering you know what signs there were of war there?

Very little because Singapore was an impregnable fortress.

Exactly.

The only trouble was that all the guns were pointing the wrong way and like Hong Kong

39:30 their fresh water supply came from the mainland so enough said.

And you didn't come across any of the British, the British raj in Singapore?

No didn't have much time for it

40:00 really because we were only briefly in port and then back to sea again so we weren't trying, never tried to develop any contacts.

Tape 6

00:31 **Len, on the Kanimbla where did you do your signals work?**

Well to a large extent I wasn't actively engaged in the actual signalling, only on rare occasions. I can give you a couple of those but you see I had

01:00 a chief deck leading signalman and about four or six signalmen, a chief telegraphist, a leading tel and when we left Australia we had three telegraphists. They were all reservists. The chief yeoman and chief tel were fleet reserves that I mentioned before,

01:30 they had served their 22 years or whatever in the navy and got up to chief petty officer which is about the equivalent of a sergeant major in the specialist sections so that they were top class, excellent

02:00 you know professionals and administrators so the chief yeoman ran the actual signals office. The chief telegraphist ran the wireless side, so as far as running that I was more or less you might say the managing director of the communications

02:30 branch. As such I didn't really need to know more than enough about signals to get past. I really needed to know how the books worked and all because I've maligned the original signals officer because he wouldn't release any of the signal books because they were marked confidential. He wouldn't

03:00 let the signals staff touch them so when he got the books there was a list of amendments that had to be made to all these books that came out with every book that was issued. Before it went into use somebody in the Admiralty had decided that there were errors and omissions so they issued, periodically issued fresh amendments to 'em so before you used

03:30 'em you had to put the amendments in, bring the books up to date, so poor old Johnny he got 'em so he sat down to bring the books up to date, just grabbed one book at random and started entering it up. Unfortunately he didn't know what books were in force or anything so the book he picked wasn't in force, he laboriously started to correct it, I came along and saw what he was doing, threw everything

04:00 out, got the books that were in force, dished them out to the signalmen and tels and said, "Well there you are, bring them up to date," so they did all the work then. The book that Johnny had started on, it was compromised so it never ever came into force anyway so that was one point where my signals knowledge, if not ability, proved to be of use, some use to the ship I think. On other occasions,

04:30 one that sticks in me mind, when we were arriving in Bombay with a convoy of five or six ships that we'd escorted from Durban to Bombay, we arrived in Bombay in the middle of a squall so that the first thing that happened, the captain had already got the signals staff on the bridge signalling to the port

war signal station to whatever

- 05:00 naval ships he could see, he had everybody rushing madly about sending signals everywhere and he decided that the visibility was becoming too bad, he'd have to reduce speed, so he immediately ordered signal to the commodore convoy 'reduce speed to five knots' so all the signals staff were busy so I had to grab, I didn't have to but I grabbed a signal lamp myself, called up the
- 05:30 commodore ship, passed him the message 'reduce speed to five knots' and the procedure signal, procedure in a situation like that when you're passing a message word by word, as the receiving ship gets each word they flash the light back once to show you that they've received it so that went through. I got down
- 06:00 as far as saying 'reduce speed to five knots' I'd got the acknowledgement. By this time the squall's getting worse and I'd just finished and got the acknowledgement that he'd received the word 'knots' and blanked out, couldn't, I knew where the ship should have been but I couldn't get any light coming back from it so when I sent the signal to show
- 06:30 that I'd come to the end of the message, I got no acknowledgement that he'd got that so I turned round and told the captain, well the message I sent, the message to the commodore, it'd been received but I'd received no acknowledgement officially, that signal hadn't been completed but I don't think there would have been anyone else in the ship that, apart from myself who would have been capable of doing that,
- 07:00 well all the signalmen were doing something for the captain. I don't know whether, I can't remember whether I actually sent any more ships' signals like that from Kanimbla but on other occasions where I had one of my patrol boats down in Hobart and the signal staff at the signal station there knew that we didn't have any trained
- 07:30 signalmen on board and that they were supposed to, any messages for the patrol boats they were supposed to send them slowly so that the seamen that we'd detailed off to act as signalmen would have a chance of being able to read it. Well the bloke that was sending this signal this particular day, he offended me because he was sending at a rate that
- 08:00 he should have expected a signalman on the other end to be able to receive it so he was sending much too quickly for a humble seaman to deal with but as it happened the message called for a reply from me to the naval officer in charge so I got the lamps, well I took the message from the signal station anyway, so I took
- 08:30 the lamp to send back the reply and I showed him no mercy. I sent it at full rate too and it was so fast, I was sending it so fast, I wasn't sending it above the 10 words a minute because I couldn't send that fast but I was sending it at 10 words a minute and the bloke the other end he couldn't read it all, I had to repeat words
- 09:00 over and over. Some time later when I was put on board the examination ship down in Hobart we went out, we got a few signalmen from the signal station and I was, while we were killing time one day I was swapping experiences with the deck in charge of the signalmen on the exam service who had been a deck and been through the signal
- 09:30 department at Port Melbourne. He knew me, he'd been a leading signalman when I was a leading seaman and it came out in the discussion you see that it was disclosed that I'd been a leading signalman and passed for yeoman and one of these young signalmen sitting there piped up. "Oh that explains it." He'd been the signalman at the war signaller station. He knew that we didn't have a rating that could
- 10:00 send like that and it'd puzzled him until he found out. I got me own back on him.

Well that's good to hear but can we just go back to the Kanimbla?

Yes, sorry I keep digressing.

No that's fine no. Just you were on the Kanimbla for a long time so what were your living quarters...

About 18 months.

What were your living quarters like?

Well like you would more or less expect in a sea-going liner. We had

- 10:30 first class cabin accommodation.

How many in it, how many in the cabin?

We each had a...

Your own?

...cabin to ourselves, our own cabin. I think maybe I'm not sure whether the midshipmen had to share a cabin, I fancy they may have. We had four midshipmen and I think perhaps they dosed two to a cabin, I'm not really sure about

11:00 that but the rest of us had a cabin to ourselves. I had a double berth cabin. Some of the more senior officers had some of the first class accommodation suites and that. The first lieutenant the engineer commander, the surgeon lieutenant commander and the paymaster,

11:30 they had suites. I don't really recollect what some of the other lieutenant commanders and senior lieutenants but they would have had if there had been better class cabins than I had, well they would have had some of those.

Well what had you brought with you to put in your cabin? Had you taken any family photos with

12:00 **you?**

No no just more or less just took what we stood up in, our uniforms.

And I was wondering, you were away for a long time from your family, did you ever get homesick?

Oh yeah yeah, before we even left Sydney. I was down near Central Station one evening I was horribly tempted to jump on the train and go back to Melbourne but

12:30 I knew they'd have caught up with me anyway so I resisted.

Well what do you do about homesickness when you're on board ship, how do you deal with it?

You've generally got something to take your mind off it. A particular pal of mine was an accomplished pianist and I thought I had a reasonable sort of a voice. We used to go up to the music room and he'd play the piano and

13:00 we'd dig out some of the songs and that, you know things like the 'Indian Love Lyrics' and those sort of things. Real music you know. It was a bit in advance of the, not of the Jazz era but the swing era that was only coming in. I never got converted to swing.

Well how often did you get mail from home?

13:30 Whenever we got into port. If we were at sea for seven weeks well we got seven weeks' mail when we came back to port. Very rarely did they try to send mail out to us. I don't remember actually getting any mail at sea.

Well what I'd like to ask you about now are your trips to Durban. Did you, were you actually based in Durban there

14:00 **or...?**

Well we sort of oscillated between Durban, Aden, Bombay, Colombo around the Indian Ocean. We'd either go on patrol from one or other of the ports, maybe get diverted directed back to one of the others or if we had a ship or ships to convoy most of the convoys would

14:30 have been heading to or from Aden to go through Suez Canal and that, but well just depended where they wanted the convoys to go. We never got around Cape of Good Hope into the Atlantic. Arawa and Moreton Bay after they left

15:00 Hong Kong they went through the Atlantic and finished up in the UK and their ships were decommissioned over there I think. I've got one pal who served in Moreton Bay I've been onto him, suggest that I give your people his name. He doesn't want to be interviewed but I think he should be.

Well that's good to hear. I was wondering why

15:30 **was Durban your favourite port?**

Interesting question because I was always lumbered with officer of the watch on arrival in a new port. I didn't get the opportunity to go ashore on the first night in Durban,

16:00 my relief, I had the dog watch four till eight pm and when I handed over to my relief about nine o'clock he came to my cabin and told me that the officer that was to relieve him at midnight had just gone ashore at nine o'clock,

16:30 so he quizzed him about this and pointed out to him that he didn't have long to stay ashore. He got the reply, "Well no I'll be, it's all right Lloyd I'll be back in time. Anyway, if I'm not Len'll stand in for me." So shortly after nine o'clock you see he came and said well you know, "What's this?" he said, "Johnny's gone off ashore, he says you'll

17:00 stand in, what do you know about it?" First I knew about it. Anyhow that was by the by and I said, "Well anyway if he doesn't turn up don't worry, I'll come and do the watch," so about a quarter past 12 he came in and said, "Well look," he said, "Johnny still hasn't come back and I've had it more or less." He'd been on watch for four, well four and a quarter hours then so I said, "Right, okay that's all right, I'll come and do

- 17:30 the watch." So round about two o'clock friend Johnny comes back on board so I proceeded to tear a strip off him so he said, "Oh well righto," he said, "Well I'll take over now, you can go and turn in if you like." "Pigs you can! I've started," I said, "You can do my afternoon watch tomorrow," so that was all right. So then the next day three of us went ashore together,
- 18:00 I'm not really sure whether this lad that was my relief was one of the three but there was one of the midshipmen another sub-lieutenant and myself, we went ashore. The crew had, when they'd come back the night before they'd told us that the natives were friendly, they'd been greeted with open arms or taken all sorts of things so we're walking along the footpath and nobody has said
- 18:30 'boo' to us and I said to the others, "Well look, this is no good, we'd better start looking lost and forlorn so that somebody'll take pity on us." Almost immediately I'd said this a huge Chevrolet car pulled up, a woman and a young lady, the young lady poked her head out the door and said, "Excuse me but can we take you anywhere?" you know so, "Oh,"
- 19:00 so, "Righto," so we piled in so that was all right. They took us around and showed us around Durban and then around about five o'clock or so they said, "We'll have to leave you now, we've got to go to a 21st birthday party. We know you wouldn't like to come with us," so we said, "Oh you know we don't mind going to a...," so we found the natives were friendly
- 19:30 so that was the start of some really good friendships in Durban. Course we met this mother and first of all the elder daughter then a later daughter then some of their young girlfriends and they took us everywhere and we reciprocated by taking them to dances and
- 20:00 to the theatre. One lass that I'd palled up with there, only spoke to her on the telephone one time for a quarter of an hour because the phones in Durban then you could speak for three minutes for a 'tickee' which is threepence in South African language and I only had five threepenny bits in
- 20:30 me pocket so by the time I ran out of the threepenny bits I had to let the crowd outside that were hanging on using the public phone on the wharf hand it over to somebody else, so this lass and I we frequently went to the pictures together but oh all sorts of 'funny-ha-ha' things.
- 21:00 Australians didn't have a high reputation in South Africa.

Didn't they?

No.

do you know why not?

Yes the second contingent of AIF troops called in at Cape Town first and they anchored off the shore and the troops were not allowed ashore. Then they came around to Durban and they'd been away from Australia then about 10 days or a fortnight but then they were allowed ashore

- 21:30 in Durban and they went mad and they wrecked a lot of the pleasure spots there. One of the open-air dance places that we used to go to, they really destroyed that. Anyhow these girls that we met wanted to know what part of England we came from so we said, "No we're not English we're Australian." "No you can't be Australians, you're too good to be Australian." They admitted
- 22:00 that if they were walking down the main street in Durban and there was an Australian soldier coming up they'd cross over the road walk down the other, yeah that's how bad the reputation they had. We had to show them the Australia on our buttons to finally convince 'em that we weren't Pommies, we were Australians.

And well did these friends know that you were married?

Yep oh yeah well of course amongst the sub-lieutenants I was

- 22:30 the only one that was married there, the others were single but oh no they all knew that. Now this lass that I'd been to the pictures one night, I forget, no I remember why it was, I wasn't allowed ashore in uniform but that was part of the punishment that was weighed out to another bloke and I. We'd disgraced the uniform so we weren't allowed ashore in uniform
- 23:00 so when one of the sailors learnt of this he came and saw me in my cabin and told me that he'd, he knew I wasn't allowed ashore in uniform but he said in Hong Kong he'd bought a civvy [civilian] suit, a double breasted grey suit tailored to fit by the local Chinese tailors but he was about my size so he said he had no opportunity
- 23:30 to wear it. If I'd like to pay him the five pounds that it cost him to have the suit made I was welcome to it. Well I had a shirt and admittedly at that stage I only had a black tie to wear with it. I only had black socks and shoes. I had no hat but okay, so I bought the suit off him so when we got to Durban
- 24:00 and I was able to go out so I went, always went out in plain clothes.

Well what had you done this time that you'd been you weren't allowed to go out in uniform?

Well if you really want to know it was in Bombay another sub-lieutenant and I were at the Bombay Cricket Club I think it was for dinner one night. The place was full of troops all ranks and

- 24:30 ratings and the fellow I was with was a West Australian. There were three of the stewards off the ship, they were at the table further over and they saw us come in there and one of them came over and because this other fellow was a West Australian they told him that amongst their party that they'd palled up with there was an AIF soldier who
- 25:00 was one of the crack jockeys in Western Australia in Perth Spider Web, so knowing this other bloke was from Western Australia would he be interested in meeting this other West Australian. "Oh yes, bring him over," says Ted so he brought him over, they brought him over. Well whether we should have or not, we invited
- 25:30 them to sit down and have a glass of beer so we ordered another bottle of beer. Then a message came for this AIF bloke that some people that he'd met had come to pick him up because they were taking him inland somewhere to show him round so off he went so we said to the stewards well you know, "Stay and finish the beer."
- 26:00 Shortly after that our captain with a Royal Indian Navy captain who was an Indian, not a European officer, plus a couple of women, one of 'em might have been the captain's wife, I don't know. Anyhow they came in and the stewards spotted them coming and said, "Oh we'd better go, the captain's come in," so this other bloke said, "No,
- 26:30 stay and finish the beer." Anyhow they exercised their discretion and they left so the other bloke and I we got a message from the captain the next morning that we were to explain in writing while ashore on duty in uniform, we weren't
- 27:00 on duty we were on leave, why we were observed drinking with ratings, so we wrote our explanations about it all which is roughly just exactly what I've told you, that probably filled up the best part of a foolscap page. The two of us our stories tallied because
- 27:30 we wrote 'em together anyway and so we took those up and we had to produce that within a matter of hours time and when we got up there the captain explained to us why he'd insisted on us giving the explanation in writing, because if we were telling lies then it would show up in writing and
- 28:00 we'd have no opportunity to argue against it, so he picked on it because we had said to the stewards, "Stay and finish the beer." When they left he had particularly noticed that there was still beer in the bottle so they didn't stay to finish the beer so that was a lie so therefore the whole story was lies
- 28:30 so we were debarred from going ashore in uniform. Several months after the captain was sent back from Australia they were a relief captain came to take his place. We received, neither of us received any word that we were allowed ashore in uniform. This other bloke he took the attitude that because the captain had gone
- 29:00 that the punishment had expired with him. That didn't suit me. I had discovered that I had far more freedom going ashore in civvies so didn't exactly abide by the edict. If I wanted to go ashore in uniform I went ashore in uniform. If we were going somewhere and I wanted to be with the
- 29:30 girls and partly because amongst their friends there were Royal Navy ratings who might be in the party with us well I could be in the same car with him and there'd be no embarrassment no confusion but any of the other officers they would have to travel in a different car because they couldn't afford to be seen ashore with, fraternising with a
- 30:00 rating so that was how I came to be debarred from going ashore in uniform but I maintained that until I left the ship. I went ashore as I pleased. I was never hauled over the coals, was never stopped from going ashore in civilian clothes, I was never told I wasn't allowed ashore in uniform cause they couldn't have stopped me because the other bloke they hadn't,
- 30:30 it never affected his advancement. He became a gunnery specialist was sent over to England, did a gunnery course at Whale Island Gunnery School. I applied to be sent over to England to do a navigation course but I'm sure my bad reputation stuck with me. When the captain left the ship, every time you come under a
- 31:00 different commanding officer the retiring or the commanding officer that you've been under has to write a report not necessarily an annual report. Ratings you have to fill in on their service certificate an annual report but the captain has to write or fill in, they have a pre printed form which has a space to put the
- 31:30 officer's name and rank and then it says has conducted, in those days it was 'himself' because there were no female officers, and then the captain could write in, so my captain wrote 'has conducted himself not to my entire satisfaction. He lacks initiative and drive and is therefore below average
- 32:00 as a divisional officer and officer of the watch in harbour. He has not kept a watch at sea.' That didn't worry me very much. I observed that he had said I'm not to his entire satisfaction. At that stage I was

too new in the navy, I didn't realise that that amounted to a severe criticism. I discovered that later but that has gone onto my record

32:30 and I'm sure that that has counted against me forever and a day, along with other things that I blame the captain for. I can pick holes in that criticism. For a start all right he says I was below average. That's his opinion. I was below average as a divisional officer. Well I was only a junior sub-lieutenant,

33:00 it was hardly fair that I was put in charge of a division, which the signal branch was a division of the ship certainly, but I still think I was probably the best one able to control the signal branch but by and large that was a job which should have been considered above my capabilities as a sub-lieutenant with

33:30 less than 12 months seniority. Right, as officer of the watch in harbour well the sub-lieutenants were the officers of the watch in harbour. There were seven of us and we had the harbour watch-keeping duties it was confined to the sub-lieutenants. Some of the lieutenants their official harbour

34:00 duties were as duty executive officer, 'DXO'. Right, I had not kept a watch at sea. None of the sub-lieutenants kept a watch at sea. We did a four hour watch on the bridge as a gunnery control officer but not an officer of the watch so those criticisms were,

34:30 you know.

Well they were unreasonable.

Unfounded, he could have said all those things about all the other sub-lieutenants including the three sub-lieutenants who were sea-going reserve officers with sea-going experience.

So when did you actually leave the Kanimbla then?

Left the Kanimbla in April 1941, I'd had 19 months at sea

35:00 then.

So what happened then? You must have got some shore leave then did you?

Oh about three weeks after I came back to Australia. From there I was posted to...

And you got home, you saw your family?

Oh yeah yeah yeah, because I was sent back to Melbourne, have my three weeks leave, home leave, so when that three weeks was up then I was appointed

35:30 to the Gabo Island there was a war signals station at the lighthouse on Gabo Island. Our job there was to observe ships that were going past Gabo Island. If there were any messages to be transmitted to the ships, we had to call 'em up and send 'em. I don't remember ever having to do that but I had signalmen and a cook

36:00 and then from there, after a month or two, I was appointed to at that stage I think they called the depot in Sydney 'Platypus' to stand by for commissioning HMAS Steady Hour which is the photo I showed you there.

36:30 My magnificent fighting ship so when that commissioned, eight o'clock the morning that I commissioned, I signalled the navy office, naval officer in Sydney that HMAS Steady Hour had commissioned at 0800 under the command of Sub-lieutenant LD Money RANR [Royal Australian Naval Reserve] and so that was that. That was one of the things that my signal experience told me was the correct signal

37:00 to send. I don't know if other patrol boats did the same thing but I did it anyway.

Were you happy with this posting?

Promotion?

Were you happy with the posting?

The post, oh yes yes well was my first command, the first ship you get command of always the best. After a couple of months there I was drafted from there to Hobart. That was in

37:30 November 1941. On the way through I took the opportunity to book on the Taroona which was the ship going across Bass Strait for the Wednesday, picked up my wife cause I had it arranged, I told her we were going down to Hobart, pick up my wife and family and

38:00 descend on Hobart, so I arrived in Hobart and the first lieutenant at the depot when I reported there that you know I'm reporting for duty, he took me to task because he expected me the day before so I explained to him well you know I'd taken the opportunity to bring my wife and family with me to Hobart. That didn't matter, I should have been there the day.

38:30 I said, "Anyway, I couldn't have done much about it, it was Cup day." "Oh yes, Melbourne Cup, that's all right." So I was allowed to stay in Melbourne because it was Melbourne Cup Day so for a couple of

years there I had my wife with me in Hobart. Now...

Oh that's good for two years then. So from the end of '41 to the end of '43 is this right? Just getting the chronology right here?

Pretty much yeah

39:00 yeah yeah.

And so what were your duties or we'll start to talk about what your duties were down there?

Well just to try and be useful in the Naval Reserve Depot where mostly local Hobart reservists were kicking their heels waiting to be sent to sea or anyone that had volunteered for service in Hobart

39:30 were posted to the depot there.

So this is a shore job?

Yep yeah, just while they were waiting firstly to be sent across to Flinders to do their new entry training and things like that but there again from Hobart we had these harbour defence launches so I had another one I was posted to, one of those sent back from Hobart back to Melbourne to pick one up.

40:00 The original idea that the naval officer in charge of Hobart had was that we would proceed under our own power from Melbourne to Hobart. He completely ignored the fact that we wouldn't have had enough petrol to get there. When he found out that we only had a limited tank, we had three hundred gallons of petrol, I think, we could

40:30 carry in the tanks.

Tape 7

01:19 **Look Len speaking of action what was your action station aboard the Kanimbla?**

I was what they call 'officer of

01:30 quarters' for the number three guns port and starboard three. We had a crew for each gun but because they could only engage on one side of the ship, officer in charge of the gun had two guns under his control but he could only use one gun at a time so I would, if we went into action, I would take

02:00 charge of whichever gun, whichever side we were fighting on but as we said before as far as I can remember we only fired the one shot to persuade the Mayakovsky to do what we wanted to tell him.

Well what would have happened if you were attacked from both sides?

Yeah well then I'd have to run madly backwards and forwards

02:30 as the guns were firing I s'pose but it would be pretty unlikely because German ships were only operating independently. They'd only have one raider in the area at a time so they couldn't very well surround us.

Now while aboard the Kanimbla,

03:00 **I mean you're traversing huge oceans?**

Pardon?

While you're aboard the Kanimbla...

Yeah.

You're traversing all these oceans, you're travelling across the seas...

Yeah

Enemy boats around and ships and submarines, what did you fear the most?

Well generally we would have known if there was an enemy ship anywhere in the vicinity because

03:30 theoretically our shore staff knew where all the British and friendly ships were so that they'd know if there were any potential enemies around near where we were supposed to be. The only time that I can remember which went haywire was when we spent the two days looking for ourselves when this Dutchman

04:00 sent off an enemy report because we'd stopped him at night and he got a bit jittery. Our captain as I said didn't like that. Apart from when the German pocket battleship was more or less on a collision course with us although two or three hundred miles apart we were never in any real danger.

- 04:30 Unless there happened to be German submarine around but they were generally looking for merchant shipping in the commercial sea lanes on their way to Britain and Europe so we were relatively free. See I was back in Australia well before Japan came into the war.
- 05:00 **So what fate did you fear most?**
- Oh nothing really. Took the attitude that you know nothing was likely to happen to us without our knowing it, weren't going to worry about anything until the time came when maybe we ran up against somebody.
- Well what about**
- 05:30 **the weather was the weather ever a threat to you?**
- Oh we ran into some pretty bad weather at times. Typhoons up off China and things like that that tossed the ship around quite a bit that well I never felt that we were likely to be overcome by the seas that we were likely to be sunk or to sink,
- 06:00 no we had a good seaworthy ship so nothing really to worry about there.
- Well did you ever get seasick?**
- Yes the fortnight that I spent on the RN destroyer because after dark they used to batten the ship down
- 06:30 and it was somewhat or more or less airtight but dependent on ventilated air and the fuel oil fumes sort of permeated throughout the ship, that tended to make me seasick. Later on after I'd been serving at sea for three years or more
- 07:00 working down from Hobart in a mine sweeper bomb boat which was commandeered by the Australian navy, mine sweeping gear placed on board her, I'd been at sea for three years then, I started to get bouts of seasickness the first day out of port or something to my utter disgust. I thought you know after three years at sea shouldn't be suffering from seasickness but anyhow I survived.
- 07:30 **Well it's one of the facts of life for a sailor isn't it that you will get seasick some times?**
- Oh lots of lots of sailors did get seasick some were much worse than others but generally speaking it wasn't a terribly common occurrence. Most sailors maybe the first few times, first few weeks at sea
- 08:00 they'd get it but they'd get over it.
- Once you got your sea legs...**
- Yeah
- You were right yeah. And how did you feel about the sea?**
- I loved it.
- What did you love about it?**
- Well one thing that no matter where we went we always knew where our bed was going to be that night
- 08:30 you know, had a, you know, fairly comfortable existence sailing around the place all over the ocean. Not wasn't terrifically exciting and enjoyable but if we had to fight a war well that was the best way to be carrying it out. Certainly the pick of the services I think because
- 09:00 you had comfortable quarters to be in, you knew what they were like, what they were going to be like tomorrow, you didn't have to pitch a tent or sleep out in the open. I don't know how the air force get on although I've got a grandson who's in the air force but at least we had our home with us in the ship.
- Well how did you feel towards the enemy navies because I mean**
- 09:30 **in many ways they were experiencing a lot of the same things as yourself?**
- Yeah well actually generally we recognised that if we came up against a proper German or Japanese (later) fighting ship, proper naval ship, that we had very little hope but you know
- 10:00 just more or less had to put up with that and do the best we could you see, so the Jervis Bay which is a British armed merchant cruiser much the same as the Moreton Bay and Arawa, the same type of ship, before we'd even left Australia she'd met up with one of the German pocket battleships when she was convoying convoy
- 10:30 back to Britain and they tried to defend the convoy. They set, made the convoy scatter and they steamed over to engage the enemy warship, knowing full well that they virtually had no chance, and you know of course Captain Fogarty Fegan got a posthumous VC [Victoria Cross] out of it which didn't do him a lot of good but
- 11:00 that was the sort of thing, we accepted that maybe we'd have to do the same sort of thing but no good

worrying about it till the time came.

So can you tell me what's the strangest thing you ever saw out at sea?

What's which?

The strangest thing?

Strangest thing?

Well you know you see lots of odd things out at sea?

11:30 Oh nothing that I would class as strange really.

No that's all right I just thought you might have come across something but anyway no mermaids?

No mermaids, no unfortunately yeah.

And look I was also intrigued earlier on you said you used to sing on board the ship. I was wondering if you could

12:00 **give us a tune Len?**

I used to what?

Sing?

Sing? Oh not these days.

Well could you give us just a bit of a tune?

Oh oh well various sorts of songs that get sung from the sublime to the ridiculous. One of the ones goes much like:

12:30 'On Monday we had bread and gravy, on Tuesday it was gravy and bread. Wednesday and Thursday we had gravy on toast the same as the other two days almost. On Friday we went to the captain to get something different instead. On Saturday morning we had a great feast, we had

13:00 gravy but no bloody bread.' There I hope you're satisfied with that.

Well I don't know if I'd be satisfied with that meal but the song was great thanks. So was that a rude one or was that a clean one?

Oh no that's the original version of that. That's a clean one. I can't remember any

13:30 of the rude songs. Got a selective memory of course.

Now Len in the Australian forces a lot's been said about mateship and how important mateship was. Do you think that was equally true in the navy?

Well to a restricted sense because you know you're virtually prohibited

14:00 from fraternising with the lower deck so you had friends and mates amongst your equals, although I still had a lot of friends that I knew from the days prior to my being promoted but I wasn't

14:30 serving with any of those. They didn't come to the same ship as I did. Some of the ratings who I trained with at Port Melbourne, some of them went to Arawa and Moreton Bay. We had quite a number of ratings came to Kanimbla from the Williamstown depot.

So were you able to make

15:00 **friends with the ORs [Other Ranks]?**

Not really, not until after the war when we joined the Ship's Company Association.

So you were then limited to friendships with other sub-lieutenants?

Yeah yeah, other commissioned officers, sub-lieutenants, lieutenants, you know.

And how important were those friends to you?

15:30 Oh moderately because, you know, they were more or less, you know, ships that pass in the night. You got shifted on to different appointments so you lost touch with most of 'em that way until after the war, when you tended to attend the same reunions and things like that so a lot of the friendships were rekindled that way

16:00 after service.

Well would you say that rank was very important in the navy?

Well it must have been important to a degree although it never bothered me to that extent, I never sort of reacted one way or the other. Come to that you know I was stuck with the officers so

- 16:30 they were my friends there. I still had some contact from time to time with some of the lower ranks, well my brother-in-law joined the reserves because I was in it. He was a signalman also but he got into trouble one
- 17:00 time when we were in Darwin, his ship and my ship were in Darwin together. I had him over for an evening so gave him a meal and never worried over much about the fact that he was on midnight leave, he was supposed to be back on board by midnight. I sent him back in my
- 17:30 motor boat from Bombo. Didn't think to go over with him and explain to the officer of the watch that he'd been with me in my ship, hadn't been ashore but he got three days leave stoppage because he was late returning to the ship. I don't know whether he tried to tell 'em that he was in, was my guest, because he was my
- 18:00 relation I think he probably could have been excused and not been punished but that happened.

I was just struck by your story of when you were in South Africa that you know an officer couldn't get into a car with a rating of one of the ordinary ratings?

Oh no no.

So there really was quite strong sense?

Lines of distinction yes yeah yeah.

- 18:30 Well you know a reason for it because if you get too friendly with the lower ratings your exercise of discipline might be impaired. It could be difficult.

So you really did have to command their respect and exercise your authority like that?

- 19:00 Yes, well didn't realise it until much later that although you had the authority you didn't always have the respect of the lower decks. It never occurred to me because I always felt that the crew I was with thought I was
- 19:30 all right, to put it mildly. For instance one thing about Steady Hour, my stoker there was ashore one evening there, when he came back the next day he told me that he'd met up with some of his mates who knew that he was on one of these patrol boats
- 20:00 and they asked him all sorts of questions, one of 'em was, "What's your skipper like?" Well Ragsy Burns is the fellow that was manning the machine gun in that photo, he was a rough stoker although he was as flash as a rat's tooth you know, you might say always well dressed, well set up. His reply I classed as fairly high praise.
- 20:30 When this fellow asked him what his skipper was like his reply was, "Oh he's not a bad sort of a bastard," so but I never had any trouble with any of the crew that I served with the lower deck. Other officers may have some of 'em, certainly did have, but I never had and I always felt that whether I deserved it or not
- 21:00 that I did have their respect. So much so, one little anecdote, one of the leading seamen came to me in my cabin one evening and he and some of his friends apparently had been talking about one thing and another and they were to some extent a bit upset with the treatment I was getting from the captain,
- 21:30 so this leading seaman said well you know, "Do you want to get discharged back to Australia? If you're worried about having to pay your own fare back you needn't worry about that because we'll see you right for that," so I assured him that I wasn't all that upset about it and, "Thank you very much," so you know that told me something about the sailors
- 22:00 in general in Kanimbla so if I had nothing else I had some of their sympathy. They were prepared to get me out of it, if I wanted to I could apply to be reappointed to, drafted back to Australia because I wasn't happy in the ship and they'd see that I would be able to afford my way back so maybe I'm blowing me own
- 22:30 trumpet but...

No well that was a kind thing to do for them wasn't it?

Yeah yeah.

This section of transcript is embargoed until 1 January 2034.

24:25 **All right now look I want to come back to Hobart now and talk about your time sweeping for mines**

24:30 **could you tell me how does one sweep for mines? Have you got a big broom or...?**

Well not exactly no, you, the mine-sweeping gear that we used had a special wire rope on a winch that was made in such a way that it

25:00 acted like a hacksaw if it came across a mine mooring wire. How it operated, if you imagine you how a kite flies in the air you got the wind blowing and the kite is on a string and because it's up

25:30 in the air it's at an angle so that the wind blowing tends to keep the kite up in the air. Well if you translate that into a kite like contraption on the end of a wire rope and this, it's called an 'otter board' it's, but it serves the same purpose as a kite

26:00 but it's suspended from a float on the surface so it's down so many feet below the float on the surface and it's in the water so that it's on an angle to the vertical. As the ship's steaming along it's like a a kite in the air but turned over, so instead of being up in the air it's

26:30 horizontal in the water and this kite-like contraption is forced away from the ship so that you've got a wire from the stern of the ship where it's lowered down and weighted more or less so it's low down in the water then this wire goes out to the side to the float so that that's down in the water.

27:00 If there's mines there which are, say, within 10 or 20 feet of the surface your wire is down below that. As it's being dragged along it comes across the mooring wire for the mine then it's being pulled along. The mine mooring can't go anywhere else

27:30 so it's dragged across the wire. The wire cuts across the mooring cable, cuts the cable, the mine floats to the surface. Now further questions on the science of mine sweeping?

Well did you ever find any?

No.

None in Hobart?

No no.

What about in Sydney?

Hey?

In Sydney?

Well I wasn't on mine-sweeping duties in Sydney. Our job in Sydney on the harbour defence launchers

28:00 was to go out because the mine-sweepers based on Sydney they had a particular track which was, say, about half a mile wide on the approach to Sydney. All shipping coming to the port would have to come in that channel. Because the mine sweepers went out daily.

So what would you have done with the mines if you'd found

28:30 **any?**

Sink 'em.

Don't they?

Like gunfire or rifle. I didn't think rifle fire was very effective to sink the mines but we'd have to dispose of 'em somehow. Theoretically once the mine has been cut adrift it's safe, theoretically. They weren't always but if a

29:00 mine was swept up well you'd have to deal with it and if you couldn't sink it by rifle fire you'd have to use the bigger guns until you got enough holes in it that it'd sink.

Now you were telling me about your work in Sydney Harbour?

Yeah.

Going around after the mine-sweepers?

Yes, well, no we weren't actually going around after them. You see the mine-sweepers would sweep all day

29:30 to make sure that the approach channel was free of mines whether any had been laid there or not but to guarantee that it was free they had to go out and go up and down all day so that they could know that there were no mines there anyway. Then our job as the harbour patrol vessel was to take over

- 30:00 after the mine-sweepers finished for the day, we would go down during the day in Sydney, go down to Watson's Bay and at sundown go out through the heads and choof up and down, well it didn't matter where we went because our boats weren't deep enough to be in danger of the mines. The mines were all well down below the draft of our boats
- 30:30 because they were only large motor launchers but our job then was to keep an eye on it and see that there were no suspicious vessels. Had any been sighted well of course we'd have to report to the naval officer in charge what was happening. My boat Steady Hour I was relieved there by Athol Townley,
- 31:00 you might remember hearing of him, he was Minister for the Navy in one of Menzies' governments but he was a Naval Reserve officer from Hobart. He took over Steady Hour and the day that the German, that the Japanese submarines came into Sydney Harbour, Steady Hour claimed that they sank one of those Japanese submarines,
- 31:30 Townley.

Well what was Steady Hour armed with?

A 303 machine gun plus about four depth charges. If we came across any submarines we had depth charges we could drop to sink the submarines.

How do you fire a depth charge?

You fire a depth charge, you just drop it over the side

- 32:00 and it sinks and it's set to explode when it reaches a certain depth. You can set the depth anything from 50 feet to 350 feet wherever you thought the submarine might be so what'd happen as it's the mine, as the depth charge sank a chamber would fill with water.
- 32:30 When it was filled then it would set off the explosion so that the different depth setting to get it to go off at 50 feet you'd open up a fairly large opening into the chamber in the mine, the depth charge rather, that fills up with water. To go down to 350 feet you'd have a much smaller diameter
- 33:00 entry for the water so that it took longer for the chamber to fill. That's briefly how you controlled the depth that the depth charge would explode at but as I was saying Athol Townley took over my ship. Within about three months four months after I'd left her there was the raid on Sydney Harbour and he realised that
- 33:30 he'd, that the authorities would tend not to believe him when he got back and claimed that he'd sunk a submarine so he'd used his depth charges. They decided that he'd try and get some wreckage off the submarine. He lowered his anchor and he went backwards and forwards until the anchor caught on something in the submarine. He thought,
- 34:00 will he pull the anchor up and get something up with it, but what he didn't realise was that what he'd hooked with his anchor was too strong, it wouldn't break away so when he went in to replenish his depth charges he requisitioned the depth charges and then he, "Oh by the way, sunk a submarine out there," so everybody laughed and he said, "Oh I also,
- 34:30 I've got to report that I've lost me anchor." He said, "But I'll tell you where you'll find the anchor." He told them where it was. He said, "You'll find that it's tangled up with a Japanese submarine," so when they sent the divers down they found out he was right so he got a pat on the back but I claimed that I'd trained the crew and he got the the honour and glory out of it. Anyway that's my story so...

Well Len you were in Hobart when Singapore

- 35:00 **fell?**

Yes.

What was the impact of that?

Well that was interesting from various aspects. A senior officer in Hobart had a car all ready so that if Hobart was invaded he had a car filled with petrol

- 35:30 so that he could take off in his car up to Launceston and make a strategic withdrawal back to the mainland. Another aspect of it was that shortly after New Year they always had the Hobart Regatta. They got a broadcast from Tokyo Rose directed to the Hobart population,
- 36:00 sympathising with them because they'd had to cancel the Hobart Regatta for 1942. They said, "Well never mind, when our fleet comes down there we'll put on a Regatta for you." The general, most of the population in Hobart went to panic stations pretty well. Some of the authorities reckoned that
- 36:30 Tasmania was the ideal place for the Japanese to base an invasion of Australia. They'd come down, take over Tasmania and then invade the mainland from there so all sorts of silly ideas went around there, yeah.

And how did you feel?

I don't think you've ever heard any of these stories before.

Oh some, not the Tasmanian ones.

Not those?

No they're interesting, yeah

37:00 **and what did you feel about the invasion of Singapore, I mean having been there and served there?**

Well like everybody else I was amazed that Singapore collapsed so readily but by that time I realised that they had very little chance because for a start they lost so many Australian troops

37:30 on the Peninsula, the mainland, they were overrun by the Japanese and the fact that the guns were pointing the wrong way, plus that all the, nearly all the supplies at that stage had to come over land from Malaya so that, and of course the

38:00 [HMS] Prince of Wales and [HMS] Renown were lost early in the things, the battle ships that were part of the essential defences of Singapore, so and they were lost because they had no air power, so the dice were heavily loaded against us as far as Singapore was concerned. It was a terrible shock but within days we

38:30 realised that it, by that time it was inevitable.

So how did you feel about your home front defence role once Singapore fell?

Well personally I felt that Australia was reasonably safe. We're not immune from

39:00 sporadic attacks but as far as invasion was concerned I really felt it was somewhat unlikely because the Japanese had so far to come. The lines of communication were extended so far and ultimately I think that was the great weakness in the Japanese side because when the Americans

39:30 came here we were able to cut off a lot of the Japanese from their supply bases so that by that time I was confident that we had, the odds may have only been slightly, but the odds were in our favour anyway. By that time we'd dealt with the...

So you weren't worried about an invasion?

40:00 Pardon?

You weren't worried about an invasion?

Not really I personally didn't give it much thought at all but...

Tape 8

00:31 **So after your posting in Hobart where were you sent next?**

Well I finished up on HMAS Bombo as I said which originally pre war had been carrying blue metal from down near Kiama, if not Kiama itself, I'm not sure which, up to Sydney and that was, they shoved a couple of

01:00 winches on the stern and made her a mine-sweeper then six or nine months sweeping out of Hobart they had just built a floating bridge in Hobart across the Derwent, concrete pontoons to carry the roadway. The roadway was only about that far above the water level, had a big

01:30 section which had a section of the road on towers each side of the opening so that they could lift the roadway up, let ships go up through there to go up to Risdon up the river. Well I don't know how long it took them to make the pontoons to float the bridge across there. It got a big write-up in the engineering papers at the time.

02:00 Well then when they finished making that bridge the firm that had been making these concrete pontoons got a contract with the army to make ammunition lighters, concrete ammunition lighters, but they had to be delivered in Sydney so Bombo got the job because they were able to tow mine-sweepers. We could tow lighters so we got

02:30 the job of towing these lighters up to Sydney although there were two sweepers in Hobart but we were the lucky or unlucky ones. As the lighter got completed we got the job to take it up to Sydney. We spent a few months delivering these lighters, ammunition lighters, in Sydney and because we came from Hobart and the navy people

03:00 in Sydney had a bit of a liking for 'Cascade' beer which was reputed to be about the best in Australia we were one of the most popular ships. We had friends we never even knew we had who came down to see us on board because, well you had to invite 'em to have a drink didn't you? You couldn't let 'em go away dying of thirst so we were invaded with people from Sydney. Then they decided

03:30 to reconvert Bombo to a store carrying ship so they didn't actually take the mine-sweeping gear off. They left the winches but took the actual floats and sweep gear, the kites, took those off, cleared stuff out of the ships hold and

04:00 put her back to being able to carry cargo, sent her up to Darwin. Took 'em three months or more to degut her and reconvert her back into a normal sort of ship. Installed masts and derricks and winches for cargo handling on board because originally she hadn't had a mast, she had carried a crane so that she could

04:30 have a scoop and scoop the blue metal up out of the hold and deliver it, you know like these big grabs pick up tons of stuff at a time and so but they put a mast and signal yards and derricks and winches so that we could handle cargo, sent her up to Darwin. When she paid off to

05:00 re-fit, I was first lieutenant and I was promised that I would get a posting to another ship. Well when it came back they recommissioned Bombo, the engineer who had joined Bombo later than I had he hadn't had as long on her as I did, he and I were reappointed to Bombo on recommissioning so we went up to Darwin with her. That was a dirty trick played on me again

05:30 because I should have got another appointment somewhere else. Anyhow we crashed our way up to Darwin. Every time we came into port somewhere our captain who was a naval reservist like me, should say not like me like I, but he was a fairly poor sort of seaman. I can say that because he's, he can't retaliate, he's departed this mortal

06:00 coil, by now every time we came in he crashed into another ship or a wharf or something so we smashed our way up to Darwin but we got there. Then we worked out of Darwin for several months. Normally a posting to Darwin was 18 months. You could come home on leave after nine months and go back and after 18 months you could come home on another lot of leave

06:30 but then if you'd had nine months leave, after nine months you ran the risk of being reappointed to Darwin, but if you did 18 months without a break then they were morally bound to give you an appointment somewhere other than Darwin so I stuck it out but I got attacked by sandflies and mosquitos before the 18 months was up and eventually I was invalided out

07:00 of Darwin, maybe after 12, if I look at me sheets here I'd give you the exact time I spent working out of Darwin but that's immaterial but I was invalided south unfit for tropical service. I was appointed to Williamstown Naval Depot as first lieutenant there. After I spent six or seven months ashore and got fed

07:30 up with shore service I went, I knew a friend who'd been a school mate at Mordialloc High who was actually appointed to Navy Office there. One of his jobs was to help with the appointments of officers so I went and saw Jim and said, "Well now I'm fit for sea service again." I didn't know whether I was or not but that was my story. I said, "Get me a job back to sea," so I think he probably

08:00 organised it but I got appointed to HMAS Manoora who by this time had been converted from originally being an armed merchant cruiser like Kanimbla had been early in the war she was converted back to a landing ship 'LSI', Landing Ship Infantry which Kanimbla, [HMAS] Westralia and Manoora all ended up as HMAS ships,

08:30 carrying troops up for the invasions of the islands when the Japanese were being defeated and pushed back and we, my, but then our job then in Manoora was to bring troops back from the island. The war was finished I was actually in Darwin Hospital when the Japanese surrendered in September what, '45?

09:00 I was discharged from the navy in April '46 and then came back to my civilian job as I was still a cadet biochemist but I'd, you know, if it hadn't been for the war theoretically I should have been qualified for advancement as biochemist.

09:30 They refused to promote me to biochemist because I hadn't done the departmental examinations. They retained me as a cadet biochemist but paid me as a biochemist, a biochemist rate of pay, but at that stage because I hadn't done the examinations I wasn't actually entitled to

10:00 accelerated advancement. If we passed our internal departmental examinations fairly quickly, passed the part two examinations, then we'd get salary increase above what we would have normally got just by passage of time. So then by the time I'd

10:30 done the, all the internal examinations, then I applied to be considered for accelerated advancement and I gave them a sort of a claim as to when I considered I would have reasonably have passed the internal examinations. It actually worked out to my advantage that one of the, my mates who joined

11:00 CSL about a fortnight before I did, when I finally got my accelerated advancement sort of further accelerated and it was granted from the time that I'd worked out when I was entitled to it, I was paid, I didn't actually get the money at the time but my salary caught up so that I leap frogged over

11:30 him although I actually qualified later but, oh you know, after a few years or months in the navy you learn how to use the system to your own advantage, yeah. This never bothered me if someone showed me a point and sort of scored a dirty advantage over me. I used to think

12:00 oh well maybe my turn'll come, I'll get something back on him so that it didn't worry me to that extent that I was being seen off because if I got the opportunity I'd take it to do him in the eye too but you know maybe I've got a strange sort of philosophy but that's been more or less my approach to life throughout which hasn't stood

12:30 me in very bad stead, mightn't have done me a hell of a lot of good, but yeah.

Well Len, you mentioned that you were in hospital when the war ended?

Yeah.

What was your illness?

Well because I said that I'd been attacked by sandflies and mosquitos I've still got spots on my arms and legs that when I get a suntan up they show as white spots.

13:00 Every place where an insect has bitten me I reacted and I finally had poisoning, blood poisoning of the legs, so the doctors in Darwin got me into hospital. At that stage penicillin was the wonder drug. A couple of weeks they reckoned on penicillin they'd clear it up,

13:30 how little they knew because nothing happened and they, one of their conclusions was that because the bites were so itchy and I scratched them that I never gave 'em a chance to heal so they countered that by having me in hospital and so that I couldn't scratch the itches they bandaged me hands up in bandages and cotton wool

14:00 so instead of scratching I rubbed the bandages on it so finally, after several weeks in Darwin Hospital, then somebody thought, "Oh well," you know, "We think perhaps your psychiatric condition needs to be assessed," so they, the navy, had no psychiatric unit, the army ran that in Darwin so they sent me, you know,

14:30 wherever the Psychiatric Unit was, a couple of hundred miles away from Darwin or wherever it was, so I thought, "Oh well, that's all right," you know, "If the, when the psychiatrists start asking me the questions, I can give 'em the answers that I can convince 'em that if I'm not completely 'gah gah' at least I'm a bit 'troppo' so they'll send me south," so again you know used the system to my

15:00 advantage and get what I wanted so that was how I got out of Darwin before my 18 months were up but then see then I was unfit for tropical service until I pulled the next swiftie on 'em and said, "Well you know I'm okay to go back." I don't remember being assessed by a medico to clear me for sea service but I got back into Manoora and serving at sea again which

15:30 for a naval officer is much preferable to flying a chair in navy office or 'Yogi House', as it used to be called back in those days.

So you were happy to get back to sea after all that?

Oh, yeah yeah. If I was in the navy, certainly I was going to be at sea but then if you had sufficient

16:00 time up they had a point service that you got so many points if you were married, so many more points if you had a family.

Len what did you do on the Manoora?

Oh much the same as I'd done in Kanimbla more or less assistant officer of the watch. I wasn't keeping a watch on me own because Manoora had

16:30 proper sea-going officers, naval sea-going reserve officers who had years of experience at sea although by that time I was capable of navigating a ship on me own and handling a ship because in Bombo I was first lieutenant and the captain, who I said crashed his way up to Darwin, he didn't know anything about

17:00 navigation. By that time I'd managed to teach myself sufficient to be able to find me way around the ocean and in Manoora well that was all I had to do. They, I think they tended to keep the ship's company up to much the same as it had been when she'd been employed as

17:30 an assault ship because we still had the landing barges and that on board so that when we were embarking troops to come back to Australia in, they had the same complement that had been engaged in taking the troops from the ship to the islands for the assaults

18:00 but then to bring 'em back they had the same crew bring the troops from the island back on board so the landing barges would come alongside, the soldiers would clamber up, get back on board one way or another, up the gangways or up the scrambling nets, and then once the landing craft had discharged their crew back on board

- 18:30 they'd go back and pick up another 50 or 100 men, however many the barge would carry, keep going until we'd embarked the seventeen hundred or however many troops we carried. I never knew how many they carried. When we brought one lot back from somewhere up in the islands, as they were coming back on board I recognised
- 19:00 one of the privates there. He was a younger brother of this lad that I told you earlier that we went down at the age of about four, we were going down to Mornington to catch our fathers' tea fish, Wal Ezzard, who was actually best man at both my weddings, I recognised his brother coming aboard
- 19:30 so I had a message piped over the ship's public address system for Private Ezzard to report to the regulating officer so he didn't know what he was wanted for so he came up there, met him, took him down to my cabin and we cracked a bottle of beer and because he was only a private I couldn't take him down to the wardroom until I contacted one of the army
- 20:00 officers on board and borrowed a set of shoulder pips so Private Ezzard was unofficially rapidly promoted to captain, we went down to the wardroom and were able to drink in civilised fashion so.

So how was that repatriating the troops how did you feel about that job?

Oh well that was just another job.

But what was it like to have all these infantry on board?

- 20:30 Yeah well I was I wasn't actually involved in taking the troops up to the island but the ship had been. The navy took 'em there and put 'em ashore so if somebody was going to bring 'em back home the obvious people to do it were the navy. They knew how to put 'em ashore in enemy territory. Surely we could bring 'em back and put 'em ashore in a civilised fashion, onto a wharf
- 21:00 not in Sydney we brought 'em back to Brisbane, discharged them at Brisbane and then we'd choof off back to another of the islands and bring another lot back, so that went on until I applied for demobilisation because I had sufficient points scored to be immediately eligible for demobilisation. By that
- 21:30 time I wasn't really all that overjoyed at coming back to CSL really because I'd been away from it for nearly seven years. I'd, my service had been interrupted, I wasn't fully trained as a bacteriologist biochemist or bacteriology was my, rather my preferred
- 22:00 side of it rather than biochemistry, mainly because I'd failed at chemistry a few times I s'pose but I was so far behind everybody else that I'd started out there with that, I thought, well you know, I was tempted to try and stay not in the navy but the merchant service but then I would have been up against it because
- 22:30 although I'd had experience in loading and unloading cargo from Bombo being a store carrier and where we went supplying mission stations as well as some of the outlying RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] stations around Northern Territory and north western Australia, I
- 23:00 had no proper qualifications so I'd be a long way back there so eventually I thought better of trying to go to sea although I would have loved to have gone back to sea but probably I wouldn't have made as much as a success of it as I did with my service at CSL, so that's how I came to go back to
- 23:30 the scientific life. What else do you want to know?

Well I guess I was just imagining that being involved in bringing the troops home might have been quite a satisfying job to perform? How did you feel about that? I mean did you have a sense of pride in that particularly, or...?

- 24:00 Had nothing to take pride in, it was the sort of job we were supposed to be able to do. We, you know, just did it and didn't kick up a fuss.

Well what would you say is the part of your service career that you do take the most pride in?

Service career being navy you mean, do you, yeah?

- 24:30 Well first off I suppose not that I was much to blame for it but the experience in Kanimbla in the communication branch and well equally the patrol boat and mine sweeping work. Well without really exerting myself I s'pose I really tried to do me best
- 25:00 in each job. Mightn't have been a very good best but it was the best I could manage at the time I s'pose. Reasonably I was, I felt reasonably satisfied with the job I did, even though the captain wasn't.

Yeah well that's good, yeah, and what was the low point of your naval

- 25:30 **service would you say?**

Oh coming up against that captain, yeah, but there I was, I just had to put up with it I s'pose.

So looking back are there things that you regret about your service years?

The fact that I didn't

- 26:00 get over to Great Britain because Barbara was an English girl. She was born in England she had her first birthday in Durban on the way out to Australia in a troop ship. She, you know, her parents came out in the same ship and when I went into the navy when I was called up, I thought,
- 26:30 well, before the war finished I was certain to get over to England but I never did. I don't know how many others of us didn't get to England but I know most the fellows that I started off with in the AMCs, most of those did get over to England. Maybe it's just as well I didn't because it tended to be a bit unhealthy over there at times
- 27:00 but I would have liked to have got over there and met some of Barbara's relations. That had to wait until after I'd retired and we went over to Britain in 1986 but a lot of her relatives over there by that time had died but some of the younger ones that were around her age or slightly younger, well we got on, met them
- 27:30 and had wonderful times over there then but would have been much better during the war.

So look we're coming towards the end of the interview now so I just want to say you said you had lots of stories to tell another three days worth so would you like to offer some of them now?

Well off hand

- 28:00 what can I think of? I've touched on the time we spent looking for ourselves for two days capturing the Dah Pu, Mayakovsky, HMS Thrasher the Royal Navy destroyer
- 28:30 that I had a fortnight on, there they were all some of the highlights. Oh yeah one other little one which won't take long, I mentioned the lass that I used to take to the pictures in Durban occasionally,
- 29:00 well most times when we got into port I suppose and of course I was in civilian clothes. We came out of the theatre one evening and Margaret nudged me and pointed, "Isn't that your captain over there?" 'cause he was in uniform you see. I was in
- 29:30 civvies and, "Yes that's the captain but we're not speaking to each other," so we just ignored each other. I assume that he knew that I was there too but that was just by the by. We conveniently acted as though neither of us was there but, no, that didn't worry me.
- 30:00 **So have you ever dreamt about the war?**

Ever dreamt about it? Not that I can recall, no.

And did you talk to your wife or children about your war service?

Oh I told her a lot of what I've already been through, I think, same as I've told Jeannie a lot about it. She might have forgotten about it but she'll remember,

- 30:30 told you about some of the things that I did during the war.

And Len, I'm wondering do you feel as though your contribution to the war has been adequately acknowledged?

Well yes I suppose so because apart from the episode

- 31:00 up in the Persian Gulf when they captured however many, nine, German ships and a floating dock and a couple of Persian warships and tugs and Lord knows what which I had left the ship about four months before that took place but by and large I don't think that I personally did anything
- 31:30 very effective. I did the job that I came up with. I think I did all that could have been reasonably expected of me although the captain said that I lacked initiative and drive but other officers in the ship did as little in their spare time as I did
- 32:00 but in addition to some of them, well I had the signal department to pretend to run anyway. It was an easy job because, as I said, I had two experienced chief petty officers, the chief yeoman and chief telegraphists. I think I'm not sure about the chief yeoman but I think the chief telegraphist was one of the most
- 32:30 highly regarded telegraphists in the navy at that time. They were both equally efficient in my respect in their particular job.

So why do you say you don't feel like you were particularly effective in the war?

Because I had other people under me that were able to do all that the ship that I was in was

- 33:00 required to do, they could carry on and do the job effectively without me interfering, so the fact that I could pick up a signal lamp and send a signal to another ship, that was beside the point. That wasn't anything that would normally be expected of a junior officer who just happened

- 33:30 to have the job of signals officer, see. As far as the captain and first lieutenant and all the rest of the high executives in the ship knew, I was just another rocky sub-lieutenant, "What would he know about the job?" But it just happened that if necessary I could do the job of a signalman. I don't take any credit
- 34:00 for that because before I got me commission, I was trained to do that. I never lost the ability once I got me commission. I may not be as efficient a signalman now if I had to pick up a lamp and try to signal but give me a week or two, I could still,
- 34:30 I think, so long as I didn't have to listen to a radio signal and pick up Morse on the radio except that in Bombo we only had a telegraphist to handle the wireless traffic. He of course could not be on duty 24 hours a day but
- 35:00 at any tick of the clock maybe the shore signal station may have called up Bombo, so the telegraphist that we had told us what the call sign for any messages which might have affected us, the call sign that the
- 35:30 station would transmit would be VHL VHM two stroke nine. If the message started with that sort of call sign which would be sent at 22 words a minute, he sort of trained us up to be able to read that particular little bit of Morse code
- 36:00 at 22 words a minute so even now if a buzzer went off sending VHL VHM two stroke nine I would be able to identify it at that speed but anything else even at 10 words a minute through the ears I would not be able to read but if it was a light 10 words a minute yes I
- 36:30 could read that but that's just because we weren't trained initially to that extent.

Well Len, I'll put the question a bit differently and ask you, do you think that the navy have received adequate acknowledgement for their contribution to the war?

- 37:00 Maybe not from the general public but amongst the professionals I think, yes I think it's recognised, you know, by and large, the navy did as good a job as any other navy in the world. We think we did it a bit better than most. Maybe we're prejudiced.

- 37:30 **And having served in World War II did you then feel as though you were part of the ANZAC [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] tradition?**

No, because I've always sort of lined the ANZAC tradition up more with the army. I think there are different traditions amongst

- 38:00 the services. I think the air force traditions follow on from both army and navy so that I feel there was a more strong bond between the navy and the air force than there is with the navy and the army. I think there is an equally strong bond between the army and the air force

- 38:30 because the air force sprang from both services. Originally the army and the navy had their own air services which weren't amalgamated until late in the First World War. That's why the air force ranks, the lower ranks, tend to adopt

- 39:00 the army terminology. You've got air force, you haven't got privates but you've got corporals, sergeants, the warrant officers get a bit different, but then the officers in the air force they follow the naval ranking. You haven't got sub-lieutenants but you've

- 39:30 got flight lieutenants, wing commanders, ah not wing commanders, squadron leaders are an odd one. They rank with lieutenant commanders but then you've got wing commanders, group captains, air commodores, all navy ranks. Then they break traditions and they become air marshals, they're army ranks again so they've got associations, air force's got an association both

- 40:00 ways. You may or may not remember what the 3LO Evans, what was it, Peter Evans was one of the famous 3LO announcers, or they'd be disc jockeys these days. Used to run the best

- 40:30 breakfast session on the air post-war. He was a villain. He claimed that he, whatever sort of fit occurred to him any day. He'd claim to have been in any one of the three services and he had me fooled because I could recognise army slang that he used

- 41:00 but he also was well up with navy slang and of course he reckoned, yeah, he'd been in the air services as well so I button holed him one day to find out just where he fitted in because he was so convincing. It turned out that he was an army officer, a bit of a devil, but

- 41:30 he had a brother who was in the fleet air arm so he knew the army slang because he'd served in the army and he picked up the navy language from his brother who was in the fleet air arm so he was able to more or less convince anybody, wherever he was, that he'd been in that service too. He was a delightful old boy, Peter.

INTERVIEW ENDS

