

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Lloyd Saltmarsh (Saltie) - Transcript of interview

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### Tape 1

- 00:05 Well I'm a First Fleeter, my great, great, great grandfather came out in 1788 and in Tasmania if you had convict forebears you weren't looked upon very kindly anyway...
- 00:51 **Sorry Lloyd if we could just start again, sorry about that.**  
Yes fine. My forebears, my great, great, great grandfather
- 01:00 came out in 1788 and in Tasmania if you were descended of convicts you weren't looked upon very happily. As a matter of fact my forebear was supposed to be a sergeant in the Queen's 77th Foot Regiment and there was never a Sergeant Saltmarsh and never was a 77th. Anyway my father worked on the land and I went
- 01:30 to school at a place called Cressy. We lived in Epping Forest in those days and I went to school at Cressy because I couldn't get to the school at Epping because I was about 4 ½ miles from home and I was only six years of age so I lived with my grandmother went to school at Cressy. And then when Granny died in 1928 I went back to
- 02:00 to Epping Forest School. And I'd always wanted to join the navy, so I worked around as a farm hand for some years in 1938 I tried to join the navy but Tasmania was on a roster or not a roster but a quote system to join the navy, the permanent navy that is. So I didn't make it in 1938 but then I tried again in 1939
- 02:30 and got through and one of my reasons for wanting to join the navy was because I had an uncle in the navy and he was chief physical training instructor and he used to come over to Tassie [Tasmania] on leave with his medals and his braid and all the rest of it and I thought it would be a good thing if I join the navy. So on the seventh of August 1939 that's what I did
- 03:00 and being a Tasmanian and living in the north, we came over to Melbourne to do our medical. But if you lived in the southern part of Tassie, you did your medical in Hobart, and that's something I never quite understood and once you came over here of course, you stayed for a fortnight, used to come over by ship of course. You stayed a fortnight, so you had a fortnight's holiday if you wanted, then go back. And a friend of mine who tried to join the navy couldn't pass his medical,
- 03:30 he did that. And we were working together on a farm. And from there of course I went down to Flinders Naval Depot and did my initial training as a seaman in gunnery and torpedo and parade ground stuff, and then in early 1940 I got appendicitis,
- 04:00 so went to hospital and I didn't go to sea until May 1940. And in May 1940 I joined the [HMAS] Canberra and we sailed off and one of my first ports of call, foreign ports of call was Capetown and that was a magnificent sight, going in the early morning with a flat, dead flat sea and the Cable Mountain in the background. And you know, its
- 04:30 a memory that stayed with me or a view that stayed with me all my life. A about three years ago, Vera and I went back just to have a look, and it's nothing like...the mountain is still there of course, but the foreshore was quite different to what was in 1940.
- What was it like in 1940?**  
Well there were just a few buildings around in 1940 and I can remember we went up to Durban
- 05:00 from Cape Town and one of the things that struck me, they had the prisoners all working. And they all had red shirts on and they were all working around, and the guards were standing there with assagais, you know the short spears that the Africans have. But Durban was a nice very too but Capetown was well, it was different of course.
- 05:30 One of the few places, well, it was the first navy places that I'd been to with a lot of coloured people,

and the whites weren't terribly popular in some places there, but was still a nice place to be. So from there on the Canberra we went around the South Atlantic and the German

- 06:00 pocket battleship, the Admiral Scheer, was in the locality and well I for one, was hoping we didn't meet her because she had 11 inch guns and we only had 8 inch guns, so I thought we would be tremendously out gunned, not get very close at all, if we got away at all. So I stayed on the Canberra until
- 06:30 October 1941 and then I went, I was drafted to [HMAS] Vampire. And Vampire had come out of the Mediterranean and was doing a refit in Singapore. And you might recall, they were called the Scrap Islands tour, VNW destroyers and the steward. And we did our working out trials
- 07:00 and we took General Percival up to Borneo, it was called British North Borneo in those days and the White Raja was the man. Anyway we took General Percival up there because there was signs that the Japanese were getting a bit excited and likely to, you know, come down that part of the world and we brought him back and then
- 07:30 we did ordinary working out trials and so on around the area. And I do recall while we were doing that, we had, we used to call them the Panatrophe System a broadcast system on the ship and because we were not getting into port at all, they started playing 'If I Had the Wings of An Angel
- 08:00 'Over these prison walls I'd fly.' And they played it over and over and over again and the first lieutenant said, "That's enough of that, you can't play that." So the smarties thought, we'll play the American national anthem, which they did and then he said, "Well that's fair enough, but if you're going to play the American National Anthem then you'll have to stand to attention while it was being played." So that finished that episode.
- 08:30 **And from there?**
- Well from then we went into Singapore Harbour in December, and on the seventh of December Pearl Harbor took place and a British unit of two battle ships, four destroyers and the [HMS] Indomitable, the aircraft carrier, were to come to Singapore
- 09:00 to bolster the forces there and unfortunately the Indomitable ran aground in the West Indies and had to go to America to be fixed and they arrived in the battleships and destroyers arrived in Singapore on the eighth of December and we went out, there was supposed to be some Japanese landing
- 09:30 so it went out to look for them and we were hoping that we would have cloud cover so that we could get in close to them. They were supposed to be landing at a place called Kota Baru, which is on the east coast of Malaysia. And we went looking as I said and couldn't find them. And in fact they were landing much further downstream or down the coast as I should say.
- 10:00 And then on the 10th December, whilst we were still at sea, looking around, an aircraft was... or an aircraft cited us, so our open being undiscovered was blown and they reported obviously that we were there and the Japanese
- 10:30 aircraft torpedo bombers from land base, from the 22nd Squadron I think it was Japanese, came out and attacked the two big ships. But before the torpedo bombers attacked, there was a high-level bombing run and they dropped some bombs, and one of them, or maybe more than one, hit the [HMS] Repulse. It didn't do much damage to her
- 11:00 as far as sinking was concerned but then the torpedo bombers came in and they came in from all angles and they used to come in to about 4-500 yards and drop their bombs and their torpedoes. And it was a bit of a thrill to be an escort destroyer alongside the two battleships and to see the torpedoes passing underneath you, because we only drew, our depth in the water was only
- 11:30 11 feet 8 inches, whereas the battleships were 21 and 26 feet. So they would be set to their depths but still gave a bit of thrill, particularly at night and in tropical waters when the dolphins would come to the ships. You know they were attracted to ships and they would be coming to you in a straight line and you'd say well let's hope they are dolphins and not torpedoes from a submarine. Yes so...
- 12:00 we picked up survivors. Our ship the crew picked up 225. Our fellows were diving into the water, we had one of our boats down and our boys were diving into the waters and picking them up. And there was some painful wounds in the seamen and of course one of the things about it was,
- 12:30 you didn't know whether they were dead or not until you pulled them out, and of course if they were dead, well then we left them there, because you had to pick up the fellows that were still living. And one of the big problems there was fuel oil, you know, it floats on top of the water and it was quite thick. And it was bad for the survivors who was splashing around in the water. It was also pretty tough on our boys who were trying to pick them up
- 13:00 And we brought them on board of course, laid them out on the deck, took them into our mess decks. Some of them very badly burnt from super-heated steam which they had to drive the engines and the skin would just be hanging from them and I remember in our mess decks and sitting on our lockers, they were saturated

- 13:30 with fluid from the burns and so on and from the oil fuel. It was quite a messy business actually. So we took them back into Singapore. Actually there was 850 sailors lost in that engagement, between those two battleships. And we took them back into Singapore and some of them were sent up to, given a rifle, a 303
- 14:00 and a few rounds of ammunition and sent up to the peninsula to fight the Japanese. And one person I know in particular was Stoko[?] and he was given the job of driving the train, which he could do of course. So we stayed around for a while and then in January, the 26th of January... actually the 25th January, there was a report
- 14:30 that some Japanese were landing in at place called Endau Bay on the east coast of Malaysia [actually Malaya] down nearer to Singapore and we took off with another destroyer the [HMS] Thanet in company and we went into look at Endau see what was going on there and when we got there, there was a Japanese cruiser and 6 destroyers and
- 15:00 some troop ships and it was rather a hot reception that we got because we fired our torpedoes at one of the destroyers but we were too close, so that just went underneath. And the Thanet also fired some torpedoes and the same situation because you know they'd only been about 50-100 yards away from us and by the time the torpedo hit the water,
- 15:30 it wouldn't have had time to adjust itself to its right running depth. So, much gunfire took place on our behalf on an on the cruisers behalf and we.. at one stage we were steaming along and there was three of us inline, there was the Vampire, the Japanese destroyer and the Thanet behind it. And the Japanese destroyer was signalling to us and I remember our yeoman signaller asked the captain,
- 16:00 "What do we do?" because he just said they were signalling and the captain said, "Answer." So he made the ordinary answer sign which is just the letter 'T' on a light, the Jap just pulled out and started firing and then the poor old Thanet disappeared. And we dropped the smoke float to distract the Japanese and to give us a bit of protection to get away
- 16:30 and we did and of course, there was no way that we could go back and look for survivors of the Thanet for a start it was dark, and also, had we with the volume of Japanese warships in there, wouldn't have made it either. So we scampered back to Singapore. And then after that we did just ordinary patrol work, convoy patrol work and escorts and so on, and of course you know
- 17:00 on the 15th February the Japanese actually took over Singapore. We weren't there at that time, we were on our way to Colombo. And I remember it well because my birthday was on the 14th of February and Singapore fell on the day afterwards but we were out of the place by them and on our way to Colombo
- 17:30 And one of the ships that was with us, the [HMS] Prince of Wales, was a destroyer called [HMS] Tenedos, the British destroyer and she was also at a Colombo and she was sunk there along the wharf, but not when we were there sometime after. Anyway from there on we went around to Trincomalee
- 18:00 and there was an aircraft carrier there, the Hermes, HMAS Hermes and we were to bring her back to Australia. So on the 8th April, we set off for Australia and then we got reports that there were Japanese in the area and we came back into Trincomalee
- 18:30 and then on the 9th, now I may be wrong there, might be one day after, we were in company with the Hermes, acting as escort destroyer when Japanese dive bombers appeared and they actually ignored us for a time and they concentrated on the Hermes and she went down and I believe they lost 206
- 19:00 of her crew in that effort. And when the Hermes was down, they thought, 'Well we'll better had a bit of a go at the small destroyer.' so they started bombing us. And they used to get up in the sun, so when you looked up there you are looking directly at the sun and you couldn't see dive bombers until they were too darn close and you could actually see the bomb when they released it, you'd see this little black ball coming down towards you.
- 19:30 Anyway we got a few hits and we had to abandon ship. And I remember, my action station was on the bridge and I was the director operator on the bridge and the story, well not the story, the theory is that when you're on a ship and when you have to abandon ship, then you go down the high-side
- 20:00 and you don't dive, you walk down into the water and you see the reason for that is so that you don't get debris and all that sort of stuff falling all over you and damaging you and also, you're away from the suction of the ship when it is sinking. And the order to abandon ship was given and I took off and I dived and then halfway down I thought, "I shouldn't be doing this." so I tried to straighten up you see
- 20:30 and I hit the water at rather unusual angle. Anyway I managed to carry on and we all had to wear life belts. Whenever actions stations were sounded we had to wear our life belt, not inflated but we had to have it with you. And I had one with me, but it wasn't mine it was somebody else's, and it had been left out in the tropics, to my knowledge for three months or so
- 21:00 and so of course it was perished. So I didn't have a life belt. So when I met my mate in the water, we decided to sit on an oar and it would just balance the two of us to about here and we got sick of that afterwards because it was a bit restrictive, so we decided to swim. And in the swimming bit, I took off my shoes and socks, took off my overalls because it's all so much more comfortable, the water was

- 21:30 warm of course, being in the Bay of Bengal, took off my shoes and socks and my overalls and was swimming around my underpants and singlet. But my friend and I were running what was called a sewing firm and that is we did the sewing. See we had a sewing machine and I remember we had a profit of 25 pounds each, which we took with us, and I put my wallet down the top of my singlet you see
- 22:00 and after being in the water a few hours the elastic in my underpants decided to give up the ghost, so I lost my underpants and I lost my wallet, but I didn't realise it actually until there was a hospital ship, the Vita, came around and she lowered boats to pick up the Hermes' survivors and she also picked up our survivors. And when I got to the boat to climb into the boat
- 22:30 that come down to pick us up, I realised I didn't have my wallet and I didn't have my underpants, so it didn't matter because there was a bloke in the boat and he said, "Right-o mate, grab the oar." so I had to start rowing and start helping him row the boat. And when we got to the hospital ship there was nurses on the gangway and one handed out a cup of chocolate, hot chocolate and the other one handed
- 23:00 out a packet of cigarettes, Blue Capstan cigarettes with the Red Cross emblazoned on the back you know. What about today, you wouldn't get that today would you? And somebody said you know, "Weren't you embarrassed about having no pants on?" and I said, "Nothing to see anyway after 6 hours in the water." Yes, but one thing climbing into the boat after being in the water for some hours, a steeled hull boat,
- 23:30 the skin pulled off your knees as you rubbed up against them. Anyway from there we went into Colombo, we arrived there at about midnight, got some shorts and a shirt and a cap of course, so you could do your saluting bit, a hammock, a blanket and we went up to a rest camp called Betalooa,
- 24:00 on the opposite side to Kandy in Sri Lanka as it is now, and we stayed there for 16 days and we came back to Colombo and stayed for a few days at a place called St Joseph Barracks, which was actually a school and then got onto the Dominion Monarch and came home. And we arrived outside Sydney Harbour the night
- 24:30 that the Japanese midget subs were attacking and of course we wondered why we couldn't go in, they wouldn't let us into the harbour. We were, you know, sailing up and down outside in the ocean and when we got in next morning of course, we knew why. The [HMAS] Kuttatubul had been sunk by a sub torpedo so then were off-loaded and sent home. My home port was Hobart of course
- 25:00 and I went down to Hobart and I got 28 days leave, survivors' leave, and when I was in Sydney in Balmoral, HMAS Balmoral, the paymaster called me up and gave me 25 pounds from the King George's Fund for ship-wrecked sailors and he gave me the money, and gave me a little prompt of what I should
- 25:30 do with it, "Don't spend it rashly son, put it in the bank." Of course 5 pounds in those days which is only \$10 today, but it was a week's wages of course, so I got five weeks wages. And then I went on to after I finished....while I was down in Hobart, I had to go on submarine
- 26:00 patrol duty and it used to fascinate me because it was on an ordinary launch and we used to go down the Iron Pot at night and I had a .303 and five rounds of ammunition and I often wondered what would happen if a submarine surfaced, what would I be doing about it, you know.

**You may as well be throwing peanuts at it.**

Yes probably. Throw the rifle overboard would probably be the best thing to do. Anyway

- 26:30 I stayed down there for a few days and then I was drafted to the [HMAS] Deloraine and it I stayed on the Deloraine for about three months and then I was drafted to the [HMAS] Swan. And I stayed on the Swan for a while
- 27:00 and I was on the Swan that the war artist came on board and did the painting and there was a bit of a story about that. We were asked to close up the gun in full battle dress, you know, that was with our tin hats on, anti-flash gear and our overalls and anti-flash gloves on and of course I was the only one that didn't have boots on
- 27:30 and I should have because I was captain of the gun. And it was all very fine until the captain saw it and then he called for me and said, "Why aren't you properly dressed, everybody else has got boots on, but you haven't?" And I would have thought the miserable artist would have painted me with a pairs of boots on, but he didn't. So I got a bit of a reprimand for that for not being properly dressed. Anyway I
- 28:00 stayed on the Swan for a few months. I had a bit of time on [HMAS] Brisbane while she was up there doing some repairs and from the Brisbane I went to the [HMAS] Norman and that was in April 1944 and I joined the Norman. And then we took part in the campaign in Burma. We were also out here
- 28:30 in the Pacific up towards Japan and around the islands up there. And also we were we went back down to South Africa to Durban again. Then after the war finished in August '45,
- 29:00 I came back to the depot down at Cerberus to gunnery instructors' course or gunner's mates' course as it was called in those days, and that was a 15 month course. Then I stayed in depot as a staff instructor and I was on the parade ground one-day and I collapsed and I had pneumonia and I went into hospital

- 29:30 then I'd developed TB [tuberculosis], so I stayed in the navy bit longer and then ultimately I was discharged from the navy in April '51, physically unfit for able service. So then I came out of the navy and then... what do you do as a job? They didn't want professional murderers or
- 30:00 professional killers, so that wasn't on, so a friend of mine was actually working for the navy department in the naval stores and he spoke to the deputy director there and I went along for interview and he said, "Yes, that's true, I can come on." and I remember very well, he said to me, "Now Mr. Saltmarsh, you were a chief petty officer in the navy
- 30:30 and you're coming here into the public service so you have to start at the bottom of the promotions scale." and he said, and if I were to join the navy I would have to start as an ordinary seaman. And I wondered about that, being the deputy director of naval stores if he went into the navy whether he would start off as an ordinary seaman. I doubt it very much, anyway. Because I had TB, I couldn't become a permanent public servant,
- 31:00 I had to wait for 4 years and 10 months and that was a bit sad because you know, all the fellas my age were getting on and going up the ladder and so on. So I hung around until the time elapsed and then I was promoted and one day I was... Thursday you know is a great day for public servants. You a public servant?
- 31:30 **I have been in my younger days, payday is Thursday.**  
You know Thursday, the [Public Service] Gazette comes out and everyone looks in the Gazette to see if there is a job going that they can do. Anyway there was a job advertised for Canberra, so I decided that I would apply for it I applied for it and this was in 1960. I got the job and that was in the officers' appointment clerk
- 32:00 for Naval Reserve. So went up to Canberra and joined what was known as the head of the Naval Branch and I stayed at there until about 20 months and then there was a position advertised in Melbourne at the Department of Defence on... the position was advertised in the Defence Department in the cataloguing section particularly
- 32:30 with a knowledge of armament, naval armaments so I thought, "Well I'll fit that job." so I applied for it and got it and came down from Canberra in 1962. And I might say, while I was in the Department of Defence cataloguing, the only piece of equipment that I identified which was military was a bayonet. So all my knowledge of 8 inch, 14 inch and 4 inch and so on guns
- 33:00 were of no avail, it wasn't used. Anyway I stayed in the Department of Defence as a technical officer, I changed from a clerk to a technical officer and then my boss from the navy, where I had been working previously for years, rang me up and asked me if I'd like to go back, on promotions and navy, to Naval Stores. So I said, "Yes thank you very much." So off I went and I stayed
- 33:30 with navy for many years and then the second highest technical officer clerk position in Defence was advertised and I applied for that and got it and by this time I was the Class 9 level and there was only 11 levels. And anyway I stayed which the Department of Defence cataloguing until
- 34:00 1981 and we had in 1975 sent an adviser up to Singapore on the American NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] Cataloguing and Equipment Handling Organisation and then this one came up in Malaysia and seeing that I was the senior operations
- 34:30 manager, I decided that it might be a good job for me, and my boss said, "If you wanted it you have to tell me by tomorrow morning." So we did and we packed up in June '81 and off we went to Malaysia, where I was the cataloguing advisor to the Malaysian Armed Forces and there is an ornament up there on the mantelpiece which I was given when we were coming home because I was considered to be a warrior, so they gave me that.

## Tape 2

- 00:34 **As a child growing up did you have any relatives who were in World War I?**  
My father was and my father had what, four-years and 227 days service and three years of that was overseas and he won a Military Medal
- 01:00 while he was overseas. And my uncle, the one that was a TPI [permanent and totally incapacitated] and he was actually on the first [HMAS] Sydney when the Emden was sunk.  
**Did your father and your uncle talk much about their World War I experiences?**  
My father didn't but sometimes you could get him to talk about it and he mainly used to talk about the state of the wounded and also the muddy fields of Flanders
- 01:30 and places like that you know. He said particularly in different parts of France, you were always wet and

it was always muddy and stinking and used to complain about the stinking of the mud and so on but apart from that didn't say much about that. And my uncle rarely talked about, well he didn't see it much, he was a chief petty officer and when I joined the navy of course

02:00 I was only an ordinary seaman, a very ordinary seaman as a matter of fact and he didn't communicate with me along those lines but of course he was never home, you know. Well the only time I ever saw him was when he came home on leave and that was it and that wasn't for very long.

**And you said that you always wanted to joined the navy, was it your uncle in uniform...?**

Yes that was part of it but I always had a feeling that someone told me once

02:30 when I was only a little fellow, that sailors could do anything, you know. They could do black-smithing, they could do boat building and splice ropes and all this sort of thing, you know, they could swim. I must tell you about my swimming experiences. In my day anyway we had to do a swimming test call, the PTT, pass provisional test, and that's the way

03:00 it's entered on your records and we had to do it with a duck canvas duck uniform on. We didn't have to wear boots or shoes or a cap, but you had to swim the 60 yard pool that we had down at the depot. And you had to float or tread water for two minutes you see. And in the navy, when you were a recruit, you always got very good advice from those blokes

03:30 that had been in about two weeks longer than you had. Anyway I had to go down and do my provisional test and one of my close buddies said to me, "Now when you get down there, tuck the top of your jacket into your pants." because those jackets had a big 'V' neck on them, "Into the top of your pants, and when they say jump in the water, don't jump, dive in, because if you dive in then you are on your way,

04:00 part of your way to swimming your 60 yards." So I thought that was pretty good advice. But what I didn't realise that when I dived in the top of my jumper filled up with water and here I am, spluttering and struggling to get out, to get going on swimming. And my uncle, the chief PTI, standing on the bank and here is me, with the name of Saltmarsh disgracing the family name, spluttering around, so he said to his PTI [Physical Training Instructor],

04:30 "Pull him out." So they pulled me out and he said to me, "Right, for the next fortnight, at a quarter past four every day, you will be here to do swimming training." so that's what I did.

**So that guy had just given you some really bum advice?**

Yes, he was really squaring things up with me a bit.

**Did you square things up with him after that?**

No I didn't, but I often thought about it though.

**And as a boy**

05:00 **had you seen many ships or was the navy just an image in your mind?**

No, no, we lived in well in Mora in the Northern centre of Tasmania and the only time I'd actually seen the sea was when we used to go occasionally out to Davenport to the seaport on holidays. But now I hadn't. When I was a boy going to school, my cousin lived in Castle Forbes Bay down in Huonville

05:30 and my uncle had an orchard there, and I used to see the boats coming in to pick up the apples, you know. I can remember one called the Western Australia used to coming in that was about it, but apart from that no. I'd never seen a war ship.

**Did you think that the boats like the Western Australia were very impressive?**

Yes I did. Particularly coming up the river on a calm day and sun shining

06:00 and their green and yellow banding on them, it was wonderful.

**And growing up in Tasmania, was the Depression where you were at, very severe?**

Yes it was, very severe. You know we were on the farm, living on the farm, so food wasn't a problem there because you could grow most of your own food

06:30 and used to be a lot of sheep and of course you had mutton, mutton and more mutton and more mutton and but the only thing was there wasn't any money around, you know, people wearing second-hand shoes, no shoes and you know hand-me-down clothing and all that sort of thing. It was pretty tough in those days and of course, working on the farm you got the magnificent sum of 1 pound a week

07:00 you got tea rations and sugar, tea, flour and sugar rations, so a staple diet I suppose could be made up from that but apart from that.. and usually on a farm you had a cow or a couple of cows depending on what the family had, so you could survive from a food point of view but from the money aspect and clothes, it was a pretty tough life.

**And when you left,**

07:30 **when you enlisted in the navy, you would have only been about 17 or 18?**

I was 18 ½.

**Did you have to be 20 to join the navy like the army?**

No, no you could join the army at 16 years of age as an able seaman.

**Can you go to war at 16 years of age as boy?**

Well as a matter of fact on my gun crew I had a fellow who was from South Australia, a lad called Jostrum and he was 16 ½ and he was in my gun crew on the [HMAS] Norman.

08:00 **How did the 16 and half year old perform?**

Well he performed well actually. He was a pretty fit young lad; you know they had no problems with him at all.

**It's quite remarkable, that in the army you had to be 20 but in the navy you could be 16?**

Yeah that's right you see and the snotties or the mid-shipmen, we took them in at 13 years of age to the Naval College.

**But they wouldn't be on boats at 13?**

Oh no, but they were in training you know

08:30 down at the depot, the poor little middies. Wherever a mid-shipman went around the depot, he went at the double, no walking, no marching, well they marched but at the double march everywhere they went. And they wore their uniforms of course, all the time at the depot and on the weekends they used to wear a reefer jacket and grey pants. And of course once again

09:00 they went double wherever they went.

**Why was that? Why were they doubling everywhere?**

I don't know really know that. During my time as a gunnery instructor I used to go over to the college in the early morning to give them their rifle shells and some of them... well there was one little fellow there who I used to take pity on him and I used to call him out

09:30 and he used to hold my rifle for me. Because trying to throw a 10 pound rifle around, you know, I don't think he could have done it.

**And you say those lads were called snotties?**

Yeah.

**Why were they called snotties?**

Well the story is they used to wipe their noses on the sleeve and there were three buttons, brass buttons on the sleeve and the reason why they say the three brass buttons were there to stop them from wiping their noses on their sleeves.

10:00 **What other nicknames were in the navy, there must be a tremendous lot of names?**

Millers were called Millers, Smiths were called Smauge, for some odd reasons. Dusty Miller...

**You mean in terms of surnames not occupation.**

Oh no, we had a fellow that looked after the water level

10:30 in the tanks, he was called Tanky of course. Then what did we call the tailor? The sail-maker was usually the tailor onboard ship. And of course I say there was the dhobi firm and they were the people who did the washing and there was the jewing firm, J-E-W-I-N-G firm and they did all the business with the clothing

11:00 making suits. That was the sailor's uniform, there were two rigs, there was a fore and aft rig and a square rig for sailor's uniform. The fore and aft rig was the one where they wore a coat and buttoned down the front, right. A square rig was a sailor's rig. Everything was on the square, if you laid a sailor's jacket on the floor, it would be like a big 'T'

11:30 right, and there'd be collar going up there, which was rectangle, the two sleeves going out, and the body of the uniform, so that was a square rig. And a square rig always wore the round pill box hat and the fore and aft rig wore a peak-cap.

**Was there colour differential between the uniforms?**

No they were navy blue and the sailor had... an ordinary seaman,

12:00 well a man dressed as a seaman had two pairs of underpants, two singlets, two shirts, two flannels,

three uniforms, this is the navy blue uniforms. You had a serge uniform, a number three uniform, which was a coarse serge, a number two uniform, which was a little better than the coarse

- 12:30 and with those two uniforms, when you had badges, you wore red badges. And then you had the number one uniform, which was fine serge and with that you wore gold badges.

**What were the three uniforms for?**

Well the serge, the number three uniform was to work around the ship, you didn't wear overalls in those days, you didn't wear overalls around the ship. You wore your blue uniform.

- 13:00 If you were painting or up in the rigging then you were allowed to wear your overalls. But as I said, we had three blue serge uniforms, we had a duck uniform, which was the light canvas uniform and we had a number six uniform, which was a white drill, we had a pith helmet, believe it or not, a big pith helmet, and

- 13:30 two caps for, you know, a number one cap that and the one you wore onboard ship. In the morning as the seaman, you got up at 6 o'clock and you scrubbed decks and cleaned the ship until seven when you had breakfast and then at 8 o'clock you went on duty. That's if you weren't keeping watch, if you were keeping watch well you went on watch at either 8 o'clock, 12 o'clock,

- 14:00 4 o'clock, 6 o'clock and then at 8 o'clock again. See we had 2 dog watches which were from 4 o'clock to 6 o'clock in the evening and 6 o'clock to 8 o'clock. And people said why do have dog watches? Well you had dog watches because then you broke up the routine of watching and if it didn't have a dog watch, you'd be keeping the same watch all the time, you know

- 14:30 **Why was it called dog watch?**

Well apparently the story is that there was occasions when, way back in the olden days and sailing ship days, that they had to keep watch for dogs which used to come aboard ship. Some people said only the rats came aboard ship not the dogs. But that's what it was called, the dog watch, and it's a two-hour watch you see. And of course you were called; you knew the time onboard ship because of the bells that rang

- 15:00 **Tell us about the bells ringing?**

Well a bell.. you had 8 bells, 4 bells and 2 bells. Well you had 8, 6, 4, and 2, so every 2 hours, you had a bell. So you had 2 bells for the first hour and then 4 bells

- 15:30 for 2 hours and then 6 bells for 3 hours and 8 bells for 4 hours, right. And there was also another one called a small bell at the 8 hour watch, there would be one small bell, just one ting. And also we had a bosun's pipe

- 16:00 when they gave orders or wanted to get your attention over the speaker system they used a pipe. And for lunch the bosun's pipe called was one minute in length and it, you know, it's like reading music you get trills and straight blasts and so on.

**So it's like a flute, literally a pipe.**

Yeah I got one here, I'll show you.

- 16:30 It's a whistle with a bowl on the end and by the way you keep your fingers over the bowl so you change the sound of it and also you trill, you know, use your tongue to trill it.

**One question I always wanted to ask is why seamen have the blue serge uniform and the white uniform, why... I imagine the white uniform would get filthy dirty?**

Yes but you wore that in the tropics, you see. And even now at the depot in...

- 17:00 come October you got into white uniforms, right, and you stay in white uniforms until April and then from April you go into blue uniforms but you see, you spend of fair amount of time in the tropics and well here I mean, you sail up Brisbane way in you're in the tropics. And I spent most of my time onboard ship in the tropics.

- 17:30 On the [HMAS] Canberra we had a fair amount of time around Singapore and Laccadive and Maldiv Islands and Madagascar, and places like that and when you're in the tropics onboard ship, you wore your white duck uniform. And another thing you know, in the very early stages of World War II

- 18:00 when we went to action stations onboard ship, we were advised to wear clean clothing and the reason and particularly underwear, and the reason were if we were wounded, then there was less chance of infection. And of course later on and if alarm rattlers went during the night,

- 18:30 you didn't have time for that sort of thing, you put on whatever you can get on and get up there.

**One more question on uniforms, you spoke of the duck uniforms, why was it called a duck uniform?**

Because it was a light canvas and that's the type of material.



**Oh that's called duck?**

Yes.

**Oh I see. Okay, so you've signed up for the navy, was it a very strict medical?**

Yes it was.

**What did it consist of?**

It was pretty tough. Well you know,

19:00 apart from the medico sounding you over and doing all that sort of thing, you had to do certain exercises. For instance, one of the fellows that joined up with me from Tassie [Tasmania], in his very early days he'd shot himself through the foot with his pea rifle, and he had a very big scar on his right foot. And one of things you had to do for your medical, you had to stand up on tip-toes

19:30 and he said it was agony for him, but that he wasn't going to give in that it hurt him, because the medico said, what's that and does it hurt and all the rest of it and had to get down and do a full knee bend and all that sort of thing and get down on your hands and throw your legs out behind you and do a couple of press ups and so on. Yeah it was a pretty tough medical as a matter of fact. And cough, you know.

**Yeah cough.**

20:00 **I never know why they do that, why do they do that do you know?**

Well apparently if you've got a hernia, it shows up.

**Oh right, now I know. So tell me once you'd done your medical you went back home in to Tassie...**

No I didn't I went straight into the navy, that night.

**Did you?**

Yep.

**So you already said goodbye to your folks?**

Yeah, yeah, they didn't know whether I would be coming

20:30 back or not of course.

**That must have been a bit sad for them?**

Yes particularly my mother who was in an Englishwoman and she came out, married my father in World War I, and came out here and she would have been, no doubt, going through that to some extent again, And being the only son and the oldest in the family.

**And so you're straight into the navy then as a 18 year old lad.**

21:00 **How was that, did you feel a bit lost away from home or were you just excited?**

Oh no I didn't feel lost at all but it was all new and it was exciting for me anyway...

**What's this?**

Well you know when you join the navy...we left Port Melbourne, got on a train, went down to Crib Point,

21:30 there was navy truck there to meet us, or a covered van actually, we got on the covered van, went in the police station as it was called, the depot, went in there and made out a little form, this is not a will, but it was the address of your next of kin and so on. And then we went up to our dormitories. And of course they were all waiting for us up there, saying, "You'll be sorry, you'll be sorry

22:00 and have you got a fag?" you know, botting [borrowing] cigarettes from us. And also we were issued then too on arrival with some uniforms you know, and they were always on with, you know, "Can we have that bar of soap, do you need that bar of soap?" and so on. Of course we were given a bar of soap about that long, washing soap, for laundry purposes and that was always a trade because

22:30 you could be fined by your senior hand, the leading seamen or petty officer, chief petty officer... well if you left a bit of your uniform around they could take it and put it in what they called a scan bag, and to get it out of the scan you had to pay a penalty which was usually soap, for some reason or rather I don't quite know why, but that was it.

23:00 **Do you know why it was called scan, what that name stands for?**

Well scan stands for food actually, so why it was called as scan bag, I don't know. But a meal is called a scan in the navy.

**Right I didn't know that. I have a feeling that there were some initiation ceremonies going on in those dormitories, or some rites of passage, for want of a better word?**

Not really, not really, no.

**Oh go on,**

23:30 **did they flush your head down the dunny?**

No they didn't do that but I must tell you there was a crook here in Melbourne called Freddie Harrison you may have heard of him, he was shot down the wharf station pier, I think someone shoot him with a shotgun and Freddie happened to be one of my classmates and he used to smoke incessantly and he had, you know, nicotine

24:00 stains up his fingers and so on, but he was also a bit of a character. We had a big fellow from Queensland called Frish, Lofty Frish, and somebody once rubbed Lofty's back with a clothes brush as they were walking past, you know. He was sitting there with no shirt on, and he said, "Oh that's lovely." So Freddie thought, that's good, so Freddie said, "I'll give your back a brush

24:30 Lofty." and he said, "Oh yeah." So Freddie got his shoe brush...Yeah so anyway, Freddie dipped his brush in some black Nugget [shoe polish] of course and gave old Lofty a really good scratch back with that. Freddie wasn't very popular when Lofty found out he had black Nugget all over his back.

25:00 But now as to why Harrison was killed, I'm not quite sure, but he was you know, he was one of the well, number one thugs around at that time and there was something going on down at the wharf you know. He was shot with a double barrel shotgun and nobody saw it of course.

**Was this after the war?**

Oh yes of course, after he had been discharged from the navy.

**Now the navy has got great traditions and long-standing roles you know**

25:30 **for different officers and different men and different levels of service that there must have been some traditions of the way you treat raw recruits like yourselves when you get there. Not necessarily in terms of initiations, but the way officers behaved to you and the way other men behaved to you?**

Yes an ordinary seaman...well first of all, everybody that joined the navy in my day, you did about six weeks on the parade ground right

26:00 and we used to start off the day by getting down on the playing field and doing half an hour of physical jerks and my uncle would be out front and the PTIs, there was about four-five of them, would be amongst the crew, amongst the sailors, keeping an eye on them. And we used to have signalmen and wireless telegraphy

26:30 trainers amongst us. And the WT [wireless] boys used to talk to one another you know, send Morse code by whistling. And the flag wavers used to do it with their fingers which used to get my uncle rather upset about it all and when things got very tough he used to send us around the 1,000 yard mark. There were two flag poles on the sports ground

27:00 one at the north end and one at the south end and when he said around the flag poles, that's what you did. That was 1,000 yards apparently, it went right around the parade grounds and it depended on how well you did it, whether you just did it once or you did it again.

**This was marching?**

No running, running because you would be doing it in you shorts and PT jacket shirt and you would be doing this stuff with your gym shoes on

27:30 and if things got a bit hot, that's what he used to do, send us around the parade ground.

**What did they tell you in training about navy life, because it is quite different to any other service?**

Well yes you know, it was mostly, when you get to sea, you'll be doing this, and when you get to sea this is it. And as an ordinary seaman, we used to have an onboard the big ships you know and the destroyers would different of course

28:00 but on the [HMAS] Australia and the Canberra, they were too big ships we had, the two 8-inch gun ships, we used to get up in the morning and scrub the decks because the decks were wooden and we used to start off, get up at 6 o'clock and worked until 7 and we would be scrubbing the decks and then about once a fortnight

28:30 or it might be once a month, we used to have to holey stone the decks and there were two stones about half the size of a brick and they had a round hole in the top, and that's why they are called holey stones, which you were supposed or you could fit a handle to use, scrub the woodwork you see, up and down.

But

29:00 we never quite got to the stick in the hole business, it used to be down on your hands and knees and you'd have a holey stone in each hand, like this and you would scrub like this, up and down the deck until you cleaned the deck. And a ship is divided into four parts; well the big ships are divided into four parts. There is the fo'c'sle division which is up front and the quarterdeck which is the rear end of the ship, and then you had the

29:30 portside and starboard side. And each one of those divisions or parts of the ship had a divisional officer and he was the one who reported on you and told you whether you were good, bad or indifferent and report or wrote the reports up. We used to play, we used to play Ludo [a board game] onboard ship,

30:00 we had a big canvas board, Ludo board, you know what Ludo is don't you?

**Yeah.**

And it was about nine feet square and painted in appropriate colours. And the dice was about 6 inches square, the shipwright used to make the dice and we used to have it in a bucket, shake it in a bucket and throw it out you know, roll the dice out. And that used to be a bit of onboard fun.

30:30 Also we used to play deck hockey on the big ships, that is to make a puck out of rope and there wasn't much space I must say, but we used to play. There was 3 a side, 5 a side sorry, 5 a side, and try not to hit the puck over the side of the ship or you had to make a new one. And I can remember when I was playing one time

31:00 I bend over with my head towards the bake-house door and one of the able seaman, old bloke, came up and gave me a good side bump which caused my head to go onto the door and put a bit of split in it and I had to go down to the doctor and get a couple of stitches. And he said, "The moral of the story is, never put your head down towards the bulkhead." you see. So next time we didn't

31:30 do that.

**And in training, I used to have a little fishing boat and port and starboard, I always used to get mixed up, and I imagine if you were on a boat and training and got them mixed that you'd be in awful strife.**

You would, yeah you would. And of course one of the tricks they used to do down at the depot they used to send you down to the paint shop to get some striped paint, or send you down

32:00 to the lantern room to get some green oil for the starboard lamp and all this sort of thing. And on modern day ships, particularly the Canberra we used to have all oil burning lights for port and starboard lights,

32:30 and they used to be carried on the bridge so you know, if the electricity failed we had still had the lights and of course during wartime, we didn't have any lights, we sailed without lights.

**And so initially in training it's a lot of square bashing and marching and so forth?**

And seamanship, training in seamanship and how to splice ropes and how to send semaphore, that used

33:00 to come into it too.

**So you had to learn semaphore, rope splicing and so forth. What other basic skills did you need to learn in training?**

Well you had to learn how to row a boat, how to pull a boat and you had to do initial gunnery and initial torpedo training and basic electricity you know,

33:30 to let you know what an electric current was. And there is a story that on the Canberra apparently we had a chief petty officer who wasn't all that sharp and one of the things they used to tell us when we did our electrical training, electricity follows the same line as water. In other words, it takes the line that is the least resistance, you see. And the story was that on the Canberra, they were cleaning out

34:00 the hammock bins on the seaman's' decks and this particular petty officer, they said, "Turn the light off." so he grabbed hold of the lead and squeezed it up like that. And said, "It's not true about what they say about electricity and water." That's the story.

**That's not very sharp at all that feller. So and then from land-based training, when did they first send you off to**

34:30 **actually train on a boat?**

When I joined the Canberra on May 1940, right, it was, Canberra was a training ship... we commenced or continued our training onboard ship and actually when I left depot, I was an unqualified gunnery,

35:00 well I was unqualified in everything and when I when aboard Canberra, I was then did some training and I became an able seaman, after passing an examination And I also then, decided I would like to be a

trainer of guns, right. So I qualified as a gun trainer and for that I earned threepence a day.

35:30 **Woo hoo.**

Wow, yeah that was the big-time yep. And for gunnery rates we used to get paid threepence, nine pence, one and six pence, and if you became a gunnery instructor, you got two and six-pence a day, which was the top..

**The top pay.**

The top of the tree, you couldn't go any further than that.

**And just before this tape winds up, as an 18 year-old lad**

36:00 **in your blue serge uniform and with the words, every girl loves a sailor running through your head, was it a jack the lad of free times for you, where you know you we on leave, or on evenings, or on weekends when you got into town?**

Yes that's right. Usually you worked in watches which meant periods of duty, that's what a watch meant. And in wartime we worked

36:30 in two watches, four hours on and four hours off and that's right through the day and in non war zone areas, you worked in three watches, which was red, white and blue watches. And depending on which watch you were, when you got into a port, that's the way you went ashore you know. Sometimes you'd be port watch say here in Melbourne and you'd get over to Fremantle

37:00 and you'd be port watch again. So you had two runs in a go. They didn't say and now port watch went off last time and starboard'll go this time. And the same with red, white and blue, although red, white and blue was better because you had more chance of getting ashore then. One watch always stayed on board and two watches went ashore, see red, white and blue.

**And did you think you were pretty...**

37:30 **I imagine if I was an 18 year-old, in a fancy new uniform on and I'm in port in a strange town with the money in my pocket you'd get up to a few fun and games?**

Well yeah, life used to be very pleasant ashore. One of my uncles used to say, "A sailor when he's ashore lives like someone earning 10,000 pounds a year, that's the way he spends his money." But you know, I liked to dance and there's an old saying,

38:00 "Like a sailor at the dance, if you don't ask, you never know." So I used dance wherever I was. One of my favourite dancing places was Sydney at Luna Park [amusement park], they had a floating dance floor virtually, pontoon there and that was great and we used to dance there.

## Tape 3

00:39 **I've read that in the navy discipline, obviously in all armed forces it's important, but being quiet on ship and not just talking loosely and not making noises are very important thing Do they instil that in you in training about you know, not making too much noise onboard ship and so on?**

Well normally that doesn't apply

01:00 unless you are likely to be submarines or other vessels around. But talking about discipline in the navy, down at the naval depot, Cerberus, we had a commodore superintendent in training out from the UK and his name was Dalmyre, and at that time I was that is

01:30 when I was chief petty officer, and I was in charge, I wasn't in charge but I used to look after the morale school it was called where we had army, navy and air force bods in there and he is to give a talk on discipline and it was the best I never heard. He said, "The army had discipline, the air force had discipline but the navy has discipline." And he said, "It's like being inside a sardine tin

02:00 once you get on ship." There is nothing you can do to get away from your mess mate. You may be on actions station with him, you know, cruise station with him, defence station with him, live in the same mess as him and work in the same part of the ship. So you have to discipline of a very high standard. And I always thought that was a very good description of naval discipline. And of course on a submarine, it's even worse, it is even more intense.

02:30 **So in the navy then, you got to be a team player haven't you. There is no room for individuality really?**

Yes you have to be a team player.

**And that's instilled in you pretty much from day one, isn't it?**

Yes it is, yes it is, you see, I'd been a captain of the gun on a few ships and my gun crew, weren't all from my part of the ship, you know. But we had to get along; we had to be friends with one another. I mean if one of my,

03:00 well any member of the guns crew had the sulks and didn't want to pull his part, then we would all be in trouble.

**And there is no time for anyone to say why, is there? If you say do that, you just do it, there is no questioning anything like that?**

No, that's right. And I know that this is diverging from today's attitude but one of the things that was very much looked down on in the navy was homosexuality because of the thing that you say

03:30 you will do that and you had to do it, and there was no question about it, you know. And you had to be able to rely on them. Oh I'll tell you about that later on.

**You can tell us about that now.**

When I was on the Canberra as an able seaman I always wanted to be a duty watch keeper because duty watch keepers worked 4 hours on

04:00 and 8 hours off always you see. And you didn't do work, just on part of the ship you were the watch keeper. And I got my leading hand to put me up as the watch keeper, which he did, and we had a case of a couple of the boys not behaving themselves.

**You mean they were homosexuals?**

Yeah, yes. And one of them was the chief petty officer, electrical

04:30 and anyway he was sent to cells and I was sent down because I was duty watch keeper, to keep watch on him in the cell. And I was down there and he was all very quiet and I was reading a book by Raphael Sabatini and I went to sleep. And the corporal of the guard came down and followed by the officer of the watch

05:00 and here is dear old Lloyd Williams Saltmarsh very nicely asleep, sitting up sleeping. So they shook me, relieve me, got somebody else in and I went up before the duty executive officer and was charged with being asleep on duty. And that got me 14 days 10A

**What's 10A?**

That's the punishment. I had to be up at

05:30 a 6 o'clock in the morning and report to the master at arms or his delegate and then we had to master at night, at 8 o'clock and any odd jobs that were going around that weren't very tasteful, you had to do then you see. And I was told by the captain when I was awarded my punishment that I was very lucky

06:00 because I could have been charged with being asleep in the face of the enemy, dereliction of duty. So anyway I served my time and that's the only time I ever did.

**And those two fellas, those two homosexual fellas, would they be discharged or would they just be warned not to do it again?**

No they'd be discharged.

**Okay then let's talk then about being on the Canberra for the first time, when you're on a real ship**

06:30 **... you keep laughing, I keep thinking there are some big stories on there. Tell us why are you laughing?**

Well I joined the ship and that was in Chowder Bay in Sydney, we were, then we went to Garden Island and we restored ship and I can remember carrying all these bags of dozens of beer carrying up, because

07:00 the officers had drink and we didn't, up the front end, we didn't. But then we went to sea and this was my first experience of being at sea. That was as rough as guts as they say, outside, it was pretty rough sea outside. And the ship was taking a buffeting and water was coming in through the hose pipes you know where the anchor chains come out

07:30 and also was coming in around the A gun, which was the foremost of the guns, and it was mixing with oil, because those guns in those days were all hydraulic. And that somehow or rather there was oil mixing with sea water, you see, and down at the canteen flat, not the canteen flat, the cable flat and so we had to go down

08:00 and mop it up, you know, lovely bits of waste and mopping up this oil and stuff. And the old chief petty officer by the name John Brown and ex-merchant navy man said to me, "Here you are son, two buckets for you." and I said "Chief, I can only carry one bucket when I'm marching up, you know, going up the ladder to ditch the..." he said, "No son, one bucket's to mop up in and the other one's to spew[vomit]"

in.”

08:30 Because it was a bit, I didn’t do the second bit, but I did the first bit alright.

**That was very surprising because being below deck on rough seas makes you very queasy.**

I was never affected by sea sickness ever, even if I was ashore and had you know a frisky night drunk, I still, next morning, I was never affected by it at all. So it was really good for me.

**Very lucky.**

09:00 And I’ve seen people actually turn green really... one of my ship mates.

**Tell us about him.**

He just, you know when we got a rough sea, of course he didn’t eat at all, but he just used to turn a funny colour, almost green really, you know poor fellow. Couldn’t do a damn thing.

**So what happened if you where in a battle station and he’s as green as cabbage?**

Well he’d still have to do the best

09:30 that he can.

**Did get some fellas get so sick that it would really affect their performance?**

Oh yes when I joined the [HMAS] Swan, one of the... well I do not know about affecting his performance, but one of the petty officers had been 26 years in the navy and whenever we went to sea, he would get seasick, but not for long, but every time we went out, he got seasick. Because he stuck to it for 26 years

10:00 he would up with it. But you know, some of them got frightfully sick, particularly in the early stages of their sea life they got very, very sick.

**And a couple of things you mentioned before, you talked about the front end not being allowed any booze. Was the front end where the non-officers ranks slept?**

Yes that’s right. It’s no so quite like that now, they changed around the but in my day the quarterdeck and the wardroom,

10:30 the two wardrooms, we used to have one called the gun room, which was for the warrant officers, and then there was a wardroom for any lieutenants and above would be there and they had grog. But us up the sharp end, didn’t. And don’t know, might be out of order, but on VE [Victory in Europe] Day when war was over in Europe and the order was given to

11:00 splice the main brace. Now you’ve heard of that have you?

**I have, but I’m not too sure what it means.**

Well what it means is that the Admiralty, we used to get rum from the Spanish you know. They used to provide the British Navy with rum and they did until this century I think. Anyway any battle that was on or any great deed that was achieved, not necessarily at sea, but you know the crowning of a king or something like that, it could be splice the main brace,

11:30 where every man on board was given a tot of rum, right, that’s splicing the main brace. On V E Day this is 1945, they gave the same order from Admiralty, splice the main brace. Well up front end we didn’t have anything to splice the main brace with, so we spliced the main brace, four men to a tin of peaches.

12:00 That’s something to go down in history.

**Yes. Now two things firstly, you mentioned you weren’t allowed booze and in the same breath you said you smuggled bottles of beer on board...?**

I didn’t say that did I?

**Didn’t you say you were carrying bottles of beer up the gang plank?**

Oh yes, but that was the wardroom.

**Oh but did any of them end up at the sharp end?**

No, some of them ended up on the concrete bottom of the dock though. There was dropped

12:30 a couple of bags, dropped.

**So nobody would smuggle anything on board?**

That’s not quite right. Not in that situation they wouldn’t, but you know, we’re diverting a bit...

**That’s OK.**

But when I was on the Swan, I was always been coxswain of a boat, where it be a sea boat or a motor boat, except for the Canberra, I wasn't on the Canberra but after that I was always. And we were in..

- 13:00 up going up to the Barrier Reef and we got a message to go and pick up an airman who was on a listening post on Willis Island, they used to have listening posts where the Japanese messages would come through you see. I think they're called listening stations. Anyway we had to go and bring this bloke back to the ship and when we got over there,
- 13:30 they had underground listening rooms and they had quarters on the top and so on. Anyway we get down to the listening room and he has all these bottles of sherry lined up there, you know. And I said, "Why all that?" and he said, "There is no one here who drinks." there was about four of them there and no one drinks. And some of my fellas said, "We could do with that back on board." And I said, "Oh we can't do that that." you know. "How would we
- 14:00 take it back?" And they said, it was a rowing boat, see. "We could put it in the boat's bag." every boat had a bag which had bits and pieces in it. And we could put in the sail bag because you always had a sail on your sea boat, and a big canvas bag so we helped him out by taking some and putting it in our sail bags. And then of course

- 14:30 when we got back to the ship, the problem was how to get the boat hoisted up so the cover of darkness is the answer.

**Okay just a couple more questions on the subject of sly grog, well not sly grog.. rum and sailors, it's a big tradition of rum and sailors, were you getting good rum or was it rough as guts rum?**

No it was good rum, but I didn't get any, we didn't get any. The Australian Navy

- 15:00 didn't get an issue of rum.

**Why was that?**

Because that was our tradition, we didn't do it. But when I joined the [HMAS] Norman, the Norman was on loan to us from Admiralty, she had some British seamen onboard and then when she came into Port Melbourne some of the crew changed over and I was one of the new crew going onboard. And on the gangway was the master of arms, who you know was our number one policeman onboard ship,

- 15:30 and he said to me, "Are you over eighteen son?" And I said, "Yes I am." And he said to me 'G' or 'T'. And I had not the faintest idea what he meant, and I thought, oh well 'G' comes before 'T' so I'll take 'G'. And what it meant was 'G' was for grog and 'T' was for temperance. So if you said you were 'T' you didn't get anything

- 16:00 but a few said you were 'G'. They'd give you threepence a day.

**Why that to buy it?**

To pay for your pot of rum, which we would be entitled to bring rum onboard.

**Did anyone say they were 'T'?**

I don't know. I don't know. I know I said that... you remember when I was on the Canberra, I did my first gunnery course as a gun layer, I got threepence a day for that, and I got threepence a day for just saying 'G' too. So it was big-time

- 16:30 **And the actual phrase, 'splice the main brace', what does that actually mean?**

Well the main brace is one of the braces that was on the guard arm of the ship, right. And splice the main brace means that you're joining it up right.

**So do you know how that came to mean have a drink?**

No I don't know how it came to mean that.

**Okay**

- 17:00 **and the last question on that topic, young fellas and rum if you tasted it and didn't like it, would you be stirred [teased] for that, ripped for that?**

Well yes you would, can I relate a story. I went in New Zealand ship called the Balona when she was in dock here at Port Melbourne, and one of my contemporaries, New Zealander, in the same gunners' instructors course that I was in,

- 17:30 David Stewart McCurry by name, anyway David invited me down to the Balona. And I got onboard went up to the chief [(UNCLEAR)] and of course timed my arrival to rum issue time because the New Zealanders did have rum issue of course, and I got there and the tots were being handed out. And if you were a prudent drinker, you always kept a medicine bottle with a bit of rum in it, you see,

- 18:00 saving some of your tot. Anyway they said to me, "Would you like a tot?" I said I would so they produced a tot of rum for me and I am standing up in the petty officers' mess, right beside a stanchion, and

somebody spoke to me around behind me and I hit my elbow on the stanchion and spilt the rum. And there was a deadly silence and somebody said, "Well we can't waste the bloody stuff."

18:30 and got a match and lit it and it burned of course, being good proof. But I didn't get another tot though.

**Oh yes, I'm sure it's like gold and how big is a tot.**

I think it's one gill, an old English measure.

**How big is a gill, I mean compared to the water in your glass there?**

No it would only be about an ounce and a half, it wouldn't be more than that.

**So just over a shot.**

Yeah just over a shot, virtually.

19:30 **Okay well I think we've exhausted the topic of booze unless you've got any other stories you think are worth retelling on that point. Don't be shy.**

Well not on the grog, you were interested in only the grog side.

**No, no.**

When I was on the Deloraine when I was on the Swan I passed for a leading seaman and then when I went to....sorry the other way around, I was passed for a leading hand and then I was on the Deloraine and the coxswain said to me, "We are going to sea this afternoon and since you have passed as a relieving hand, I want you to take the ship to sea." In other words look after the special sea duties and so on. And I said, "Fine I'll do that." And of course when you go to sea you got to see

20:00 that all the port holes and scuttles are closed and all this sort of thing. So I did that, I got the storeman up from his mess and made him undo the stores so that he could see that all the scuttles were properly closed and then I went up to the bridge and reported it ready for sea, ship ready for sea, secured and ready for sea. And out we went, past the Heads at

20:30 Sydney Harbour and there was the southerly bluster blowing and the coxswain's office was on the starboard side, on the right-hand side and we went up and we were going up north up to Brisbane, and the southerly bluster was coming up. What I hadn't done, I hadn't checked the port holes or the scuttles rather in the coxswain's mess. And in those days our report books, captain's report books,

21:00 first lieutenant's reports, vitting's books, were all done with indelible pencil. And when the sea water came in through the scuttle and it splashed all over the books and the captain held his reports, held his reports on...yeah.. Thursdays, that's right, and the coxswain of course

21:30 told me I wasn't a very bright spark but he didn't do anything officially. And of course when he presented the captain's report and request book you know, nice and smudged with the indelible pens all over it, the captain said, "How did that happen?" So he told him what happened, so then I was called for, down to see,

22:00 well brought up. They had a table, the master of arms or the coxswain would stand behind the commander or the captain or whoever, they called you by name and then read out the charges see. So I was charged with neglect in that I didn't close the scuttles. And I thought, "Well this is it, I'm going to get a big wallop for this." and the captain said, you know, told me I was a bit of an idiot and all the rest of it and said, "I will award you

22:30 number 19 punishment." And I thought, "Hell, what 's that?" And what it was, number 19 was an entry on my record that I'd been awarded number 19 punishment, not why I'd been but just that I been awarded 19 punishment. And you know where ever I went after that, when they looked at my report they'd see I had number 19 and they'd all say to me, "Why was that,

23:00 why did you get that?" because it was an unusual punishment and there was really no punishment at all except you had to tell why it happened.

**That's probably the best punishment then isn't it?**

Yeah, that was the best I ever got. Well I only ever had two, that was 10A and 19, that was alright.

**Was there a whole list of punishments?**

Yes there were, there was a book called the Book of Reference Number 11 - BR11 and in BR11, it set out all the punishments that you could be awarded

23:30 and for what crimes.

**And were there some ones that had been on the books for a 100 years that were quite bizarre?**

Well that could quite be because I wasn't a master of arms or a coxswain but, there was one occasion when I was in Sydney Harbour and I was on the Norman and I was doing coxswain duties and I had to send the boys off on leave.



- 24:00 And we'd already sent some Queenslanders and the Victorians and I was going to send the Tasmanians off. Because we used to send them off you know not all at one time. Anyway I was on shore making arrangements to get them down to Melbourne by train and all this sort of thing and when I came back in the morning which was about half past 8 because I had to be at the station to collect tickets
- 24:30 one of the petty officers said to me, "Well you've got a few problems coming up." he said, "Come down below and I'll tell you about it." So what had happened during the night the quartermaster, we always had somebody at the gangway overnight, the quartermaster had broken in
- 25:00 to the officers' wine store, had deserted his post, got in the motor boat, drove it across the Harbour, and run across a mooring wire which pulled the rudder off it and boarded a ship called the Lindfield and throwing off the lines, and trying to take it to sea when he was arrested by the water police. And I then
- 25:30 came back onboard, doing my first stint as coxswain and this was all this was laid out before me. And I had to go down and see the captain of course and the captain said, "What are we going to charge him with?" and I said, "I don't know, I'll look at BR11 and find out." So looked at BR11 and you know, we could lash him up to about 4 different charges. So you know we were getting near the end of the war
- 26:00 this is 1945 and the captain said, "Can we send him on leave?" And I said, "Yes if you're willing to sign the warrant for him to go on leave, yes we can." And he said, "Well he's only a young boy and I think it would be better to send him on leave than it would be to put him in gaol." So that's what we did. And we sent him on 7 days leave to Melbourne.

**That's very understanding of the captain.**

Yes it was, and most unusual that you would get that sort of

- 26:30 you know, consideration.

**Well on that point then I've also read that on a ship, you're stuck together, you can't nick off, you can't go home for a couple of days, you're all a constant target because you can't go out of the war zone, you live together like you said, like sardines in a can, so I suppose a captain would have to be a lot more in tune with how his men were, and also**

- 27:00 **a bit more understanding because he's got to live with them with them every day and he knows what they are going through.**

Yes that's true and usually they are, you see the captain on a ship, well he is the number one boy on ship, onboard, in wartime anyway. He's got a pretty tough job because he's always got to be... they have a day cabin in which you know, on the bridge or near the bridge of the ship because

- 27:30 if there's anything at all happening during the dark hours or the daylight hours which is out of the normal run, he is called you know. And the saying is, 'call me if it comes on to blow', because if there was a very heavy blow particularly in the sailing ship days it would be dramatic. But still a saying that they use these days, 'call me if it comes on to blow'. So the captain's got a hell of a job really because we work in watches, but he doesn't, he works all the time

- 28:00 or he's available all the time.

**I've heard people talk about a ship having a personality?**

Yes that's true.

**The crew and the ship, how responsible is the captain for that?**

Well you know, a captain can make or break a ship. Some of them are very fondly regarded because of their great ship handling abilities particularly on the destroyers when they handle them like fast speed motor boats.

- 28:30 And some of them can be very much disliked by the crew or wouldn't say disliked, but unhappy with the captain. But in the sinking of the [HMS] Repulse and the [HMS] Prince of Wales, one of the captains there was very highly thought of because of his actions when they were in action with the Bismarck, you know way back. But yes

- 29:00 and you get a feeling of it you know. I've been on a ship when we'd run into the wharf and everybody cheered like hell, because the captain wasn't all that popular because of his ship handling.

**Well obviously for good reason if he ran into the wharf.**

Yes it opened up the ship's sides like somebody got a big can spanner and opened it up.

**Did you... what were the personalities of the ships that you were on? Were they all pretty good or did you have some shockers?**

- 29:30 Well the Canberra being a training ship there wasn't that, well the camaraderie that was on smaller ships. See the smaller the ships, the less discipline was enforced, and you know, destroyers were well they were all pretty slap dash, wouldn't be kind to... but they were more cohesive

- 30:00 on a destroyer than they would be on a cruiser and then when you got down to the mine sweepers like the [HMAS] Deloraine, the OMS, they were very chummy, it was really quite a family. I mean on the Deloraine as we came back from shore leave the cook would be in the galley, instead of getting a meal served to the mess.
- 30:30 On the small ships in particular on the corvette minesweepers, you know a big happy family generally, they had some characters onboard of course. And one of my, one of my Legatee [member of Legacy organisation] mates was the gunnery officer on the Deloraine when I was there. And I didn't connect it up until I saw his signature
- 31:00 on a paper at Legacy House and he also signed my efficiency report and given me seven out of 10 which I remind him these days is pretty damn miserable anyway. He could have given me... course, he said, "You might've only been worth 7 you know."

**Now characters onboard ship, we talked before about the fact that you have to be team, everybody has got to pull their weight, so there wouldn't be much room**

- 31:30 **for guys who stood out too much or were a bit too different, so what kind of form does a character take on a ship? Like what kind of shenanigans did they get up to or were they the funny guys that kept you all laughing?**

Yes you have the comedians and you have the dour blokes of course, who haven't got any humour at all. But you've really got two separate lives, you got your life when your in

- 32:00 the mess and working as a part of ship and then you got your life when you're in a guns crew or in action, on action station, defence station or whatever, you know. Some of them are a quite humorous and some of them got less sense of humour than.. well a pig. You always get a grunt out of a pig if you kick it.
- 32:30 Some of them are not too...you know. You have got practical jokers, but life can be pretty serious, particularly in war situation when there's not much time for fun. But I can't think of anything hilarious moment really. I can think of some, some that had
- 33:00 you know, had sad finishes but still...
- Well would you like to talk about any of those?**
- Well on one occasion where I thought the captain of the ship was not as just as he could have been. We were oiling from an oiler
- 33:30 at sea and of course that means you're passing ropes between ourselves and the ship that we're oiling from. And we got a line across to the oiler, you put a line across and then you put a heavier rope across. And this feller of mine was standing there and we had you know what bollards are, two bollards
- 34:00 and he was standing there by the bollard and the rope was running out but what actually happened was, he got his leg in one of the coils that was running out between the bollards and he was in all sorts of trouble and it was 4 inch rope, and got my knife out and cut it, otherwise I could see his leg going out through...and the captain called him up to the bridge and gave him a great big serve
- 34:30 and I thought that was most unjust because I know he shouldn't have had his foot there, but things do happen you know, these accidents do happen. And he of course was a South Australian bloke too and he had a nickname of 'Happy' because he was never very happy. But talking about incidents, when I was on the Norman , I was coxswain of a sea-boat
- 35:00 as I said, I've always been in boats, and one of my duties as coxswain of sea-boat was to take the boat onto the buoy. If we were going to a buoy in a harbour I used to take the sea boat and get it up to the buoy because when they dropped the cable over and the anchor over, it was my duty to attach to a buoy, or the buoys in the boat, to attach to the buoys. And while I was on the Norman I was
- 35:30 promoted to petty officer and in the Royal Australian Navy they don't have petty officers as coxswains of boats you see. So I was promoted and it is away sea boat and I sent my leading hand, Skeeter into the boat, so he got into the boat as coxswain and he was happy to do it. And the captain was standing on the bridge and he said, "Saltmarsh, what's Collins doing in the boat?" And I said, "Sir,
- 36:00 in the Australian Navy we don't have petty officers as coxswains of boats." And he said, "Get in that bloody boat!" Which I did. So Skeeter got out, I got in.

**Skeeter, was that a nickname?**

Yeah Collins was his name, Skeeter Collins.

**Were all Collins called Skeeter?**

Not that I know of, he was the only Skeeter I knew.

**And just on boats, we have five minutes left of this tape, just on boats having personalities**

36:30 **and the law of the sea, are ships very superstitious places?**

Well not to me they weren't but some, yes, some of them do have a big suspicion about them you know. For instance ships carrying the same name as a ship that had been sunk was at one time

37:00 on the board of 'don't touch' or 'don't go aboard'. But I hadn't been on any that were you know really, really were suspicious.

**Are there superstitious things that you not supposed to do on a boat, like you can't bring a certain thing on or you can't do a certain thing, or you can't shoot an albatross or something like that?**

Oh yes shooting of the albatross is definitely

37:30 taboo, because the albatross is supposed to be a sailor you see, or the soul of a sailor, so you don't shoot the soul of the sailor, or the sailor so the albatross... and of course you don't see them very often unless you go down south, then you get them, a lot of them, down south, but not very many around here in these waters.

**Are there unlucky things that you weren't allowed to bring on a boat, someone said...on a ship rather, I keep calling it a boat sorry...?**

Your girlfriend

38:00 No not that I know of. I don't really know of anything that Naval Law said you shouldn't do in that regard. You weren't allowed to bring grog on board of course, that was always a bit of a no no.

**Unless it was well hidden in the sail bag.**

Unless it was well hidden in the sail bag or the boat's bag yes.

## Tape 4

00:32 **The Canberra, Lloyd, can you describe from the pointy end to the blunt end what it looks like, what the different parts are, just a brief walk through the ship?**

01:00 Well the fo'c'sle part of the ship had two guns on it, A gun and B gun and also we had the anchor where there in the hose pipes those big pipes that the anchor were in[?] There is a breakwater there because when the seas came over it towards the stern of the ship, so the water just ran off and also

01:30 we had berthing wires, 4 inch berthing wires, which we used to tie the ship up and of course the start of the bridge structure was on the fo'c'sle side of it. And then if you're going down the starboard side, that was known as the main top and the main top had two boats, had a cutter, which you propelled along

02:00 through the water by oars and it also had a motorboat and then you came to the quarterdeck and you had two guns there, you had X and Y gun and a fairly open space on the quarter deck and that's where we used to do our pistol firing from the quarter deck on the Canberra because the open space we had to fire out

02:30 over the stern. And then if you're going up on the port hand side, you came up to the fore top which was the section between the court deck and the fo'c'sle and it had two boats. It had a pinnace, which was a big boat we used to take sailors ashore in and it had another cutter up there, a row boat.

03:00 And it was the same as the main top except it had different boats on it and that's about all. And it was also those two spaces, the main top and the fore top where we used to play deck-hockey and where we used to have our tombola [bingo] and where we use to play our Ludo, on either side of that, depending on which way the weather was coming on of course.

03:30 **Just briefly on the Ludo, you said it was a 9 by 9 foot canvas board, big dice, what were the markers made out of, the counters?**

They were round disks that chippy [ship's carpenter] had no doubt made somewhere or they got from somewhere but they were around and used.

**Right, what was the bridge like then on the Canberra ?**

The bridge we had there was an open section...

04:00 **Number 19 punishment for me.**

There was the open section right on top of the bridge and then there was the bridge with the glass

housing and underneath that was the or behind that was the captain's day cabin

04:30 and underneath the bridge was the helmsman, the steering wheel and the telegraph which called for all the revolutions that you know, the navigator wanted or that captain wanted. And also behind the bridge was the plot where the navigator kept his charts and did his plotting and so on.

**And what about below decks?**

Yeah. Below decks

05:00 the main below deck bit, up forward anyway and the same for aft, the would be in the fo'c'sle part of the ship, was the seamen's nest and you had the seamen's mess, able seamen's mess and you had watchkeepers' mess and of course

05:30 then in between the two, the fo'c'sle and the quarterdeck and you had the engine room, and the boilers and all that and the fans, that used to you know, provide the draft for the ships. When you know, you are at sea of course and in war stations or dangerous areas, you didn't open any scuttles.

06:00 They were all kept closed and you had to do that for the safety of the ship.

**How long was the Canberra ?**

Now that's a very good question isn't it? About 600 feet.

**And is that particularly large?**

Well the ship was a 10,000 ton Kent cruiser and she...

06:30 well she was the biggest one we had here except for the Australia, the Canberra wasn't armour plated but the Australia was. And we had six torpedo tubes on the Canberra, two lots of three and we had four, four inch guns, we had some two pounders.

07:00 And of course several machine 303 [.303 calibre] machine guns around.

**And below decks I imagine you had acres and acres of room to spread, I'm saying that tongue in cheek, it must have been very cramped in there?**

No we didn't have much room. We all slept in hammocks and in the mess

07:30 below decks, we had a hammock bin which was up in the corner, which we used our hammocks in when we latched them up in the morning. And we had a mess table which seated about what.. about 12 people, like 6 on each side. And we also on the Canberra had a scullery where we did our washing up. And you are

08:00 assigned cook of the mess, which did the washing up. You got this scran [food] up from the cookhouse and you, when meal was over, oh you had to lay out the table of course, and then when the meal was over you had to do the washing up. And we used to have a captain's rounds, at least once a month and when you had captain's rounds you had to lay out your,

08:30 all your cutlery. And that's where the competition used to come in, the designs that used to come in which laying out your knives and forks, and what you did with your cups and sauces, or cups, we didn't have sauces, we weren't posh in that part, you know what posh means don't you, being an Englishman of course. And I just trying to remember how many messes there were

09:00 and I think there were four on each side of the ordinary seaman's mess.

**When you say captain's run...**

Captain's rounds.

**Captain's rounds sorry, the captain would come around and inspect if everything was clean and orderly and so on and you say the competition, was that amongst yourselves?**

Just amongst the messes you know. And he used to look into the teapots see if they were clean and one of your countrymen said one time, captain said,

09:30 "That's not very good, that's terrible. You know, dark and stained." And he said, "Aye sir but you canna make a good brew in a clean pot."

**And what did he say to that?**

Just "Hmmm", that's all.

**And is it ever quiet on a ship, like when you're in your hammock at night, is it still quite noisy or is it quite quiet?**

Well you can still hear

10:00 the propellers turning, you've got that sensation. And there's the engines of course you can hear those.

When you're right down aft you're getting the vibrations from the propellers and up forward, you'd be getting more engine noise also the noise of the ship going through the water you know, ... Apart from that, very silent as a matter of fact, very silent.

**And did the hammocks....**

10:30 **if you're going through rough water and the ship is pitching, do the hammocks compensate for that quite well?**

Hammocks are the most comfortable things to sleep in.

**Really?**

Particularly in cold weather because you know you're keeping yourself warm and of course, we always had white blankets in the navy.

**Why was that?**

I don't know, because they're easier to spot if they're weren't clean I suppose, but we had white blankets, yeah issued with white blankets. Never any pillows of course,

11:00 you had a cover to go over the mattress in the hammock but no pillows.

**So you said that in the morning you would latch your hammock and throw them in the hammock bin, did you grab any hammock at night or did you have your own hammock?**

No, no, your hammock had your name on it.

**And were they different?**

No, they were all the same.

**So if it had to sleep in someone else's hammock, it wouldn't be like sleeping in a strange bed.**

No but I wouldn't like to think I was sleeping in some one else's hammock

11:30 that would be next to what... the revolution started if you did that. No, everyone had their own and had you had to latch it up properly. And the reason.. like a roll, and the reason for that so you could use them for plugging up shell holes if you happened to be damaged in action. That was one of the reasons for them being the way they were.

**And did you say before**

12:00 **you first saw action on the Canberra?**

Well yes that's right and I can't remember the name of the ship but I can remember that name of the tanker and it was called the Kitty Broebeck [?], yes we were floating around in the Indian Ocean doing our normal thing and we came up against a German

12:30 supply ship and we fired quite a lot of rounds at it actually, and finished it off. And the Kitty Broebeck, the tanker... we boarded it and undid the scuttle in the base of it and sunk it on the spot. There was one

13:00 of our officers went on board, with an escort, we took the crew of, the Chinese crew took them off and brought them on board. That was the first, that wasn't a very serious incident I might say. But we also stuck in.. what's the name of it... Thunder Straight in Thunder Straight

13:30 we struck some floating mines which we had to knock off. See we had marksmen in the navy and their principle being, they could shoot the horns off mines and explode them. Anyway things developed a bit during World War II and they used the machine gun and they used Oerlikons [machine guns] sometimes to knock them off. But we didn't run into them,

14:00 they were discovered and they were floating. We had to sink them, which they did.

**How would you spot mines from a ship because I imagine if the sea is a bit rough, they would be hard to see?**

Yes well you've got nowadays and in those days we had ASDIC [Anti Submarine Detection Committee], which is now sonar and also we had magnetic mine detection equipment on board which you could detect

14:30 mines and what were used to do we used to sweep for mines. And they had what they called paravanes which were like dummy aircrafts sort of things which we'd lower into the water and they had serrated wire on them which would cut the cable of the mines. If they didn't sink them,

15:00 well if they didn't cut them we would have to explode them some other way, mainly by shooting at the horns we'd explode them.

**And the first action you mentioned with the German ships although as you say that wasn't very heavy action, it must have still been quiet a thrill or quite an amazing time for your first action?**

Yes it was, I had two stations on the Canberra,

15:30 well actually I had three I suppose. Sometimes within the high angle director, which directed the anti-aircraft sometimes I was in the eight inch gun turret, as a gun layer and other times I was in the high angle control. A high angle control station. I can remember you know, firing all these rounds at

16:00 a German ship and the feeling that you get you know because all eight inch guns heading in one direction and they all fire at the one time, there's quite a feeling in the ship you know, a shuddering feeling. And I can remember when I was in the high angle station this time, the officers' steward or an officer's steward was also in there and he had his cap on

16:30 and on one of salvos hit his cap, the cover came off his cap so there was sort of a concussion, well there was a concussion.

**Would the whole ship sort of roll?**

No it wouldn't roll but it moved you know, well it felt like it was moving just a bit and of course to overcome that, whilst all the guns would be firing at the one target and to your ear and sight,

17:00 they would be firing at the one time, but they weren't, there was just a fraction of the second between each round so that the shock would be minimised on the ship. And you can imagine the battleships firing their 15 inch and 16 inch and 14 inch guns there was considerable thrust.

**You said your station was gun layer, what does a gun layer do?**

17:30 Well a gun layer either trains the gun or the director onto the target, right, and that's one part of it and the other part of that is that he elevates the gun to the angle that is required. In the ships, all of the ships except the

18:00 very, very small ones you had repeater sites, dials, like clock dials right. And on them was a pointer, right, and that pointer indicated the angle to which the guns should be laid so you as a gun layer had another pointer. What you did, you turned the handle

18:30 to which elevation the gun or turned your gun right and left until you got the pointers in coincidence, right, and then you got the target according to the director. See a gunnery is quite complicated on the ships...perhaps we shouldn't be talking about gunnery.

**No, gunnery is fine.**

Well look on those ships you've got four guns right, we'll talk about the Canberra for instance, you got four guns, you got one up front, and one

19:00 behind it and the same down the rear, now there are all are different, and in the middle or not in the middle but at a point behind the bridge, right, you've got the main armament control director. Now the director looks at the target right, and factors such as wind speed, speed of the ship, angle that you're pointing

19:30 your gun at, all these corrections are applied and the result of that comes down to the ship, to the guns, actually to the guns. But the guns being at different levels and different distances apart and different heights that calculation has to go into it too. So that's pretty displacement, which is a distant hour away,

20:00 that's pretty standard and so is the height above sea level. Now all those things are in there but when you match your pointer up, you're taking all those things into consideration and then the gun is fired from the control position to the director. But the information comes from the director to the station to the control station and from the control station out to the gun.

20:30 **It's very complicated.**

Yes and also if that system fails, and I was sitting in my position in the 8 inch gun turret, then we'd go into the local control and then I would elevate the gun by hand. It's all hydraulically operated of course, but I would be the one to elevate it. And somebody told me what the range was and we'd set the range and I'd elevate the guns.

**And what was the noise like**

21:00 **with all these guns going off?**

The worst noise of all was of course out in the open with the smaller guns. In the 8 inch turrets there's a very loud or very muffled loud sound you know. It wasn't too bad inside the gun house, but when you got down beside the other side the two pounders and their of course rate of fire is rather rapid, and also

21:30 the four inch gun that was pretty rugged. What they used to give us or tells to do with was sometimes we had rubber blocks which we would put between our teeth but on the four inch gun in particular if you kept your teeth open, the shock wasn't so bad but if you clenched your teeth, then it was pretty tough. It seemed that the sound got in and couldn't get out,

22:00 or the other way round, couldn't go in an out.

**Do gunners go deaf?**

Most of them do. Particularly the army blokes because they were always in the open you know, and a lot of our Legatees are army gunners and quite a few of them are quite deaf, wearing hearing aids. But fortunately for me, I'm not.

**Lucky you. Did you actually see those ships go down?**

Yes.

22:30 **Must have been quite an awe inspiring sight to see these two ships go down for the first time?**

Yes, yes it was. I mean I saw the scuttled tanker go down and I'd seen the German supply ship go down, but that was a different circumstance to the Prince of Wales and the Repulse because...

**Well let's talk about the sinking of those two ships.**

Yes well

23:00 they sailed, they sailed from Cape Town to Colombo from Colombo to Singapore and they arrived there on the 8th December. Anyway we went up the coast looking for a landing at Kota Baru

23:30 and as it turned out there wasn't a landing at Kota Baru but actually further down the coast at Quonton, which was where the Japanese were supposed to be, and the admiral in charge of the Force Z as it was called, was Sir Tom Phillips, and he hoped to go up the coast to meet this supposed landing at Quonton

24:00 and do it under cover of darkness or we often had cloud or fog in that part of the world, for some reason I don't know, but often you had fog around that close to the coastline. And he hoped to go up there and to surprise the Japanese but as I said earlier along, a couple of Japanese planes were sighted and they blew our cover.

24:30 And the next thing we knew, was about 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock in the morning, 11.20 actually, the Japanese high-level bombers went over and they dropped a stick of bombs on the Repulse and didn't do much damage. It actually hit through the aircraft hanger. Of course, those battleships, as the Canberra did, always carried the aeroplane

25:00 for reconnaissance purposes. And then after that we saw aircraft low down on the horizon as I said they came in to attack and they hit the Repulse and they hit the Prince of Wales.

25:30 The Repulse was the first one to go and she got about seven torpedo hits. She got one early in the action towards the stern which made her not too manoeuvrable and then of course they then came into the Prince of Wales. And 85

26:00 aircraft took part in that attack. And some one said 34 in the high-level attacks. We had more than one level high-level attack and had a second high-level attack and there was what... 54, 50-odd torpedo bombers and they came in from all angles, and they came in low down

26:30 and that's the only reason that we could get a shot at them because on the Vampire, our gun had a limit elevation angle of about 45 degrees, it wasn't much but the torpedo bombers coming in at our level almost, we could get a few shots at it.

**Excuse me Lloyd, how far off the Repulse and the Prince of Wales were you standing in the Vampire?**

Would have be about 200 yards I suppose...

**So you were right there?**

Yeah, a cables length.

27:00 A 100 fathoms is a cable's length, so 200 yards.

**And was it just the three ships there?**

No we had.. we started off with the [HMS] Tenedos when we left Singapore, the Tenedos, the [HMS] Electra and Express and the Vampire and the Tenedos was having a bit of a problem so she was shipped back to Singapore and on a way back to Singapore she underwent attack but she survived.

27:30 So virtually we had a destroyer up front then one on each side right, right and we happened to be on the portside, the left-hand side of the screen and principally there of course for submarines screens, but we didn't see any. Anyway the aircraft that torpedo bombers that come from 22 squadron which were based in Saigon.

28:00 They weren't from aircraft carriers at sea. And how the Japanese, and it was supposed to be 39 of them were knocked down, how they ever got through the screen of exploding ammunition I'll never know, because I did work at it out. There were

- 28:30 5.25 anti-aircraft guns and 5.5 aircraft guns and there was something like 40 40mm guns firing as they were coming in, you know, and of course being low down, they were pretty good targets and they were... how any of them ever got through, I don't know and how none of them
- 29:00 well I know why none of the torpedoes hit us because we were virtually floating on top of the water to the depths that the torpedoes were set. But what was impressive was the way in which is the first battleship combed the torpedoes. You know as the torpedoes are fired at the ship and the Repulse was the one in particular
- 29:30 they combed them and that is, they turned in towards the torpedoes that are coming up, and of course, they present less of a target. And I read a report where the captain of the Repulse reported to the Prince of Wales that he had combed 16 torpedoes, so there were 16 torpedoes fired at him and he had combed them and got away with it. But then again when
- 30:00 the bombers decided to come in from all angles and there was no way you could comb them and the Repulse got three distinct hits and you know that more or less finished her off.

**Can you see the torpedoes running at 26 feet?**

Yeah you can.

**Is it possible to fire machine guns at them?**

Well you could but it wouldn't do much good. But you see in the tropical water, you've got a lot of phosphorescence in the water

- 30:30 and when those torpedoes are running, you can see the trail that they leave, because they got a propeller on the rear end of them which drives them. And that's why at night when in the tropics anyway when the dolphins were coming towards the ship they look just like a torpedo because they were a bit closer to the surface you know. But you know the Express, the destroyer the Express,
- 31:00 tied up to the Prince of Wales when she was sinking and were taking crew on from you know from the Prince of Wales onto the ship.

**Were they still under attack at the time?**

No they weren't, they had finished their attack and when the ships were done, they flew off and of course we didn't have any aircraft cover. Had the [HMS] Indomitable not fouled up in the West Indies then we would have had some air cover, whether it'd been

- 31:30 any good or not I don't know because I think the aircraft they were flying were Fairy Fulmars and the Japs, their fighters were Zeros, which were the top at the time. So we were picking up you know survivors. We didn't pick up any of the Prince of Wales blokes, we were told to pick up the other ship, the Repulse, so that's what we were doing. There was Electra was the other destroyer helping us
- 32:00 and ourselves picking up..

**During a battle like that, you're in your gun turret and so you can't really see what's going on can you?**

Well I could because I was standing on the bridge. My station on the Vampire was on the bridge and I was always on the bridge because I was one of the few gun layers on the ship and being the senior gun layer I was the director operator

- 32:30 you see, up on top the bridge and of course, it was all open we have no shielding around the bridge at all.

**Did they direct much fly around the bridge at all ?**

Well when the bombers finished their run, you know, they'd come in, they'd drop their torpedoes and then they would swing around and they used to give us a bit of a hurry up with their machine guns.

**You were in the open there aren't you?**

Yeah.

**That's incredible. What was the noise like up there**

- 33:00 **in the open with the guns and the bombers and the big ships?**

Well it's hard to describe, you know, you say you can't hear yourself speak well that'd be about the situation when they were all going at the same time.

**And how long did the battle go on for?**

One-hour 55 minutes.

**To be exact.**



To be exact because I've just written a paper on it and yeah one-hour 55 minutes.

**And what's your captain...**

33:30 **are you on the same position as the captain on the bridge?**

Yeah he's on the bridge.

**What is he doing during this time?**

Well he is trying to con our ship, get it out of the way of the torpedoes and you know, still maintain a screening duty for the battleships.

**And are the captains of the individual ships in contact by radio?**

Yes by radio.

**And what were the captains of the Repulse and the Prince of Wales saying**

34:00 **to your captain?**

That I don't know, that I don't know. And I don't know whether they were even talking to him at all, but you know we had radio telephone and of course we had flags and lights, you could signal him with lights. But the captain of the Repulse, Captain Tennant came up to the bridge on the Vampire you know when it was all over and our captain said to him,

34:30 "Can I get you anything?" you know after saying sorry sir and all the rest of it. And the old boy said, he'd like a cup of tea. I would have thought a double whisky would be better... but the admiral's barge you see, Tom Philips was a full admiral and his barge was a magnificent thing, it would of course cost zillions and zillions of pounds I would think. It was floating around there on its own in the water

35:00 and there was a sailor standing up on it, you know had got up on it, and they called out to him you know, "Come alongside." and he said, "I can't do that I haven't got any fenders." And you know, the fender is the thing you put out between the ship or ships and the wharf and he was being a hardy son over there saying, "I can't do that, I haven't got any fenders."

**In case you scratch the admiral's barge?**

35:30 And of course we just left it there, they didn't even sink it that I can recall anyway, they should have.

**And so do you remember the moment when you thought, those two ships are gone or one of those ships are gone?**

Yes so do. I can you know, because we were on side, or the same side as the Repulse, it is an awful sad feeling

36:00 to see a ship go down you know. When the Vampire went down that was to me that was terrible and this is before then of course. To see those ships... and you know the Repulse was an old ship, she was built in the 1920s but the Prince of Wales was a brand new battleship you know, she was about number 2 in the King George V class I think

36:30 and you know, a friend of mine said that when she rolled over, and she did roll over the Prince of Wales and her red anti-fouling paint was showing up, you know, he said, like a big red cigar in the sea. And of course then after that, all these bodies floating around and all this oil and the water.

**And did they go down quickly the ships?**

Yes they did, they went down fairly quickly, but you know

37:00 when you think about it, the battle lasted an hour and 55 minutes and 850 sailors lost their lives in 2 hours, or just under 2 hours.

**I think that's one of the differences between naval battles and land battles, they tend to happen very quickly and are very intense.**

That's right because once again you're the sardines in the tin and the tin gets holes punctured in it and it sinks.

37:30 **And can you remember when the ships had gone down did it seem strangely quiet once the battle was over?**

It did, yes it did. And strangely enough or not strangely enough, I suppose naturally enough, no one seemed to be talking to anybody, even on board our ship, there seemed to be a stunned silence, would be the best way to describe it I suppose, until you know it was decided

38:00 that we had to do something about getting those sailors out of the sea. And we only had one doctor, well we had a doctor on board and we had only one sick berth attendant, his offside and of course, they were pulling the sailors up out of the water, laying them up on the deck. Doc was examining them. Some of them we didn't take back with us because they were already dead, it was quiet terrible thing actually,

really was.

38:30 **I imagine it would be shocking.**

And of course the other thing about it was, they you know, they came out to save Singapore virtually, you know. Bob Menzies [Sir Robert Menzies] in August, the Prime Minister, got in touch with the UK and said we have to do something or something must be done about strengthening that area South-East Asia area

39:00 because the Japanese were looking as though they were going to attack us. And of course that happened.

**And does it take a long time to rescue men from the water?**

Well it depends. We had people swimming in the water and bringing them up to the ship's side and we had what they called scrambling nets over and they could climb up. And also we had our boat down and we were picking them up out of the water.

39:30 **And how do you get all that oil off them?**

Well you don't really. You try to get it from them and the only way of getting it from them, off their clothing, is to throw the clothing or get rid of the clothing. But when they got it on their face, and you know, you have to be careful, of their eyes and of course the swallowing it. A lot of them swallowed it, you know

40:00 and that's disastrous results for them.

**Would just make you sick or would it kill you?**

Well it could kill you, but made a lot of them sick of course and that affected some of our boys that were in the water pulling them out.

**And is it a sea full of quiet men or are some screaming in pain?**

Yeah, some of them screaming in pain, some of them are shouting out and some of them calling out to you, here and waving their arms and so on.

## Tape 5

00:41 **Lloyd we would like to pick up where we finished off, rescuing men from the water, you mentioned off camera that to rescue men from the water, your ship's got to be stationary?**

Yes that's right.

**What particular dangers does that throw up?**

01:00 Well the propellers on the ship could draw people in the water down because of the suction and also decimate them because the propellers would be spinning around and you know they were badly wounded as it was and it'd be no good adding to it, it would be fatal if they were to be hit by a propeller.

**And I've heard or I've read of men being drowned in the wake of the propeller?**

Yes that's right.

**Is that what you mean by being sucked down?**

01:30 Yes that's right.

**And it keeps you down does it?**

Yes it does, long enough to drown you, yeah. And if you see ship going out of harbour you see where the props, when it's travelling at a reasonable speed, you see the prop weight behind it and as long as I would imagine that as long as it is visible it would be long enough to keep you under.

**That would well and truly finish you off.**

Yeah it would.

02:00 **And in naval battles then, say that the battle is still raging, you can't stop to pick up men can you?**

No you can't.

**Because then you're a sitting duck.**

Yes that's right.

**So was it often the case that men would be in the water while the battle is still going on?**

Well yes. When we were at Endau Bay and the Thanet was sunk, that was our situation, we couldn't stop and look for survivors there. And there were

02:30 survivors, we know there were. And the Thanet didn't look upon us very kindly for not helping, but I think it was just a few odd sailors, but certainly there was nothing we could do, we had to get out and get home.

**And if your moving, there is also a chance that you may run over some men...?**

Oh yes if you're moving, yes of course. Normally in those circumstances you will be moving very slowly but you know, we had a bit of an exhibition in Sydney Harbour recently,

03:00 we had people hanging on to bows of ships and so on. Yes well, that's right. They would be subject to a rude buffeting, it would be very dangerous.

**And we've all seen 'Titanic' and seen other films where a ship goes down, and people are sucked down with the ship, is it always the case that you'll be sucked down so far that you'll drown**

03:30 **or was it possible that you can come back up in that situation?**

Well I don't know about that. See we lost eight men on the Vampire, we had 130 something and we lost eight men on the Vampire. And the Vampire actually broke in two and sunk that way. But you know, the drill is that you go over the high side as I said earlier so that you're away from suction because

04:00 the ship won't roll on you and debris won't fall on you.

**Could you actually like, could you talk us through the drill from the call to abandon the ship, because I am assuming it's a very disciplined operation?**

Yes, yes it is. We were under attack by dive bombers and we, the old Vampire only had a top speed of about 28 knots

04:30 that's the best we could do. And quite often we were at high-speed and we were taking evasive action. Our navigator, Beau Cartwright, was an experienced navigator. He had been in the Mediterranean area, so he knew what dive bombs and things were about. And of course the engine room people were working overtime and so are the

05:00 helmsmen and the telegraph men, because we not only did we go at full speed, we also changed speed and course quite often. But a bomb dropped behind the bridge where we had our vegetable locker and I can see the ASDIC officer picking up the onions and stuffing them down his shirt

05:30 you know and wondering why the hell he wanted those for but at least he had something to eat. And they wouldn't have complained about his bad breath I wouldn't think. But we were going around in a circle trying to you know, provide an evasive target, and after we were hit just behind the bridge

06:00 and also a bomb went through one of our boats and the captain gave the order to abandon ship. And when that came then we were preparing to jump over the side. The freeboard, the distance of the main deck of the Vampire would have been about 10 feet from the water, but I was up on the bridge and that would've

06:30 been 25 feet above the water I suppose. And as I said earlier when the order to abandon ship was given, I dived over the side instead of jumping over the side and halfway down I knew what I should have done. And then you know all the crew were then getting off the ship and I could see, knew one fellow

07:00 who was just stuck to his site and just couldn't jump over the side, someone gave him a little push. And the crew we lost were all engine room crew plus a signalman. And the signalman had come to us through one of the British ships and he wasn't really our crew, but he joined us. And then you know, we're in the water and as I said, my mate and I was sitting an oar.

07:30 The first lieutenant had our football, Australian Rules football which he shoved under his jumper, or shirt I should say, and he used that to float around. And I believe that ball actually got back to Australia. But whilst we were in the water and the ship broke in half, and then there was an explosion, which we think was the boiler room or it might have been, I don't know, it could have been

08:00 a depth charge, probably, but they would have been set safe so they wouldn't have gone off, so it would have been the boiler room. So when then explosion took place we were in the water, it gives your tummy a bit of a tingle up because, you know, you get a concussion in the water. And as I say, the hospital ship picked up the crew from the

08:30 Hermes, survivors from the Hermes and then she came along to pick us up. But before that, before the ship came to us, we could see the shore, could see the palm trees fluttering around on the shoreline, and a few of us decided we would swim to shore. It didn't seem to be too far and were we all pretty good swimmers because we used to swim a lot in the tropics and the ship would be in anchor the harbour and we would swim. Anyway we decided to swim to shore, but we were

09:00 swimming and swimming and nothing happened and actually we were in a tide-set. We went in and then we were coming out with it and that's when the hospital ship arrived on the scene to pick us up.

**Did anybody during the abandon ship, apart from the fellow who froze and then helped overboard, did anybody panic, did people lose it?**

No not that I saw, no not that I saw.

**And in the water you always read about in the tropics, shark infested waters and so forth,**

09:30 **did you ever see sharks, evidence of sharks?**

No not all. We saw a big sail fish come up out of the water, that's it, that's all we ever saw.

**Did the men worry about sharks?**

No I don't think so, I don't think so. You see, strange thing I can't remember seeing any fish floating around either and with the exploding bombs in the water and the ship and the ship blowing up, I would have thought that, well now

10:00 I wonder why there weren't any fish. Because when we were up in the Barrier Reef and dropped a depth charge or something, there was lots and lots of fish.

**And how far away from the Vampire were you when you went down?**

Oh from here to about the house over the road.

**That must have been an awfully sad and terrible time?**

It was, and the thing about it was

10:30 that the bow section went first and then the quarter deck or the aft deck part, and the last thing that was above the water was the flag, the Australian flag flying.

**That's a very sad image wasn't it?**

I should have said the white ensign, not the Australian flag, it was the white ensign.

**And what about the notion of the captain going down with the ship?**

11:00 Yes well once upon a time it was traditional that the captain went down with his ship, but when I left the bridge the captain was on the bridge and he was sitting on his chair on the portside of the bridge. Somebody I heard say that he was seen down at the depth charge racks, but he wasn't, he was on the bridge ,because when they said abandon ship the ASDIC officer

11:30 went and then I went and I don't know about navigator when he went. I don't recall him at all. But when I left the bridge the captain was still there.

**Did he survive?**

No he didn't, no. And he'd been the commander of the Canberra when I was there, so I knew fairly well as much as an ordinary seaman knows a commander.

**Do you think he would been the kind of man that made sure that all that everyone was off before he was?**

Yes, he would have, yes.

12:00 You know, we had a bit of a skirmish on the Vampire and some of the boys, particularly the young ones were a bit toey and uncertain of life I should say. And the captain cleared the lower deck, which means that everybody on the ship comes off and he said when he was talking to us

12:30 he said, "Now I know some of you got very excited." and I thought it was a wonderful way to put the fact that some of the boys were a bit scared, a bit off centre but, this was while we will floating around in the Sunda Straights and so on and I thought that was a wonderful way of putting it. And that was the man as I knew him anyway.

**I imagine when**

13:00 **you're on a ship and you're in battle, being below decks must be quite a frightening place to be because you're not really sure of what's going on, and especially if the command to abandon ship comes. Do you think it's a different kind of battle for the below decks men?**

Yes it must be, but I've never been in that situation, I've always been in an 8 inch gun turret,

13:30 but I still had a telescope that I used to look out. But to be an engine room crew or a boiler room crew, and the boiler room crew more than the engine crew because they've got those boilers there full of hot water and super heated steam, around it must be tough for them. When I wanted to join the navy back in 1938, my father said, "You are not to be a stoker because

14:00 you're going to be below decks and you're going to be locked you know, into your position." So he said, "If you're going to join the navy, join as a seamen, like your uncle." And what he said was true to a point but when you are ammunition crew on the big ships, you went down to the magazine and they lowered the hatch

14:30 which could only be lowered by a chain pulling. And it could only be raised by a chain pulling, so when you were down there, that was it, you know, there would be no way you would get out of that. So Dad was a bit wrong about all that.

**Still he had the right thought in mind.**

Yes he did, yes he did. But you know, the strange thing, the firemen or the stokers, or engine room crew, are always locked up, well not locked up, but they are always below decks

15:00 and yet they are the ones whom seem to know most what's going on, they must read very well I think. Because I know a couple of them in that category.

**Was the Vampire equipped with watertight bulkheads so that if there was a breech you could set off a part of the ship?**

No. The Vampire was built in 1913

15:30 and what you're talking about in destroyer language anyway is the break of the ship. You know there's the bow, along here and then goes down and that's the break. Now on the Vampire normally there are water tight doors there, Z doors and you close them up and that's water tight. On the Vampire and the Thanet

16:00 and some of the older ones as well we had canvas awning there.

**That's all?**

That's all yep. 'Cause the galley, you know the cookhouse, the galley was there and on either side of that we had the entry to the fo'c'sle mess or decks. But we didn't have any water tight walls there, they did below, into the engine room,

16:30 not the engine room, into the accommodation down aft, right down aft they had water tight doors.

**So as the hull was breached right below the water line, it was basically going to just flood the whole ship gradually wasn't it?**

Yes that's right except right down aft in the office there, they had some watertight bulkheads there.

**And what are the injuries that sailors fear the most?**

17:00 **Like I guess if you're below decks it's steam burns?**

Well yes super heated steam is the problem when you're below decks. And when you're above decks you know in fighting positions, its shrapnel wounds or worse than that, gun shot wounds.

**And being a ship, you're like a miniature country or you're a miniature HQ, you have all your ammunition in one spot, all your fuel, all you boiling hot steam so if a ship blows up, you're likely to be blown up**

17:30 **perhaps by your own ordnance exploding under...**

Yes, most likely. Magazines are usually placed under the guns in emplacements and of course if the magazine is here then things go pop all over the place and particularly the cordite ammunition because the cordite ammunition.. in ships that have separated ammunition, you can have fixed ammunition and separated ammunition and where you got

18:00 separated ammunition for cordite stored in one place, they only got a tiny little thin shell of copper around them.

**You wouldn't want to be standing near that then would you?**

No, no. I used to throw my empty shells over the side, empty cordite shells over the side until I got reprimanded not to do that.

**Why did you get reprimanded?**

Well we had a 4 inch gun, 4.7 each gun that was my gun and it had about that much clearance

18:30 above the deck and when you were firing and you know, you were firing as fast as you could, and you had these cylinders being projected onto the deck, they used to get under the gun mounting and you couldn't train the gun, couldn't move the gun around. So when that happened I used to throw them over side. Captain didn't like it very much. He told me so. Well I can understand, I mean it's alright for the Americans, they used to do it as a matter of course you know. But then

19:00 we didn't have the resources they had.

**And coming back to the sinking of the Vampire again, were you aware that most of the below decks men had come up, could you see that they were mainly out?**

No I couldn't and it was below decks men on the engine room side, where we had our main

19:30 losses, most of our losses were there. But the sailors from below deck in the magazine they were they got up and out of it.

**Do the below decks and above decks, is there a division, are there two different kinds of sailor, do you mix?**

On no it's you know, one of the below decks men might be my shipmate, might be working, cleaning the part of ship, but when we go to action stations or defence stations, he'd be down there.

20:00 **Okay I would just like to talk about there... you mentioned that there was a plane on the Canberra, an aeroplane.**

Yeah there was.

**I'm interested in knowing how it would be launched and retrieved ?**

Well it was catapulted off . We had an air force squadron leader on board the Canberra and we had a

20:30 mechanic onboard to look after it. And we used to fire it off with a cordite charge especially made of course. And it used to go off the look for enemy aircraft, enemy ships rather. And on one occasion when we're down in when the Admiral Scheer was around in the South Atlantic, we fired it off because we had an idea that there was a ship around

21:00 and it could have been the Admiral Scheer. Anyway we shot off and 42 miles away happen to be the New Zealand cruiser the [HMNZS] Leander, so she came back. Now getting it back onboard was a problem. We had a big crane of course, it lifted it out of the water...

**Oh it so was a sea plane that would land on the sea.**

Oh sorry yeah it was a pusher type[?] sea plane, the propeller is at the back

21:30 to push the aircraft along and it was a sea plane yeah and it was capable of carrying a machine gun and also a camera, had a big hatch and the bottom and used to screw the camera in. And when it came in to land the ship used to swing around against the tide to make a smooth passage for the aircraft to land

22:00 And I had never seen it done but they did say if things were too tough and they couldn't get it down, the sea down, that they could float oil. Terrible these days isn't it? They'd put oil on the water to break the waves down and of cause oil does break the waves down. And then the crane would go overboard, hang over the side and the observer would hook the plane on, hoist it up,

22:30 and park it back in its little spot. And that was the same type of plane that the Repulse and in the Prince of Wales had.

**And something you just said a minute ago, you had a feeling that there was a ship in the area, how do you get these feelings, what leads you think that there's a ship in the area?**

Well you get reports, radio reports coming in. Of course you don't talk to one another when you're at sea by radio because that would be breaking radio silence and that's not on.

23:00 But you get reports from shore get reports from aircraft, might be around so they just went over, and the poor old Leander we were all happy about it actually.

**I'm sure you would, better to have a friendly ship than an enemy ship...**

As I said earlier on you know, the Admiral Scheer was a 11-inch gun ship and we were 8, that had been pinging us long before we got close to them.

**Yeah I'm sure.**

## Tape 6

03:19 **My first question Lloyd this afternoon, is what kind of a fellow do you think it takes to make a good navy officer or a navy seamen?**

03:30 Well they are two separate people aren't they? And the seaman is one brand and naval officer can be of any branch really, but they have to have understanding and may have to be able to appreciate the situation that you're in. And the way you react to different situations.

**Well you were talking yesterday about the ability to cooperate and I was thinking of if you're a soldier, if you're training to go out in the field and fight, then you're trained to do almost the opposite of your instincts**

- 04:00 **when someone is firing at you, you don't run away you stand there and take it. But is that not entirely what you need as a navy figure is it, you need slightly different skills?**
- Well you need the same skills. I mean on a fighting ship and that's what we're talking about I mean you had your main armament and you had a secondary armament and then you had your 303 machine guns and you have
- 04:30 0.5 inch machine guns and 2 pounder guns and you know you had to stay at your post, there was no way you could get away from your post, and if you did then you could be in serious trouble. Is that what you want to know?
- Oh yes. I also want to know how you coped on a day-to-day level, living so close to together with each other?**
- Well the one good thing about a service life is that you have to learn to live
- 05:00 with your fellow man as I said yesterday, you're probably in the same mess as he is, you're probably in the same watch as he is, and you're probably in the same action station or defence station or whatever.
- But how do you do that though, they must still irritate you though, you are still human beings?**
- Well you still have boxing competitions and you can let a bit of your spleen go [relieve the pressure] there if you wish, and we played sport onboard ship
- 05:30 which provided contest, but you know there was nothing you could do about it.
- So tell me about one or two chaps you must have met along the way who thought they would be good seamen but they actually weren't, they weren't cut out for it at all?**
- Yes I know one particular sailor who just always seemed to be in trouble and it wasn't...
- 06:00 well it was always his fault, you know. Some of them just look for trouble and of course they usually oblige with the requisite penalty if they get caught. I mean you know gambling of course is one thing that was forbidden in the navy, borrowing clothes from one another was also forbidden.
- Why was that forbidden**
- 06:30 **I don't think you said so?**
- No I didn't. Everybody is issued with the same amount of clothing right, if you were short of clothing we had a store on board, on the big ships in particular, called slops where you could go and buy replacement clothing. You couldn't buy a replacement uniform but underwear, shirts and those sorts of things, yes and socks, you could buy those
- 07:00 sorts of things from slops. And we did kit masters you see, when we did kit master you laid your spare hammock out on the deck and you laid your clothing out in particular way and they were rolled and taped, you know, the shirt, you folded your sleeves in and the fold in the middle and roll it up and put a tape around the ends
- 07:30 with your name showing. And that's when your kit was inspected you had to have everything there, you see. And if you didn't have your own name there, you would be in trouble because they could say that you had stolen it and if you didn't have it there you had to go off to the slops and buy another one like shirts and singlets and those sorts of things. You had to layout all your uniforms, accept the one you were wearing of course,
- 08:00 and they would come along and inspect them, and inspected for the way you laid it out, the tidiness of the layout and also the cleanliness of the uniforms. If it wasn't clean then you would be in trouble.
- I understand that, I am just curious as why it was such an offence to lose a piece of clothing, it seems a bit harsh I suppose?**
- Well I suppose it was and another thing to, if you left a bit of clothing laying around and each mess deck
- 08:30 had a petty officer or leading hand as the charge hand, and if you left a bit of clothing around they would pick it up and put it in what we called the scran bag and to get it out of the scran bag of course it'd cost you a bit of soap, you see, a piece of soap, so you know, it was it was particular that you kept your uniform intact and up-to-date.
- This is a bit of an odd question,**
- 09:00 **of the one of the things that I was thinking of was those T uniforms with the bell bottom legs, you'd have to be pretty thin to wear those, they didn't really have the waist band for a chap who is a bit portly, and I am trying to remember if I ever saw a photograph of a tubby sailor. I mean... you...**
- Yes I knew a couple.

**How did they fit into uniform like that, it wasn't designed for anybody with a pot belly?**

No, but you know, you could get big uniforms from stores issued but

09:30 every sailor that I know of anyway, had his tiddly uniform.

**Tiddly?**

Yeah and that was made by a tailor outside the service usually. There were a couple in Sydney, a few here in Melbourne in Elizabeth Street that use to make uniforms for sailors. And we used to have, the pants, the bottoms on service pants were about 14 inches and when you got them made

10:00 by the tailor, they were at least 20 and sometimes more than that, so you know you got the real big swing of pants and also we used to get port and starboard pockets. See the left-hand pocket would be red and the right hand pocket, lining that is, would be green.

**Most unusual that. Perhaps there were some tubby sailors...**

Oh I know on the director which

10:30 directed the direction of the guns and through fight cross systems had a very small egg shaped port hole to get in, you came up from underneath and one of my friends who did the course with me, instructors' course, he reckoned he used to be able to get into the director through the manhole and I'm damned if I know how he did because he was big in both directions

11:00 width, both ways and there's a photograph over there of our class and he's in it.

**Well were there any regulations about weight?**

Nope.

**But in such a small space wouldn't it have been a prerequisite that you could fit in your hammocks and through the doors and not bounce somebody out of the way down the corridor.**

Oh know I mean a hammock was what close to five feet wide I suppose,

11:30 well four feet six anyway and that was quite comfortable, wouldn't matter how big you were actually you'd get into that okay.

**As long as you didn't have to sleep underneath that person I guess?**

No well no one slept under anybody at all in those days.

**At all?**

No, not in a hammock, not in a hammock. You might in tropical areas, we sometimes used stretchers and you might sleep under him in a stretcher but usually when you have a stretcher you slept up on deck

12:00 in the tropics.

**Did you ever work on any convoy ships, did you take soldiers anywhere?**

Oh yes indeed we did. We took the 6th Division across to Aden and there was the Queen Mary and Ile de France.. I can't remember the others but I know

12:30 on other occasions we had the Queen Elizabeth and some American ships, the Manhattan and often it was just the Canberra who would do the convoy across to Aden or across to Africa, to South Africa. And I can remember one occasion I may have mentioned that yesterday I'm not sure,

13:00 when the [HMAS] Warrego was the new ship that was going across the strait with us, the Gulf.... forgotten it's name.. from here to Western Australia and as the going through the bight [Great Australian Bight], she disappeared down in the trough of the wave and I think we were talking about yesterday about 50-feet down, the trough must have been. But mainly

13:30 my service on the Canberra was mainly in convoy duties. We did some searching for you know the Graf Spee, the Admiral Scheer I should say, the German pocket battleship, and we did that sort of work. And we went up to Singapore and we were around the Maldive Islands and Laccadive Islands and those places like that, but mainly on convoy work.

**But on occasions like that, are there any fraternising**

14:00 **between the two services?**

How? What do you mean, army and navy? Well yes, ashore, when we got into port and they were on leave and we were on leave, yes there was some fraternising, and there was a few punch ups as well because we were sailors and they were 'swotties' as we used to call them. And sometimes there would be a disagreement about something or a rather, usually start around a pub somewhere.



**What does 'swottie' stand for?**

14:30 Just a term we used for a soldier.

**Like it doesn't mean 'swatting' flies swatting?**

No I don't know, but we just called them 'swotties'.

**And was there an expectations that if you're in the navy that you were better than if you were AIF [Australian Imperial Force]?**

We were the senior service of course we were better.

**And give me an example of a punch up, did you throw any right arms yourself?**

No, no... well I had to protect myself.

15:00 And my nose is a bit crooked but that's alright.

**And underneath that, under those circumstances there was a sense that you really thought you were okay or did you actually hate each other?**

No we didn't. If you were in a port and things got a bit rough with the locals and that happened sometimes and there was soldiers there and airmen and sailors, and if you called our 'Aussie', then you had all the help you needed.

**So tell me a little**

15:30 **bit more about these pub punch ups that went on between....**

Oh well we didn't go into the punch ups much because it was much more interesting to be drinking beer than to be engaged in a punch up but it used to happen. I mean it happens sometimes between crew members, now you were speaking a while ago about getting on with people, well if you didn't get on with somebody

16:00 there was the possibility that there could be a bit of a punch up over that, but generally we got along pretty well, sure. And if we didn't like somebody we let him know and if they wanted to go beyond the slanging match, well that was usually accommodated to, one-way or another.

**And was that sort of petty sometimes the business that went on between...**

Well yes mainly it was petty yes.

16:30 If you stole something from someone that would be serious and not only was it serious between the two people involved, but it was serious as far as the ship was concerned too, you know. If you were known to have stolen something and you were reported then you would be in for punishment.

**Yes, and I imagine you may never lose that reputation either.**

No and one of the punishments that you can get...

17:00 we were awarded good conduct badges after so many years service and then you got a second one, a third one after 15 years and we also were promoted see. And if the crime was serious enough they could take your good conduct badges from you and they also could also take you substantive rate which was

17:30 if you were a leading hand or a petty officer, they'd take that from you and that would be a loss of money then because each substantive rate that you have, had a money value attached to it.

**Well I imagine getting promoted was very much sought-after for that reason but I have a feeling that being promoted was a lot more than just an increase in pay?**

Yes it was but then again you know if you wanted to be the captain

18:00 at the top, if you were a seamen, and you wanted to be a captain at the top, you couldn't get there unless you were a petty officer on the bigger ships and leading hand on the smaller ones and so if you wanted to obtain that, to have any chance of getting a position you had to have the relative substantive rating and it wouldn't mean that you were necessarily promoted on the ship that you were on, you'd probably be drafted.

18:30 You see I served on six different ships, actually five, the sixth I only had a couple of days on that, but five different ships and the main reason for my moving, I like to think so you know, was I was increased my non-substantive rating, in other words my gunnery rating, I went from one phase to another. And also I went from able seamen to leading seamen, leading seamen to petty officer

19:00 and of course, ships are allowed a certain number of leading hands and petty officers and another ship might be short of that specialist rating and you could be drafted over to the other ship.

19:30 **Was there a sort of assumed period of time that you would serve before promotion or was it more random than that?**

No, there was no promotion in the navy below chief petty officer that you didn't get by passing an examination, you had to pass the examination or you wouldn't be promoted

20:00 and that was the short and the long of the story.

**Could you request that yourself or did you have to be recommended?**

Well you could let your divisional officer know that you wanted to take an examination for a leading seamen or a petty officer or whatever and then you would be advised as to when the next exam would be in you would be listed for it, and that's the way it went.

**Do you know of anyone or any incident where**

20:30 **for instance people might have cheated to get a promotion?**

No, no I don't.

**And while we are on this salacious subject, what about people.. I'm trying a term that isn't too contemporary... brown-nosing, were there opportunities where people used that to their advantage?**

Oh yes that went on you know, where senior sailors had favourites among the younger sailors and I suppose

21:00 to some extent that went on between officers and senior ranking.

**I think you said yesterday, there was a captain that you liked less well than others, but did anyone ever take you under their wing when you were just starting out ?**

No I didn't have a sea daddy. You know that's what...

\n[Verse follows]\n "When I was a lad on the old iron clad\n The captain at the top was my sea dad"\n

21:30 **So you saw examples of that though?**

Oh yes there was examples of that.

**And there must have been nepotism as well I'm sure .**

Yes, but it was not something was a carried with favour on ship because it caused unrest between the sailors and in even further up the tree with the officers it would be so too.

**I get the feeling after you've been at sea a little while,**

22:00 **there must a rhythm to the ship where you don't even have to be told something you just know, you just know something's going to happen?**

That's true, that's true. I mean the routine in the morning, I'm talking from a seaman's point of view now because that's the only one I really know, you'd be called in the morning, get up, shower, wash, whatever you'd do, latch your hammock up and stow it away and then go up on deck to work.

22:30 Well sorry, that was after you had breakfast sometimes and then sometimes you would go up before you had breakfast depending on you know, what the dawn action stations were, or what ever was happening round about. And that went on day after day as I explained yesterday, the watches changed. I'm mean if you're on the morning watch this morning

23:00 then you wouldn't be on morning watch tomorrow morning, you would either do the middle watch or afternoon watch, whichever way that worked. And you know, that was life and it went on like that. And we always had, we always had morning action stations long before the sun got up. And sometimes we had evening action stations, depending on where you were and what the possibly

23:30 of enemy ships being around were.

**And in terms of all that morale and camaraderie in the face where there ever times when for example, you saw men trusting a subordinate officer more than trusting the commander officer?**

Well the commanding officer was usually in the fighting top, wasn't down with the troops you know. We had, officers

24:00 had divisions which they looked after and the man to man relationship was mainly between the chief petty officers and petty officers and the men. You see I was a petty officer and I was in charge of 4.7 twin gun mounting B gun and my men looked to me. The gunnery officer was on the bridge with the captain and the

24:30 navigator and other specialist offices as deck officer. And I was the one that said what went on, then I would be rebuked from the bridge if necessary, as I was on one or two occasions.

**So amidst the chaos of battle there would be circumstances where the men would follow your**

**instructions over and above the CO, I'm not suggesting that you refused orders at any stage,**

25:00 **but I can imagine if they work closely with you and the CO calls out something that they don't think you would agree with, was there, well did it ever operate like that?**

Well it didn't with me but the point you're making is that the more senior the person is, the more likely they are to be obeyed. In other words for instance, if I was a petty officer and I said do this and the gunnery officer poked his head over the bridge

25:30 and said I want him to do this, then he would do that, because I couldn't override him and I wouldn't undermine his authority anyway.

**No I appreciate that, I just wonder, I just wonder what it must be like in battle and it just must be so confusing, it just lead me to wonder if people just threw those rules away?**

When you're fighting, you're too damn busy to worry about other things. I mean there are lots of things to do, to be done

26:00 and you have to keep your crew on their toes and smoking hot bits of cartridges flying all around all over the place and orders coming through from control as to, you know, where you are to fire and all that sort of things. No we were very busy.

**You talked quite a bit about yesterday about when the Vampire sank and so on, but I was wondering whether you could walk us through a basic what happens when the battle**

26:30 **command is up and you have to mount the guns and go into action, like what steps you do prior to doing that?**

Alright well, we'll talk about an action station call right. Now on the bigger ships, you are called to action stations by a bugle call and/or a whistle, but all ships had a tannoy system, a broadcast system

27:00 and the call for action stations would go through that. Now what happens was the first thing you did was you made sure you had your gas mask, your tin hat and your battle gear on because we had anti-flash gear you know, that we used to put on and gloves and so on. And then you would go straight to your action stations and when you got to your action stations

27:30 and me being captain of a gun, I would ensure that the gun, we often had covers over the muzzles to stop sea water from coming in, and would make sure that the muzzle covers were off. You would open up the ammunition lockers because we had ammunition lockers by the gun, and they were called our ready use lockers. And you opened up your lockers,

28:00 test your guns by opening the breech and closing it, make sure it was working properly. And to see that you would have your full crew there and they were to do the job that they were supposed to do. And then you get an order come through by phone, and we always had a communication man on each gun. The order would come through you know, to train to port to starboard or up in the air or to tell us what was going on,

28:30 what the target was. And then you would get the order, you didn't start firing independently, you waited for the order to fire. Actually when you loaded the guns and they were on the target from the control tower, the director down through the control station, the fire control station, and when all guns were ready and everything was set the way it was meant to be,

29:00 then the guns were fired from there, by electrical contact. You didn't actually pull the trigger but you could you know if you were independent firing and sometimes that would happen, if you were given an independent target to fire at.

**Okay that all sounds fairly straightforward, and the noise at that stage, how loud and from how many directions and how do you keep it together in your head?**

Well you know, thinking back on it, noise didn't ever worry me. As I said yesterday, sometimes you'd keep your teeth apart, sometimes that helped, but you know I suppose, we got used to it and we expected it. As I said, the smaller the gun the louder the noise, or the more sharp was the sound, but the bigger guns were much better. Inside an 8 inch gun turret you heard a dull boom

30:00 followed by a vibration. But on the smaller ones, it didn't seem to worry us at all actually.

**Apart from the Vampire when it sank, after a battle, did it get discussed much afterwards in the mess?**

Oh yes, you had a bit of talk about it with one another.

**In a non official capacity I suggest?**

Oh yes in a non official capacity yes.

30:30 **And how did that go? Was kind of discussions did you have, was it as obvious as that...?**

Yes that sort of thing. On one occasion on the Vampire it had separated ammunition, you had the bullet

part of it and then the propellant was in the brass cartridge, and the Vampire fired separated ammunition. And we had some of the

31:00 propellant cases on the deck and this was while we were at Endau Bay and the water was coming over and we got into some of the propellant. And of course next morning, it looked as if someone got some grass hay and spread it around because the water got in and ruined it of course. And the fellows responsible for they got a bit of chiacking. But that was never,

31:30 in my knowledge anyway, was never vicious. You know you talked about something and somebody made a boo boo, well, you know he did, but because you are all prone to make mistakes and when things got exciting, well not exciting but when things warmed up a bit, you know, you can't always rely on yourself to do the right thing, although you might try.

**No I mean there was a lot of professional ineptitude in various aspects of these services**

32:00 **but listening to you talking it almost sounds as though the navy was...oh this is going to upset somebody, that the navy was more organised and lenient or forgiving of mistakes than perhaps the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] was at times, just judging from what I've heard?**

I don't know about forgiving mistakes. I mean if you, well first of all, are you speaking within the ranks likeman to man, or are you speaking from authority to....

**Oh mainly man to man and**

32:30 **from what I've heard, and this is purely anecdotal, this is hardly research data but you told a story yesterday about the man who was given leave as opposed to being sent to the brig and also the level of cooperation that goes on a ship, for example seemed a lot more manageable than what seems like chaos out in the field.**

Yes that may be so but we had to....you had to co-operate if you did... you know

33:00 I had a gun crew, we had 8 in out guns crew, now if one of those fellows wasn't doing his job or decided he had had enough then we couldn't operate efficiently because we just couldn't operate with seven men, we had to have 8.

**So how did you go about either getting him removed without causing more upset, was it just obvious?**

Yes it would be obvious and if you wanted to get him removed then you would have to go to his

33:30 divisional officer and I as captain of the gun would be reporting to the gunnery officer you know, I didn't think he was suited in the position. If we had somebody onboard equally trained or at the same non-substantive rating, in other words, say he was a layer-rating two, sorry a layer rating one, and we had a layer rating one doing something else, we would change them over because gun positions

34:00 are usually related to the part of ship, as I explained yesterday, different parts of the ship well usually a gun position is related to a part of the ship, so that crew for that gun usually come from that part of the ship.

**So John [interviewer] talked a little bit yesterday about the aeroplane and if he mentioned this I apologise for repeating but the pilot onboard... that must have a little bit odd**

34:30 **have one pilot in amongst all that navy?**

Yes they had a separate mess of their own, he and his observer and mechanic.

**So they had a little team?**

Yes they had a team, yeah, they had a team.

**Did you ever play any Ludo onboard together?**

No.

**They stayed really separate did they?**

Well they did, yes.. I was just an able seaman, probably not a very able, able seaman but I was an able seaman and of course the pilot was a squadron leader as I recall and I think his observer was a sergeant and I don't know what the armourer was or the mechanic, but they didn't really mix with us at all. And anyway they would be down aft and I was a sharp end man, I was up the front end.

**That's true, I guess you might just appreciate from my naïve point of view how unusual that must seem**

35:30 **that there were these three men in amongst the rest of you that just kept amongst themselves. I mean it is understandable I suppose. You just get the feeling that on a ship you'd eventually talk to everybody at some stage even if it is an official capacity.**

Yeah well you know, we had about 800 blokes onboard, on the Canberra but no, the only time I ever saw him really was when he was in the kite ready to fly off

- 36:00 and we used to fire a big round and away he would go, off she'd go . It used to be really thrilling because she'd used to go out like that down, and we'll used to say, is it this time that she was going to hit the water. But usually she wouldn't be at full power or she might be at full power by the time she got off the end of the catapult, but it was always a bit of a thrill wondering if we would or wouldn't have to pick them up from the water.
- 36:30 **And you did have to pick up some of the enemy out of the water, did you not?**
- Yes when the Kitty Broebeck and the other ship, I should have looked that up last night that was sunk, we had them onboard and we also had some survivors from the Port Brisbane which was a merchant ship that had been sunk.
- 37:00 But the one, the German supply ship, they had an SS [German Secret Police] man onboard, as you've probably already heard, and they came onboard and he had to vacate one of our mess areas for them to keep them separate and we mounted a guard over them and we carried our pistols,
- 37:30 45 pistols, while we were on duty and they had some very interesting badges these German sailors that were onboard, and we were very good at souveniring in the Australian Navy, you know. So we got some badges and buttons off them and souveniried them and were very happy with ourselves but the SS bloke who was Lord of course, no one did anything unless he allowed and
- 38:00 he complained to the captain and we had to give all the damn things back. And what we were hoping of course was that maybe he would have given us cause to draw our pistols, that didn't happen of course.

## Tape 7

- 00:31 **I want to talk a little bit about life in port, when you were given some time off, and how you spent that time, and I want all the dirty details Lloyd.**
- Oh no, can't do that.
- Well first of what is this cliché, a girl in every port?**
- Well when you went ashore you wouldn't go and talk to blokes would you?
- I guess not.**
- I mean it was much nicer
- 01:00 to be able to talk to girl and of course the two fellas, in my day anyway, didn't dance together. So if you wanted to go to a dance, you went with a girl and of course if you were in Port A today and there was a girl who would dance with you, you'd dance with her and if you would go to Port B tomorrow, you would dance with her, the other one in Port B.
- Well I appreciate that but the inference is much stronger than that, and even today when you see a group of sailors arriving in town there is a flurry**
- 01:30 **in the air. So what is this air of ineffable sexual charge that sailors have managed all these years?**
- I like that expression, sexual charge. Well you know, for one thing, 99.5 percent of sailors are always very clean in their uniforms and their body
- 02:00 you know, because it's one of those things you have to do onboard ship, you have to be clean because we have had occasions where there have been outbreaks of those things that crawl around and so on. And girls seem to love a sailor, they seem to like sailors. Most of us could dance and dance well and of cause at a dance, if you got along fairly well with the lass, usually meant a nice walk home
- 02:30 and probably you know... what should I say... an impressionable embrace
- Do you mean a knee trembler?**
- Oh no, no, dear oh dear, no. Anyway how do you come to know about knee tremblers?
- I think I am the product of one.**
- Oh are you? Yes alright.
- 03:00 They say the best of those you can have is getting a girl with one short leg, but...
- No listen, we keep meeting fellows who will have us believe that the most that they ever did with women was kiss their hands and say good night, but I just don't believe it, especially with sailors especially you know, when you've got the perfect excuse?**

And I wouldn't either, and I wouldn't believe it either.

**So you aside, given that you are nice...**

Oh that's nice, isn't it?

**Well it gives you an out doesn't it, but what about some**

03:30 **your chums and some of the escapades that you would have got up to especially in foreign ports and I'm not asking you to give me gory details about things but..**

No, look foreign ports were danger points particularly where you have you know, large black populations. And coloured populations, not saying anything against them really, but that was an unknown quantity.

**So they gave you advice**

04:00 **about brothels and things?**

Well they did and one of the senior surgeons on the Canberra used to say if anybody contracted VD [venereal disease] and some of them did, quite a few of them did, he used to say, "How did you get that?" and the sailor's response was you know, "Caught it off the toilet seat." But his response to that was, "That's a very dirty place to take a lady."

04:30 No but it happened of course.

**And I think it was quite serious too because you know, in terms upsetting local customers or in terms of the upsetting the local men. I guess let's face it, a lot of women working those areas they would be doing it because they were desperate to survive and stay alive, but for example , did you ever encounter any situations where men had got local women pregnant? Or you probably would have sailed too far to ever find**

05:00 **that out?**

No sometimes you knew about that if you visited the one port fairly frequently and it was more so in Australian or in English-speaking ports than foreign ones of course. But talking about sailors and girls and uniforms and girls, when I was down the naval depot after I done my gunnery

05:30 instructors' course, I was mostly parade ground, they called the parade ground bull for bully I suppose. And we got seven sailors down to Sale to do, we brought our first aircraft from the navy and we had to get photographers trained. So we had seven sailors down at Sale, one was a leading hand and six were able seamen, and all hell broke loose down there.

06:00 The sailors were up before the CO [Commanding Officer] of the depot, air force, and somebody told him that we were sailors, that we didn't take orders from the air force, or words to that effect, so our gunnery officer called me one day and said, "Tomorrow morning, six o'clock, we are going to leave here and go down to Sale because there's some problems down there

06:30 with the sailors and I'm taking you down and we're going to straighten them out, you know, run them around the parade ground and wear them out and show the air force what we do in the navy." So we got down there and the gunnery officer went off to see his air force equivalent and he was away, quite a while, and he came back to me and of course I was expecting to get out and start rampaging

07:00 around the parade ground. And he said to me, "I don't think we will do anything about it from a punishment point of view because this is what happened. Down in Sale the air force arrived and girls were all 'air forcey' you see, and then the sailors came and the girls went for the sailors right. Now the local lads didn't like the air force blokes because they were taking their girls

07:30 and the air force blokes didn't like the sailors because they were taking the girls. And where all the trouble started because the sailors were definitely on the outer, see with the eruption with the local boys and the air force fellers." So we came home, we stayed the night, enjoyed the hospitality of the various messes and came home the next morning.

08:00 **What about some of the concerts that we've heard about or some of the morale troops that particularly from America but also from Australia that went around the place cheering the lads on, did you ever experience any of those?**

No but you better talk to Vera [Lloyd's wife] about that, because she used to sing at the naval depot at the concert parties down there.

**Was that right?**

Yes, 'course her name was Vera Ling, L I N G, and Vera Lynne

08:30 was around that time.

**You're joking, that's ridiculous. I'm sure she was, they asked her several times for special requests.**

Oh yeah and we had Gracie Fields down at the depot too as well.

**Did you?**

I wasn't there when she came but she was there at the depot.

**How lovely.**

And when I was in hospital down at the depot, we had... Laurence Olivier and Vivien Lee

09:00 come down to the depot and Vivien came along I was in bed in the hospital and she fluttered through and offered her little hand which I shook and then he came through, and he had a big camel hair coat on and one of the ward sisters thought that I looked like him in my younger days, and she said to him, "We think that Chief Petty Officer Saltmarsh looks like you." And he looked at me and said, "You poor fellow."

09:30 And passed on.

**Well that's not a bad brush with fame, they would have had to have been two of the most famous people to have lived in terms of the film industry. What about films and songs and general morale boosters like that. I imagine films were never offered to you on board but...**

Yes we did have films on board on the Canberra

10:00 we had our own projector and screens and...not Doris Day... Alice Faye I can remember was the first film I ever saw on the Canberra when she went to sea. But down at the naval depot we had the drill hall which we turned into a picture theatre. When it wasn't a picture theatre it was where we did our gymnasium stuff and when we were doing our gymnasium stuff it was the church on Sunday.

10:30 **That gives me a few questions to ask but first of all onboard what did they project on to and who operated the projector?**

Well we had technical people onboard, the electrical bods they were the ones who could do that. And you mentioned film, there was the film made while I was down at the depot during my course called, 'Always Another Dawn'

11:00 **Not sure I know it but.**

It was made by a firm called McCreedy's and oh dear what is his name... there is an actor here in Melbourne now is associated with the RACV [Royal Automobile Club of Victoria] or was and he was leading light in it. And we got out to the naval depot gates and then passed Pearl, the naval figure head, you know Pearl.

11:30 And we marched in through the naval gates and the camera whirring and all the rest of it and I was on the right hand of the frontline and a friend of mine was on the left-hand side and the naval officer in the centre and we marched down to the depot.

**In the film?**

In the film, yes.

**Oh so not just a brush with fame but a cameo as well?**

Oh yes.

**I can see the makings of a leading man.**

Oh yes.

**Did you ever see any activity**

12:00 **like that elsewhere internationally while you were sailing, film crews or news crews in action or things like that?**

No.

**What about songs, did have any sing-alongs onboard for example?**

Oh yes they use to have sing-alongs onboard, not very frequently but occasionally they would because we had a band onboard the Canberra..

**There you go.**

They were there for ceremonial purposes and also because of their supposed

12:30 sensitivity, they used to operate the fire control instruments, down in the fire control sections.

**Oh. They were definitely navy who could play music?**

No they were bandsmen and they were dressed as royal marines dressed, not now like the navy men

now wearing navy uniforms. Well they wore marine uniforms.

**You will have to forgive me but my knowledge**

13:00 **of marines unfortunately comes from American television so this is an entirely different thing I would imagine.**

The nearest to it would be some of the bands around town, well, the fellas wear a peaked cap and that's the nearest to them

**Okay..**

...to those days.

**So what sort of songs did you get to sing?**

Mostly fairly lewd ones.

**Oh really? Surely not in front of the officers though?**

Oh well I think they knew the words too.

13:30 **They probably wrote them. And we couldn't get a quick rendition of any of them?**

I'll give you a couple of lines of one. Don't know that I'll sing it though. But it's.. I only know two lines of it:

\n[Verse follows]\n "It's me brother Silvest,\n He's got the big great ship Lucy tattooed on the chest,\n He can run, jump, fight, wheel a barrow, ride a bike,\n That's me brother Silvest"\n

Couple of rude words I could put in there too.

14:00 **And what about in port too, was there a lot of pub singing? Not perhaps in some of the more exotic countries but...**

No, no. If you went ashore to a pub, you went ashore for the serious business of drinking.

**Were there any restrictions when you're on ashore apart from doing illegal activities...?**

Well you couldn't get drunk. See whenever we went ashore or whenever we gave shore leave to any of the crew,

14:30 we always had a patrol ashore to look after them, to protect them from the local population, inhabitants, and also to see that they didn't make fools of themselves or disgrace themselves or the ship.

**So we they also called provos [provosts - military police] or was that just a AIF term?**

Nope, that's an AIF term.

**So what did the navy call them?**

They were just shore patrol. I mean depending on how your petty officer

15:00 thought of you or anybody decided that you know, you would be a good hand to go ashore, they put gators on you, a belt and an arm band on it with NP, Naval Police and off you would go.

**And were they fairly brutal individuals by nature?**

No they weren't, no they weren't.

**So they weren't necessarily tougher than the rest of you or more into discipline or punishment or anything?**

15:30 No I've been naval patrol in the city of Melbourne many times and I've been naval patrol in Colombo and Bombay.

**Okay so it was shared.**

That's right and you didn't know whether you would be patrol not you know.

**Sounds like a clever way of doing it though.**

Oh yes usually the petty officer or the leading hand of a patrol who'd been on it before and wouldn't just throw you into the deep end.

16:00 **Now to completely change the subject, I'd like to talk about your experience of coming back into Sydney Harbour when the [HMAS] Kuttabul was sunk.**

Yes well, there is not very much to tell there except as I said yesterday we were on the Dominion Monarch and we arrived off Sydney Heads in the evening expecting that we would go in and berth and go ashore, but then they wouldn't let us into the Harbour and we didn't know why,



16:30 not until next morning that we found out that the Japanese subs were in the Harbour and they sunk the Kuttabul. I think the [USS] Chicago was in the American cruiser, Chicago was in the Harbour and they were firing bullets all over the place, some going into the streets of Sydney I believe.

**Is that right?**

And the Australia was there I think, the Australian ship cruiser.

**So they just yet kept you outside the**

17:00 **Heads?**

Yes. Actually weren't right outside the Heads, we went to sea to get right out of the way. Apparently so. Yeah but that was my experience of it and we got into the Harbour and went ashore. And those boys from the Kuttabul, some who weren't from the Kuttabul, played it very hard in the pubs too you know, to get free drinks. There were some fellas saying they were from Kuttabul and they weren't. And of course in those days we didn't wear

17:30 the name of the ship, it just said 'HMAS' on our tallies. So they didn't know who we were.

**Well on that note there must have been some tall stories all over the place to win favours here and there, was there you know was there a practiced game that people played to get free drinks or to win sympathy?**

Well you only had to go up to the bar of the ship and say you were from the Kuttabul and they'd give you

18:00 a drink. A fascinating pub, the Kuttabul, not the Kuttabul, the Ship Inn, fascinating place because they had a barman.... the ships used to come in at the Ship Inn and there was a girl used to sit on the tiller, the till, I'm getting all navy...and there was a barmen who used to pull the pots [beers] and wherever you stood at the bar, he used to slide the pot along to you and it would stop right in front of you, that was the thing.

18:30 But the intriguing part to me was... a pot of beer was a shilling, and he'd say, "Val, 2 bob." and throw the money and she'd throw the change back so it was like missiles flying through the air, like a shilling that way and 2 bob that way. Great place to be.

**So what was it like getting back to Australia during the war, for shore leave**

19:00 **and so on , I imagine you didn't get back to Tasmania in all that time?**

I did after the Vampire was sunk, I went on survivors leave down to Tassie [Tasmania] for 28 days.

**That's a fair chunk of time really isn't it?**

Yeah it was but that was the standard thing, 28 days survivors leave. And I told you yesterday I got 25 pounds as well from the fund for shipwrecked sailors.

19:30 It was a bit, it was a bit different from the days before we'd been in action and you know you had a certain apprehension or not naturally distrust but you know, you wondered about people. And one of the things that often occurred to... well to me anyway, a fit and able bodied man, why wasn't he doing something for his country, you know

20:00 not necessarily in the navy but you know in the army. And then I don't think we ever went out of our way to be a unpleasant to people but you wouldn't go out of your way to be terribly.... anxiously trying to please them you know. And sometimes we used to get, we be in a pub, always used to be a pubs somehow,

20:30 you'd be in a pub and things would get a bit woolly with the cross talk, there would be a bit of cross talk going on. And of course quite often amongst sailors, those that had been to sea felt that they were better than those who hadn't, because some of them did their very best to stay on land and not got to sea, and some of them were successful

21:00 And of course when we sailors who had been at sea, and these fellas hadn't, we used to brush the salt of our shoulders. And so they could know what it was all about.

**Because there are a lot of men who weren't enlisted for one reason or another but a lot of them were for some very legitimate reasons.**

Oh yes, no doubt.

**So you know from what you're saying, those men probably didn't receive the better end of the stick under those circumstances**

21:30 **they were all just under suspicion of being cowardly.**

I wouldn't say all but some were and some of them flouted the fact that you know silly mug sailors, that didn't go down terribly well.

**What about some of the older chaps and I'm not talking about elderly men but men who were**

**still young men but too old to enlist for one reason or another? Did you notice a strangeness between you and these chaps,**

22:00 **these guys who were probably working in bars or working in normal jobs? I often wondered that they felt that they were still young enough to do something but they were obviously too old to enlist. I wonder if they felt strange about seeing all these young bloods coming into town with all this energy and braggadocio?**

They probably would but you talk about being too old. When I was in hospital a fellow in the bed next to me,

22:30 joined the army, joined when he was 42 years of age and he said that nearly killed him, trying to keep up with the young blokes, you know he said that was that was tough. And I can understand that.

**I bet it was and I wonder why they took him.**

Yes. In the navy if you were 35 years of age you were excused double marching you know, because you were considered to be old at 35

23:00 and I found out because I was marching a squad of sailors up one-day and I gave the order double march and this fella stepped aside, and I asked him what the hell for. And he said he was excused doubling because he was over 35 years of age. So that was good and I kept that in mind.

**Now to change subject again, the other thing I am interested in is a lot of the AIF in even some of the airmen probably came quite close**

23:30 **to their enemy, came face-to-face from time to time and so on, now in the navy that would be very rare.**

Yes that would be rare.

**So what did you understand of what your enemy was? You saw an SS officer at one there must have been other times that happened, but you're quite distant from them?**

Yes you are. If you asked a soldier if he killed somebody or shot somebody, he'd probably say, if he was a frontline man, he would say yes. If you ask me

24:00 I don't know because I didn't carry a rifle and march against the enemy like that. But I dare say, that from my gun there'd be some because when you scored a direct hit, there was obviously be somebody on the other end of it who wasn't very happy about it.

**Did you fire at planes and at ships?**

Yep.

**Can you remember hitting any planes?**

24:30 No I can't. The gun that I had was a 4.7 gun, it had are limited elevation, the smaller guns like a 4 inch gun and pom poms and Oerlikons and Bofors [machine guns], they could you know almost stand straight up. But no I can't remember that we did hit or although when we were with the Prince of Wales and the Repulse, it was reported

25:00 that the Vampire had shot down 7 planes. Now I can't say that I actually saw them. Well there were lots of planes falling out of the sky, there was a lot of stuff going on and perhaps we did and perhaps we didn't . I don't know. One of my shipmates reckoned we didn't even fire, now that's wrong because we did but he said no we didn't.

**Why would he say that?**

He can't recollect he can't recollect that happening because he knew that our guns

25:30 on the Vampire had very limited elevation and he thought, this is my version of it, he thought that we were firing up in the air, but the torpedo bombers were coming down you know only a couple hundred feet above sea level. Because that was the way to launch a torpedo, you didn't drop it from a great height. They got down as close as they could to drop their torpedoes. So they would have been in a nice line for us to fire

26:00 at them, and they were in a nice line.

**But you both must have been standing fairly close to the gun, were you not, or do I have my co-ordinates completely wrong there?**

No that's right, no.

**So how could he think that you didn't, and you know that you did?**

Well I can't say. I can't say that I know positively that we did, but the report is that we did, knocked seven out of the sky. Now my position, I was not on the gun there, I was up the director of the Vampire. When I was at the Norman

26:30 and on the Canberra, I was on the gun and also when I was on the Deloraine

**And what about ships, can you say for the certain that you hit another ship when you were firing?**

Yes I can say that definitely because.. the method of firing at target is you would do what is called the spread line shoot.

27:00 You move your gun left or right, up or down by degrees, degrees and minutes you know right. Now to do a spread line shoot, you went 4 degrees right, left degrees 8 and 4 degrees right. And in each time each of those points, you'd fire a round. Then you observed them, where they fell. If the first one fell in line

27:30 then you knew that you had to go 8 degrees to the right to get the target. And the next thing you did was you did what we'd call an up ladder shoot. You'd have a range which would be given to you by the range finder or some one in control down below and you would give you a range and you would fire a round at that range, you'd go up 400 yards fire another round, and up 400 yards again and fire another one. And then you'd observe the forward shot

28:00 Now if the first one fell short of the target you'd have to wait and see where the second one went. And if the second one went over then you would know that you would have to go 200 yards up from your first shot to hit. Because the ideal situation was to hit at about water line, that was the ideal spot.

**So was one of your crew's job was to do just that, to work out where it landed and tell you how many more degrees...**

No we didn't do that

28:30 the director's crew did that, you know, they were the people who communicated down to the fire control station and the fire control station was the one that moved the pointers in the gun receivers, the gun receivers you see, and then they would note what happened. Somebody would call, the director would call the forward shot

29:00 and then it would be applied down below in the station, and then that information would go down to all guns.

**So you did manage to sink other ships and did you see them go down?**

Yeah I saw the German ship go down, I didn't actually see the ship go down in Endau Bay but we definitely sunk a ship at Endau Bay, despite the searchlight being shone on us.

29:30 That's rather a dreadful feeling.

**What do you mean, despite the searchlight shining..**

Well there was a cruiser, a Japanese 6 inch cruiser in the harbour at Endau Bay and six destroyers when we with the Thanet went in to see what was going on. And after the Japanese decided that we weren't friends, the cruiser put her searchlight on and apparently it was a 44 inch searchlight. And it was

30:00 shining on the bridge of the ship and I was on the bridge, I think they'll looking at me, I don't think they were looking at anyone else. But that's what it felt like, you couldn't get away from it, you couldn't, there was nowhere go. Your captain of the bridge and the gunnery officer, and ASDIC Officer.

**You were like a bunny.**

Yes just sitting there. Fortunately they didn't shoot directly at me. They did shoot at the ship of course.

**So this is a fight at night?**

Yes.

30:30 We arrived in at Endau Bay at about 2:30 in the morning and as we were going along, there was a ship on our right-hand side, on the starboard side which was winking its little light, Morse, and we knew it wasn't one of ours because our ship was behind us. So we fired out three torpedoes and we were very close, very close to it and they

31:00 passed underneath because they hadn't travelled far enough to come up to their depth setting. And the Japanese didn't like that very much, they got a bit annoyed at us about shooting at them. So then all hell broke loose and they started shooting at us and the poor old Thanet disappeared. Some of her survivors got on to an island but we could do anything about picking them up at night,

31:30 but I can remember the searchlight very, very clearly.

**How do you fight a sub, I know a sub has to come up to launch its torpedo to hit you...**

No a sub doesn't have to come up, that's the problem. Submarines launch their torpedoes under water.

**Okay I'm sorry that's different information than what I have read or heard then I heard they had to come up to a certain level, that's why you depth charge them.**

They might come up to a certain level, but they certainly don't surface. They don't break

32:00 surface that's the one thing they don't do.

**So okay, why was this craft signalling you, why would it do something like that?**

Well you know, it's a challenge, you have to challenge you know. If there is a ship silhouette, which it is in the dark and you want to know who it is, you challenge them, and there are set challenges laid down, well there used to be in my day anyway, which are changed daily. It used to be called Anduswreck [?],

32:30 Anduswreck recognition. And depending on the signal that was given, you knew whether it was friend or foe.

**And do you see why I find that so odd that there are ground rules of this operation of world domination? Why did they even bothered to let you know they were there, why didn't they just launch?**

Well there was six destroyers there, Japanese destroyers in there and two British or one Australian and one Brit,

33:00 and for the same reason that we would have signalled them, if we'd have been in there unobserved to find out.. well I'll put it another way. If the Thanet had gone off from us somewhere and we wanted to talk to her, and the light was just a little pin light to signal so you want to know who the person is.

**So they were just asking you...**

Yeah, who we were.

33:30 **So you said we where enemy and they went bang.**

And we were enemy and they didn't like it very much, they got a bit ignored about that and they started shooting at us.

**Now we are getting close to the end of the tape, but I wanted to ask how much difference there was in terms of your routine, whether you're fighting at day or fighting at night? Was it the same co-ordinates or didn't it matter?**

Yes basically it was the same. You followed your instruments

34:00 for the aligning of your guns to the target during night the same as you would during the day. Although when we were up in Burma we fired star shell which is a shell you fire and it illuminates the target, you see, and when the target is illuminated then you take your ranges on it and sightings and you set your instruments accordingly.

34:30 **So it shouldn't really matter day or night, fair whether or foul.**

And nowadays with radar it would matter even less.

**Nowadays it doesn't really matter. Nothing like that matters does it. What about when there are high seas, is possible to conduct a battle when the weather was really bad?**

Yes you had to. It was not as easy as when it was calm because

35:00 the movement of the ship, roll and yawing and pitching, you know it cause d the telescopes or pointers that you used for siting to be going haywire, well not haywire but a lot of moving, a lot of movement which required a lot more skill for a gun layer to follow the pointers

35:30 than it would if the sea was fairly calm.

**Yeah it would take quite a bit more quick thinking, wouldn't it?**

Yes. And of course another thing, distance also moved the pointers because depending on the distance you were from a target is the elevation you put on your gun, the closer the got the less elevation of course.

**Now if you were going into battle and you ran through the routine beforehand what about if you were under threat of being, sunk which you were most of the time,**

36:00 **what did you do about personal things? I remember when you said the Vampire went down and you had your money down your...well that would be my natural instinct is if I should survive I would need something to survive with, so do you think most of the sailors just grabbed the money and..**

Well my friend who was in the jewing firm with me, he came from New South Wales and for some reason or another, the night before the ship was sunk,

36:30 he sewed his wallet into the top pocket of his overalls. Now why he did it, he's got no idea but he just did it. I didn't do that and of course when we got pulled out of the water Bert had 25 pounds sterling in his keep and I didn't have any.

**But you got rid of your overalls and he didn't.**

Yes that's right. I took mine off because it was easier to swim

37:00 without them than it was with them and he wasn't that keen.

**Jewling firm was it? Was jewling because most of the Jewish were tailors?**

No it was just an aberration of the rag trade I suppose you see because we mended uniforms, and we made simple things. See we made dicky fronts and you know a sailor's uniform,

37:30 he's got a white shirt with a blue stripe across the front actually that's two rectangular pieces with the.... on it. It is the same at the back than in the front and that's called a dicky front. See it's not a shirt at all, it's just a front.

**But that still doesn't answer why the word jewling, I don't understand.**

Well who's in the rag trade?

**Yeah that's what I mean because it's a Jewish trade.**

Yes. Sorry about that.

**No that's alright. We are going to run out of time**

38:00 **but you said yesterday that being a sailor was appealing because sailors could do almost anything they had a bit of skill in all sorts of areas, but what they also did was considered women's skills, they had domestic skills. Now I'm not for a moment suggesting that there was anything effeminate about being a sailor but at a time when women did A and men did B, did it change your view of things in terms of you know, what men and women's roles were meant to be about?**

38:30 Well apart from the being in a jewling firm when I was on...

**Well that's a girl's job isn't it?**

Yeah that's right. But when I was on the Swan, three of us day had a dhobyng firm, in other words a laundry firm. The cook had 50% share of the company and my mare and I had 25 percent and he had 50% because he owned the washing machine and he had access to boiling water in the galley

39:00 which we could make starch you see in the big pots.

**What do you mean he owned it though, surely..**

Well he bought the washing machine.

**On board?**

He bought it and put it on board yeah.

**And what was the washing machine then?**

What was it?

**Well obviously it wasn't..**

A washing machine, an electric washing machine.

**Right. Didn't think you had them then.**

No, a top loading one.

**Why was he allowed to take that on board?**

Well you've got to keep your gear clean it was quicker and better to use water for the washing machine than 200 sailors doing their washing.

## Tape 8

00:41 **Did you have as I say did you have any sense of the role played in the Mediterranean at the time?**

Yes indeed.

**You knew what you were doing?**

Yes. Actually the Vampire was one of the Scrap Iron Flotilla and she was in

01:00 the spud run to Tobruk.

**Spud run?**

Yep.

**And what about the sinking of the what was it, the Bartolomeo [Italian cruiser Bartolomeo Colleoni]**

By the [HMAS] Sydney?

**Yes. Did you hear about that quick smart or...**

I wouldn't say I heard of that quick smart but we did hear about that while we were at sea.

**Because that would perhaps be one of earliest wins for the Allies when things were really dark.**

Yes that's true.

**And did you notice that there was any impact on your ship in terms of morale?**

No I didn't. notice that.

01:30 Oh except that the sailors were saying, "Good on the Sydney." and that sort of thing. Yeah to that point they would have been a morale boost.

**And what was your opinion of the Italian Navy?**

The Italian Navy had very fast ships and they used them to advantage of course but they also were very, very good in range taking

02:00 because they used this system.. we used a system of coincidence to get our ranges, like get two images to coincide with each other to get a range. But the Italians had a different system, a metric system, quite different from us.

**Did you expect them to put up a stiffer fight than they did?**

Well I would have thought so, I would have thought so. But I wasn't in any conflict with the Italians,

02:30 so I couldn't say.

**Well I read that their land machinery was not very good, mechanically.**

That could be, but they had a light point 8 inch machine gun called a Breda which was apparently very good. And a matter of fact they had them on some of our Australian boats, and they souvenired them because point 8 ammunition was available for us as well

03:00 for our.....

**Do you have any opinion about the decision to sink some of the French ships earlier on?**

Yes and my opinion is that they should have sunk the lot of them actually. As a matter of fact there was one battle ship, the Richelieu which was not Vichy, and the Australians were involved in at Dakar with the French.

**I get the feeling that there's a bit more there with the French?**

Yes but I don't know much about it except I do know that there were some sailors who were involved in they actually took a gun ashore from one of the ships you know, a small gun ashore. And that apparently was a rather traumatic situation for them. But I don't know anything else about that.

**Okay. Were you aware of the Japanese threat at the time**

04:00 **that you were sailing towards the Middle East or the Mediterranean?**

Well I wasn't actually in the Mediterranean, the furthest I got was into the Red Sea but we were apprehensive about the Japanese because they were up in China you know, they had been a since 1938 fighting the Chinese, and seemed to me and to lots of others

04:30 that it would be a natural progression for them to come down the peninsula from China, which of course they did come through Saigon and Thailand.

**So onboard was their sort of back seat drivers, were there people who thought you should be heading back towards the Pacific when you were heading towards the Middle East?**

There were some that thought we should have been home in Australia, not where we were.. Sure, there were some thoughts about that.

**And did you**

05:00 **have any relationships, not personal obviously, but did you have relations with any of the**

**British Navy and if so what were your relations like?**

Well yes we did because some of the British ships were in company with us of various times and we met them ashore and also in places like Colombo and Singapore, they had what they called Union Jack clubs where, you know,

05:30 servicemen would go and mingle. In Singapore we were ashore there one night when and this was when I was on the on the Canberra way back and we had a little bit of a dust up with some of the British boys there some of the army, British Army blokes. And that was actually my first patrol in a foreign country or well a country other than Australia.

06:00 **So you had to break them up?**

No, well yes, actually we were on patrol and we had to break it up because there was a bit of nastiness going on between some of our fellas and the British.

**By nastiness they were just sledging each other were they?**

No, fisticuffs business.

**Okay. I'm wondering for example if there was an American Navy fellow, a British Navy fellow and an Australian, would the Brits and the Australians side together**

06:30 **against the Yankee?**

Yes definitely, definitely.

**And by the end of the war do you think that shifted?**

I don't think so. The Americans got too much money. And we got too much money according to the British and the Dutch too much money according to the Yanks.

**Oh the Dutch were paid better than the Yanks?**

Oh yes oh very well.

**I've never come across that before . I kind of got close to this earlier today, but your views on the army**

07:00 **on the AIF, conditions and rations onboard, you were sailing in convoy so you weren't actually on the same ships as them, you said before. But did you have any knowledge about how they were treated onboard in terms of conditions or rations, were they better than the navy?**

No they wouldn't have been better than the navy. Some of my legatee mates had travelled on troop ships and one of them said the other day, he was on the

07:30 Queen Mary before she was actually converted to a troop carrier and he said, life was pretty good there. But he said that you know, meal time was a bit chaotic because of the large numbers of men onboard and the unusual circumstances in which they had to. And he said he was also on the Ile de France before she was converted to a troop carrier

08:00 and they had French cooks onboard and I thought he was gonna say you know, delicious meals, but he said they.. eventually the CO of the army boys, our Australian boys, dismissed the cooks and put their own Australian Army cooks. And they say some dreadful things about army cooks, but they must have been alright or the French one was terrible.

**Now the threat of air attack, you've talked a little bit**

08:30 **about this. Was there a difference between worrying about air attack or battled attack or other ships attacking you?**

Yes, aircraft had two advantages. One was that they could travel very fast and get out of the way. Also they could hide in cloud and also hide in sun, you know. They could go up into the sun and if they were doing a

09:00 dive bombing attack, there was no way you could see them until they were too darn close and the bombs were on its way down. And you always got a picture of a little black bomb coming down on you.

**Yeah that really stayed in my mind when you mentioned it yesterday, just that concept because I guess that sense of nowhere to run to, nowhere to hide.**

That's right.

**And that, how did you cope with that, that lack of control in that respect or was it drummed out of you earlier on?**

09:30 Well I mean you had a job to do and you did it, and that's all I can say about that. I mean no one that I know about left their post either during air attack or during attack from sea. No doubt some of us were a bit scared or as our captain said, a bit excited.

**Excited. And were you scared from time to time,**

10:00 **like could you feel that?**

Well when we were bobbing around in the water after the ship was sunk, my main concern, I wouldn't say that I was scared, but my main concern then was it was six o'clock and it gets dark pretty quickly up there the tropics. And I was wondering how we'd get on when it became dark you know. And I was also wondering when I was going to get something to eat because we went to our action station before we had our midday meal

10:30 And the fellow with the onions was probably better off than we were.

**You mentioned that and I still thought that eating raw onions as a means of survival, doesn't appeal very much.**

Depends on how hungry you are, I guess.

**I guess it does. I'm a big fan of onions. So you said you never experienced any acts of cowardice in your time,**

No I didn't see any.

**What about acts of heroism?**

Well

11:00 I don't know that I saw any great acts of heroism but I saw some acts of consideration when our ship was sunk, we had some wounded on board and we took them onto the Carley rafts and looked after them, where you know they could have shrugged their shoulders and said every man for himself. But no, and they were, in that regard...

11:30 with a sailor, when you get into trouble you've always got a friend, another sailor you've always got a friendly you know whether it be in fisticuffs, or in those circumstances danger you always have a friend. And so I was always confident that I could always look for some support no matter where I was, if there was a sailor around.

**Okay so you never saw any feats of daring and so on?**

12:00 No not really.

**It's hard, I imagine for a sailor to act extra to anyone else anyway?**

Yes. Although you know, some of them got distinguished service medals. My friend who was in the Leyte Gulf on the [HMAS] Shropshire, he got a Distinguished Service Medal for activity there. And sometimes some of them got decorations or noted for their

12:30 activities and rewarded with an award. For instance one of my guns crew was given a Mentioned In Despatches. I didn't recommend him but someone must have thought he was a good fellow. I was a bit, I wasn't cross about it but made me wonder about that, why couldn't they pick out one of my guns crew. He did have a very nice head of blond hair, I must admit that.

**Makes you wonder.**

13:00 **But how do you feel about that? I've heard a couple of AIF blokes saying in retrospect that they thought the navy was not very well dealt with because there was this mob mentality, if one went, they all went. If you were attacked everyone was down and the opportunity for men to show their valour or to be distinguished for their valour was much slimmer simply because you couldn't act as an individual?**

No, well we had one fellow on the Norman he didn't get his medal

13:30 for his actions on the Norman but apparently he was operating an Oerlikon and he was.. well he was in sick bay right, and he was in the sick bay for a minor complaint and he came out of the sick bay and went up to his gun station and manned his Oerlikon. And because he did that he got a DSM [Distinguished Service Medal] you know, because it was considered outside his

14:00 normal duty run to do that. And I have heard of another fellow down in the control station and he was awarded the DSM and that was accepted very kindly. He wasn't an Australian, he was a Brit, but the other Brit sailors told me about and they reckon he had friends in high places or something.

**Now chaps in the RAF [Royal Air Force]**

14:30 **had to fly say 30 operations. Was there any arrangement like that in the navy, did you have to do a certain amount of...**

No, no, it mainly depended on what's sea time you've done. For instance one of our navy fellow, navy association fellows was on one ship for three years. And I suppose the longest I was on a ship was from May 1940



15:00 to October '41 and that was on the Canberra, and the next longest time was on the Norman and I joined her in April '44 and left her in August '45, just after..

**Now you said yesterday that ships have their own personalities?**

Yes they do.

**So did you have a favourite one?**

Yes I did. My favourite ship was the Swan

15:30 and we still have a very big reunions for the Swan's crew now and whilst I go to the reunions, we've been to Queensland and New South and down Victoria, most of the fellows I don't know because they join much later than I did. But it was a very comfortable ship as far as living was concerned and of course that's where we had our dhobyng firmand also

16:00 it was a comfortable living ship and people were friendly on it you know. I was a leading hand on the Swan and people were friendly on it. Each mess in a ship has somebody who is in charge of the mess, the senior hand of the mess. And the senior hand of the mess has to detail those who will do the washing up

16:30 and those who will get the food from the galley and all that sort of thing and I can remember on the Swan we were in the Sydney Harbour and we had some new boys come onboard and you know, you'd talk to them saying where are you from, what did you do, and this fellow said he was from Moran and Catos the grocery people so he got nominated as cook of the mess because in those, it was what was called repayment messing

17:00 where you got an allowance of one and threepence a day to feed breakfast and evening meal, and the navy provided the midday meal. And of course he was nominated cook of the mess, he did the providing of the food for us right, he didn't do the washing up everyday, someone else did that. He still comes along to the Swan reunions

17:30 and he is one of the few people...oh there was another fellow too who was in my guns crew, and I liked Bill.

**Well speaking of money how did they dole out pay, like, they didn't have a bank deposit on board in a safe or anything. Was your money sorted out onshore and you were given an allowance?**

No, no money was onboard, it was onboard ship. And on payday

18:00 you were paid by a number, you had a number given to you and you were paid by your number. And for a sailor when you went up to the pay bobs table, and they called your name, number, you took your hat off and presented it, and they put the pay packet on top of it, you took the pay packet off and put your hat on your head and away you went.

18:30 **Did they pay you in coins or in cash notes?**

Cash, notes and coins, depending on what you were entitled to.

**Given that you were at sea, don't think that cash notes would have been a bit of a liability?**

Yes but the pay master onboard, talking about the Canberra now, 'cause it was a big ship, the pay master onboard the Canberra, ran a branch of the Commonwealth Bank virtually because you could bank your money with him

19:00 and you see by banking the money onboard ship you kept the money for pay. The only place you could spend your money onboard ship was at the canteen, buying goffers as they called the drinks and macaroons and lollies and playing Tombola, right. There was no where else... you could indulge in playing crown and anchor [dice game], but that was illegal and if you got caught doing that, you'd be in trouble really

19:30 but each banking transaction that was made by the pay master, apparently he got a penny. You know 800 people on the Canberra, lots of pennies.

**Lots of pennies. It's like those decimal points in your bank accounts sometimes.**

That's right.

**And tell me a bit about Tombola and Crown and Anchor.**

Well Crown and Anchor is played with a dice, well with dice

20:00 and they spread out an oil silk cloth and you bet on crowns or you bet on anchors and they roll the dice and of course depending on your luck you win or lose.

**Like Two-up, kind of, in terms of your odds.**

Yeah in terms of your odds and of course at three during the night we were always blacked out. And the

Canberra had a big recreation room up forward

20:30 and that's where we used to play Crown and Anchor, or that's where they used to play Crown and Anchor and we used to have a cockatoo [ a lookout], a man outside and when the master at arms or the regulating petty officer was in sight, he used to put his foot on the bell and the oil silk cloth and Crown and Anchor board was wrapped up and shoved into somebody's pocket and the dice would be put away and we'd all be sitting up nice and smart when the regulating bloke came in.

**Who do you reckon you were kidding?**

21:00 Well you gotta have the evidence haven't you? There is one man who was caught and wasn't very prompt at getting away and had quite a bit of money, 'cause money used to be fairly large. And on his way up to the bridge to be charged, he was throwing it all away. Didn't see any floating around but still that's what he did.

**And what about Tombola?**

Yes. Tombola was one of those things that you had to you go to the commander

21:30 to get permission to run Tombola and you were allowed to take a certain percentage of the money that you took in and that was yours, it wasn't anybody else's. And of course you sold your Housie Housie tickets, Tombola tickets and used to be sixpence a ticket I remember. That was a profitable organisation too. We used to run it during the first dog watch,

22:00 between 4 and 6.

**Was there any wildlife onboard ever?. Literally I'm talking...**

When we were in Cape Town there was a big Great Dane there called Nuisance and Nuisance was a ship's dog really because Nuisance knew when to come aboard and knew when to go ashore.

22:30 He used to apparently recognise the bugle calls and when the breakfast bugle call was sounded Nuisance would come on board and when hands to work was sounded he used to go off. And when the sailors went on shore leave because we were a bit out of town, when the sailors got on the train to go into town, so did Nuisance.

23:00 And he came with us and came back with us. And then we were leaving Cape Town finally leaving, they got Nuisance onboard into the recreation room and off we went and unfortunately or fortunately for Nuisance I suppose, they let him out of the recreation room and he was spotted by the commander, so the ship stopped,

23:30 the shipwright was called and he made a cage, put Nuisance in it, called a boat out from shore and put him back on the thing and sent him home. One of the other ships one of the N class ships that we were alongside in Trincomalee had a monkey onboard, only a little, not a very big monkey, wasn't a macaque, but it was that type. And at stand easy

24:00 they were painting ship and at stand easy the crew went to have their cup of tea and they left the paint pot on deck and the monkey thought it was wonderful because he got this paint pot and he slashed the paint all over the deck. Fortunately it was a steel deck so it didn't matter very much and when they came out of course, they were all upset, so he took off and he went up the mast and just sat up there and watched the performances.

24:30 So that's the only monkey, the only animals that I know were onboard ships.

**That is interesting.**

We had a cat on the Canberra, that's right and when the guns fired it took off and whether it's still swimming or not I don't know, but it took off.

**I can imagine keeping a cat would be reasonable, a dog would eat a lot of meat and I don't know how you would manage to find that onboard a ship.**

Well you know well meat was one of those things that used to become short rations

25:00 and we used to say that we always had meat because when we had rice, it had plenty of weevils, so we always had fresh meat with the weevils.

**On the subject of food what sort of rations did you get when you were sailing around?**

When we were near shore of course the ship was provisioned with fresh fruit and vegetables and meat and depending how long we were at sea,

25:30 that's how long... well you know, that would only last a short period and when we used up our fresh food we went usually to corned beef. And I've said before, I'd have corned beef baked, fried, boiled, stewed and any other way you could think to have corned beef. We used to have corned beef and rice and red leaden

26:00 peas, red lead was tinned tomatoes, you know there is a paint called red lead which you used to prevent

rusting. On my 21st birthday I had red peas for breakfast .

**Well on your 21st Birthday it was the day before the fall of Singapore?**

Yes it was.

**I don't know if you knew that the fall Singapore was about to happen?**

No, well we knew they were there because we hear the guns firing across the causeway

26:30 **So apart from that, tell me about how you celebrated onboard that one have been a little unusual given the seriousness of the things outside, but how did you celebrate onboard for birthdays or Christmas?**

You didn't.

**At all?**

Christmas was different. Usually at Christmastime, the officers used to have the wardroom open for the senior sailors, in particular and we used have a drink with them at Christmas.

27:00 But as far as birthdays, well, you know they called you a silly old 'b' or a stupid young thing or something or other. Nothing you know.

**Completely written off. And on yours, I don't know if a 21st was as big a thing as it is now for young people, did you get to celebrate at all amongst your own mates?**

No, no. We were, we left Singapore on the 11th of February

27:30 and we were in the Macassar Straits as far as I can remember for my birthday, going towards Colombo.

**Yesterday you said you got into a bit of strife for throwing empty shells overboard and I understood that was for the purposes of recycling anyway because of the war effort.**

Yes that's right.

**So did a ship manage to recycle, how did it have the room to store things?**

28:00 Well you have your shell rooms and you had your cordite rooms and when the empty shells would go back down to the magazines and put back down in the racks, we had safe stowing racks, we could put your cartridge in and clip it in place because it wouldn't come out when the ship was rolling around a bit. And the same with projectiles.

**So they would eventually be taken back then?**

They would be taken back and landed at Sydney, Spectacle Island or you know Colombo

28:30 or Singapore or wherever.

**John's a keen fishermen and before when we were talking about food, were you able to fish, ever, off the side of the boat or was that impossible?**

Yes we used to fish but only when you're in harbour of course. I can't remember fishing while we were at sea. You wouldn't have much luck, would you, going on at about 28-30 knots and trying to catch a fish? But I can

29:00 relate, we were up, this is when I was on the Swan, we were up in Marauke, New Guinea, and we were waiting to take a ship in, which was, the Islander was the name of the ship, and it was a little tram steamer and it used to take stores up there. And while we were waiting out Marauke, we decided to do some fishing and we were playing Tombola

29:30 and those were the days of the red ten shilling note and a fella got his back to the tin rail with the ten bob note in his hand and he dropped it. It went down into the water and along came a shark and came whoof, got ya. And so that encouraged everyone to fish and we all started to fish and we caught 17 sharks, opened them all up and not one of them had the ten shilling note in it. So it was a bit of a dry run.

30:00 **Well I hoped you had fry up of flake anyway.**

No we didn't, we threw them all back in.

**If Tombola was so probable to run it then how did you work out who got to run it then?**

Well once again you needed about three people to run Tombola and the thing was, three of you got together and you went down to see the commander and asked permission

30:30 to run Tombola and then you would have to tell him what you intended to do about you know, your take,

**Did he take a cut?**

No fear, not at all.

**Were there any kickbacks going on onboard?**

No, no, only kickbacks might have been from the illegal gaming boys you know Crown and Anchor and there might have been a few there.

31:00 **I'm sure there must.**

But you know, in my day in the navy you couldn't borrow money, that was taboo but it happened and the rate used to be a pound for 25, repayable next pay day. So if you would like to sit down and work out the interest rate, 25% repayable in a fortnight,

31:30 pretty steep interest rate. That used happen. That was illegal of course.

**So obviously that was to discourage...**

Yes that's right.

**Crossing the Equator, were there any special ceremonies?**

Yes, yes, yes. I think I crossed the Equator 42 times, we didn't have a ceremony each time but we certainly had one on our first...

32:00 when we had a new crew and left Sydney for the first time and crossed the Equator on our way to Singapore, we had a ceremony. We had a canvas bath sort of thing, filled with water, we had Neptune, King Neptune, and all the new hands who'd never crossed the line before went for their ceremonial ducking

32:30 we even got the commander involved. It was good fun.

**So you must have had one once?**

Oh yes, I had one in the early stages you know.

**You said during the break, that you had to ask permission to grow, not a beard, but to stop shaving?**

To discontinue shaving, yeah.

**Can you talk a little bit about facial hair onboard a ship because it's a reasonable tradition?**

Yes it is

33:00 I suppose when you're in the northern climes and right up north in the Arctic area a beard would be some protection because you'd get frostbite and your face freezes over. But it was quite common for a sailor to grow a beard. And also some of them grew a beard and had their heads shaved, which was a bit of a trick but I know one fellow who did that, he was a Frankston boy

33:30 and his hair didn't grow any more than about half an inch for some reason or another I don't know. He blames it on having growing his beard, his strength went from his head to his beard.

**In reverse, it was the same hair just kind of moved town.**

Moved to another place yeah.

**So you're uniforms were very strict but was there any sort of fashion sense at all, did anybody try to appear at all**

34:00 **an individual by maybe turning their cuffs a certain way or by having there beards styled a certain way?**

No the beard that you grew was the King George V style, which is a nice neat beard

**Stoic.**

Yeah and when the sailors went ashore then they'd roll, turn up their cuffs and put their caps flatter on the back of their heads and wear their tiddy suits, and the sailors uniforms were a pretty strict V,

34:30 so when they got it made, they got it in a 'U' to show their hairy chests, or what used to be hairy chests. And of course you had your collar and then you had a silk under the collar and when you're on board you probably tried to cover the exaggerated 'V' up with silk and then when you got on shore, you'd take the silk off and have a big chest poking out at you, and your cap flatter back. You know

35:00 when we were on patrol if we saw a sailor with his cap flatter back or his cuffs rolled up, we'd tell him to roll his cuffs down and put his cap on straight.

**What is it with tattoos and sailors, what's the tradition?**

I don't know if it is a tradition but it just seems to be one of those things that happens and it usually happens when the sailor's got a skin full of beer or a skin full of something that dulls his senses, in my

way of looking at things anyway.

35:30 **Have you got any?**

Not at all, not at all.

**Would that be rare for a sailor not to have a tattoo?**

Oh not rare, not rare to be clean skinned. My father had a tattoo on his right arm just there, that was the Greek equivalent of the swastika, you know what the swastika was, well the Greek symbol goes the opposite way. And he had that on his arm as a good luck emblem and he had his service number tattooed on his arm.

**Did he get into trouble**

36:00 **later on in life, did people ever mistake that with a Nazi swastika?**

I don't know about that, I really don't know because I wasn't home at all during World War II. I joined the navy in August 1939 and I was never home .

**Your dad was a sailor?**

No he was a soldier.

**He was a soldier who just had tattoos. Now you mentioned a little bit yesterday about how you handled the wounded onboard, but what about the dead, what were the rituals**

36:30 **involved with the burial of the dead?**

Well normally if a sailor dies at sea he is sewn into a canvas, or wrapped and sewn into canvas and weighted so he sinks to the bottom and he is covered with the Union Jack it used to be in those days, or the white ensign. And those mess deck table

37:00 tops, something on which he is placed and if you've got a 'sin bosun' person onboard, a chaplain, he does the necessary and you slide him over the side. And that's it. Now when the Prince of Wales and the Repulse, there were so many coming onboard that were dead that our doctor you know used to say, he's dead and we had put them over the side because on the Vampire,

37:30 we picked up 211 sailors and they were all over the place, you know we were fairly small ship, they were in our masses and on our decks and on our tables , they were everywhere.

**So you just had to..**

And one of my friends was in the boat getting them out of the water, we were told to pick up the Repulse survivors and he was picking them out of the water

38:00 and he said that some of them, he'd bring them out of the water, look at them and they were dead and so they'd just have to let them go. And he said you know they'd be trying to get to a sailor who was bobbing around in the oily water and by the time they got there, he wasn't there, he was gone.

**This sounds a bit mercenary but we are talking about a time when everything had a value, did their shoes get removed or their pockets emptied?**

38:30 No, no.

**Their identification tags and so on?**

There IDs would be taken but not in all cases. I mean those in the water and who were dead, they didn't go and take tags off them, but those who came onboard and died, or who were dead, yes they would take the tags from them.

**Because they would have an idea that if there are on the Repulse and they weren't out for roll call in a few days, they were gone?**

That's right.

39:00 **And you mentioned there was at chaplain or a padre onboard and did he conduct regular church services?**

On the cruisers, yes, on the cruisers. on the Canberra yes every Sunday morning we had church service, the band used to play music for the hymns and on the Swan the commanding officer

39:30 conducted church services or conducted a service onboard.

**And was it fairly non-secular or was a there...**

There were two religions they were Catholics and others, right.

**And the Catholics like to think there is just one.**

Yeah they used to like to think that. But it'd be, Catholic all-out and also

40:00 hook rope party if you got yourself on hook rope party, which is a non-existent thing these days but you would say hook rope party, which meant that you were sneaking off.

**To get out of it.**

Well unless you were caught somewhere.

## Tape 9

00:40 **The generic question, where were you at the end of the war, well first of all where were during VE Day and VJ Day?**

VJ [Victory in Japan] Day I was in Manila Harbour

01:00 and VE Day I was in the Pacific Ocean that'd be south of the Philippines.

**And what was that like, especially VJ Day, that would have been more pertinent?**

Yes well VJ Day there was a lot of hilarity onboard and there was a lot of excitement and much whooping and shouting and people throwing life buoys overboard which they shouldn't have been doing and firing off pistols which they shouldn't do

01:30 and all that sort of thing. And one of my guns crew loaded one of my guns and fired it and that caused an American ship to get all excited about a shell splashing nearby. And I said to him you know, it was only a star-shell and when we checked the ammunition locker it was a semi armour piercing. Yeah anyway.

**I don't like to think about what would have happened if that had...**

Yeah me too, we probably would have had World War III

02:00 on our hands.

**Oh well, lucky it was an American. Okay and you said yesterday you got four men to a can of peaches and so on, so what did that mean to you, you joined up specifically to go to war but you..**

No I joined up specifically to be in the navy.

**Oh pardon me, then.**

No I'm sorry, I wanted my life to be a sailor, that's what I wanted to be, see and war came along, 1936 of course

02:30 there was the Italian and Abyssinian war, right.

**So what was going through your mind as to what was going to happen to you. I imagine that you were happy the war was over but it cast a few doubts in your mind as to your future?**

Yes, it did. I went I came back to Sydney on the Norman.

03:00 And the Norman was to go back to the UK, they were on loan to us anyway, those N Class Destroyers. And we had some Q Class Destroyers here and we changed from the Norman to the [HMAS] Queenborough and I was only on the Queenborough for three days and I went down to the naval depot to do my gunnery instructor's course. I wanted to get home

03:30 for a while because I hadn't been home for some time and I did get home to see my parents and of course on what, the 14th October, I met Vera Ling, we were going out to a dance. The radar technician from the Norman came in to depot, that's Cerberus

04:00 and I met up with him and he said, "What are you doing on Wednesday night?" and I said, "Nothing I know." he said "There is a dance out at Crib Point." and so off we go so we go out to Crib Point and we walk up the road of course and we meet these two girls. And I haven't got rid of her ever since. No, so we went out there to the drill hall at Crib Point where they had a dance every Wednesday night, good fun.

**I've got a lot of questions about that, but before we get onto that, coming back to Australia, for how many weeks before you landed on Australian turf? Couldn't have been too many if you were in the Philippines at the time?**

No actually we came down... I got an idea it was the 4th November, I'm not sure if we arrived

05:00 in Sydney, we had a few days there because we were changing from the Norman to the Queenborough and then, it must have been the 12th or 13th that I left Sydney to start my long gunnery course.

**So in those weeks, there must have been a major change of mood onboard?**

Yes there was, indeed.

**Was it harder to keep the men in line?**

No there was no problem

05:30 there. Life was relaxed onboard, whereas most of our time at sea, we did two watches. You did four hours on watch and four hours off watch and if you were at sea for six weeks, that's what you did for six weeks. After VJ Day, then we went into free watches, which meant that we did four hours on duty and eight hours off.

06:00 And life relaxed quite a bit and our seamanship which we weren't able to carry out at sea during wartime, we did in this peacetime movement. Like changing the falls on boats and all this sort of thing and looking at rigging and so on, and maintenance of the ship and so on.

**And I think you said you weren't too far away when the papers were signed by the Japanese?**

06:30 No were weren't. We actually did the mail run, we picked up the mail and delivered it to all the ships in the fleet. Well the British and Australian ships down there. While we weren't actually in Tokyo Bay when the

07:00 surrender was signed, we weren't very far away, we were in that Japanese area.

**And what was the attitude towards the Japanese at that time onboard?**

Not very good, the Japanese at that time, and I suppose they had nothing to be happy about, they were sullen, disgruntled, dishevelled looking mob. They were really were and as I said, I suppose they had nothing to be happy about.

**What contact did you have with them then?**

07:30 None at all. I had none at all. Some of our fellows did. We had to have somebody go ashore to get the provisions and bring them onboard. And of course if you had a couple of pounds of sugar that was worth trading, because that was something that they didn't have there, and the other thing was soap, soap was rather a precious commodity.

**Now you were going back to do a training course,**

08:00 **and I imagine that there was a lot of chaps who were keen to get out of their uniforms and get away from the navy.**

Yes that's right.

**But I also understand that it wasn't guaranteed that you could stay in the services?**

That's right.

**So what guarantees did you have?**

Well I didn't have any. Actually I was a provisional temporary petty officer, my last promotion at sea, because they didn't know how many sailors

08:30 were going to stay in the services. And while I was a permanent service man, there was a possibility that I might want to go anyway. And of course they had the points system going, you know, if you were married and had a couple of kids, then you got pretty high on the release program.

**So you were fairly safe then?**

Well I was except they said they had a glut of petty officers and me being a provisional temporary, they could have said to me,

09:00 "Okay sonny, here is your deferred pay and here you go." But it didn't happen that way, I was you know, confirmed as a petty officer and if you look at my services certificate, you'll see it in there. But so I was happy to stay in the service. I had a problem though, I collapsed on the parade ground with pneumonia, and I was in hospital

09:30 and that's when I saw Vivien Leigh and we were buying our first aircraft carrier the Sydney and I had recently qualified as a gunner's mate, gunnery instructor and I was asked if I'd like to go to UK to bring the Sydney back, and I said yes I would, but the problem was I was in hospital

10:00 So I didn't make it, and I was disappointed about that, that was a big disappointment for me. And I would've liked to have gone to the UK and I would have liked to have taken out a commission while I was there, but still, didn't happen.

**No, but as you said you got to meet your wife.**

Oh yes.

**And when you got back, she was an equal rank to you?**

Yes she was. Not for long though.

10:30 **Well once you put the ring on her finger..**

No, no I was the boss man, I was a chief and she was a petty officer.

**How did that seem to you that you were out at sea the whole time and you return and there were women in high ranking positions that couldn't possibly have had the navy experience you had have?**

Well they were in a different stream, activity stream than what I was. I was a seaman. Now we also had

11:00 men as petty officer writers onboard ship, for instance, the captain's secretary and one or two other people onboard ship and they were recruiting girls, because I came down in 1943 and there were WRANS [Women's Royal Australian Naval Service] all over the place then you know. There were.

11:30 But I'm just thinking you know, you haven't been down to Flinders Naval Depot, HMAS Cerberus, well they have three huge blocks, which I suppose holds 2 or 300 men each, there was A, B and C blocks and the petty officers' block. And the cooks, the girls cooks, used to march down past out barracks past our blocks.

12:00 And we used to be rather cheeky to them, and some of them weren't too bad in responding either I can tell you. And we also had assistants to the truck drivers were WRANS and that used to intrigued me. They had these girls drive trucks so they could release the sailors for sea, but in each truck they had a fellow, a jockey to do the heavy lifting and so on.

12:30 I never quite saw the value in that.

**Well I suppose the navy had wisdom in their planning somewhere along the line. So not to just sort of skip over your marriage or anything, you had quite a career post the war as well. And what was it like, everybody it seems just wanted to get over it and get on with it, but you were fairly happy to stay in the ranks. So just tell me about what happened soon after the war**

13:00 **and how you got yourself sorted?**

Well I contracted TB [tuberculosis] and as far as I was concerned it was the end of my naval career. I went into hospital and I was in there 12 months or so, on the first time round and then I came out and in 1951 Vera and I got married and

13:30 then late in 1951 I had an outbreak and I went back into Heidelberg [Hospital]. On and off I had about three years in hospital in Hobart and that was a bit of the problem you know what do I do, and I think I said the other day they didn't want people to murder other people, to shoot people, so I had to do something and that's when my friends said, "Why don't you come and work for the navy?"

14:00 which I did, but because of my TB, I couldn't become a permanent public servant. I was 4 years and 10 months before I could come permanent. And all the others were passing me by a bit and of course I was getting on in years then, 34 or something.

**Yes very old. I know you are being a bit sardonic when you say that nobody wanted murderers after the war but why use that expression for example,**

14:30 **wasn't it a just war that you were fighting?**

Yes and I suppose that was a very silly term for me to use .

**Oh I don't mind but you..**

No but you made a good point there you're right, no. You know perhaps I could say nobody wanted people to act in a military way after the war, you had to become a civilian, think and work like one.

**Many did and some joined the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] units.**

15:00 Yes well when I was down at and after I qualified I was asked if I would be a mentor to a school, a morale school they set up , which we had army, air force and navy people. And the idea was that you know, some of them had been at war for about five years and knew nothing about civilian life, they joined from school virtually and what we did there we have professors from universities

15:30 we had American servicemen, we had English servicemen, we had magnates of industry you know, come down to talk to people about civilian life and what was life in civilian like because some of the fellows would be going out into it, you know in a year or so and it gave them an understanding of what was going on,

16:00 and what had developed since they joined the navy or the army or the air force.

**And what were your expectations then of what life was going to be like afterwards despite the**



**fact that you were able to stay in the service, you must have changed your attitude towards it and its attitude toward you?**

Well my attitude towards the navy never changed, I wanted to stay in the navy. The only thing this business about the possibility of going to the UK, that was a disappointment

16:30 to me, but it happened in there was nothing I could do about it and of course after that when I got TB that was the end and that was a blow to me because I knew then that that was it, I was finished. After my first stint in hospital in 1948 I had six weeks in Heidelberg whilst they did some tests and things

17:00 and I came back to navy and I used to like to do some running, and I came back to navy and we had the cross country run, which I ran, which was a silly thing to do I suppose. And I can remember the surgeon captain saying to me, "I am going to let you continue your service in the navy and you will be the first sailor that they has ever continued into the navy

17:30 after having been diagnosed with TB." So that was something and his name was Lionel Lockwood, Captain Lionel Lockwood.

**What about keeping up with chums afterwards, you were all living so closely together, was it strange not to see so many familiar faces? I know you changed boats a fair bit?**

Yes that's true but I had a particular friend who is now up in Canberra and we were friendly with he and his wife and there were other

18:00 chaps that I'd been on course with, you know, one of them was a New Zealander and we went over to New Zealand once and looked him up and he was a funny man, his name was David Stewart McCurry and he was a petty officer and he'd come from New Zealand to do to gunnery course that I was doing. And we used to go up the line which meant going from the depot up to Melbourne you see and David Stewart McCurry

18:30 had a beard and used to wear a navy greatcoat, you know with the brass buttons on and we'd get on the train and there'd be civilian people around as well as he would sit up there and put his hand out of his pocket and pull out his knitting, and sit up there a knit. Used to get some funny looks from people, he just used to do it for the hell of it

**Now you said**

19:00 **that navy chaps were particularly good at souveniring, so what did you bring back?**

Well I didn't bring back very much at all. I made the mistake of buying some silk clothing and some of my souvenired knife, fork and spoon

19:30 sets from the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay and sent them home and they never ever came, so somebody's got a nice set of knife, fork and spoon from the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay. Oh yes you know, mainly knives and forks with names on them and those sort of things and also you didn't realise that at time in Colombo and India, filigree works, silver filigree work was very common, well very

20:00 low class but now, be wonderful, wonderful if you had some.

**While you were away was there something that you missed a lot?**

No. I missed my mother and father. But not to the point where I would fret, you see the navy to me was everything that I wanted there was nothing else, I didn't want anything else accept the navy. I was quite happy

20:30 about that, a letter from home and a letter to home and you know some couple of days or a weeks leave occasionally down to Tassie was great.

**So what was it like going back after the war was finished because yes you were staying in the service but that must have been a load off your parents mind to know...**

It was, actually when the Vampire sunk, my parents knew about it from the radio and not from, well they lived in the country you see

21:00 and a telegram would have taken some well next day delivery sort of thing but they heard that the ship was sunk and that caused a bit of angst as far as they were concerned, because they didn't hear from me for quite some time because I was in Colombo, up in Dearalowa[?] in the rest camp.

**That's right, you got quite good treatment up there afterwards?**

Oh yes marvellous, wonderful, cup of tea in bed in the morning and no bed to make, it was wonderful.

21:30 Three meals a day, exercise, great,

**Very nice. So when you saw them again after all that time, you went from a boy to a man, did you feel... were you the same man or boy to them or had you changed that much in your relationship?**

Well as far as my father was concerned you know, he

22:00 more or less accepted me as an equal to him because of his service background and of course, I was my mother's pride and joy anyway, she being an Englishwoman and away from her mother and understood that me being away for four or five years was a bit different.

**And what about married life, that must have been a little, would that have been a bit difficult to get used to given your experiences?**

22:30 No I don't think so. I like to think that I can adjust to situations in life. I can live life any way well you know comfortably, I can live life comfortably in most situations.

**Because I was thinking 'cause a sailor would be very appealing to women with their understand of cleanliness and domesticity and so on, did you find that whereas other men**

23:00 **would never have picked up a broom or cook a meal or something, did you find that was not a problem for you occasionally and that was kind of a good thing to pitch in and do.**

Yeah well you know when you were on ship, the mess is cleaned by the people who live in the mess, not anyone else and of course the decks in my day we were scrubbing the decks and that's what you did everyday when you weren't on watch. You turned out to the washing and the scrubbing of the deck, washing the paint work and painting the ship

23:30 You know whilst you were at sea you still painted ship because not over the side, you would do that when in harbour but when you're at sea, you still have some paint work above look after, wire ropes to be scrubbed and oiled. A lot of work goes on in the ship.

**Are you that kind of chap that needs to be busy most of the time?**

I suppose so.

**And how did ship cope then after having to leave the service?**

24:00 Well I went to work for the Navy Department right and I worked in the naval store department down here in Melbourne and then I transferred to Canberra. I became the naval officer reserve, the reserve naval officer appointments clerk and that took me to Canberra in 1960. And whilst I was up there I applied for another position as head of naval branch

24:30 and got it and was told by the fellow that took me up there, or who I went to in the first place, "If I knew you were going to do that I wouldn't have appointed you in the first place." Well that's right and then I got the job down here in defence. You know as I said an armament specialist and I identified a bayonet. And then I went back to the navy

25:00 because the boss asked me if I'd like to go back the work for him, which I did. And then I left the navy and went back to defence because there was a job going that I reckoned I could do and I got that job and I stayed there for about.. 1967 to '81 and in

25:30 well in 1975 my boss then was an air commodore and we went off to Singapore to have a look at the Singapore Armed Services with a view to instituting a system the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] codification and identification system. But actually Barnard was the Minister for Defence in the Gough Whitlam [Prime Minister Gough Whitlam] era and he was one who talked to them went up there and off we went. And as a result of that we appointed a fellow

26:00 up there for three years and then a few years later Malaysia said they wanted someone. So it seemed that I was the senior fellow on the operations side of the business, I said to my boss I thought that would be a good job for me. He said, "Well if you want to go, you have to tell me by tomorrow morning." So I had to convince Vera that was what we wanted to do. And Mary was..

26:30 year four when we went off and we went off in January and their school year didn't start until September and she had the most glorious few weeks living in the best hotel in Kuala Lumpur all at the government expense I might say. But then she did go to school up there and the government paid her school fees, it was \$6,000 a year, American.

27:00 She went to the American school, which was quite something because she studied subjects there that she didn't here, like technical drawing or stuff like that.

**So even though you were discharged unfit for service in 1950...**

'51.

**...'51, you still have made a fully fledged career out of the navy.**

Yes navy and defence.

27:30 **But what I wanted to ask you if the navy was exactly what you wanted and suited you perfectly, what was it like then to actually let it go?**

It was tough. It was tough.

**Did you get depressed?**

No I didn't get depressed but you know I had no skills except navy skills, you know and whilst I said you know they didn't want military types in the naval stores in particular

28:00 or in the public service but it did eventuate that what I knew from my navy training was applicable in lots of aspects in the stores system of the navy. You know when they talked about anchors and blocks and all sorts of those types of things, I knew what they were talking about, whereas those people, you know, a lot of the people in the public service

28:30 came in from school particularly when we had a Flynn and an O'Grady or those sorts of people running the naval store branch...

**Are you suggesting the Irish didn't have a clue?**

I'm not saying they didn't have a clue, I'm suggesting that they tailored their students to get into the public service, that's what I'm saying.

**So on reflection**

29:00 **what do you think your time in the navy during the war gave you?**

Well a couple of things I suppose, resilience enabled me to, when I was in a position that I could fit my around it. Nothing really bothered me as far as...look if somebody could

29:30 do it with their hands, anything with their hands and with their mind as long as it wasn't highly technical, then I could do it you know. That's my attitude, hasn't always worked out of course, but that's my attitude to life and that's the way I adjusted myself to my post navy, navy life. I enjoy being in Malaysia that was very good. It wasn't too good for Vera

30:00 initially, but you know it's a very interesting place to live because of the ethnic mix, the Islam teachings and also politics you know. We don't know anything about politics down here, you know, we're infants as far as politics is concerned. Once you get up there, then you know all about it boy, really you do. You've never seen anything

30:30 prior to an election that would match it, nothing, nothing at all.

**Just one last question too, I'm not sure quite how you'll answer this but given your life long experience in those areas what are your recent views on the conflict in Iraq?**

Well I've got mixed feelings about that. I think if they've found the weapons of mass destruction that they talked of,

31:00 then you know, I figure it was highly justified. I do believe that getting rid of Saddam Hussein, or as Vera says Sodom Insane, people were depressed under him I'm sure of that and having lived in a country which practises

31:30 Islam you know, Islam might be great to some people but when you see it in operation, it's not all that good. I mean you don't cut off people's hands and things like that you know, I don't expect my wife to walk behind me when I walk up the street. And if I walk down the street holding your hand, I'd be criticised about it, but if John and I held hands walking down the street that would be okay

32:00 in Malaysia. That say they are gentle people, well they are to a point, but only to a point.

**Thank you so much for this, I'm quite exhausted it's been really incredible and thorough, I feel as though I've been around the world a few times, thank you.**

Well thank you for that.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**