

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Mackenzie Gregory (Mac) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/71>

### Tape 1

00:21 **Your life before the war, how you came to enlist and why you chose the navy.**

00:30 **Then we'll move through your war experiences and then post-war and if we could just get a feel for the major events of your life initially and then we'll come back and talk in further detail about significant experiences you've had. First, if you could tell us where you were born?**

I was born in Geelong on 9 February 1922. I happened

01:00 to be there because Dad was working with the J-Class Submarines which had come out from England in 1919 and they were based at Osborn House in Geelong, which happened to be the first Royal Australian Naval College. Mum and Dad were there and so that's how it happened. I believe on the kitchen table in Hope Street in Geelong.

01:30 **And after your early experiences, you went to school?**

Yes, Dad was always a steward in the navy and he worked for admirals and generally the first naval member so we went out of Geelong when I was quite young and were actually living in Haynton Place[?] in Toorak with one of the admirals and my first school was Christchurch Grammar

02:00 on the corner of Toorak Road and Punt Road and probably my earliest memory was catching the tram and I started school the day before I was 5 there. Subsequently the next admiral had a house in St Kilda Road at Landene and it's still there, a lovely old brick place. I used to have to walk across the park, Faulkner Park to get to school.

02:30 I remember it particularly when the magpies were nesting and I used to be quite terrified as they swooped down on me when I was wandering off to school as quite a young boy.

**And did you want to join the navy from an early age? Was that your intention?**

Probably not at that stage. They bought a block of land in Coburg of all places and built a house and I went to Coburg State School until I was about 11 or 10

03:00 I guess and then I went to Coburg High. At that stage I suppose I realised that we were very working class, went through the Depression. Dad was away a lot and Mother really had to struggle and I can remember her stuffing her shoes with paper to keep the rain out and making sure I had a pair of shoes and I had

03:30 learnt about the Naval College where boys during their 13th year could sit for the Naval College and they selected maybe a dozen out of 300 applicants and I guess I saw if I could get into the navy and get a good education I'd get myself out of this very working class rut I guess. Even at that young age that's what I wanted to do

04:00 and I was most surprised when I sat for the exam, then I was called for a medical and then eventually I had to face a series of captains and admirals at Victoria Barracks and being petrified as the young man being interviewed and these gruff naval officers saying things like, "Look out of the window young man. What car is that going down the road?" and all sorts of questions. Then I was one of 13 who were

04:30 selected to go into the Naval College in January 1936.

**And when you went to the Naval College did you have to sign up for a number of years?**

My father did. For the 4 years of the College and a subsequent 12 years from the age of 18 and the only way you could get out was to pay quite a considerable sum of money which was never going to be forthcoming from my family so having made the bed I really had to lay in it.

05:00 **Tell me something about the College.**

Well the first year was pretty tough. We had 3 senior years and we were really dogsbodies [lowest of the low]. There was a pretty nasty sort of initiation and you doubled [ran] everywhere around the College and we were the youngest and the eldest were 17 or 18 were quite young men. For instance we went swimming in an open swimming pool which was one end of Flinders Naval Depot from where the

05:30 College was. We doubled everywhere and we carried our own gear and we carried the seniors' gear as well. The first year was quite rough and one of our lot was told not to return after the first term. We never knew what happened. We started with 13 and then after Noosey[?] as his name was just did not appear after our first term leave and we never knew why. He subsequently joined the air force

06:00 and unfortunately as a fighter pilot got killed in the Western Desert in about 1940, '41.

#### **And what about the rest of your class?**

Well we bonded pretty well of course. We had to survive I guess. For instance at night you had to be totally undressed, all your gear laid out, your chest of drawers open for inspection and have had a shower in 3 minutes against the stop watch and

06:30 if that didn't happen you got a size 10 gym shoe on your bum quite regularly and you learnt pretty quickly to be able to do it. One would help each other and we had 2 double bunks in a cubicle so you lived with 3 others and we had our own gun room. I guess out of that 12, 2 died in the war and one got killed in a car accident but the other 9 of us are still going.

07:00 We all were 80 last year and we all met in Sydney in July last year for a wonderful lunch at the Sydney Yacht Club and went from midday to about 4 or 5 in the afternoon.

#### **And what year did you graduate from the College?**

We were due to finish our 4th year in '39 and in August '39 the international situation was quite alarming and we were due to go on leave in August

07:30 of '39 to come back for our final exams, our big passing out parade, our graduation ball which was a big deal. The College was lined up and the commander said, "Years 1, 2 and 3 will proceed on leave. The 4th Year will stay. You are going to sea. Leave is a privilege not a right." We had a week's extra seamanship and signals

08:00 and we were sent off to sea and we all went off to join the navy at sea before the war.

#### **Which ship did you join?**

We all went to the [HMAS] Canberra which was an 8 inch cruiser and the [HMAS] Australia was not in commission at that stage, our sister ship. They'd both been built in the British Navy in about 1928 and came out to the Australian Navy. The Canberra and the Australia were sister ships of the County Class

08:30 Cruisers because they were named after counties, Shropshire, Devonshire, Sussex, Essex, etc. Just after war was declared, 6 of us went to the Australia and I was one of those so 6 stayed on Canberra and 6 went to the Australia.

#### **Do you remember the day war was declared?**

Very well. Very well. It was about quarter past nine in the evening when the Prime Minister who was Robert Gordon Menzies made the announcement that,

09:00 "Because Britain was at war, we too were at war." and I was sent to run the pinnace which is a motorboat, mid-shipmen ran the boats, in the charge of the boats. You had a bowman, a stern sheet man and a stoker to run the engine and interestingly enough a couple of Anzac Days ago a tall gentleman fronted me and said, "Sir, do you remember me?" and I had to say, "Not really." and he said, "Let me take you back to the day

09:30 war was declared. You were running the pinnace and you came into Man O'War steps and the end of Man O'War steps is a blue stone wall, you said 'Stop engines, go astern.' The engines cut out and we crashed into the blue stone wall and the bowman went over the side and I was the bowman." and then I remembered the incident and it was really breaking up the sailors from wives and mothers and saying goodbye.

10:00 The ship had been recalled to go to sea. It was a Sunday and I remember it quite vividly still.

#### **Where did you sail?**

Oh, we went straight out, just down the coast and to make sure all was well and we sailed around the coast for a day or two and then about - we didn't do much more than convoy work around the coast for the first 3 months then early 1940 we went over

10:30 to New Zealand and picked up a New Zealand Army group and a couple of troop ships and that was probably a poignant memory of the war. I can recall the troop ships pulling away from the wharf in Wellington and thousands of people breaking out into The Maori farewell and singing as the troop ships left and we took them round to Melbourne where we picked up the Melbourne, Australian group

11:00 over to Perth and we went across to South Africa with them and then the ship went on to England and joined the home fleet in 1940 about a month after Dunkirk when it was quite dark days.

**And you were then stationed where? Where did you sail after that?**

We were stationed in Scarborough in the North of Scotland in a very bleak place up in the Orkneys. Very bleak and cold and

11:30 wet. At one stage we were sent up to Bear Island to look for German trawlers giving away they thought, convoy information. That's 75 degrees north which is only 900 miles from the North Pole and bitterly cold, ice. The ships were not built to go into that sort of weather and within the month we were back based on

12:00 the Clyde in Scotland. Greenwich which is a naval base on the west of Scotland close to Glasgow. We were told we were going down to Dakar with [General] De Gaulle's expedition which he was hoping to.... Dakar sits right on the hump of West Africa, right on the convoy routes. The Americans at that stage of course were not in the war, were very interested in

12:30 getting hold of Dakar because of the convoy routes and Britain had to rely on America and Canada for food and oil to keep them going and we did convoy work for best part of a year. Dakar was an absolute fiasco. De Gaulle at one stage thought he was going to march in and take over and the brand new French battleship, the Richlour[?] had gotten into Dakar and she had

13:00 14 inch or 15 inch guns and she was virtually a land fort. They had cruisers, destroyers. They had forts with 9 inch guns and for 3 days we went in and for 3 days they bombed us. They shot at us. We got hit twice with 6 inch shells.

**Was this the Vichy French?**

Yes, it was the Vichy French and they were not going to give up to De Gaulle and he virtually stood off and said, "Well I'm not

13:30 going to shed the blood of Frenchmen for Frenchmen." I'm afraid I haven't been too fond of the French which they showed pretty well in the present war I think, but they don't want to fight that much.

**And after Dakar, where did you sail to?**

We went to Gibraltar. We did a bit of time in the Mediterranean with a convoy off to Malta and then we went back to England doing convoy. We were based in Liverpool.

14:00 At that stage we went into dry dock to fix up the damage we had and it was December 1940 when Liverpool was very badly bombed and it was much worse being in harbour than it was being at sea running the gauntlet of the U-boats [German submarines] and ships being sunk and it was pretty nasty sort of time. At that stage we had three bad nights in December 1940

14:30 when in fact the side of the dock was hit with a 500 pound bomb and one of the jobs - they dropped incendiaries all over Liverpool and one of the jobs the midshipmen had was to rush around the upper deck and kick off the incendiaries that landed there over the side as we'd left a few feet of water in the dock. There was a whoosh one evening and something came down and lobbed between the ship and the dockside which was probably

15:00 no more than 15 or 20 feet. Nobody paid much attention and we were duly taken out of dock and another ship was put in and they pumped out the water and there was a 4000 pound land mine sitting on the bottom ticking away still. We'd been lucky.

**Lucky!**

Yes.

**When an incendiary hit the deck - how big is an incendiary?**

Oh fairly small. They just set fire.

15:30 I think they were phosphorous and they'd burst into flame and the idea was to set the place alight then the bombers could follow where the fires were coming from and drop their bombs accordingly. Rather like we use pathfinders on our side to go into Germany and drop bombs and start the fires so the bombers could follow.

**So did you have to run around the deck literally and kick these things off the deck?**

Oh if they happened, yes.

**You did that yourself?**

Yes.

16:00 **And were you burnt at all?**

No, no. You wore boots and gave it a quick boot and hope it would happen. I only had it on one occasion I think but it was a bit scary.

### **I'm sure it was. What happened after you left Liverpool?**

We did a number of convoys working out of the Clyde. We did convoy work and prior to that in November 1940 we were out looking for a German cruiser or a pocket battleship I

- 16:30 think. We were called out and a Sunderland aircraft which was quite a big flying boat which we used for anti-submarine work ran into a storm and it was a real Atlantic gale. Waves 30, 40 feet high, 100 mile an hour winds. It had run out of petrol and had gone down and somehow the pilot had got it down. She'd been down for a number of hours and she was using her radio
- 17:00 and with our directional finding equipment we were trying to find her. I think if I remember correctly the captain said he would offer £10 to anybody who sighted the wreck. £10 was a lot of money. As a midshipman we got 6 shillings a day, £2 a week and that didn't go very far and eventually we sighted it and just as we got her in sight a huge wave picked it up and turned her right over on her back
- 17:30 and broke the Sunderland in two. There was one of the airmen clinging to the tail and we were coming up with the wind and sea behind us doing 26 knots and I can remember watching the speedo [speedometer] down below decks and it went up to about 31 [knots] and back again as we literally surfed and the airmen were then in the water and they were too weak to even grab a line
- 18:00 so eventually our commander, an officer and some sailors secured a line to themselves and leapt over the side and physically tied a line to the airmen and we got 9 out of the 13 and I remember being sent up to the fo'c'sle with a party of sailors and the heaving line to try and get the four who were drifting past but we were unable to cast a line to them. As soon as you threw it out it came flying back with the wind over your head and they went off to die.
- 18:30 That was a dreadful moment to see them so helpless. 60 years ago I can still feel the absolute helplessness of myself and everybody else. We then took them back into - we could only do 5 knots back into the storm and we took them back into Glasgow and we recovered 9 out of the 13.

### **Then from the Atlantic?**

The ship

- 19:00 was coming home. We left England with the biggest convoy that had ever left at that stage. The Mediterranean was virtually closed. It was a troop convoy and we took them round the Cape up to Aden to go into the Mediterranean that way. We then went to Capetown and Durban and Ceylon and the ship was coming home and this was about
- 19:30 May 1941 and I'd been promoted to acting sub-lieutenant where you get your commission. We did our Seamanship Exam in the British cruiser, the [HMS] Emerald. We had 3 glorious weeks in Ceylon at the government's expense at the Gallface Hotel for 10 days and then we got sent up country to a rest camp at Desalawa which was interesting. We never had any money.
- 20:00 We'd gone to 11 shillings a day which was a big increase and we were walking down the street one day and a very toffee-nosed English voice said, "Oh, some Australians I see." It turned out it was a tea planter who had been at Gallipoli and was badly injured and some Australian had hauled him up off the beach and he gave us a wonderful time. He had a Rolls Royce and he wined and dined us for 10 days in Desalawa.
- 20:30 We then caught a troop ship back to England to go and do our sub-lieutenant's course. There was nothing worse for a sailor than to serve on a ship run by the army, I'm afraid. They had so many troops it was a hot bunk system almost. 4 hours in and 4 hours out. Two meals a day because they couldn't cope with 3 and we ran the gauntlet of the U-boats and got into Glasgow.
- 21:00 We were late for our courses and nobody really knew that we were there. So we said, "Let's go off to people we know." We told our own group where we were going, there were 6 of us and eventually we got a recall with a telegram. Somebody had run out of money and gone into Australia House who said, "What are you doing here, you should be on your courses." They rounded us all up and sent us down and we did our
- 21:30 gunnery signals and navigation. Some in Brighton in England. That was quite amusing. We were again bombed because 1941 was when they were expecting the invasion and at times you'd get called out to go and man the beaches overnight when they thought the Germans might be coming. There were stories, whether it happened but there were stories that they'd set the sea alight at one stage by putting oil on it and lighting it. Our hotel got
- 22:00 the top floor knocked off with a bomb one night which wasn't very pleasant but we were all safe and the Signal School. The navy had taken over Roedean Girls' School, like our Fernbank here, fairly toffee-nosed [upper class] school.

### **That's where Princess Anne when to school, I think isn't it?**

Yes and it still had notices in the rooms, "If you want a Mistress during the night please ring." We rang

those bells like hell but it never happened.

- 22:30 We had quite an amusing time. We had 3 or 4 months we went to Whale Island for our gunnery. We did navigation at Dryden which happened to be just out of Portsmouth and was General Eisenhower's headquarters for D-Day where he made his famous decision, "We will go." That's where we did our navigation courses and we were to come home and we got bundled into a Blue Star
- 23:00 ship called the Tuscan Star and we sailed in convoy to Halifax and then went individually down to Panama through the Canal and the ship had boxed Avro-Anson aircraft on their decks coming for the air force and we stopped on the east coast of Cristobel on the eastern side of Panama for the night and I'm afraid we all stayed ashore until about 1 in the morning and we missed the tide and the captain wasn't
- 23:30 very pleased with us. We were late coming back. We got through the Canal and all of a sudden in the Pacific, smoke started to come out of these boxes. Somebody had got at them in Panama and put some type of incendiary and they all finished up all dropped over the side as they burst into flames. So the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] didn't get their Avros.

**So that was sabotage?**

Yes it was. I understand you could have a

- 24:00 little metal container with two chemicals which ate through and then caused a small conflagration and so they were dumped over the side and we arrived back in Melbourne on Pearl Harbor Day, 7th December 1941. We'd been away 2 years.

**Then were you immediately sent north?**

I think we had 2 weeks leave. I was then not quite 20.

- 24:30 We got engaged. I got engaged to Gladys who I'd gone to school with. Her brother was my best friend. Gladys was a year older than I was and we said we wouldn't get married until the war was over in case I got bowled over. I got sent to the Canberra as a sub-lieutenant to get my watch keeping certificate which means that you keep a watch on a bridge as an
- 25:00 assistant officer until the captain says you are competent to run a watch on your own. I guess it would have been February '42 when we took the last troops into Singapore just to put them straight into the bag virtually and we went up through Sunda Strait through Banka Strait not quite to Singapore, called in at Surabaya or Jakarta as it now is.
- 25:30 Then we did a bit of convoy work and went back into Sydney and we were in Sydney Harbour in May when the midgets attacked Sydney Harbour on May 31st, 1st June. It was a mad night in Sydney.

**After Sydney Harbour?**

After Sydney Harbour we were then part of the - the

- 26:00 coast watchers around Guadalcanal. There was Martin Clements, was an Englishman but he was in the coast watcher force for Australia. He was a captain in the British Army and he'd been a district officer and the Japanese landed on Guadalcanal and landed on Tulagi and they were building an airfield on Guadalcanal. He sent this information back and the Americans
- 26:30 had decided and the British had decided that Germany was going to be knocked over first before the Pacific but Admiral King who was the commander in chief of the American forces decided that we ought to do a landing on Tulagi and Guadalcanal and we sent as part of the force for that operation. Operation Watchtower and we were part of the bombardment force and there were 18000 marines under
- 27:00 Major General Vandergrift, the American carriers and [Frank Jack] Fletcher was the [vice] admiral in charge of the total force and we did a stage out of Wellington and went off the marines and convoy and Australia, Canberra and [HMAS] Hobart were the 3 Australia ships. We were part of the bombardment force to do the softening up beforehand. August 7th we arrived and we did our bombardments, did our
- 27:30 night patrol. Fletcher said he'd stay for 3 days with his carriers but he nicked off after two and we were not very happy about that which meant we were absolutely without air cover and the Japs were coming down from Rabaul where they were bombing and we had a couple of nasty days of torpedo attacks and bombing attacks and about 4 or 5 of them
- 28:00 were knocked over and we been at action stations for virtually 2 days and at night there was the Australia, the [USS] Chicago and Canberra and 2 destroyers south of Savo Island. Savo Island is a little island that sits off Guadalcanal which is sort of down one side. Savo's there. There is an entrance north and south or east and west of Savo. There were 3 American cruisers blocking off the northern one with 2 destroyers, [USS] Quincy, Astoria, Vincenze.
- 28:30 We were the southern force. When Fletcher suddenly took his carriers off, Admiral Turner in charge of the landing called for Admiral Crutchley who was the second in command to take the Australia over to Guadalcanal for a conference and with Vandergrift they decided they would have to abandon the next morning and leave. So we were without our flagship and we were leading the Chicago who was the senior ship but he decided

29:00 to stay astern of us 300 yards and I had the midnight to 4 watch and I'd just gone on watch at midnight on the night of 8/9 August. I was on the bridge it was 1.43 in the morning and I had to call the navigator at quarter to 2 so I could remember the time very well and all of sudden mayhem broke loose. There was an explosion to the north, there was someone flashing to us

29:30 and all of a sudden there were Japanese, 6 cruisers and a destroyer about 3000 yards firing 8 inch guns and torpedos at us. The bridge got hit and I was relieved by the navigator. We got hit in fact by about 28, 8 inch shells and I virtually walked around 2 or 3. The captain was mortally wounded and the gun roister was killed. Everyone on the bridge except the navigator and I

30:00 were either dead or shot and we were not able to fire a shot. We suddenly took up a list to starboard. There were fires going on, ammunition exploding, it was just mayhem.

**I'd like to come back to that experience later in more detail. Just at the moment I'd like to get a sense of what happened after that. Where you went in the last couple of years**

30:30 **of the war?**

I then came back to Australia. It took about 3 weeks to get home. I had to go the Court of Inquiry as to why we'd lost the ship being officer of the watch when it all started. I'd lost all my gear. I had a pair of boots and overalls. I did hang on to the binoculars which I've still got. I'll show them to you later. I re-kitted and got sent back to sea. I joined an old cruiser called the [HMAS] Adelaide conveying

31:00 out of Fremantle and we were just doing basic convoy duty but we came across a merchant ship one day that turned out to be a German blockade runner. In combination with a Dutch ship, the Heemskirke and ourselves we sank her plus she put chargers on board and they all bailed out into their boats and paddled up and just as we were hauling the Germans in

31:30 up paddled a dog and a pig that had been on board and the sailors stopped hoisting them in to get the dog and the pig on. Amongst that group of men were 10 allied merchant captains who'd been captured by German armed raiders so the Germans were stuck down below and they were freed.

**Was that your last ship of the war?**

No. I stayed on her a year or

32:00 so and then I was drafted to the [HMAS] Shropshire which was the replacement ship for the Canberra. Winston Churchill [English Prime Minister] had offered it to the Australian Navy as a gift. The Shropshire had been bought for over £2 million by the citizens of the County of Shropshire and the ship was not renamed and I was in Perth and we didn't know where she was. She was somewhere up in the middle of the Pacific and I flogged

32:30 round Australia by train up to Brisbane and I think 3 or 4 nights I went out to the airport trying to get a passage north. The only way you could go - the Americans were the only ones flying DC3s up to Manus, a city on the Equator which was the big forward base and they kept on saying, "No, no you've got no priority." so I went back to the HMAS Morton, the depot and said, "For God's sake give me some piece of paper that will get me out of

33:00 here." They wrote out a South Pacific Transport Order that said, "If Lieutenant M J Gregory does not join the HMAS ship within 24 hours it will seriously hazard the war effort." Well I fronted with this and the Yanks said, "My God what do you do?" and I said, "It's too secret, I can't tell you." They bundled me into an aircraft and it took 2 days to get to Manus. Sitting on the floor with no heating and the mail and it was dreadful.

33:30 Got to Manus, it was in a tropical downpour and you couldn't see 10 yards. I said, "Where's the Shropshire?" and nobody knew where the Shropshire was. I sat for 2 days in the concert hut and the rain cleared and she was about 600 yards away anchored in the harbour. I joined her just before the - she'd just come back from the battle of Surabaya Straits which was the last great sea battle of all time and we went to the Lengayne Landings

34:00 in January '45.

**Right at the end of the war?**

We then went off to Tokyo and we were in Tokyo Bay for the surrender which was a great day.

**That must have been extraordinary and we'll definitely want to come back and talk to you in very great detail later. How long were you in Tokyo?**

3 months. We were part of the occupation force. We were anchored off Yokohama but we got off

34:30 to Tokyo quite a number of times and I was mate of the upper deck which meant I was the commander's assistant, the executive officer and we ran all the sailor's work, seamen's work on the upper deck. He said, "We've been here for ages." We'd acquired a jeep and a landing craft for 2 bottles of whiskey which I'd taken off and swapped.

35:00 He said, "Go up to Tokyo in the jeep and find somewhere for the sailors to go and don't come back until you have." I was able to organise a travel company to send a train down 3 times a week and we put the whole ship's company through Nikko, 3 or 4 days each, gorgeous spot about 150 miles out of Tokyo up in the mountains and we stayed there until late November when we came back to Australia and we stopped on the

35:30 way at Wewak and picked up 600 army troops and brought them home. I stayed on board Shropshire as a lieutenant and watch keeping officer and she was picked to take the victory contingent to England and I stayed as ship's company and we took them to London and I then stayed in England to do a specialist torpedo anti-submarine course which lasted over 12 months.

**So this was well**

36:00 **after the war now?**

Yes, all of '47 and a bit of '48.

**Then did you come back to Australia?**

I came back to Australia and went straight back to sea again to the [HMAS] Warramunga, which was the flotilla leader as the specialist TAS [?] officer for the flotilla with Captain Harrington as the captain and then I started to get some quite bad headaches and eventually they sent me to the Torpedo Anti-Submarine

36:30 School and they found I needed to glasses for astigmatism and I'd been at sea the whole war and I'd been back to England. It had been about 8 years and I'd had a pretty rugged time. I did a bit of teaching at the school and then I came to Navy Office for a year. They had a small group called the Director of Training and Staff Requirements with 3 specialist officers and you really were the eyes

37:00 and ears of the Naval Board to set policy for that specialisation to the navy. I was called in one day. We'd had our first child in April 1950 - Nan. When she was a month old she got meningitis and she died. Then the Second Naval member said "How would you like to be Aide de Camp to the Governor-General?" I really didn't

37:30 know who the Governor-General was and I didn't really know about that. We had a thought and he said, "Well, at least it will keep you home for a year. It won't do your career any harm one way or the other. If you say no or if you say yes." So we decided we'd go and we did. It turned out I did 2½ years because the King died, there were various reasons why Sir William McKell [Governor General of Australia] didn't want a change and we then had 2 more

38:00 miscarriages while we were there and then our eldest girl was born in Canberra, Jane. She won't want me telling you this but she's 50 now and she was born while we were at Government House.

**Then you?**

Then I went back to sea again. The top job for your specialisation was on the staff of the admiral commanding the fleet. I went on Admiral Dowling's staff as the fleet torpedo anti-submarine officer on the aircraft carrier,

38:30 [HMAS] Vengeance and we were then escort for the Queen's visit in 1954 and we went right round Australia and we had to produce a guard and a Queen's guard is 120 sailors and a lieutenant commander and a lieutenant. In case one of those gets ill you have a spare and I was the spare. When the Queen was doing the Australian War Memorial in Canberra

39:00 I told Lieutenant Stacey that he was going to be sick and Hugh Jarrett and I did the Queen's Guard in 1954 in Canberra.

**How long did you stay with the navy?**

I stayed until 1954 and at that stage we'd had a little boy. We'd had Jane, and then Anne and then a little boy. He was born with a congenital heart and he died

39:30 after 10 days so we'd had a rough couple of years and I decided I'd try and get out of the navy before I was too old. I had 19 years.

**At that point you went into civilian life?**

Yes, I took about a year to find out if I was going to get out of the navy. Dad was working for Sir Owen Dickson, the Chief Justice of the High Court.

40:00 I used to see Sir Owen quite regularly. He was very pleasant and I got an unofficial reading on the Naval Discipline Act and he said, "They can hold you if they want to so be very careful before you resign." I'd talked to Sir Murray Tyrrell who was the official secretary and I knew Athol Townley who was the Minister for Defence very well and he said, "For your information they've liberalised for officers

40:30 and we're not going to tell anybody. So I think you should have a go." So we posed a hypothetical case to the Navy Board and I resigned and Admiral Dowling said, "Is this right?" and I said, "Yes, these are the facts." He said, "I'm going to be the next Chief of Naval Staff and you won't have any trouble."

Within 10 days the signal came. I could go out without relief.

**Now that seems like a good moment to pause.**

Right

## Tape 2

00:11 **Okay Mac, we'd like to take you back right to the very beginning. I was very interested in what you were saying about your father. Could you tell me a little bit more about your father and his experiences in the navy?**

Dad was a,

00:30 eventually became a chief steward and in fact he served the Crown for 50 years continuously and was eventually awarded with a British Empire Medal of which he was very proud. In the First World War he'd been one of the Old Contemptibles. This is the crowd that the Kaiser said, "What a contemptible little army." and he fought in Belgium. He was on the Somme. He didn't talk much about the war.

01:00 He was a very proud person and he came out to Australia. He brought.... my mother's mother was a widow, my maternal grandmother, Ellen Greening and she was a gorgeous little lady who always took my side. I was a Cub and I think the sub was tuppence and I'd bought 2 Wild Woodbine cigarettes and tried my first attempt at smoking.

01:30 I would have been 11. I came in and my mother said, "Have you been smoking?" and grandma knew I might have and mother was Minnie Winifred. She said, "Minnie, don't be stupid. Of course he wouldn't be smoking." and took my side. Dad took her into the house and she really was one of the household and she was not a burden at all. She died while I was England in the war and I wasn't able to say goodbye to Grandma.

02:00 Dad wanted to serve and he really did look after the admirals he had. He went to sea on a number of occasions and was the steward for admirals. He served on the Canberra, he served on the Australia and the destroyers. He ran the School for Stewards at the Flinders Naval Depot but essentially he was the guy who looked after the First Naval Member, Sir Agna Colvin [?]

02:30 and some of those and until we had our own house we lived with them. He stayed until the war was over. They made sure we never served together, the navy. I was never at sea or in a depot when he was there. If I was there, they I suppose made sure we weren't together. It would have been pretty invidious having to say

03:00 'Sir' to your son. I always thought that it probably helped. I never really knew how I'd got into the navy. I thought maybe as we've got the token Black Judge[?] maybe I was the token lower deck person's son to get into the Naval College. I was the only one of a serving sailor to get into the Naval College. Whether that's right or not I don't know.

03:30 Occasionally when I was quite young as a midshipman, the sailors who knew Dad and he was always well-respected would say, "Perhaps I wouldn't do that sir." if I was going to get into trouble in some way in what I was doing. In charge of a boat or in charge of a group or doing this or that. The senior petty officer would come and whisper in your ear "I wouldn't to that but can I suggest this?"

**So was there a sense of class differences?**

04:00 Oh fairly big. Not so much in our navy as in the Royal Navy. Very distinct in the Royal Navy. Very distinct.

**Did your father talk about that at all?**

He was conscious it might cause me a problem the fact that he was on the lower deck, as they say. It really didn't and I suppose the fact that he worked for the top people is usually

04:30 a help and they'd always say, "How's your boy going?" or, "What are they doing." I don't think it was a harm at all ultimately. You asked about the class distinction. In 1940, '41 when we were working out of Liverpool we got friendly with some WRNS [Women's Royal Naval Service] and in the very early part of the war the top families' daughters jointed the WRNS. There were two, Phoebe Sanderman-Allan whose father

05:00 was a colonel and Member for Parliament for Birkenhead. She took me home for a weekend. I was cleaning my shoes. Mother came up and said, "Naval officers do not clean shoes. We have servants to do that." Then I had some leave and she said, "You can't stay in Liverpool and be bombed, we'll send you down to Anglesea where we've got friends." I said, "They don't want me, I don't know them, they don't know me." She said, "Don't worry, they're Canadians.

05:30 They're colonials, just like you." That really pointed it out. The other girl was Penelope Evans-Loam whose father was a full admiral and it was unusual that they went as ordinary serving people but they

- took it as tradition but that sharp distinction wasn't so much in the Australian Navy but between an
- 06:00 officer and a sailor a) there's got to be a distinction because you've got to have someone fulfil an order on the spot without thinking. The same applied to me. Anyone who's a day senior to you in the navy, they're senior to you and that's it. More than probably the other services you have to rely on each other so much for survival at sea. You've got to do your job; everybody else has got to do their job
- 06:30 and you've got to do it properly. It's amazing the camaraderie that still goes on. Here we are 60 years on. The Shropshire Association is still fairly strong. We have two reunions a year. Here at Albert Park we get 100 people probably still.

**Did the fact that you were senior to your father in the service. Did affect your bond with him in any way?**

No, not really.

- 07:00 I was probably closer to Mother than I was to Dad. It was after that we got closer I guess. Gladys was very good to him. We'd have him over regularly for meals when he was living on his own after Mother died then he formed an association with another lady that didn't please me greatly but it was his business. We drifted a bit until he got older. He lived to be over 90 before he
- 07:30 died and wanted to make sure I had his medals and things like that. He went with Sir Owen Dickson to India when he did the Partition for the United Nations and Sir Owen really relied on him. He used to pack for him and look after him like a son. The whole Dickson family were very supportive of my family and Lady Dickson
- 08:00 became Raymond's godmother when he was christened and she was pleased to do it.

**When you went into the College, were there any sort of rituals that you underwent as part of your initiation?**

I suppose you had to fetch and what have you. There was one particular period where they made sure you had to climb through a window.

- 08:30 They could jam the window on you so they could belt you from behind so you couldn't get through the window and the usual sort of nasty things that went on. After your first year, you had a year below you that you could kick around. By the time you were fourth year you were absolutely cock of the walk. It was wonderful. It was just superb. Then you went to sea and you were down very much on the bottom of the ladder. Someone defined the midshipman as the
- 09:00 lowest form of animal life in the navy. It was thus. I had a very salutatory experience. I had been at sea less than a month and I was running the captain's motorboat. The captain was R.R. Stewart, Royal Navy. Very tough guy. He called the boat away and you ran the boat for 24 hours with a crew. I was in the heads or the toilet and I didn't hear it which was no excuse and I think
- 09:30 half the ship's company were up on the quarter deck waiting to see what happened when I arrived. I rushed up and saluted the captain who said, "Boy, punctuality is the politeness of Kings. It is the duty of a Naval officer. Don't you bloody-well forget it! Your leave's stopped. Get in the boat and take me to Rose Bay." We were at No. 1 Buoy which is right near Man O'War Steps near the present Sydney Opera House. Rose Bay's the other end of the harbour. We got down there and I lined up the wharf with a
- 10:00 nice big swing and ran aground before we got in there. He said, "Don't stand there. Get out and push." I was in long whites and I'm up to here in mud and almost in tears. I got back to the ship and the commander saw me and he said, "My God when did you run ashore, before or after you dropped the old man?" I said, "Before." He said, "Well, you can stay on board for a month." That was my punishment for that and it probably made me try and be punctual for the rest of my life
- 10:30 so much so that my family's like it. My third daughter Sue will say, "Captain Stewart will be pleased with me." when she arrives on time for something.

**Do you think that the training you received at the College really prepared you?**

Certainly. Yes. You were confident. You were young but you were ready to take charge. We used

- 11:00 to be sent sailing. You'd go off on your own on a weekend. We'd take a 27 foot whaler and we'd sail from Flinders Naval Depot over to Cowes and back. It taught you to be very independent. They had a very nasty habit occasionally of rousing you out in the middle of the night, putting you into a closed truck, taking you maybe 20 miles somewhere along the peninsula. Putting you out at 2 in the morning and say, "Get back to the College." and there's a time to do it in. You didn't know
- 11:30 what it was but if you got back too soon, you got a lift, they knew that and they'd send you back to do it again. If you got back too late, you did it again. That sort of made you resilient, things like that.

**Did you ever get seasick?**

The very first time I went out in the old destroyer [HMAS] Tattoo into Bass Strait I got queasy but I wasn't sick. No I never have.

**A lot of sailors do, don't they?**

Oh, a lot of sailors do. They get sick for a day or two.

12:00 Quite terrible. Can never go to sea. Gladys hated ships. She was seasick before we got under the Harbour Bridge on our way to England when she came over in 1947.

**When you left the College, you said before that really the war intervened?**

Yes.

**You didn't have the opportunity to graduate properly?**

No we didn't graduate. We were the only

12:30 term ever to get out of the College without a passing out exam. They just had you for your four years, that's where you are. I think I was about 9/12. I struggled with calculus. We had twins in my term, the McDonald twins who were brilliant at everything. Didn't matter what. Sport. Their dad was a Headmaster. They came from a town in South Australia. Academically they were

13:00 superb. Good cricketers, good rugby players, good everything, tennis players. One got a Distinguished Service Cross as a sub-lieutenant on an arctic convoy, Russian convoy. Came out as a lieutenant and did medicine. His brother stayed in the navy and became a rear admiral and was in command of the fleet. One lives in Melbourne. Hugh lives in Melbourne and Neil is in Sydney. If anything happens the group will come together.

13:30 **When war did break out, what was your response to that?**

I think - because in those days you were - Britain meant a lot. Mum and Dad being English they always talked a lot about home and one always was very proud to hear the National Anthem played. One stood to attention. You'd play it in theatres in those days.

14:00 It was a different atmosphere. I think we were all looking forward to it. It was going to be an adventure. Now war can be hell, war can be dreadful, it can be boring, it can be agony, you can get scared at war's end but there's some good times as well.

**When do you think you first realised what war was about?**

Being bombed in Liverpool. Having ships sunk around you and leaving

14:30 them there. I was ashore in Liverpool one night when there was a bad bombing raid and I was trying to make my way back. I hated going into the shelters and I'd rather take my chance on the street. In London you got shunted into the Tube, the railway stations, and I was trying to make my way back during a raid and there was an air raid shelter filled with women and children that got a direct

15:00 hit and probably 500 got killed. Seeing people lying all over the place really brought it home to you and made you hate the opposition really.

**Did you carry that hate into battle with you?**

Not as individuals so much probably. I suppose you don't face them face to face in the navy. Often battles are some thousands of

15:30 yards. Later in the war the Kamikazes got very personal when you could physically see them in the aircraft and you got to hate them individually that way. I have probably had no great love for the Japanese and I probably still don't. I've been back to Japan on business a couple of times since the war and I know it's not those individual people but they are still the enemy, I'm afraid.

16:00 But the Germans weren't quite like that.

**What was the difference?**

I suppose, well we knew how the Japanese were treating our prisoners of war, number one, we knew we had a lot of prisoners of war and we saw them first in Japan. We sent out troops of people to go and look for them because a lot of our prisoners of war had been taken up to Japan and put in the coal mines under the sea

16:30 and were really they were terrible. One of my team was in the [HMAS] Perth, two were in the Perth. One was killed, Jack Lester and Norm White became a prisoner of war. He survived. Went on to become a commodore. Learned Japanese and earned a living out of advising business people on what to do in Japan. In the last Queen's Honours got a Medal of the Order of Australia for

17:00 what he'd done in fostering interest between Australia and Japan in industry which is ironic.

**I'd like to go back to the Kamikaze. What ship were you serving on?**

Shropshire.

### **Shropshire. When was your first experience?**

January 1945 in the Lingayen Gulf landings. Luzon which is the north of - [General] MacArthur

- 17:30 had landed at Leyte which is in the south and we were doing a second landing in the Lingayen Gulf which is in the north of Manila and we went up with the second biggest fleet after D-Day. It was enormous and the Kamikazes. They seemed to graduate on Fridays from flying school on a one way ticket and they would send up a 100 aircraft.
- 18:00 The combat air patrol and maybe knock some of them down and after Leyte we'd gone back to Manison - I joined the ship there and we had Christmas Day on December the 17th because we were going up to the Philippines and the captain decided we didn't have enough anti-aircraft fire and he said to our gunner officer, Commander Bracegirdle, whose dad had been Rear Admiral Bracegirdle and
- 18:30 official secretary to the Governor General's office, "Go ashore and see if you can get some more 40mm guns from the Yanks." He said, "Use your initiative." so Brace's got a couple of cases of scotch, took them ashore and was gone for a day or two. A little tug puffed out with a pontoon with 13 single Bofors [guns] on it, about a million rounds of ammunition, the mountings and the ordnance officers
- 19:00 to put them on the ship and we stuck them all over the ship, on the turrets, round the quarter deck, 13 40mm guns, anti-aircraft guns. That saved us in Lingayen. Really saved us.

### **Were the Americans better supplied?**

Absolutely, in every way, every way. We used to joke about us. The way the Americans won against the Japanese. We were landing on an island. They would land

- 19:30 the stores. They'd build them up, they'd build them up until they fell over and crushed the Japs and then they'd go in. This is the way we'd describe the Americans. They had - the second thing to hit the beaches would be the ice-cream machine. They lived absolutely much better than we did food-wise, equipment-wise, everything was just absolutely incredible.
- 20:00 When we got up to Lingayen, the Australia had been hit once with a Kamikaze in Leyte in October 1944. The captain had been killed and whole heap of them had been killed. She was stationed 600 yards astern of us and she attracted them and in fact over several days in Lingayen Gulf she got 5 Kamikazes hit on board and
- 20:30 it would have been January 6th I had the last dog watch which was 6 o'clock in the evening to 8 at night. We'd had a hell of a day with Kamikazes. From morning they'd come up and they'd fly round the fleet and then they'd got up to about 1000 feet and then just dive in to any ship and I'd seen about 80 ships physically get
- 21:00 hit over a period of a week or two and this particular evening I suddenly looked up into the sun and there's this Japanese aircraft screaming down for the bridge. We cleared the bridge and I flattened out on the deck. There was an explosion; the bridge is 60 feet above the water level. I got wet. I thought it was petrol. I reached out a hand and
- 21:30 had a lick and it was salt water. Cazaly who was the leading seaman in charge of the port pom pom - the son of "Up there Cazaly" from football was captain of the port pom pom which was an 8 barrel anti-aircraft gun that could fire 1200 rounds a minute from each barrel, 2 pound shells, had seen this Japanese and in fact had shot him in half. Half went one side of the ship with a bomb on, half
- 22:00 went the other side and the explosion splashed the water up onto the bridge. Well that's about the closest I've ever been to being written off. Roy Cazaly was given a Distinguished Service Medal and many years later in Adelaide we were having a Shropshire Reunion. My wife said, "Where's Roy Cazaly?" I pointed him out and she went up and kissed him. His wife looked very cross-eyed
- 22:30 at her at that stage. She said, "I wouldn't have him if it wasn't for Roy and that's to say thank you." He has since died of asbestosis unfortunately. He lived in Hobart. That was probably a more frightening experience I think than even being sunk in the Canberra. You got to the stage where we hadn't lost a man - you'd keep on seeing your sister ship being hit, you'd see other ships being hit
- 23:00 and you got to the stage of saying "Can we go on? When are we going to collect one?" I think Shropshire overall shot down something like 19 Japanese aircraft We fired the 8 inch guns at them. We had them radar controlled and we could fire an 8 inch shell which weighs 256 pounds all at once, burst at 2500 yards and
- 23:30 we would splash them in front of the aircraft if they were flying just above the deck. Sometimes they'd go in. Cazaly was such a good shot. When we working up there'd be an aircraft, a friendly aircraft dragging a drogue, which is a target to shoot at and I've seen him cut the drogue in half, go up and cut the wire with his shots he was so good. All by eye until the pilot sort of said, "Aah, that's enough." and he'd nick off.
- 24:00 An American aircraft followed down behind a Jap one day and Cazaly knocked them both over. The pilot got out of it and we were able to - the destroyer was able to pick him up. They were not supposed to come down that close. If they were that close you shot at them. The only way you survived.

**Was it easy to tell who was who?**

One of the things you had to do was aircraft recognition.

24:30 You'd got off and do a course and they'd flash up silhouettes of the aircraft and you got very good at picking out all the Japanese aircraft which had names like Zeke and Val and Betty and what have you. They all had a name. From the silhouettes you could pick them unless they were coming out of the sun and they were hard to see.

**But you had to have instant recognition?**

Really, yes. You had an officer in charge of the guns. Cazaly would shoot all down the port side and we had

25:00 a tripod main mast. Three legs main mast just aft of where his gun was and it had a section, a triangle that he could shoot through that triangle through to the starboard side. The captain would ring the check fire bell which meant the guns should stop. You'd hear the port pom pom chattering on and the old man would say, "Get me Cazaly!" and Cazaly would go up to the bridge and he was a reserve leading seaman. He was only in for the war.

25:30 He'd salute the captain and he'd say, "Cazaly when I ring the check fire bell, you'll stop!" and Cazaly would say, "Sir, if I can see them, I'll shoot at them." He'd salute and walk off.

**And the noise level?**

Oh, unbelievable. I have a picture in the study of an artist's picture of Shropshire under fire and you might think that it's far fetched. It isn't. You would not believe what an aircraft

26:00 can survive and will fly through. You just see all this black bursts of fire and Cazaly used to load tracer in every now and then. Tracer lights up as it goes so he could - he used to call it hosepipe - you could follow where the tracer was going. He was just so good with his eyesight and shooting. He had a joystick control which meant he could lay the gun

26:30 and train it by himself. All he had to do was get his crew to load it, to keep it going. If he yelled they would run. He was absolutely superb as captain of the port pom pom.

**Now, you said that it was more frightening that experience than being sunk?**

I thought it was. More personal, more intense and over a longer period of time.

**So obviously we really need to talk a lot about what happened**

27:00 **to the Canberra and where you were at that time?**

Yes.

**What role were you performing on that ship?**

I was a watch keeping officer which meant you had to be an executive officer with a watch keeping certificate from the captain merely saying you were competent. I had got mine in May 1942. I joined the ship in

27:30 December. I had done the 3 months with somebody else and Captain George Moore was the captain who gave me my watch keeping certificate. He'd gone off on 2nd May, I remember and we got a new captain, Captain Getting, who'd only just joined in May. It's interesting; a cruiser is a big ship 12000 tons, 80000 horsepower,

28:00 4 propellers. It's not like driving a car where you put your foot down and it goes. They take a while to work up. I was still - although I had a ticket I was still learning. One afternoon we were only 600 yards astern of the flagship and I was a bit out of station, astern station and we'd line ahead so the admiral's only got to look out and see that you're out of station and he'll send a dirty signal and the captain hates that

28:30 when the admiral says, "Get back in station!" The navigator came up who was a lieutenant commander and said, "Sub, you're out of station. For God's sake use some of that horsepower and get back in station." I went up a couple of revs and nothing happened. He said, "Look, you've got 80000 horsepower, use them." I went up a knot, nothing happened, I went up another knot and suddenly we started to charge up and before we know where we are we're about 300 yards instead of 600 yards and the old man, the captain noticed

29:00 what was going on and he came up and had a look and said, "Sub, I don't believe the Admiral has invited me on board for dinner. Get back into station." I got back again. But he knew I had to practice. After a while you get very good and you can look at it and know you're in station or you're not. You have a little station keeper where you can get the ship down, you can measure the distance exactly but you can do it by eye. These days you've got radar. It's very easy. You navigate by

29:30 radar. You've got global positioning. It was much harder in those days.

**So where were you physically positioned on the bridge?**

On the bridge. Well, behind the compass. You've got a voice pipe down to the helmsman who is one deck below and he's also got the controls to the engine room. So you give speed and course orders to the seaman who's in charge of the steering and you've got two helmsmen,

30:00 telegraphsmen who will telegraph what speed you want to the engine room. You've got a voice pipe to the captain.

**When you say they telegraph it, is that literally?**

It's an instrument which you move, 'Slow Ahead', 'Full Ahead' and it registers in the engine room. Also you say so many revs. You go up in revolutions. You had 4 propellers, 2 each side. 8 boilers with 2 boilers linked to each screw.

30:30 20000 horsepower could be generated through the steam going through the turbines that drive the propellers.

**So if you're travelling in convoy, how do they all manage to stay together. I mean...?**

In line?

**Yes.**

They don't. They wander all over the place. You try and shepherd them and that was one of your problems. You'd wake up in the morning and you may have 30 ships and you've got

31:00 to - someone's drifted off and you've got to round them up with a destroyer if you've got one. When you first leave, you'll have a battleship, a carrier, half a dozen destroyers, half a dozen cruisers. When you get well out west of England or Ireland, they'll all nick off and leave one or two ships to take the rest of the convoy. Actually we travelled from Liverpool to Durban by going around in a circle. Circling the convoy going right round doing

31:30 much greater speed. There's an old saying, 'the speed of the convoy is the speed of the slowest ship' which is very true. If one ship can't do 14 knots and that's what's ordered still drop back. You've got to cut back the speed to what they can do.

**What about supplies during that?**

You'd only carry what you could but in the Pacific the Americans had what they call the Fleet Train. You'd stay at sea for months. They'd bring a tanker out. You would steam

32:00 hooked up to the tanker and pump fuel across the 15 feet you'd be steaming apart or 20 feet. Keeping station on the tanker. Then they'd bring a supply ship up and you'd hoist in the supplies while you were underway.

**Getting across to Durban from Liverpool would take you how long?**

3 weeks.

**Was that at the speed of the slowest ship?**

Yes, might do 10 knots.

**Because some of those ships could have actually done it quicker than that?**

Oh yes.

32:30 They would try and get ships that were pretty well compatible in making up a convoy but you'd have a tramp steamer, you'd have an Orcades or they were taken over and they would vary from maybe 5000 tons to 40000 tons.

**Were U-boats [German submarines] the biggest threat?**

Oh yes, and the aircraft. The Germans had a big flying boat called a Focke Wulf Condor. It could fly right out, miles out

33:00 into the Atlantic and their job was to spot the convoys and then home the U-boats. They'd string the U-boats out in a line across the Atlantic and there was gap that we couldn't cover. From the west with air cover and from the east with air cover and the gap in the middle and that's where they'd go. That's the gap until we got - we were able with. We put aircraft on - old Hurricanes and old Spitfires onto a merchant ship. Squirted it off

33:30 once and the pilot shot down the [UNCLEAR] and then bailed out hoping to be picked up.

**So it was acting like an aircraft carrier?**

Well, a little catapult on the front of some ships.

**And it would...?**

Squirt it off for once.

**And that would be it?**

That would be it. He'd go up, abandon ship, abandon his aircraft and be picked up.

**So they couldn't land again of course?**

No.

**So how many planes did they lose like that?**

34:00 They used the older aircraft I think and they just fitted a number of them. That was one way they closed the gap.

**Right, so it was a deliberate policy of abandoning those aircraft and just trusting that the airman could eject and...?**

Be picked up.

**Yes, so it was a pretty high risk mission?**

Yes, indeed. Churchill [British Prime Minister] did a deal with Roosevelt [US President] for 50 old

34:30 American destroyers. They took over the bases in the West Indies for 100 years and did a great deal for the Americans and we got 50 old World War I destroyers to help these convoy ships, anti-submarine ships.

**Actually I think I read that the Australia had a sea plane?**

Yes, the Walrus, on a catapult.

**Was that the same set-up?**

No, it could land and be picked up again.

**How would you get the plane back**

35:00 **onto the ship again?**

Hoist it up by the crane.

**Were you ever involved in that operation?**

Oh, later as a lieutenant you'd be in charge of that, yes.

**And so you would be in the middle of the ocean?**

Yes

**In possibly heavy seas?**

Well hopefully it wasn't too bad but you could lay an oil slick down. Oil calms water and stops it being so bouncy. So you'd drop some oil, make a slick and the aircraft would land in it.

35:30 You'd have the crane out and the pilot would get out and hook on his aircraft and we'd hoist him up. Sometimes it would crash into the ship and do a bit of damage and in fact our aircraft at Dakar was shot down by the French and we lost our crew in 1940.

**You lost your seaplane?**

Lost our crew and the plane.

**During that operation in support of De Gaulle?**

Yes. When Operation

36:00 Menace which was De Gaulle at Dakar, we lost our aircraft.

**What were they doing as part of that operation?**

They were spotting our fall of shot onto the Richelieu and the cruisers in the ports.

**What was your feeling about that whole operation?**

Frustration essentially. A, that we didn't have a force big enough, B, that the French were there and wouldn't do anything. We were shot at by the French. We were bombed by aircraft

36:30 that the French had been given by the Americans. We sank a destroyer there or a light cruiser the Fantasque. It was all over in about 6 or 8 minutes. The first salvo was over, the second salvo was short,

then we hit and just blazed up. We went to pick up survivors and the submarine squirted off torpedos and we just left them.

37:00 They were French.

**But their own ships?**

And submarines.

**They had submarines?**

They had submarines in there as well.

**And did they fire?**

Oh yes. One of the battleships got torpedoed. The [HMS] Resolution. That really was an absolute debacle. Destroyers being hit with a 9 inch shell going in one side with a little hole and blasted a hole on the other side you could almost drive a truck through.

**And in the end...?**

No, got nowhere.

37:30 Had to be abandoned. We didn't get Dakar.

**Was De Gaulle actually on one of the ships?**

Yes he was. Yes.

**But he never obviously went ashore at that point?**

No, he'd sent a motor boat off. I think they were badly advised. They were to drop leaflets and it was to be either sticky or happy. If it was happy it was fine and they signalled happy and we gaily went in and it was foggy. It was the only

38:00 time I had an action station below decks and I hated it. I was in charge of the 4 inch high angle control position and I had a pair of headphones up to the chief petty officer up in the director who could see. He said, "Oh the forts are firing at us. No it's short. No it's gone over." Then you could hear the shrapnel hitting the ship's side where the shells had burst and we were below the waterline. I really loathed that. It was claustrophobic and

38:30 I didn't like being below decks at all. We had that for 2 or 3 days. We were stuck down there and just having to listen. The French coloured the shell bursts. It was like, green from the battleship, yellow from the forts, red from the cruisers so that they knew what shots were landing. Where they belonged.

**Extraordinary. I think probably time for us to change the tape just about. Seems like a good moment to have a**

39:00 **break. That's terrific.**

## Tape 3

00:33 **Okay Mac, just listening to what were you saying earlier, there are a couple of things that I thought we could explore further. Going back to when you returned to Australia in 1941 and then you joined the Adelaide and you went up to Singapore on the Adelaide wasn't it?**

No, Canberra went to Singapore.

**You were on the Adelaide.**

01:00 **You'd mentioned that there was an engagement with a German raider?**

No, blockade runner. The Ramses.

**Was this ship disguised?**

Yes she was disguised and flying another flag and our navigating officer had been Merchant Navy and said, "That ship belongs to such and such German line." He recognised the goal

01:30 posts where they ran their derricks from. We got a book of German ships and he picked it out and said, "That's the Ramses." We'd stayed well clear about 5 or 6 miles away having remembered the Sydney had gone too close to the Kormoran in November '41. Captain Esdale stood off and we asked them to identify themselves which they couldn't.

02:00 They didn't have the signals. You used to have 4 letters. You'd give the outside two the signal of the day

and the other ship had to give the inside two out of the four. That was one method of doing recognition at sea. It changed regularly and we decided to open fire. It was interesting; she had a big 6 inch gun on the stern.

**Can you see these? When the ship is disguised, how do they disguise a ship apart from running false**

02:30 **colours?**

Generally, sometimes they - well the German raiders used to put false funnels up. They would have woodwork, for instance they'd have guns within a container that looked like deck cargo and they'd drop down the sides of it and have a 6 inch gun there. This one really was not too well disguised. She was just running false colours and she had a 6 inch gun on the stern that didn't

03:00 open fire and we couldn't really understand this but when she went down it floated off. It was only a wooden dummy and these people were all ready and she'd been in Japan and she was loaded with tin and tea and oils and tungsten and all the things that Germany wanted and she was there hoping to run through - pretty lonely place, the

03:30 Indian Ocean and the Atlantic and pretty stiff if you get picked up. It just happened that we were with a convoy. We were taking a convoy up to - there was an oil rig for Aberdan we were taking up from Australia in merchant ships. We were going up to Ceylon to hand over to the British. You worked a certain part of the Indian Ocean and they worked a certain part. You'd hand over and we with a Dutch ship. After it was identified we opened fire from about 10000

04:00 yards.

**What sort of armaments?**

We had 6 inch guns. Single 6 inch. It was very old cruiser built about 1922. Built in Australia opposed to our Perth and that which were all British ships. Perth, Sydney, Hobart, Canberra and Australia were all British yard ships. She was not sort of a front line ship and was there for convoy work and did quite a bit of useful work around there. Was a terrible

04:30 sea, ship would roll on a (UNCLEAR) and used to ship them over most uncomfortable. They then had charges laid so they blew her up as well so we had a combination of them. We took them aboard and put them down below. They'd all bought their suitcases which were crammed with German crosses which the sailors helped themselves to and they complained. The

05:00 old man made us give them all back again.

**You also said that there were some Allied captives?**

Yes. That had been sunk by - the Germans had a number of armed merchant raiders, the Penguin, the Comet, the Kormoran was one and they sunk a lot of our shipping and they used to keep the merchant captains and keep them as prisoners of war. They were Norwegian and Dutch so they were

05:30 very pleased to be released while we slammed the Huns [Germans] down below.

**Tell me about what the feeling in the navy was once the news of the Sydney had come through and how was that news - was it rumour - there wasn't much known of course?**

There still isn't a great deal known really of how it all happened. Not a great deal was heard about it during the war at all.

06:00 We knew she was overdue, we knew she was lost and they'd got a couple of Carley floats and they thought they had somebody on Christmas Island, a sailor they thought, a body from the Sydney but they lost 635 which was our worst. It was interesting, it would have been 1988 we had an International Naval Convention in Melbourne. We had about

06:30 several hundred come from overseas and I was given the task of seating them for lunch at the Southern Cross [Hotel] and I looked at the list and I found a lieutenant or a guy - I recognised the name - he was a professor from Berlin and I put him on my table. And

07:00 I picked a few interesting ones that were going to be on my table and he turned out to have been the lieutenant who was the flying officer in Kormoran and I sat him next to me and said "Tell me about the Kormoran." He wouldn't talk very much other than the familiar line that she came too close so we fired torpedos. She went off under fire and the last thing we saw was her burning in the distance and we sank and

07:30 we didn't see anymore. That's all I could get out of him which was the line that Captain Detmers had pedalled ever since. We made the mistake of not separating them sufficiently in the beginning and he was able to get to all his crew when we got them ashore. We took them up to Queensland, the officers. So he'd survived that and came back and became an engineering professor in Berlin and came to that. That was an interesting experience too

08:00 but I couldn't get him to talk.

**The Sydney was the premier battleship**

No, she was a cruiser. Light cruiser. 6 inch cruiser.

**Oh right so similar to the Adelaide.**

Yes but she had twin turrets. She'd sunk the Bartolomeo Colleone under [Captain] Collins in the Mediterranean. She was a glamour ship.

**Alright. Then you came back to change ship?**

I went to the

08:30 Shropshire from the Adelaide.

**Oh, so you were on the Adelaide after the Canberra?**

Yes. Yes.

**Okay. Well I want to take you back to your convoy trip to Singapore. You'd come back into Australia late 1941?**

I came back December 1941. December 7th. Yes. This was about February, early February.

**What ship was this?**

I was in the Canberra and we were escorting the

09:00 - was it the 6th Div [Division] that went into Singapore?

**8th.**

8th. The 8th. We took not quite into Singapore. We left the convoy about half a day out. We got it through Banka Strait which is a very narrow channel just north of Indonesia, now Indonesia and they took them into Singapore, virtually into the bag [captured] straight away in Singapore. 19th February '42 and they all went in as prisoners of war.

09:30 **So can you remember what date you were in Singapore?**

We didn't actually go into Singapore. We stopped just short.

**So that was in January?**

It would have been just 2 or 3 days probably before and we came back through Batavia. Stopped there. I got ashore in now Jakarta and then we came back to Australia and round to Sydney where we did a small re-fit and as I said

10:00 we were there for the Jap submarine attack.

**Again how did that affect nerves and morale on the ship?**

In Singapore?

**No in Sydney.**

Absolute mayhem that night. It really was. The poor Japs were very unlucky not to get the [USS] Chicago. I think probably, the Chicago was a heavy cruiser but she was very top heavy which she looked like a battleship and I suspect

10:30 that they set the torpedos too deep and passed underneath her. That's the one that ran up and sank the [HMAS] Kuttatubul which was a ferry being used as an accommodation ship alongside Garden Island. The torpedo I think hit the wall and exploded underneath and also damaged the Dutch submarine the K-9 which also happened to be around, charging up and down the harbour.

**They didn't really fire on the ferry? It was misdirected?**

No. A torpedo that

11:00 ran the wrong way. Another one passed up onto the beach at Farm Cove. Of course one got caught in the net. They sank one and one got out. Never to be discovered with Sub-Lieutenant [Katsuhisa] Ban on board and never found it. Still haven't found it to the day. They'd had an anti-boom net across the harbour that wasn't quite finished and also had a hole for the ferry to go through and they had

11:30 loops on the bottom of the harbour which measured magnetic - the field of the ship as it went over and they read quite clearly read this was the submarines coming in and going out. But it couldn't be a submarine could it? It was probably the ferry. We were inept totally that night. The dockyard lights didn't go off until about 11.00 at night. Captain Cook Dock was ablaze. The ships were just silhouetted. It was beautiful and we were at No. 1 Buoy

12:00 in the Canberra. They were that close to Chicago they saw one of them. They had trouble keeping depth one of the submarines and it was bobbing up and down and she was that close they couldn't depress the

guns close enough, down enough without knocking of their own guardrails. Then she got down, Ban got it down - I think it was Ban got it under control again and lined up Chicago but ran it too deep

12:30 and eventually Chicago got fed up and went to sea. We stayed at No.1 Buoy and I was officer watch that night again.

**You wouldn't have known how many there were?**

Oh, had no idea. We didn't know what it was to start with. There were guns firing and Pinchgut [Fort Denison] was - searchlights. It was just absolute mayhem and they were very unlucky. Somehow we muddled through and we had only - other than the 23

13:00 who were on the Kuttabul when she blew up.

**On board, you must have thought you were fairly safe in Sydney Harbour before that?**

Absolutely, particularly No.1 Buoy which was a few hundred yards from Man O'War steps which is round from where the Opera House now is. It was that close. It's the prime position for the number one cruiser goes to the buoy and there we were.

13:30 Just lucky.

**Did things change on board after that? How did your morale and the watch must have been doubled? How did it change the day to day life on board?**

I think we became more alert. I think we probably had motorboats then going around the ship to make sure there weren't anybody trying to put a mine on board. You'd have a boat circling the ship. Then we had what you call the Hollywood Fleet which is the pleasure

14:00 yachts that were taken over by the navy for harbour patrol. They found - the lieutenant in charge of one of them actually found the submarine in the net and he asked could he open fire. Could he have permission to open fire instead of getting stuck into it straight away? It was the watchmen who found it. He sent a boat off and said "I think there's a submarine caught in the net."

14:30 I think they gave him an award of £10 for alertness in finding it. Rear Admiral Muirhead Gould was an Englishman who was in charge of Sydney Harbour and I thought he made an absolute bog of it. Muirhead Gould was in charge of the Court of Enquiry when I came back after Canberra and I was not impressed. I was a humble sub-lieutenant and he was asking me to give judgment on my captain. How did the captain

15:00 perform at the bridge on the night and he'd been killed? That really set me up.

**You felt like asking him how he performed the night the night of the....**

Honestly. He had poor old Captain Bode [?] who was captain of the Chicago. He'd been away from his ship which was a battleship at Pearl Harbor. He was in command of a battleship and he was ashore when that happened. He was away with

15:30 Muirhead Gould having dinner the night the Japs attacked. In Canberra, at Guadalcanal he was second - he was senior to Getting and he didn't take the lead which he should have after Australia went over.

**Let's go to that night. Take us through. You're in the Canberra. You've left.**

Wellington. We went to Wellington.

**After Sydney?**

Yes. We went to Wellington to pick up

16:00 the troops which were Marines and they were all young fellows.

**They were Americans?**

American Marines under Vandergrift, Major General A.A. Vandergrift. He was a tough American Marine general. Given an impossible task almost with pretty well raw recruits. Six months before they were in boot camp. He had trouble in Wellington because all the supplies were wrongly packed. He had to

16:30 pull them apart and re-stow them. The wharfies went on strike, it rained. Everything was against it. They went off to Koro which is an island in the Pacific to do some landings, pretend landings and nothing went right at that. In the end they just said we got to go because King wouldn't give us any more time and they had very little time to plan the whole thing. Nobody really knew anything about Guadalcanal

17:00 had the barest of maps and the Japs were in Guadalcanal and they were on Telagi which is a separate little island where they had a flying boat base. So August the 7th was D-Day and Canberra went to bombard Telagi and about 6 in the morning there were strikes from the carriers and they caught the Japanese flying boats on the water and knocked

17:30 all those off and put the Marines after the bombardment ashore at Telagi where they had a hell of a

time because the Japs couldn't retreat and it took them a day or two to get hold of Telagi where on Guadalcanal they had absolutely bombed the daylight out of it with the 6 and 8 inch guns you throw a lot of lead. You can fire probably 4 salvos of 8 by 8 and each shell 256 pounds plus

18:00 bombs from the aircraft. They didn't have much trouble getting ashore and they got the unfinished airfield fairly quickly on Guadalcanal and then the Sea Bees went in.

### **Sea Bees?**

Sea Bees are the American Construction Corps and they made the landing strip out of interlocking metal strips. They laid it down over the beach or over the jungle. They'd run in a bulldozer, clear everything down and then put metal matting

18:30 which was the runway and they weren't too long before they had Henderson Field named after a Marine pilot who was killed at Midway I think and so the first night, that's the night of August 7, 7/8, we were given the task with Australia, Canberra, Chicago, 2 destroyers, the [USS] Bagley and the Patterson to patrol

19:00 up and down at 12 knots altering course without orders 180° to starboard on the hour. We'd do a patrol 12 miles up and 12 miles back from the edge of Savo back towards Guadalcanal up and down as a group. That's the south side of Savo Island which squats in the middle. You've got Guadalcanal coming down, Savo, an entrance to the south

19:30 and an entrance to the east of it. The eastern side was blocked off with the 3 American heavy cruisers, [USS] Quincy, Astoria, Vincenze and 2 destroyers doing a box patrol. A box is a square. They drove round a square at 12 knots perhaps 5 mile sides. Then about 20 miles away they're still landing the troops and supplies at Guadalcanal. All the troop ships with about

20:00 8 screening destroyers are anchored off Guadalcanal getting the stuff ashore on the beach. Night time is a good time because there's no aircraft. In the meantime the Japs had found out the landing was on and Mikawa who was Japanese admiral was in Rabaul with the 8th Fleet and he gathered up some 8 inch cruisers, some 6 inch cruisers a destroyer and came screaming down from

20:30 Rabaul. He was seen by one of our Hudson aircraft flying out of Milne Bay run by Flight Sergeant Bill Stutt who subsequently became the Chairman of the Moonee Valley Racing Club. Bill was about a 20 year old sergeant pilot flying out of Milne Bay. They had just moved up camping in tents a squadron of Hudsons to do patrols.

21:00 They were not told that Guadalcanal was happening. They told they might see some Japanese. He in fact came out of the clouds and there's this Japanese fleet. He broke silence to report them. The American naval historian, [Samuel Elliot] Morison subsequently wrote years later he didn't break silence. He staggered back, had his afternoon tea, had his tea, then was

21:30 debriefed, total lie. It so happened that when he broke silence, Milne Bay was being bombed and they closed down the station and he couldn't get through. When he did get back to report them it then went from Milne Bay to Australia to Canberra to Washington, back to us and it was hours before we even heard that they were in the area. A second Hudson

22:00 with Flight Lieutenant Milne saw them, got shot at, got hit but got back and all reported them differently and they didn't have much recognition practice. It was very difficult in an aircraft and they reported them having a couple of sea plane tenders with them. Now this threw everybody out because the day before an American carrier had shot down a Japanese sea plane

22:30 on an island to the north of Guadalcanal. Everybody believed that's where they were going to set up a sea plane position at Rendell Island north of Guadalcanal. They were seen by one of MacArthur's B17's but it was probably - I knew when I went on watch at midnight that the Japanese force had been seen but nobody believed they were making for Guadalcanal

23:00 and nobody believed they could arrive before the next morning. We had been under severe torpedo and aircraft high level bombing attacks for 2 days. We had been at our action stations very little sleep. We'd gone into the second degree of readiness which means half were at their action stations. Two turrets manned, 4 inch gun but the guns were not loaded but it only

23:30 takes you seconds to load. The Yanks were in an even lesser degree of readiness than we were. All the opinion was, it couldn't happen at least before the morning if they were coming down. So on the morning of the 9th we are doing the same patrol as the previous night. I had the middle watch which means I had to be on the bridge by midnight as the 8th turned into

24:00 the 9th August 1942. Sub-Lieutenant Dorborne handed over the watch to me and the captain was on the bridge and the navigator was on the bridge at that time. I had lieutenant commander in charge of the armament, Lieutenant Commander White but I was in command of the ship's navigation and safety as the officer watch.

### **What's your rank at this stage?**

Sub-lieutenant. I was 20.

- 24:30 I'd had it for 6 months so I was relatively new at it but I was competent. He said we were doing 12 knots. He told me the course. We would alter course 180° to starboard on the hour without signal. The Australia had been pulled to of the line by Admiral Turner and as Guadalcanal was 20 miles away Admiral
- 25:00 Crutchley, the Englishman but in charge of the Australian fleet and nominated second in command to Rear Admiral Turner who was in charge of the landing operations and over above that was Vice Admiral Fletcher in the carriers that were 300 miles south east and South East Pacific Command was Vice Admiral Chormley sitting away in Fiji who had not bothered to go to
- 25:30 the briefing at Coro but had sent a captain over. Fletcher wasn't too keen about the whole arrangement anyway and he said he didn't think it would be a success and he had already been sunk in two carriers before and he was apparently fairly tired. Anyway he was the overall commander. Out of the blue he suddenly rescinded on his promise to be for 3 days and said he was running out oil, which he wasn't. He said he was
- 26:00 running out of aircraft, which he wasn't and actually nicked off with the carriers before we had approval. He didn't tell Turner he was going. Turner intercepted his message and that's the only way we knew. So Turner had called Vandergrift from the land and Rear Admiral Crutchley from the Australia to meet him on board his ship off Guadalcanal, 20 miles from where we were. So rather than take a boat in the middle of the night he went off about half past nine
- 26:30 in the evening so we were left with the Chicago, the Australia and the two destroyers. I was also told Captain Bode in Chicago had decided to stay astern of us and we would lead. So we've got the Bagley 2500 yards on our starboard bow.

**That's a destroyer?**

Destroyer, American Destroyer. Patterson 2500 yards

- 27:00 on our port bow.

**What's the armament on these destroyers?**

5 inch guns and torpedo tubes. About 3000 tons.

**And the Canberra is about?**

12000. 10000 nominally but she was a Washington Treaty which meant they had to keep them under 10000 but they'd gone heavier than that with extra armament, radar and all sorts of additives and we had a bigger crew. We had about 800 and later in the war Shropshire had

- 27:30 1280 on a ship designed for 600 or 700 but that's jumping ahead. Dorbone also said there'd been aircraft engines overhead during the night and the water was quite phosphorescent and you could see your destroyer's wake. Lights - phosphorous in the water lights up the ship's wake. So from above you would be able to see a course very clearly.
- 28:00 The captain had been told about the aircraft and they thought they were probably ours because we had sea planes and the carriers had planes although we didn't really know the carriers were not doing night flying at that time. We are bereft of any air cover for the morning and subsequently they decided, but we didn't know then, that
- 28:30 they would withdraw in the morning. The whole force would withdraw and leave the Marines onshore without a great deal of food and without all their supplies. We couldn't afford to stay there without air cover. Everybody was fairly dirty on Fletcher which I have continued to be my whole life. However. So we did our first hour and we altered course. The navigator told me he wanted to be called at 1.45am
- 29:00 so he could fix the ship before we turned at 2 o'clock and we were making towards the Savo end. There was no moon. It was misty. Visibility was not good. There were dark clouds scudding around and it was a pretty foreboding sort of feeling. There was sort of an air about the thing and we were tired. It was 1.43am because I had to look at the clock.
- 29:30 I'd just looked at the chart table clock. Now the chart table is a little table with a covered hood on it with a little light because you couldn't afford to show a light. You could stick your head in there, look at the chart and at a clock and I was watching the time because I had to give the navigator a yell in 2 minutes time to get him up out of his sea cabin which is immediately below the bridge. He'd sleep with his clothes on and take his shoes off. The captain was also in his sea cabin at the end of a voice pipe fully dressed. You only had to
- 30:00 lift the lid of the voice pipe and say, "Captain Sir." and he'd be, "Yes." straight away. He was as quick as that. There was suddenly an explosion to the north which was probably 20° or 30° on our starboard side. I think it was one of the Japanese torpedos that had been fired a long way away exploding and the Japs had the long lance torpedo which is a 24 inch diameter torpedo opposed to our 21 inch
- 30:30 diameter. They carried a big load of explosive.

### **And that's fired from a....?**

Cruiser or destroyer. Submarines only ran 21 inch but the long lance ran fast and ran an immense distance and was the best torpedo in the world. They were running on enriched air which was virtually oxygen. It is very volatile, mixed with oil it is liable to blow up. Canberra was the last

31:00 cruiser in the British navies to ever run enriched air torpedos and we'd got rid of them because we thought they were a safety hazard. We happened to be the last ship to get rid of them. We'd gone to an air driven torpedo opposed to an oxygen driven torpedo. Then the port lookout reported seeing a ship ahead in the distance. I couldn't see it. Lieutenant Commander White, the

31:30 principal control officer in charge of the armament couldn't see it. The signalman couldn't see it. Then we called the captain. I called the navigator, the gunnery officer. We went to action stations. You sound the action alarm and everybody goes to their full action stations. We loaded the guns. The principal control officer suddenly saw 3 ships. He told the

32:00 - you had what was called an Enemy Bearing Indicator. It is a control that when you follow with binoculars on it the director that controls the guns automatically follows it. Suddenly there is an enormous explosion. Probably where the Walrus is on the aircraft and the 4 inch gun deck. The 4 inch anti-aircraft guns.

### **Forward or astern?**

No, astern of the bridge. About

32:30 amidships. Just after the funnels or level with the funnels there is a raised platform that had 2 to port side and 2 to starboard side with ready use ammunition and that went up. The aircraft's on fire and it had bombs on it. Then the bridge is suddenly - I saw torpedos coming down our starboard side. We went hard to starboard. The captain was on the bridge, very quickly went full ahead. We gone hard to port he went hard to

33:00 starboard. The navigator came up and he was a bit slow getting up because he had to put his shoes on. He then becomes the acting officer of the watch. He took over from me. He said, "I've got the con." which means I'm then absolved from being in control of the ship and the navigator's got it under the captain's direction. My action station was in the fore control which is immediately above the bridge but up above it so you look down onto the bridge.

33:30 I was to really work out the ship's enemy's course and speed visually and pass that down to the torpedo to the controls station. By the time I get there the bridge has been hit on the port side.

### **Is this from the air now?**

Beg your pardon?

### **From the air?**

No no. Japanese cruisers. They'd approached in line ahead. They'd swept round the south of Savo Island

34:00 and we had 2 picket destroyers outside of Savo Island. The [USS] Blue and the [USS] Ralph Talbot that had been picked because they had the best radar and the best anti-submarine in the destroyer flotilla. They were stationed so they would come together leaving a small gap. Well the Japanese saw them visually, slowed down, steamed through the middle. The

34:30 approaching pack of dingoes on the unsuspecting sheep. They were not seen by either Blue or the Talbot. The [USS] Jarvis who'd been clobbered the day before, another American destroyer had been torpedoed was limping around Savo on her way to Australia. They saw the Jarvis, slowed down. Jarvis didn't see them. The Japs were supposedly not able to see at night. They were no good at night fighting.

35:00 They had slanty eyes. They could not see. In fact they trained lookouts especially. They had special night glasses. They picked us visually at 18,000 yards which is 9 miles away and nobody saw them. They are now something like 3,000 yards from us blasting away with 8 inch guns. The one that came under the bridge decapitated the gunnery officer,

35:30 mortally wounded the captain and filled up the torpedo officer, Lieutenant Commander Plunkett Cole with shrapnel who was dashing around the bridge saying, "I've been shot in the bum!" Midshipman Loxton was an absolute mess. He was the captain's mid-shipman. Dreadful stomach wound. Midshipman Sanderson filled with shrapnel.

36:00 The navigator, Lieutenant Commander White had gone. The gunnery officer had relieved him and he got away before that. I had to wait for the navigator. I walked off the bridge, walked around about 3 shells immediately under the fore control. The plot was wiped out and the navigator had told them to send an enemy report. We were off the air before that could happen and the plot was wiped out. Immediately behind the fore control was

36:30 the Signal Bridge. That got hit. We had had something like 25, 26 8 inch shells all down the port side. In between the boiler rooms and we stopped. We started to take a list to starboard. Some said they could

feel a torpedo hit. I wasn't aware. I knew there'd been some sort of a bump but I was never absolutely sure that we'd been torpedoed but apparently post-war it's been -

37:00 Bruce Loxton who wrote a book "The Shame of Savo" who was the captain's midshipman and he survived and I'll talk about him in a minute - believed we picked up the Bagley's torpedo from our starboard American destroyer. That's the only torpedo we hit. The Japs fired something like 20 long lance torpedos and we dodged the lot. Two went on to hit the Chicago, one took off 16 feet of bow and the other didn't explode. So Chicago

37:30 went charging off into the night. We didn't see her. The Bagley went off. Patterson was the only one to open fire and engage the enemy. Patterson just about at quarter to two used her talk between ships, which was the ship's radio, where she said, "Warning, warning, warning, strange ships entering harbour." In fact we didn't have TBS [Talk Between Ships]. Canberra wasn't fitted. Can you believe it? We are working

38:00 with Americans with ship radio and we haven't got it so we didn't get that.

**Okay, well it's pretty exciting stuff. We've got to change a tape now so we'll do that quickly and keep going with this night.**

## Tape 4

00:18 **Okay, so...**

Well I got up to fore control and I could look down on the bridge and I could see the captain lying down on the bridge. I could see the gunnery officer was obviously

00:30 dead and it was just carnage. We started to list to starboard and I had a sailor standing close to me probably as close as you are and he suddenly moaned. He'd been hit in the head with a lump of shrapnel; you know it was that sort of close. I can remember with my binoculars looking out and I could see the trunked funnel of a big Japanese cruiser, this big funnel and it was a Migami.

01:00 I recognised it as a Mogami type cruiser just blasting away about just over a mile away. I can remember saying "My God this is bloody awful!"

**Do some people panic in this situation?**

No. Not really. No no. I suppose you got a nasty feeling at the bottom of your gut, it's churning over. I did say earlier, everybody had a job to do and

01:30 if you let somebody down it's not going to work and I think that's what drives you on. You might be scared as hell but you're going to do your job.

**And does that override any - if your best mate is lying there needing some medical attention but you've got a job to do?**

I think you'd do your job first. I gave this young man some morphia. We had a pack of morphia in the first aid kit up there and I think he survived in the end. I'm not sure, I didn't really find

02:00 out what happened. We then abandoned the fore control because it was - I'd worn my cap up there and taken it off and thrown it in the corner and it was a very special cap because I'd come back from England and the navy issued caps were just ordinary and at that time the officer's cap badge in Australia was stamped out of metal and I'd got a gold braid one from Jeeves, the

02:30 outfitters in London and I had this cap and I put it in the corner when I put the tin hat on. We abandoned the fore control and we went to fight fires and get rid of ammunition and I got sent below to look for anybody that was wounded or dead. No lights and the ship's got a list on it. I had a torch that's all and I was down about 3 decks and it gave a dreadful lurch and that was an awful feeling. I said

03:00 "Oh this is it, I'm not going to get out of here." I was in the sickbay flat and there was a sailor there who was alive but he virtually had an arm and a shoulder that had been shot off with a shell coming into the sickbay flat. He was in shock and hadn't really realised it was his. He was still conscious and he looked out and saw the hand with a ring on it and realised it was his own.

03:30 We eventually got him out and they patched him up and he managed to survive.

**Without his arm?**

Without an arm. They took his other arm and grafted it onto the shoulder and got some more skin and eventually saved him - he survived without his arm.

**On a ship this size, do you know everyone?**

No, no. They all know you because you're one of the officers and you had a division.

04:00 I was the quarterdeck sub lieutenant which meant there were 100 sailors in the quarterdeck division. I would know all of them. I would know their family history. I would have to keep their records and I was a shoulder if there was a compassionate problem they'd come and talk and you'd censor their letters. You got to know them extremely well and you knew most of the sailors but not the stokers or the people

04:30 below decks.

**So the captain's been killed at this stage?**

Yes.

**Who's making the decisions?**

The commander was second in command, Commander John Walsh. He would have been in the after control which is the other end of the ship just in case something happens. He lost an eye in the action so he's out of action and the gunnery officer is dead so the next is the navigator as a Lieutenant Commander Jack Mesley who went on to become a rear admiral.

05:00 He's now in command so you might have an engineer commander or a doctor who's a commander but the senior executive officer, even if he's only a sub-lieutenant would be the one who would command the ship if it got down to the level. So Lieutenant Commander Mesley is now in charge and the Patterson, our port destroyer came alongside and we're listing to starboard, came alongside port side and started to take the wounded

05:30 off. We had loaded a lot of wounded into our boats but when we lowered them they were all full of holes, they'd all been full of shrapnel and we had to get them all out again. So we got the captain, who was still alive, over to the Patterson and most of our wounded. They just put a mess deck table over and of course she's much shorter than we are. It's a nasty gap and in the middle of it, in the distance

06:00 at this stage I've still got my binoculars and I'm on the fo'c'sle by A turret. We've got 4 turrets, A, B, X and Y each with two 8 inch guns, two on the fo'c'sle, two aft. I look through my binoculars and said, "That's the Chicago." I recognised her and she started to open fire and she thought we were a burning Jap I assume. Well Commander Walker, the captain of the Patterson said "Don't worry fella,

06:30 I'll be back." He cut all the lines with an axe and took his ship off, put a search light on. Eventually identified that he was good and we were good and off he went. We, at this stage were left, we had nothing to fight the fires with and the ship started to roll and Lieutenant Commander Mesley said, "Standby to abandon ship!" That's a real decision, do I get rid of my binoculars

07:00 or do I keep my boots. So I took my boots off, hung on to the binoculars, got outside the guardrail. You've always got to jump off the high side because if she rolls on the other side you'd get sucked in. We were about to jump off at this stage we were about 40 feet up I suppose with the roll and suddenly she stopped rolling. "Don't!" So we all got back again. It's raining by this stage, very miserable

07:30 and it's probably half past 4 in the morning. Well Patterson came back and she went starboard side of the quarterdeck, down aft. You couldn't get through from one end of the ship to the other because of the fires. My cabin happened to be on the upper deck and I had a little panic bag packed that I was desperately wanting to get if I was going to abandon ship but I never got to it. I did have

08:00 a photo of Gladys and the bugler went in there and he got my greatcoat out and he got my photo which he broke the frame and he put it in his pocket which he promptly gave back to me later with my greatcoat and it had water all around the edge of it. It eventually got lost somewhere in changing houses. We saved that. That's all we got out of the ship at the time. We then, the Blue, which is one of the two that had been

08:30 outside and missed Mikawa and his fleet steaming in came along side our port side and took off about 300 and at the time we abandoned ship the only people were the 84 dead that were still aboard. Some died of wounds later. The captain did a couple of days later and the Blue then took us off to one of the transports, the [USS] Fuller.

**What are the Japanese**

09:00 **ships doing at this stage?**

Ah! The Japanese after cleaning us up in about 3 minutes, swept past. The northern group were not aware what was going on. They split into 2 groups, went both sides of the American cruisers, knocked over the 3 of them, the Quincy, Astoria and Vincenze, 1000 dead in the Americans, swept on out and got away.

09:30 Were picked up by a submarine on the way back and one of the light cruisers were sunk by the submarine with a loss of only about 35. Now Mikawa was criticised for not going after the transports but he was not aware that the carriers had gone and he was frightened that he was going to get caught in the daylight by the carriers and he got back with his fleet to Rabaul.

**After sinking 4 cruisers.**

Yep. Great victory.

10:00 **And the Chicago just got out of it?**

Yes she survived. Bode got very much criticised later for not leading, for virtually doing very little. My understanding is the captain of the Bagley who didn't do well got relieved at pistol point by his First lieutenant and he went charging off and did nothing. The Patterson was the only one that really performed.

**So there was a**

10:30 **mutiny on board the other destroyer?**

The Bagley? No. The captain, he was locked up by his - he went a bit crazy apparently so Bruce Loxton found later in writing his book and the ship was taken over by his First lieutenant. Bode eventually got relieved of his ship. Fletcher and Chormley were taken ashore by King and they never had a seagoing command again. Fletcher was

11:00 in charge of the carriers, Jack Fletcher.

**How does it, your lives are in, you know, does it cross your mind sometimes if the captain goes ga-ga, what do you do?**

Oh, well the next officer has got to take command. Yes.

**Is that - hopefully that doesn't happen on a ship.**

I never thought about it. We had strong captains. Getting was only there a short time but he was a strong

11:30 captain. He'd been a submariner, first Australian to train as a submariner. He was in the first college lot from Osborne House where Dad's submarines were, in Geelong. It was the first Naval College before it moved to Jarvis Bay and before it went to Flinders Naval Depot in my time.

**When things are looking bad on the Canberra, you've been down 3 decks; you got that guy back up.**

12:00 **You say you've got a job to do but what are the other sorts of things that are flashing through your mind?**

Oh, we were dumping ammunition, we were trying to fight fires with - initially the Patterson gave us hoses with water which she could pump but then we had to get rid of that. We had no electricity so we were stopped and in fact the torpedo I believe went in between both boiler rooms and we had no steam, no

12:30 power and nobody got out of the boiler rooms at all. That was the greatest loss. The two total crews in the boiler rooms were dead. At the time we abandoned ship and she had to be sunk the next morning by our own forces and it took the [USS] Selfridge and the [USS] Ellett something like 6 torpedos. Some didn't go off and the Americans had a bad pistol, firing pistol on their torpedos at the time

13:00 and they fired something like two hundred and fifty six 5 inch shells before she went down and I didn't actually see her go down but she slipped beneath the waves at about 8 o'clock on the morning of the 9th.

**You were on board a destroyer at this stage?**

Yes on our way to - the Patterson took them off to the Barnett [?] and I got taken to the [USS] Fuller.

**What are you doing, you're talking with your fellow seamen**

13:30 **after this. Is there much discussion of what went wrong, who was responsible?**

Oh, what happened, yes. How did it happen? We knew there were two destroyers outside. How did they get there? In fact the aircraft that were flying overhead were Japanese float planes and they dropped flares which just lit us up like a Sunday dinner or Christmas tree and they'd obviously been able to pick the course, that was just straight up and down

14:00 with the phosphorescence in the water and they knew exactly what we were doing. It was just too easy.

**How's your confidence in your allies, in the communications at this stage?**

Well, we were upset that we didn't have TBS is the first thing that would seem silly. We were the first Australian ship to get radar. It was a fairly limited set. It was probably not working all that well and

14:30 you'd get echoes of the land when you were close to land which didn't help. We were cross that we really hadn't got the messages that Stan Judd had picked up, that the messages never got through. We were upset later that the Yanks blamed us for it and it was only post-war that - a few years ago that the wife of the second pilot, he'd died,

15:00 Nancy Milne found out that a sub lieutenant in Mikawa's flag ship had taken an illegal copy of the signal which read Stan Judd's message and they found this in the archives in Tokyo which said they'd picked up the message of him reporting sighting the fleet. So we were vindicated and Morison was totally wrong and now we are - I still find on the internet

15:30 people giving Morison's story that the Australian crew did not report the Japanese.

**When was Morison's version published?**

Oh, probably '50's.

**And that's for an American audience?**

No, well worldwide audience really. He believed that's what happened.

**Who's Morison writing for?**

He was an American rear admiral, writing the history of the American Navy. There's about 8 or 9 volumes.

16:00 **So that's the official history?**

Oh yes, yes. He was taken to task by Gill in our history by being wrong and I've been beating that drum ever since. I've eventually had a couple of websites changed by sheer persistence.

**After this, you've come back to Sydney for the investigation? Was that correct?**

Court of Enquiry.

**Court of Enquiry. Tell us a bit about that?**

16:30 Well we lobbed in Sydney and I've got what I stand up in and an old mate of mine arrived with a sports jacket and a pair of pants. I had a mean pair of pants and a shirt and maroon boots that they'd issued us with in the Fuller. They were the most beautiful boots I've ever seen. They lasted for about 15 years I think. They were the softest of leather and the best quality. You know our rough old uniforms our army had compared to the beautiful material the Marines

17:00 had in theirs. I got called up before the Court of Enquiry as officer of the watch and I think I had something like 180 questions and Muirhead Gould was the President of the Court and he wanted to know how did my captain perform, what did he do and take us through what happened. I said, "Well I, as a sub-lieutenant was not going to stand in judgment

17:30 of my captain who was now deceased." As far as I was concerned he'd performed admirably and was nothing to do with him. He didn't get the message and nobody knew that they were going to be there. The Americans - we'd set up a force outside and I still couldn't believe why they weren't seen visually or by radar. Nobody could understand that. We'd fought the ship as best we could and it was a force of circumstances and he blamed -

18:00 when Bruce Loxton came back he'd been very badly hit and to go back to the Canberra one has silly pride. As I said I prized my cap and badge and I said, "I'll go back and get that." I staggered back up onto the bridge in the middle of the night in the wet and it was a shambles and I had to shin up a rope to get onto the fore control to get the cap and where I'd thrown it in the corner was a great big hole where a shell had come in

18:30 and no cap, no badge. I was coming down and there was a body on a stretcher with two sailors carrying it and they lifted the body up and drained about a gallon of blood out of it and it was Bruce Loxton. I was the sub-lieutenant of the gun room which meant I was in charge of the midshipmen and he was one of my mids. Dreadful stomach wound and he was conscious. I said, "How you going Bruce?" and he said, "Oh, I'll be right." I wrote him off mentally

19:00 but he survived and went on to become a commodore and he was very distinguished. Then when he came back, Muirhead Gould met them and accused them of not fighting the ship properly and how do you feel and that's why he called his book, "The Shame of Savo." It so incensed him he then did a lot of research and I did all his research in Melbourne

19:30 because he lives in Sydney and all the archives are in Melbourne so I went through what we had in Melbourne about it and did a lot of basic research which he acknowledges in the book and it's probably the definitive one on the sinking of Canberra. The bible that everyone talks about the Canberra when he categorically said it was the Bagley's torpedo that hit us and for months he'd ring me up and say "Where was the Bagley the last time you saw her?" I said "Bruce it won't change.

20:00 She was astern of station." and she was beyond her station, she was further out, maybe 3,000 yards and this happened regularly. I'd say, "Bruce, same story." and eventually he rang and said, "It's all right. I found a signalman who was aboard the Bagley and now lives in Adelaide. He corroborates exactly what you've told me." He then drew up the diagrams and it says, "Gregory looked for the ship in this arc and it wasn't there which proves she was beyond station.

20:30 Now taking her to be there if she fired torpedos from there, this is where they went and we picked up one of them."

**And you believe that's what happened?**

Absolutely. Well I was asked were we hit by a torpedo and I said I couldn't say definitively that we were. As I said I had about 180 odd questions asked, "What had I done? What had happened? What had the captain done? What had everybody done? Did the captain do the right thing?" I wasn't going to criticise him. I was in

21:00 no position to as a sub lieutenant and a very experienced captain. He virtually helped us miss all the torpedos. He was going to starboard between the enemy and the troop transports that were still landing. He handled the ship very well in the time he handled it. We were ready to go within a minute, it was only that no power before we could even get the guns trained. When Ballard

21:30 found the ship, which he has. She's 2,500 feet down sitting upright on the bottom, the guns are trained to port, where the enemy was. I met him when he came to Melbourne to launch the book and I said, "Where is it?" He gave me the latitude and the longitude of the ship which is in my bit about the Canberra. I said "Can you find the Sydney?" He said "It's a hell of an ocean."

22:00 He said "You'd really have to pin that down before I find the Sydney."

**Yes, well there's a few tales there.**

Yes.

**After the Court of Enquiry, you're in Sydney for how long?**

Oh, I went home to Melbourne for 2 weeks leave and re-kit.

**Then you transfer to the Shropshire?**

No, to the Adelaide.

**Oh, to the Adelaide. That's right, sorry.**

I picked up the Adelaide and in fact...

**Did you have many crew from the Canberra with you?**

No, most of the

22:30 Canberra crew went back to the Shropshire. Went to join Shropshire. They were drafted - Shropshire was given to us in '43. She was commissioned, she'd been commissioned in '27 but Churchill wrote a memo saying, "Australia has lost all of their cruisers. I think it would be great for morale if we should give as an outright gift one of our cruisers"

23:00 and we decided to keep the name and not change it and the Americans had named their ship Canberra so we couldn't have two That's the only time the Americans have named a warship after a foreign country. They named her USS Canberra.

**When was that?**

In '43. So I went off to the Adelaide and she was subsequently came to Melbourne and we were at that time, my fiancé had

23:30 appendicitis and was getting over that. We sailed and went to Perth. I got acute appendicitis on that trip in the middle of the [Great Australian] Bight and it was too rough to operate. They were really trying to keep this thing quiet and I was quite happy because I wasn't too confident on the surgeon we had on board. Dentists in the navy are great but doctors are not that special in our experience generally.

24:00 All right for the general run of things but you wouldn't want to put your life in their hands too often. We got to Rottneest [Island] and I got taken off in a boat and I was taken to St John of God Hospital which our dear sailors call "Jack of the Christ" and I had an emergency operation and it burst on the table and I had a month in hospital getting over this wretched thing and then I got flown home to have a couple of weeks leave then I went back to the ship

24:30 and got over it.

**Worked out quite well then?**

Yes.

**Then you described that it took a bit of a journey to get to the Shropshire?**

Yes, that was a funny trip.

**You joined the Shropshire, what part of the...?**

Manus [Island], she was at Manus.

**What month is this now?**

November 1944.

**November '44.**

Yes. I flew into the strip and Manus at that time was the greatest fleet base

25:00 in the Pacific. It was huge.

**How many ships?**

Oh, hundreds.

**Is there any danger of collisions when you've got that many ships?**

Occasionally, yep. In fact one of the ammunition ships blew up in the harbour. It was a terrible time. We sat in - you came back to Manus and you replenished, you occasionally got ashore at a coral Island

25:30 and had a baseball match and we had a very good baseball team because we had a number of American liaison officers who worked decoding machines because the Yanks didn't trust us with their decoding machines. They bought their own people on board and they were all lieutenants junior grade or lieutenants that ran decoding machines with all the wheels that used to go in.

**So you had Americans on board your ships?**

Yes, we did. One of them was killed

26:00 on the Canberra. Lieutenant Vance and in fact I just had, would you believe, yesterday, there's a guy in Poland who's very interested in the Canberra. Is writing about the Canberra for a Polish audience on its sinking. He wrote to me yesterday and said, "I've just found out you had an American called Lieutenant Junior Grade Vance who was killed on the Canberra." which he was, "And they named a destroyer after him.

26:30 Can you remember him?" It was yesterday.

**The Americans named a destroyer after him?**

Yes the Americans named a destroyer after Vance. The USS Vance. You've got to get killed to get a ship named after you. There's the [USS] Gregory too. Denise was an O'Brien before we got married and they named a destroyer the [USS] O'Brien and a destroyer the Gregory. Both got sunk in battles around the Solomons in 1942.

27:00 **What sort of work are you doing on the Shropshire in '45?**

In '45? Me?

**Well, what's the ship?**

Oh the ship. The ship was in all the landings all the way from New Guinea. She was in everything. Absolutely everything. Just before I joined her she'd been in the landings at Leyte and it was at Leyte that the first Kamikaze hit the Australia and probably the first

27:30 Kamikaze of the war. We had Captain [Emile Frank Verlaine] Dechaineux, [DSC] killed and a lot of officers and a lot of sailors and then they had the Battle of Surabaya Straits which was the greatest sea battle of all time. The last great sea battle in which the Shropshire helped sink a Japanese battleship. I just missed that. She'd just got back from that to re-ammunition and

28:00 get the Bofors that I mentioned earlier for the whiskey and we had Christmas Day on December the 17th because we were going to do the landings. We were going to be at sea and we happened to get the old [HMAS] Merkur, our supply ship up and for once we were in front of the Yanks and we had turkey and they had Australian beer that day. Every sailor got a bottle of beer and there's a tradition in our navies that on Christmas

28:30 Day the junior sailor becomes the captain for the day. The officers serve the sailors for their meal. Do all the washing up and we had the first cafeteria system on the Shropshire and I was in the washing up crew. It was about 110° and the sailors were deliberately dirtying all the dishes so you had plenty piled to wash up. We had the band marching around the upper deck

29:00 with a great big conga line with the noise emanating unbelievable. The captain is on the bottom of the gangway dressed as a sailor and an American admiral is coming to call who could not believe this noise. His barge is going slowly round the ship. The captain there as the side boy and the junior sailor with the captain's uniform on. This Yank just shook his head and wandered off and didn't come on board. We sailed the next day and went up

29:30 for the Lingayen landing.

**Morale must have been pretty good at this stage?**

Oh yes. Magnificent ship. Magnificent ship's company. Best ship I ever served in. Absolutely superb. Everybody knew what they had to do. They were great at what they did. We had a lot of good senior officers. A lot of seasoned officers who'd been at sea the whole war. The lieutenants,

30:00 we had Duncan Stevens who is a lieutenant who happened to go and be captain on the [HMAS] Voyager when she was knocked over by the [HMAS] Melbourne. We had John Stevenson who was later in the Melbourne when he ran over the American destroyer [USS] Evans later and got blamed. They were all serving as lieutenants with me on the Shropshire. They had a magnificent ship's company. We had Captain Farncombe for a while who was the commodore. We had Collins as the commodore

30:30 before we had our first rear admiral. We were the flagship at times. We had an RN [Royal Navy] Captain Nichols who was quite magnificent and usually the Australians don't take well to RN officers but this guy was superb. He could handle the ship, he was cool. He used to sleep in his pyjamas in the wing of the bridge on a little bed. We caught a mine in our paravane one morning. Paravanes are two

31:00 bits of equipment you tow from the ship with cutters on and the wire picks up a mine. It's moored. It runs down into the cutters, the wheels go round and hopefully cut the mine. Under international convention they are supposed to be rendered safe as they come to the surface. The gunnery officer woke him up and said, "Sir, we've got a mine caught in the port paravane." "What have you done?" "Well sir, I've tried to shake it out. I've got somebody here with a rifle to shoot it when we get it out. I've got an

31:30 oxyacetylene torch if need be. We've got some brooms to push it off if it gets a bit close." He said, "Oh, you've got it in hand. Get on with it." and went back to sleep.

**Where about is this?**

Oh, going up to Lingayen Gulf in convoy for the landing. Biggest convoy of ships. We had an aircraft carrier blow up just about 2 or 3 miles away the [USS] Ommaney Bay.

**Hit a mine?**

No, Japanese an aircraft crashed into it and she just went pfftt.

32:00 Went through the decks and exploded.

**Kamikaze?**

Oh, light carrier probably 10,000 tons. The Americans had wooden decks on their carriers. We had steel decks and steel made all the difference. They didn't penetrate but the Americans often had them penetrate. Then they just flew into the deck. If you didn't shoot them down pfftt! You saw the photograph; it was just like that, unbelievable.

32:30 **Now the Shropshire ends up in Tokyo Bay?**

Yes.

**We don't want to talk too much about Tokyo Bay now. We'll do that perhaps tomorrow. You stayed in Tokyo?**

Yes, we stayed there for 3 months.

**With (UNCLEAR)?**

Yes.

**Were you on board most of the time?**

We were on shore for a few days but I got ashore quite a bit

33:00 being the mate of the upper deck which meant I ran all the executive seaman work in the ship for the commander. I did his night orders and so he would send me off to do various things. We had a landing craft which was a big landing craft that would take 100 sailors with a diesel engine and the bow would drop down and you could get a jeep or a tank in it. We had it to take the

33:30 sailors ashore. We borrowed this and we had it tied astern on a 6 inch grass which is a big line. A hurricane blew up and we were anchored. We had two anchors down about a mile or two off Yokohama in the middle of Yugami Wan which is the bay short of Tokyo. It's about ½ hour by train up to Tokyo which had been flattened. Tokyo had been fairly well

34:00 knocked over but we'd up and down to Tokyo to have a look. In this hurricane, we fortunately kept steam up and we were steaming to the anchors and a lot of the Yanks had shut down and their ships were dragging and the next morning our landing craft is several fathoms down. It'd sunk. The commander said, "Go and get another landing craft." I said "Well, not as easy as all that Sir." He said, "Go and get another landing craft."

34:30 So I got myself two bottles of scotch from the wardroom and a bottle of scotch duty free was about 4

shillings or about 40 cents. Took a couple of POs [Petty Officers] off in a boat. Found a landing craft depot and went up to the sergeant and said, "I want a landing craft." "Oh, pretty hard to get landing craft." I said, "I've got a bottle of scotch." He said, "Oh, Christ, you can have the spare engine as well for that." I said, "Well, I want a jeep." "Oh, no jeeps are very hard" I said, "Well, I've got a second bottle"

35:00 He said, "What about giving it to me?" I said, "No, no. Not that stupid. You get the jeep then I'll give you the second bottle." He said, "Next door to this bay there's the American provos and they've just taken delivery of some lovely brand new jeeps" He said, "So drive it round and when you hear me coming the jeep will be hot so drive it up onto the beach, drop the ramp and I'll drive in and you can take me back." This is what happened. We give him his bottle and drop him off and go back to the ship.

35:30 The commander says, "What have you got?" looking over the side. I said "Oh I got a jeep as well" so we hoisted it inboard, hoisted the landing craft up on one of the boat's falls which fitted and put the jeep inboard and I said, "I suggest the men under punishment paint it Shropshire Blue." and we put Shropshire on the side which we did and I often drove it up to Tokyo and we brought it back to Australia. In fact

36:00 we didn't come back until several months after the war was over and we filled it up with a lot of booty and landed at Bondi Beach and cleared the jeep and then we entered the Heads and went alongside.

**Alright well, that's a good place to stop I think. That's been really fascinating.**

## Tape 5

00:09 **Alright, well today we want to start off with your experience at the end of the war. You're on HMAS Shropshire?**

Yes.

**Tell us where you were on VP Day [Victory over Japan].**

VP Day?

**Yes.**

Prior to getting

00:30 to Tokyo?

**Oh, okay well let's start before that.**

VP Day was July, August.

**Let's start back in your last campaign then.**

Well the last one was Borneo I guess. We'd done the landings at Brunei and Tarakan which was virtually an Australian affair ashore but we had a number of American ships with us and we'd done the bombardments as we always did. Then we went

01:00 back to Subic Bay which was the big American base on the West Coast of the Philippines. At that time I developed a whitlow in my left thumb. I was, I guess fairly run down and they sent me off to the [HMS] Oxfordshire which was a British hospital ship which was an absolute disaster. The head surgeon was on with the chief nurse and they were a motley crew. They opened the

01:30 thing up and they used to each morning get a bandage and go like that (demonstrates bandage moving backwards and forwards) down it and I was in real trouble. The poor guy in the next bed had had acute appendicitis and taking him out of the jungle he'd been ambushed and shot in the stomach so he was in a mess. VJ Day was declared and I knew that the ship was about to leave and I was horrified that I would be left on board the Oxfordshire without the ship and I sent a quick note off

02:00 to my commander saying, "For God's sake, get me back!" He sent a boat over with a note from the captain saying, "Please I was needed back on the ship." and thankfully I escaped the Oxfordshire and got back on board to find we had probably the only grog [alcohol] on board around the area and they dredged up a few nurses from somewhere on shore and we were having a wardroom party. It was really buzzing when I marched on board and this wretched thumb was aching that much

02:30 I had to hold it like that above - vertically so that the blood wouldn't run down it to stop it aching and the wretched sailors would see me coming and they'd go like this with their thumb out. I'd tell them to shut up. Anyhow they were all gathered round these nurses who looked quite wonderful. They were reasonably elderly but they all looked wonderful. Nobody had seen a girl for months and there were two lieutenants. We were in tropical gear, a

03:00 white shirt with your naval epaulets, long socks, white shoes and shorts and these two still had caps on. The commander said, "Who are they?" and I said, "Well they're not ours." He said, "I know that." He

said, "They must be from one of the British ships. Tell the silly sods to take their caps off." I went over and recognised them and in fact it was two of our stokers. They had gone into their officers' cabins and pinched a couple of uniforms and crashed the party so the commander said, "Bring them up before me

03:30 as defaulters in the morning, impersonating an officer, doing this and that." They were duly brought up and charged and he looked at them with a bit of a grin and said, "Do you realise how these parties are paid for?" He said "Depending on how many stripes you've got, it's £10 a stripe. The captain pays £40, I pay £30 and Lieutenants pay £20. You're two lieutenants. You're both to put £20 into the wardroom mess secretary by tomorrow. Did you enjoy it?" "Yes sir, we did." "Case dismissed."

04:00 He let them go and they thought that was quite delightful. We then got notice that we were going to Japan as part of the occupation force and we left with the [HMAS] Warramunga and [HMAS] Arunta, two of our Tribal destroyers. We took off towards Tokyo stopping off at Okinawa on the way which had been of course one of the devastating places to land. The Americans had lost

04:30 many, many Marines there. We anchored in Tokyo Bay, level with where Yokohama would be and Yokohama is probably ½ hour by train from Tokyo on the western side of Tokyo Bay and the fleet anchored around us and we were there quite some days before the surrender was to be signed and I got ashore quite often on a number of missions.

05:00 **This is when you managed to get the jeep and landing craft?**

Yes. I got the jeep then and the landing craft. The Japanese were great tunnelers and they had the place full of caves and our navigator had a small range finder, a Barr and Stroud Range Finder that stuck with a spigot on the side of the bridge and he used it for coming up to take ranges when you were going to anchor. It was on his personal

05:30 slop chip. He had to sign for this and the captain called him one day and said, "Oh, Pilot." and he swung round and he happened to knock this and it fell over the side, got sunk and lost. I went ashore and in one of these caves I was looking with a couple of petty officers and I found a whole heap of equipment that the Japs had knocked off from Singapore when they took it over from the British and there were boxes and boxes of Barr and Stroud Range Finders and

06:00 I selected three and took them back to the navigator and said, "They'll have a different serial number but nobody's going to worry about that. You've got two you can knock over and still have one more." Then the commander said, "What's in these caves?" "Oh there's lots of lovely stuff." He said, "Well does anybody see you?" and I said, "Nobody saw us but one of the things we ought to do is make out a very suitable looking document saying that I had the authority to

06:30 gather this equipment for the Australian War Museum so that would give us open go." So off we went and picked up a whole heap of stuff that we brought back. Binoculars and all sorts of lovely things.

**Did some of it make it to the AWM [Australian War Memorial]?**

No, none at all I would think. None at all. The very next day, I'd got something for the captain, we had Commodore Collins and he'd gone off to the Tokyo Embassy and all the senior officers had some of this. There were aircraft sextants, cameras,

07:00 there were lots of lovely stuff and I think we needed two lifts on a 5 ton crane to get it all in at one stage and the next day there was a C in C Signal [Commander in Chief] saying there was to be nobody going ashore and there's to be no looting. The captain said, "Were you seen Lieutenant Gregory?" I said, "No sir." He said, "Oh well I can keep it then." I said, "I think you can." We managed to get away with it. Those first days ashore were quite incredible. The Japanese had plenty of money.

07:30 I didn't believe they'd give up but they did. The Emperor said stop and they just gave it away and were quite passive. They wanted overcoats. They wanted soap. They wanted chocolate and cigarettes. One cigarette the first day I was ashore was 20 yen which was £1 Australian, not a packet, one cigarette. Well the Yanks of course soon fouled it up and it stabilised at about a £1 a packet. I was about to get married when I got home and I managed to finance my

08:00 honeymoon and a couple of other things with a bit of illicit trading which most of the ship's company did and the supply officer went ashore and got for Australian pounds, he got several thousand Australian pounds worth of Yen to give to the sailors to go ashore and he would then take it back. He ran the Commonwealth Bank. You drew out your money and got the Japanese money. If you had

08:30 any over he would credit you with 20 Yen to the pound. Well £2000 over about a week turned into £50,000 until the captain cleared the lower decks and said, "That's it fellas. There's no more. It's all over." That's our first few days before the surrender was signed.

**Okay, I imagine it must be an amazing experience to be in a country where authority is unstable?**

Oh, we did not know what to expect and really when

09:00 the commander said to me, "You're to go up to Tokyo and find somewhere for the sailors to go." because we'd been cooped on board for months and months. He'd sent the gunnery officer off who came back and said he couldn't find anything and he said to me, "Don't you come back until you've got something."

I said, "Well how do I get there?" "Take the jeep and just go." I fortunately found an English speaking Japanese who was educated in America and was trying to start up

09:30 at that time a real entrepreneurial job, a travel shop and I explained what I wanted and we didn't expect to pay for it. He said food was a problem so bring your own food but other than that we'll put on three trains a week from Tokyo down to the ship. The train would steam alongside and 200 or 300 sailors would get their bag and off they'd go. We went to Nikko, an absolutely glorious spot. The whole ship's company went through it.

10:00 **So was it just for a day?**

No about 3 or 4 days. They just marched in. Took over hotels. Took over rest houses and said cook this and produced the tins and the food and had a wonderful time.

**I see. Now, tell us about - in the harbour, in Tokyo Bay approximately how many ships?**

Oh, the surrender was Sunday 2 September 1945.

10:30 MacArthur had orchestrated aboard the [USS] Missouri, the flagship and a 45,000 ton battleship. There was an absolute armada. Let me dredge my memory. 10 battleships, 5 aircraft carriers, 15 cruisers of which Shropshire was one, up to 50 destroyers, a dozen submarines

11:00 and a multitude of destroyer escorts, tankers, attack ships the whole harbour was just one mass of might.

**MacArthur had deliberately set this up as a very theatrical event hadn't he?**

Absolutely. He stage managed the whole thing. He had the table set up on the quarterdeck of the Missouri. He marched them up the gangway and sat them down and told them they were to sign the document. He did his

11:30 piece and got the Japanese to sign and as they were signing 450 carrier aircraft flew overhead followed by B-19's from the United States Air Force and it was just such a wonderful sight. We were not far from the Missouri and General Blamey went to represent Australia and I think the Second Naval Member, Rear Admiral Moore.

12:00 I think Jones was the Air Force, the Commodore Air Marshall that went and all the dignitaries were there. Bruce Fraser the C in C of the British Pacific Fleet and the guy that got left in Corregidor when MacArthur nicked off having been told to come to Australia.

**So what was MacArthur's purpose as you saw it at the time?**

12:30 I really think to show - let the Japanese take him as God. He really took a main line approach to it that he was going to be aloof, he was the victor and he was going to show them that he was the victor. I can remember not long after I was at Government House. Prime Minister Robert Menzies had been to Tokyo and he'd met the general and he said "Oh, let me tell you about meeting General MacArthur." He said

13:00 "I was invited to lunch. I had to be there ½ hour before. At an appropriate time in swept the entourage, the cars and the general straight out with his corn cob pipe, kissed his wife, and then took off his cap and said 'Gentlemen' He said, "Oh it was most impressive." He said, "I did it a second time and it was exactly the same routine. I thought it was a big act." I think it was a big act on that particular day. He was like that. He was aloof but he saw himself as

13:30 - oh, he thought he was above the President but he found out in due course when he got sacked by Truman [President of the US].

**How did people talk - did you talk about MacArthur at all?**

Oh in general we didn't like him. Well in New Guinea the Australians were the first to stop the Japanese. Just south of round Milne Bay. They were the first to defeat the Japanese.

14:00 They had to get the Americans out of trouble on a number of occasions but never was there any credit and MacArthur would take it all for himself. In one attack he sent for Willoughby who was his general at the time and said, "If you don't bring me a victory, I don't expect you to come home." That was his general approach. Well he stage managed returning to the Philippines at Leyte. My understanding

14:30 was they first carried him ashore until the newsreel man said, "General, that's no way to return victorious." and then they took him back and he hopped into the water and strode through the water with his pipe and his cap and that's the way that "I've come to return - I have returned."

**I have returned!**

I have returned! That's right. We got sent down to Corregidor because they only had 6 inch guns and they were having great trouble taking the Rock. The Japanese

15:00 had tunnelled into it. They had a train line set out and they'd run the gun along the train line, poke it out through the entrance and shoot, then drag it back in. A 6 inch shell is only 100 pounds in weight where an 8 inch shell is 256 pounds. We got sent down to do bombardments and just as the

paratroopers are falling MacArthur and his silver B-17 flew overhead and part of navy protocol when a senior officer passes by is attention on the upper deck and face to starboard or face to port whichever it is. Well some wag piped up, "Attention on the upper deck, face upwards" as MacArthur flew overhead in his silver B-17.

**Tell us a bit more about that day.**

Well it was just a day of euphoria for everybody. On a personal note, I'd

16:00 started the war as a young man of 17. I'd probably been robbed of my teenage years by the whole war. I'd been at sea the whole war or overseas except for the occasional leave. I looked death in the eye a couple of times I guess and managed to survive and I was grateful to have survived. We were getting a little worried towards the end of the campaign in the Philippines because we'd had so many attacks from the Kamikazes and

16:30 we'd won them all and we'd seen so many ships get hit. I personally noted 85 different ships hit over a period of maybe 4 weeks and morale was starting to drop a bit by people saying, "How long can it go on for? Surely we've got to get clobbered. Surely we've got to lose somebody sooner or later." Well fortunately the end of the war came and we didn't. Shropshire went through 2 or 3 years of everything in the Pacific without losing a man to enemy

17:00 action. That was a wonderful achievement. So we were grateful for that. I was personally grateful. It was just a wonderful feeling. At last it was over. At last I'd survived. I knew I was going home to get married in December if we got home in time.

**Did you know that you were going to be part of BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force]?**

No we didn't. When we landed we didn't. No. There was nobody there at all. No army of course. We were one of the

17:30 few that were there and in the end you needed I think 3 months to qualify for the Australian Service Medal of 1945. 75 with a Japan clasp and Shropshire fought like mad to get included in that and we eventually won the day only a year or so ago when they finally granted it to us. Meant you had to move everything because it had to go in a certain place in your medals and do them all again.

18:00 No it was a great feeling of victory. A certain serenity. A peaceful feeling that it was all over. We've had some wonderful times but we've had some bad times too. We've lost a lot of friends in the Australia and other ships. You go back to thinking about the Canberra and the 84 killed that night. 109 wounded and think how lucky you were to survive.

**What was the**

18:30 **attitude to the Japanese when you were on shore at this stage?**

First of all we didn't know what to expect. We didn't know whether they would in fact give up and they did. They were very servile and very humble. We even went up to Tokyo and the Imperial Palace has got a moat right round it. We could go and look it that. We couldn't go in. We weren't molested or

19:00 there was no fear at all after the first couple of days ashore. I can remember going ashore and going down to Kamakura where there's a huge Buddha that was built in 1252. It weights 35 tons and is about 40 feet high. It's one of the landmarks of Japan and it used to live in the 13th century in a huge temple and a typhoon bowled it over in about the 1500's

19:30 and I went ashore, acquired a bicycle from somebody - I took it off somebody and rode down to Kamakura and saw the Buddha and came back and reckoned I'd had a great day. We did things like that.

**Did you know much about the treatment by the Japanese of the Australian prisoners of war?**

We had a good idea. I wasn't personally involved but we sent a number of parties to look for them and we

20:00 found a whole heap of Australians and we'd seen them and they were so emaciated. You know, like 12 or 13 stone men were 5 or 6 stone with ribs sticking out and so delighted to be rescued. They'd been brought from Malaya by ship in hulks. Some of them had been knocked off by American submarines not knowing they were carrying our prisoners to work in the coal mines and they were under the sea in Japan. The coalmines were literally

20:30 under the ocean where they were forced to work on a starvation diet and they'd had one hell of a time. They were really ill. They took a light fleet carrier from the British to get them home quickly. They used a mine layer, the [HMS] Manxman that would do 40 knots which was very fast for a ship to quickly get a lot of people home and it was just a wonderful thing to see the joy on their faces to see somebody they knew and to realise they'd won out in the end.

21:00 **So how long did you spend in Japan?**

Until about the middle of November. We got there in the middle of August.

### **About 3 months?**

Oh, towards the end of August to the middle of November and we came back to Sydney and I think we arrived on 30 November. We stopped at Wewak on the way to embark 600 army troops and bring them back with us. Now there's nothing worse for a soldier than to be on a

21:30 naval ship. They hate it. They're clumsy and we were itching to get home. We'd been away for months and months almost a year I think. In the end the sailors said, "Leave all your gear down there, we'll get it in." and we loaded the 600 in a bit over an hour I think. The captain said to the engine room, "I think we should do some time trials." We did 30 knots across the Coral Sea on our way home. Steamed into Sydney Harbour on a wonderful day having

22:00 dropped the jeep off in Bondi.

#### **We've spoken to someone else who was coming in to Brisbane and they said how Customs boarded the ship and took all their stuff.**

We did better than that. The captain went off to see the Customs people at Garden Island. I don't know what he did but he did some deal with them and there was nobody around for one week. The ship literally came out of the water.

22:30 Literally! Because we'd been at Balikpapan where they'd bought -I've got a brass tray I bought in Balikpapan in the study that was engraved. It was one thing that we liked and I had a whole heap of stuff. I got sent off to look for sand because we had our decks painted and in peacetime you've got to scrub the decks, they're white and holy stoned and that's a sacred site

23:00 is the quarterdeck and Man O'War in peacetime. The commander said, "Oh God, this peace is going to come. You'd better go off and see if you can find some sand." Sand is good for getting paint off. The abrasiveness of sand. There was not much sand around in Japan and I looked at the chart and I took four senior petty officers and a couple of chiefs in the landing craft and I found a naval air station which looked like a very good place to look for sand. So off we went.

23:30 It was a reconnaissance unit about 100 aircraft on the strip, totally deserted, nobody there. The aircraft bombed up and they had - it was the photographic unit for enlarging photographic reconnaissance. There was literally that size lens (estimating with hands apart approx 10 inches) about a foot thick. Somebody cut that out with an axe. We had jeweller's lathes and stripped the place

24:00 and no sand. So I got alongside the commander and he said, "What do you need?" I said, "The 5 ton crane Sir to get this stuff in."

#### **It sounds like a real smuggler's ring.**

We were rather naughty.

#### **Well, I dare say you earned it. I want to take you through in detail a specific campaign. Let's say Balikpapan.**

24:30 **Just to give us exactly what was involved for you on the Shropshire.**

Well the first thing we would do would be to steam up and we would have - we had a couple of army officers who were liaison officers for bombardment and they would hopefully have someone ashore in either an aircraft or in a - probably in an aircraft that could spot your fall of shot and you'd stand off the beach

25:00 where they were going to land and you'd bombard. Literally just broadside after broadside. That's 8 barrels going 4 a minute throwing eight 256 pound shells. High explosive. You had sorts of ammunition aboard. High explosive for bombardment and semi-armour piercing if you were against an enemy ship to pierce the ship and then explode. The high explosive was also used again the Kamikazes

25:30 on a short range fuse and you would bombard an area. They would bomb it. The air force would come and bomb it and literally you would lay upon lay for the first 10 or 15 miles. Then the troops would go from the landing ships. There'd be the [HMAS] Manoora or [HMAS] Westralia with their landing craft and they would go down their scrambling nets and they would man the landing craft and they would storm the beaches. Literally like D-Day in

26:00 Britain. You would see the landing craft open. You might have had divers down before that to make sure there weren't mines there and you'd have a beach party looking for beach mines before you sent the troops in. They'd do a bit of reconnaissance in that context. Once they were ashore you'd have a liaison officer by radio coming back to our army liaison officer saying we want a bombardment laid down in this area. We're having trouble. There's a Japanese

26:30 force there or there's a gunning placement we want knocked out. You would target that. Now you could fire up to 10 or 12 miles with an 8 inch shell. It was merely a matter of how much elevation you gave the gun to how far they would fire.

#### **Is there enemy aircraft attacking at this point?**

Not much at Balikpapan. There was a bit of bombing. So you had your anti-aircraft as well.

27:00 You had eight 4 inch guns that could be used for landing on shore fire or anti-aircraft. We had our two 8 barrel pom-poms, one each side. Cazaly's one and one on the other side. Anti-aircraft and we had our twin Bofors and we had 13 whiskey-acquired Bofors around the ship at that time and we could throw up a hell of a lot of lead.

**So how long was the Shropshire at Balikpapan?**

27:30 Oh, we were probably there a couple of weeks I guess and once they landed we would then just fire one gun regularly over the troops heads just to keep them down and that went day and night. In fact I suffer from tinnitus which has been traced back to gunfire because we didn't wear anything. We were on the upper deck and the guns would just go off. The noise and the blast is quite incredible with a salvo

28:00 and some of the bomb stuff that came close by was - you got concussion and the blast that did affect the eardrum.

**What other injuries, just part of the day to day life of the ship you mentioned that you had...?**

Oh well I was pretty debilitated by that stage. I was down a couple of stone and in fact I was in the sick bay with my whitlow and the captain did the rounds and I'd been with him for 18

28:30 months I think and he looked in and said, "Who's this?" They said, "It's Lieutenant Gregory" and he said, "My God what are you doing? We'll have to get you home if you don't get better." Well I didn't want to get better, I thought the going home would be good but then the peace came and I didn't want to go home, I wanted to go to Tokyo. Other than that I had appendicitis in 1943 I had nothing else. Post-war in the '80's I had to have a spinal operation. Turned out I had a laminectomy and a discectomy

29:00 that traced back to the time I'd thrown myself on the deck for the Kamikaze attack in January '45. Eventually Veterans' Affairs accepted that as a fact.

**You mentioned also that you had bad headaches?**

Oh, post-war.

**Post-war?**

Yep.

**Was that part of the same thing?**

I think it was probably. They put it down to battle fatigue eventually. At that stage I'd done my long course in England post-war

29:30 and went back to sea again. I'd been from '39 to '48 without being ashore virtually other than being home or ashore.

**You said the headaches were post-war. Do you think perhaps you may have had them during the war but you just suppressed all of that?**

I suppose from time to time. I didn't suffer greatly. I smoked as we all did. I started smoking at 17 and I was smoking 60 a day at that stage.

30:00 I stopped probably 30 years ago totally and in the end I was able to relate recently smoking to - I had a triple bypass in the 90's. Post-war I went 30 years without missing a day at work and then I had a series of things. I had my laminectomy and discectomy in the '80s, then I had a triple by-pass in January '91

30:30 and that was a nasty bit because I really wasn't aware I had a problem. I had chest pains mowing the lawn Christmas Day 1990. I had an angiogram and they said, "My God, you've got 3 major arteries absolutely blocked!" and they got me off to the Austin Hospital and the surgeon came to see me the night before in intensive care and said cheerfully, "You're a 1% chance at the moment. Hang on for the night and I'll see you tomorrow and we'll do some

31:00 sophisticated plumbing and we'll take one out of your leg and a couple behind your chest and she'll be right." And it was right.

**Better than a naval surgeon?**

Oh, much better. Then I had a prostate done the next year and then I was right for a while and then the family had Moorcroft Pottery Agency. It's the English pottery that's been made for a 100 years and there's a bit of it around here and we marketed it and I worked doing that for about 15 years after

31:30 I finally retired. I had to stop working to have the laminectomy and I didn't go back to formal work after that I worked for the family company for about 15 years doing that. At one Trade Show in Melbourne I fell over on a wet floor and did a rotator cuff and finished up having to have an operation on that. I'd met Denise at that stage and I couldn't use my right arm. She was shaving me for 6 months. She was

32:00 bathing me. It was my right shoulder and my right hand and I couldn't do anything and eventually a scan picked it up and I had an orthopaedic [surgeon] operate and got over that reasonably well. Touch

wood. Oh, diabetes 6 years ago. But not related to smoking. In the end I was able to get a 20% disability for my tinnitus up to 100% last year.

**How much,**

32:30 **on any giving day on a ship, how fit are all the men?**

Oh very. Well first of all you'd often be double round the upper deck. You were up at - during the war you were 4 on, 4 off just constantly and the Shropshire spent days at action stations, days. You slept at your action station; you ate at your action station. At one stage I think we were down to

33:00 two meals in the ship and then out of the blue an American ship turned up and of course we were always last end Charlie if it was an American supply ship. All the Yanks got served first and we were last. But we still did fairly well out of them but you could only get fresh vegetables for 7 days and fresh meat. You were on bully beef and the food was dreadful. The food really was dreadful and at a Shropshire reunion a few years ago we only talked about

33:30 we were so damn lucky to stay as fit as we did because the food was so dreadful and we believed they didn't do enough to what they could have done. You were just there and you fuelled at sea as I said yesterday and you were provisioned at sea. I remember after Canberra was sunk and I went off to the Fuller. We went down to eat and the Americans were complaining they were 23 days out of 'Frisco and the food's dreadful. We had the most wonderful

34:00 meal. We had pork, vegetables and ice-cream and we thought, "Oh, 23 days out of 'Frisco."

**Okay, so we were just talking about food?**

Yes it was not good but then we played deck hockey which was a wild and woolly game just with a bent stick and a ring of rope and the officers played the sailors and the sailors

34:30 really got their own back. You'd get a whack in the shins, behind the ear, "Oh, sorry sir!" It was great. Post-war in an aircraft carrier we did a lot of volleyball. It was fascinating study in vengeance. I joined the fly boys [air force] in one team and we finished up winning it and some wag had taken - to urinate in an aircraft they've got a little funnel in the aircraft and someone had taken a fairly smelly funnel

35:00 out of a crashed aircraft and put 2 handles it and engraved it and the admiral's holding it saying, "What have I got here?" when he had to present this trophy for the winning volleyball team. But yes they did a lot of sport and if we could go ashore and play, we did.

**What about other forms of entertainment?**

We had movies. That was one thing about the Yanks you got the modern movies and we had them on the upper deck. There is nothing more

35:30 farcical, not farcical, funny than a group of sailors on the upper deck with a film and let's say it's Betty Grable and all the cracks that go on. In Manus they had concert parties. Bob Hope and people like that would come out. They had a huge amphitheatre at Manus that would take several thousand people. It was just a mammoth base right on the equator. It was the American forward

36:00 - crossroads to the world where they staged for the Philippines and Japan and everything was at the base, floating docks. Everything was ashore.

**What other aspect of the Balikpapan landing. There's been a bit written about how necessary it was.**

Probably wasn't at all.

**How did you feel about it at the time?**

Oh, we thought it was necessary.

36:30 We didn't realise at that time. MacArthur was really fobbing it off. He didn't want us getting in on the act too much. He wanted to be up in the Philippines and he wanted to by-pass places. That was his strategy - island hop and get back to the Philippines as quickly as he could. I don't think he really wanted the Australian soldier in there and he think he fobbed us off with Balikpapan

37:00 and Tarakan and let them go ahead and do that as pretty much an Australian show with an American task force as well as our ships. But we were not part of his force; we were with an American task force, Shropshire Task Force 44. We had American commanders and you worked to American signalling and it was just totally different to the British way of doing it. They do it all by voice and you might be in a, let's say you're in a carrier force.

37:30 The carriers would be in the middle, there'd be a ring of cruisers and you have destroyers around that and you advance virtually in circular formation. You might have 100 ships in the force. Suddenly the signalmen would get a signal, "Rotate the fleet axis," which meant you had to change course and what the Yanks did literally pick up the whole whatnot, move it 30° to starboard and put it down again. Everybody goes

- 38:00 like mad to get into their new position. You had an instrument called a Battenburg that in fact it was Mountbatten's father Louis Battenburg had invented. You could put where you were now and where you had to go and quickly do your course and speed so as soon as the signalman said, "execute" you had to go up 5 knots and steer 30° to starboard for 10 minutes to get to your new position and keep out of the way of everybody else where we would tend to manoeuvre
- 38:30 one after the other the Yanks just went whoosh, so to rotate the fleet axis it was quite something.
- One thing is that relevant to most things, you've mentioned Winston Churchill a few times yesterday and I was recalling a rather infamous statement that was attributed to him a long time after the war where he said, "Don't talk to me about the Royal Navy. It's nothing but rum,**
- 39:00 **sodomy and the lash." Is that just Churchill being rhetorical?**
- I think not. I think the Royal Navy was known for a bit of sodomy. I only knew of one or two occasions in our navy. I never came across it personally but there was a problem in a destroyer where somebody disappeared, the Australia I think and it seemed to be a case of sodomy in fact.
- 39:30 **As in he'd been thrown overboard?**
- Yes, I think so. Someone just disappeared and one of my college term, his two brothers. His elder brother got killed in the war and his dad was the station master at Surry Hills. Basil Treloar wasn't a sodomy case but he just disappeared overnight off an N Class destroyer in the Indian Ocean and nobody really knew what happened.
- 40:00 He was one of our losses and the other was Jack Lester in the Perth, killed in the Perth in the Battle of Sunda Strait. As I said Norm White a prisoner of war and the rest of us all survived, Norm survived but 9 are still going.
- Alright.**

## Tape 6

- 00:20 **Mac, I'd like to take you back quite a way now, back to Liverpool. I wondered if you could comment on the role of propaganda?**
- 00:30 Yes. It was interesting. We arrived in Liverpool in December 1940 and Lord Haw Haw [German propaganda broadcaster] who was the Englishman talking to Britain from Germany and the day we arrived he came on the radio and said, "Ah, we know that HMAS Australia has arrived and is in Brockelbank Dock
- 01:00 in Liverpool." and the Liver Building is a big insurance company on the Mersey. The Liver is a flightless bird and on top of the Liver Building are two big stone statues of Liver birds. "Tonight we will be bombing Liverpool and make the Liver birds fly." That was my first example of propaganda from the German side.
- 01:30 **Did they hit the Liver Building?**
- No, they didn't hit the Liver Building but they damn well hit just about everything else. They really plastered it.
- Did you come across any other clear propaganda during the war? Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose [Japanese propaganda broadcaster]?**
- Yes, during the war she used to play records and really tell the Yanks watch out and particularly I think, as I recall, she was
- 02:00 talking to Australian servicemen, "All you Americans back there with all your girls." and of course a lot of that was pretty true.
- What was your perception of the home front? You were obviously away for a long time.**
- I was away for a long time and when I got back I was appalled.
- Why was that?**
- Well, nobody realised there was a war going on in Australia. The football was being played, the races were on and what we'd been through in Britain, what we'd been through
- 02:30 in the Atlantic, it was a different world and I could not believe it. I was shocked. I was a young man, 20 and I was imbued with I suppose, Empire and Britain and I could not believe they were so complacent back home.
- When do you think that changed in Australia?**

Singapore in 1942 when the threat of invasion with Japan coming into the war. That really smartened them up

03:00 and of course they were knocking off ships with Japanese submarines on the coast. They bombarded Newcastle from the sea. They bombarded Darwin many times and we didn't really hear as much until post-war how much they had bombed Darwin. The total loss of Singapore was a dreadful shock. We didn't believe that could happen. They didn't believe the guns of Singapore - the loss of the Repulse and the Renown

03:30 Prince of Wales and Repulse off Singapore, two totally unsinkable ships by aircraft and the fact that we were left by Britain. I think Churchill in fact let us down. If it wasn't for Curtin [Australian Prime Minister] digging his toes in we would never have got the 9th Div [Division] back from the Middle East. Then he wanted them to go and fight in Burma with [Field Marshall] Slim and it was only I guess Australia turning east and looking to America

04:00 and saying our future's there, not with the British Empire that really broke the link between Britain for the first time.

**Did it change your view of the relationship between Australia and Britain?**

Yes, I think it did. We felt pretty let down by Britain and we knew it was tough over there. We knew they had to survive and if Britain didn't survive, the free world wouldn't survive because they had to use it as a base for

04:30 Europe. If we didn't bowl over Germany but at the same time we saw our place in the Pacific being left badly number two. MacArthur was there and everybody was there going for the Pacific but most of the American Joint Chiefs, Eisenhower in particular were putting their efforts into the - first clean up the Germans and Italy.

05:00 Of course it changed once Russia came in and the view of Russia changed. Nasty communists became good friendly people at that stage and it changed the whole attitude. No, Australia became a real bastion and I think we saw Guadalcanal as a turning point in the Pacific War. We had to hang onto that because there it was sitting in the middle of the pipeline from America to

05:30 Australia. Australia as the base to build up and to go forward. Without that it wouldn't have happened. If we hadn't held on to Guadalcanal and that's why it was important to hang onto the field and the area and to use it as a springboard to go north and that really, I think is the turn of the tide in the Pacific. Not Midway, not Coral Sea. Guadalcanal and the seven or eight Naval battles that went on '42 and early '43 in the Solomons that probably historians have not written sufficiently about.

06:00 **The strength of the strategic alliance between Australia and America. Obviously the foundations were laid at that time?**

Yes, absolutely.

**What's your view of our relationship with America now?**

I don't like the total slavishness of it - if America says jump we jump. I think we've got to be independent to a degree but I don't think we

06:30 can ever lose sight that if we're in trouble, America's the only one that's going to come to our aid and we need that ANZUS [defence alliance between Australia, New Zealand and the United States] alliance without a doubt and I think [Prime Minister John] Howard's been fairly clever in the way he's manipulated it, if that's the word.

**I know that you've got quite a personal relationship with the Prime Minister and the President of the United States and I'd like you to tell us about that because that's fascinating.**

Well, it goes back to being sunk

07:00 in Canberra, first of all in August '42. We were then given the Shropshire as a gift at Churchill's behest. I think I mentioned yesterday as a total gift to replace Canberra and many of the Canberra crew went on to join Shropshire as I did eventually. But in 1943 the Americans were launching a new cruiser and at the behest of President Roosevelt

07:30 he said, "I want this ship named USS Canberra." The only American warship ever to be named after a foreign nation and it so happened that our High Court Chief Justice, Sir Owen Dixon was our Minister in Washington. His wife Lady Alice Dixon was invited to launch the ship which she did and she commissioned and she came out into the Pacific and I first saw her [the ship] at Manus where she'd collected a torpedo. Had half the stern blown off,

08:00 lost a number of men. She survived the war and went back and eventually they turned her into a missile cruiser. She went to Vietnam and it so happened that in 1967 she came to Melbourne for the only visit to Melbourne. She was here for Mother's Day 1967 and I was invited as a Canberra survivor to tour the ship. I met the captain, who was Edwin Rosenberg,

08:30 an Annapolis graduate who had a remarkable history. Invalided out of the navy as a lieutenant with testicular cancer, had an Act of Congress passed to get him back into the navy when he got cured. Went back and became a naval aviator. Came on to be a captain and was in command of the cruiser, Canberra when she came to Melbourne.

**Extraordinary.**

We had 3 girls and a boy and Raymond was the youngest. He

09:00 was six and hadn't been christened. My mother was looking very cross-eyed at me quite often because Raymond hadn't been christened and we said to the captain, "May we christen Raymond on board your ship?" "It would be our delight. Bring as many as you like. May I be his godfather?" We invited Lady Dixon to be his godmother because my Dad was working for Sir Owen in the High Court at that stage as one of his associates. They struck the ship's

09:30 bell which they inverted to be the font. On Sunday, Mother's Day in May 1967 he was christened Raymond Edwin Gregory. The Edwin happened to be after his maternal grandfather. Just happened it was a coincidence. Well Ed Rosenberg had his wife out here at the time. Lovely lady and he took his

10:00 job as a godparent very seriously. He would write to Raymond regularly. Tell him he was changing ships. Sent him his photographs. Then I went to the States on business on a couple of occasions. First I went to Honolulu - oh Raymond gave him an Aboriginal head and he was a sailor and he had had a boat called the Serendipity which he nailed to the masthead. He sailed it from Los Angeles to Honolulu

10:30 to take up his command as Deputy at Honolulu. When I stopped at Honolulu he sent a car to meet me and said, "Look, the boss has got hold of me but I have taken the liberty of taking you off your aircraft and putting you on one much later tonight and we'll have dinner later and I'll take you round the island." We had a lovely dinner and then he retired as a rear admiral - he retired after

11:00 he was a rear admiral and he was doing a Masters in Marine Biology and I met him in Annapolis the day I joined the navy. He made me an honorary member of his class and we went to the Class Reunion and had a wonderful night. But back to the Canberra. So that bell became very interesting to me. The ship went back and was eventually

11:30 paid off and I had a naval captain, Frank Costagliola who was in the [USS] Phoenix which worked with us in the Pacific and Frank had gone on to become a captain. He had become a member of the Atomic Energy Commission of the United States and he was a widower and he lived in Alexander, a suburb of Washington and I used to stay with him when I went to visit the States. I said, "Frank, we've got to

12:00 find that bell. Use your rank." So we went to the navy yard and got a computer and found it was in a crate down in Williamsburg. So we drove to Williamsburg and prevailed on the officer in charge of his store to open the crate and show us the bell. Australian law is you engrave a child's name in the bell if they're christened in the bell. Not so in America. I said, "How about getting that bell?" and they very toffeely said

12:30 "Foreigners are not able to own American artefacts by law." so that finished that. In 2001 I was visiting Canberra to talk to the American Ambassador on another subject and at the end of it I said, "Sir, may I tell you my bell story?" He said, "Certainly." So I told him the story of the bell. I said, "What about getting it for Australia?" He said, "Well, I'm about to go to Jordan in 2 weeks but I'll

13:00 set something in motion." Denise and I had been travelling around Australia for a month. We went to Melbourne, Perth, Broome, Darwin, Cairns back to Melbourne and the day we got back - we hadn't even done the washing. The phone went quite late at night and it was our Washington Embassy saying can you get to - it was a Friday - "Can you get to Washington leaving tomorrow. On

13:30 Monday, [President] George Bush is presenting the USS Canberra Bell to your Prime Minister Howard to mark the 50th Anniversary of ANZUS. Would you come as our guests?" Denise said, "I've got nothing to wear!" I said, "You're going." So we caught the aircraft and flew into LA, went straight on to Washington. Our Naval Chief of Staff, Admiral Ritchie was there and we got in about midnight,

14:00 taken to the hotel. Sunday they left us pretty much alone and Monday we had to be at the navy yard at about half past seven in the morning. The President was coming at half past nine. They said, "Look, he won't meet you because he's on a tight schedule." Security was really tough then. The navy yard sits in the middle of Washington but it's got a - it's 100 or so years old and around the centre is a lovely

14:30 stretch of grass with beautiful old homes for the admiral of the dock yard and various other senior officers and they have their ceremonies there. They had the dais with several seats. Across the front row were nice leather seats with arms and other than that row were just plastic chairs about 300 and the Marines were mounting a guard and band. The Prime Minister was due and we wandered down this front

15:00 row and there were names on these seats and we found one for me and one for Denise in the front row. It was interesting. All the admirals and captains duly arrived and they wandered down looking and none of them were there. By that time the hoi polloi had filled up about the first 3 or 4 rows and they had to move back. In due course in swept the entourage and George Bush was led there by the admiral,

Admiral Weaver of the navy yard. He sat on the

- 15:30 dais with his secretary, our admiral and Mr Howard and the Chief of Naval Staff. In the front row next to me I had the Prime Minister's Secretary; next to him was the new Ambassador, Mrs Howard and so on. On the other side was a 3 star American general that came into it a bit later. The President made his speech and the bell was on a stand in front of the dais.
- 16:00 On a nice stand with blue velvet cloth under it and polished. It weighs about 300 pounds and is quite big. It's got USS Canberra on it and the date as I recall. Anyhow he made his speech and mentioned me in his speech which I was surprised and he said, "Where are you?" and I said, "Here, Sir." and he sort of nodded and said, "Great to have you here." He did a bit about the Canberra. The Prime Minister responded and again mentioned me.
- 16:30 Then the admiral of the dockyard turned to the President and said something and he shook his head and stood up and Denise said, "He's going to come down." We were only from here to that wall away from him and he came striding down with the Prime Minister behind him with his hand out and he said, "It's an honour to meet you sir." and I'm stammering there and said, "It's my pleasure Mr President." or something. Denise had dashed off to the side with the camera to take a photo and he said, "No, no you must be in this."
- 17:00 and he went and collected her, took her hand and said, "Hello." and she was gone from that moment. Brought her back to the PM and myself, took the camera and gave it to the three star American general and said, "Take a photograph." and that's the photograph we've got and the only one that we happened to get and he chatted for a while and went back and later the admiral of the navy yard said to me that he'd said, "Well, Mr President that's it." and he'd said, "No,
- 17:30 I'm going down to meet that guy." It was unsolicited and it threw the Secret Service people in an absolute tizz! They didn't know what to do. So that's what happened. We went back and the next morning we were out early in Washington to get our photos processed and Washington went absolutely mad. There were ambulances, there were cars, there was CIA, aircraft clattering overhead, helicopters and we said, "What on earth's going on?" and nobody knew.
- 18:00 We went back to the hotel and it was about 9.15. The phone rang in our room and it was my daughter Jane from Melbourne ringing, "Do you know what's happened?" and we said, "No." She told us that it had crashed into the Pentagon which was about 2 or 3 miles away and crashed into the Twin Towers. Then the embassy rang and said "We've secured the Prime Minister. We've got him in the basement. Stay where you are."
- 18:30 Then on the Wednesday, Admiral Harrington, Simon Harrington was the senior naval officer, they took us to a special luncheon and at that time he said, "I can tell you now that you were both booked on Flight 77 which was the one that crashed into the Pentagon and at the last minute we thought it might be nice if you went with Mr Howard and his wife to Arlington Cemetery on Tuesday where one Australian is buried and he's going
- 19:00 to place a wreath and we thought you should join him and that's the reason you weren't on Flight 77." Well we couldn't get out of Washington. The PM flew home the next day on an aircraft bomber and they tried to get us on that but the Yanks said, "No diplomatic passports, you can't go." We had to wait until the Saturday and we flew in the very first aircraft that flew out of Dulles [airport] and it was American Airlines and there we are queuing at the airlines
- 19:30 and they had no idea about organising anything. Many of the people wanted to cancel domestic flights, the locals. They'd closed their city office. Dulles is 20 miles out into the hinterland and all the people who wanted to cancel got in this one queue as were those flying and one desk and we kept on saying, "Can't you get organised?" and it took hours just to get to the desk. Alongside us was this huge
- 20:00 wreath of flowers, "In Memory of our friends who died on 77." and that really brought it home. We went through pretty tight security, got on the aircraft. Before we took off the pilot and the hostess came down and spoke to a woman. They suddenly took her luggage out and hustled her off the aircraft and we don't know why. The captain said, "We are checking all the passengers in our headquarters
- 20:30 in Atlanta." Apparently they had everything on computer and we finally took off and went to LA where we picked up Qantas. There was a mad rush at Qantas to get out. The Embassy had managed to get us business class which was wonderful - changed up and we had our photos then and people started to say, "Where have you been, what have you done?" They went round and we entertained everybody in the aircraft with the story
- 21:00 and landed in Melbourne about half past six to the strains of, "I still call Australia home" with everybody on board cheering as we landed.

### **Pretty happy to be back home?**

Oh wonderful to be back. The most wonderful homecoming ever. All of my family had got there. All the girls, three girls and a boy, in-laws and everybody was there.

### **They were relieved to see you?**

Yes.

**Yes indeed. That's a great story Mac. I'd just like to go back to Japan.**

21:30 **When you were talking to Martin [interviewer] about going on shore. You mentioned that it was a lawless situation in Japan at that time. I'd really like you to give me some detail about what it was like to get off that ship and find yourself onshore, in a country that we'd been at war with whom we'd defeated and**

22:00 **the conditions that confronted you amongst ordinary Japanese people?**

Well to start with the nearest place we could land was Yokohama which had been pretty well flattened by our bombers. There were just miles of nothing. Flattened houses and my one big remembrance was that every house seemed to have a rusted safe sitting amongst the rubble and it had been opened and there was nothing

22:30 in it. There was nothing there. Now whether people had picked over it or not, I don't know. There was no transport running, there were no buses, there were no trains running to, no regular trains running to Tokyo. I think there was the odd taxi there but the general feeling was, "What are we going to anticipate?" We sent off patrols, armed patrols with our people

23:00 and I was surprised to find peace there really. People couldn't speak the language very much but they were very interested in getting chocolate and cigarettes and coats with the wads of money that they had. They looked reasonably well fed but their clothes were untidy, clearly poor

23:30 looking and I suppose not the upper crust of people we were seeing. Tokyo was different because Tokyo had also been bombed but not to the same extent as Yokohama had. I went into the Imperial Hotel and Mr Mikimoto had his lovely pearl shop there. I finally did a proper deal for a nice set of pearls for my then fiancé and one of the girls, Sue's got

24:00 them these days, I think for the equivalent of 4 or 5 packets of Australian cigarettes and they were worth several hundred dollars or pounds as they were then.

**So there was still some normal activity around?**

Yes there was. There were shops, there were shops in Tokyo. Food was the big problem. They didn't have any spare food and they had been starved with oil. They're not self-sufficient in oil and the American submarine fleet had

24:30 choked off all their merchant fleet totally. The Americans only lost 52 submarines in the war compared to 800 odd for the U boats for the Germans and for that 52 they knocked off something like 3 million tons of shipping. The Germans had done 10 million tons and if you equate boats lost to tons sunk the Yanks came out No.1.

25:00 **Well ahead?**

Oh, well ahead on that basis because they had the most inefficient anti-submarine fleet against them, the Japanese. The Japanese fleet were let down by A. they didn't use their submarines properly, they used them to reinforce troops, they used them to carry munitions. They didn't use them in an aggressive manner against the enemy and the Brits were the most efficient anti-submarine force the Germans had to face so it was two sides of a different coin.

25:30 If the Americans had had to face a British anti-submarine force they would not have had the success that they had and early in the war they had a bum torpedo that the pistol didn't work and they fired many times and didn't get any result and the people back home would not listen to the captains of the submarines until eventually one guy fired off I think 15 torpedos, kept the last one, they all failed to go off, he had a 50,000 ton ship sitting 2 miles

26:00 away from him and he couldn't sink it and he went back absolutely enraged and he went back and said, "This damn thing doesn't work." and finally they fixed the depth keeping - they were going up and down not keeping a proper depth and the pistol wouldn't activate and they eventually fixed it up. But generally ashore it was peaceful and you were able to go around and do what you liked. You told people to do something and they did it.

**Right. There was no resistance?**

No, none at all.

26:30 The Emperor said give in and they just did exactly that.

**Were you aware of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at that time?**

We were aware that it had happened and some people got down there. I didn't. Well, I gave thanks on a personal basis to Truman for making the decision. We had been told our next mission was to land in Japan and they were expecting up to a million casualties from the Americans.

27:00 Since there's been, in fact I've got it on the website, the operation that was going to land in Japan and

it's absolutely frightening what they were anticipating the Japs were going to throw against them. They had kept a lot of their aircraft and all their pilots to act as Kamikazes. They had hundreds and hundreds of small submarines. I went into a dockyard in Yokohama that was 200 or 300

27:30 stacked up midget subs.

**Mini submarines?**

Yep.

**The same sort of submarines that had come into Sydney Harbour?**

Virtually. Yes very similar.

**How many people could those submarines take?**

Two.

**Two.**

Two in each one.

**Do you think they were going to use them in this...?**

Absolutely. They had kamikaze aircraft, kamikaze - they had a torpedo that they would ride. The Kaiten. It was physically ridden.

**They would actually ride a torpedo?**

Yes, one man to guide it.

**Where was that launched from?**

28:00 From a submarine. Kaiten, a couple of times in the Pacific they launched them. In fact when the [USS] Indianapolis, you remember the Indianapolis being sunk and that was the one nobody found and they all got cleaned up by sharks. That was the only success that submarine ever had in the whole war and it was a month before war ended. He had midget submarines and Kaiten on board but he didn't use

28:30 them and then the appalling thing was the American prosecution when they court martialled the captain of the Indianapolis who survived, they bought the captain of the Japanese submarine to America and used him in evidence against their own captain. Never been done in the history of the navy and everybody was absolutely appalled.

**Do you think it could happen in the Australian Navy?**

No, no! It wouldn't happen anywhere.

29:00 I can't imagine what King was thinking of. C in C of the American Navy.

**What would motivate them?**

I do not know. He wanted a victim because they'd made a bog of it at base and the poor captain because he wasn't zigzagging got crucified.

**I know Mac that you're an anti-submarine expert and after the war you went to England is that right?**

Yes.

**And you became a torpedo specialist.**

Torpedo anti-submarine.

29:30 At that stage a torpedo specialist was one specialisation and he looked after torpedos, mining, diving, general electricals of that and the strategy for firing torpedos and the equipment to fire them. Another specialisation was anti-submarine where you had the anti-submarine weapons, the azstick, depth charges, hedgehog lighter, squid which were

30:00 anti-submarine weapons. The ASDIC [anti submarine investigation committee - sonar], the depth keeping equipment and the tactics that went with that. Then for the very first time in 1947 they conjoined those two to make it one specialisation and I was the first Australian ever to do that.

**Where did you do that course?**

All round England. Vernon which was the torpedo school, Osprey and Portland for the anti-submarine, Degaussing in Plymouth

30:30 up to Edinburgh for mine sweeping, torpedo firing in Glasgow over to Ireland to Londonderry to fly with the air force and do sonar-buoys which you drop down little microphone drops down with a buoy from an aircraft into the water and you track through 5 of those and listen through headphones. We flew with the air force and did that. Do tactics on a big tactical floor where'd they say, you are a captain of a

31:00 destroyer and you sat in a little cubicle and somebody would run a convoy and WRNS were running this around and you'd get a signal torpedos approaching, what are you going to do and the worst thing that could happen is when she came and would say, "Sorry Sir you've been sunk and you don't take any more part in this exercise." This went for a week. Then they'd wash up. The whole thing was drawn out on a huge board and then they would go through all the tactics of what had happened and do the wash up. So we did an intense course like that.

31:30 So we went all over the British Empire - sorry, British Isles for a year.

**So was the aim of the tactical training to develop skills in deploying those sorts of torpedos or to avoid them?**

Both. Tactically how do you avoid them and we had submariners actual submariners driving U-boats, driving submarines and it was quite amazing. On my course of 12, I was the only Australian, 2 Canadians, 2 Indians

32:00 and 9 Royal Navy and out of the Royal Navy lieutenants they were all senior lieutenants at this stage. All been at war, 4 or 5 had actually captained submarines. Their number ones had now taken over and when we were doing our anti-submarine work they'd take a tame submarine out that attacks the ship and you've got to find it and stop it and we made an arrangement unknown to our instructors that every time you lost the submarine you could hear

32:30 the ASDIC pinging.

**What is the ASDIC?**

The ASDIC is a sound - you send out a sound wave. It hits the submarine and reflects back and you hear it in the headphones as a "ping" a metallic sound you can pick it. That's a submarine. You can do it for about a mile and a half and you can track it and you use that to drop your depth chargers and your head throwing weapons on. You track the submarine.

**So if you can hear the submarine, can the submarine**

33:00 **hear you?**

The submarine can hear you with the ping on it. So they knew if we lost them. So we said, "When we lose you, do a fast burst of speed, we'll switch to hydrophone effect." and you hear the propellers and we never lost them over about 6 months. They couldn't understand how this magnificent group never lost a submarine.

**Didn't know what the trick was?**

Yes, the trick was we had a tame submarine.

**So the training, presumably it was anticipated that the submarine would continue to be a very**

33:30 **important tool?**

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Because it was just pre-atomic. Since then, they've gone atomic and they can stay under forever.

**Literally?**

Literally.

**And what sort of weapons?**

Oh they've now got missiles. A lot of the stuff launched on Iraq in '91 were from submarines.

**And so these are launched from?**

Below the water, yep.

**Below the water?**

Yes.

**And what would the defence be against**

34:00 **a submarine like that these days. I mean, how would they....?**

You have an aerial torpedo that you can drop and control on a wire. You can tell it where to go. You can have a pinging torpedo that pings ahead and listens and alters course. That's a homing torpedo. You've got head throwing weapons where you throw out a mortar over the ship. It lands and goes down to a set depth and explodes.

34:30 The depth charges are outmoded these days. In our day you threw them out with throwers and dropped them off the stern but the ASDIC set is sitting about level with the bridge so you've got a bit of dead time. By the time you pass over the submarine and drop the depth charges can drop you've got half the

length of the ship to travel and you've lost the submarine you haven't got him because you've gone over the top of him. That's the time he nicks off.

**So that's like your blind spot?**

Absolutely.

35:00 So because of that they then got rid of depth charges, took the bow gun off and put a series of explosives on there called the hedgehog which threw ahead of the ship so you didn't lose contact when you let them go. So the gunnery people didn't like losing their gun so they then put the guns back and took the weapons down to the stern, made them bigger, into a big mortar and you fired them over the ship

35:30 ahead and still didn't lose contact. I did the first trials in Australia when I came home with the squid and the barrels about a foot in diameter and there is 2 triple barrels and they fire interlocking triangles ahead of the ship about 200 yards and they have a bakelite cover on which you take off. Well the first thing I knew when I said, "Fire" was

36:00 someone forgot to take the bakelite caps off and we were showered with all this broken bakelite that came flying when it went over the top of the ship.

**So the work you did immediately after the war was very concerned with....?**

Well I joined the flotilla of destroyers as the Flotilla Torpedo Anti-Submarine Officer Specialist on the staff of Captain Dean who commands half a dozen destroyers.

36:30 **Did you have the opportunity to put those skills into use?**

Well it was Captain Harrington who went on to become Sir Wilfred Hastings Harrington, Chief of Naval Staff, a real tough cookie and it was his son, totally different who was in Washington and I said, "Simon, God you're different to your old man!" He was an absolute sod to work for. Anyway I'm a lieutenant and he's a captain and we came to Melbourne and you normally fired

37:00 one torpedo a year. You put a practice head on the torpedo which is filled with water and at the end of the run, the water blows out and the torpedo comes to the surface and floats vertically. He said, "We're going to fire the full outfit." The full outfit is 8 torpedos. I had a rating who'd never done it. I'd prepared one torpedo in England. I'd fired it. I'd gone out on the boat and brought it back and done the techniques afterwards.

37:30 Here I am going out to fire eight off Williamstown. We were screaming along and we fired the starboard 4, turned around and fired the port 4 and Harrington turned around and said, "Well, TAS on what bearing and in what time will the first come up and it better come up?" I did a quick calculation and sweated for about 3 minutes and up it came and then the third, fourth and the eighth. "Don't stand there, go back and get them!" So we went in the boat to pull them all back. You've got to be very careful because

38:00 they float vertically and you have to put a rope in the nose on a ring, pull it down and pull the tail up so you can tow them along side. If you're not careful I've seen a boat go over one and it come up through the middle of the boat and that's the last thing you wanted with Captain Harrington, I can tell you.

**I think that's probably a good moment to pause and give you a bit of a break now and we'll change the tape so that's great. Thanks Mac.**

## Tape 7

00:20 **Now Mac, after you'd undergone your training, your anti-sub training and torpedo training in the UK. Take us up to**

00:30 **the time when you came back to Australia and the role that you held with the Governor General's staff?**

Right. Well Gladys had come over the England separately. I'd gone in Shropshire and she stayed behind. She came over separately and we had a year or two in England and we came back in the Strathaird together. The first time she sailed after being a troop ship. She promptly broke

01:00 down in Bombay and we had a week in Bombay and one of my long course people lived in Bombay. His dad was a banker and they took us home and we saw the Indian side of life at a higher level. He was a Farsi Banker and he had a daughter about to be married and they produced all their gorgeous saris and that was an interesting experience although Gladys could not get used to the Indian food which she foresaw them mixing

01:30 with unclean hands and this sort of thing. She was a bit fastidious. We got back to Melbourne eventually and I had a little bit of leave and then I got sent off to the destroyer flotilla, the [HMAS] Warramunga and [HMAS] Bataan, 2 of our Tribal class destroyers that had been built in Australia at the end of the

war and I served as Captain in Charge, Captain D Staff as a Specialist Torpedo Anti-Submarine officer and watch eeping officer as well. We had an interesting trip

- 02:00 up to Gladstone where they thought the Queen might be visiting and Gladstone has a rise and fall of tide of about 25 feet. We went to look at this and ran into a dreadful cyclone afterwards and I happened to be on the bridge and really the skill of the captain keeping her head to wind. We had a huge wave go into the engine room and put out all the dynamos. We were drifting and broke up all the boats and she was rolling so violently it was not safe on the upper
- 02:30 deck and I got stuck on the bridge for quite a few hours. As much as I found the captain a hard man, he was magnificent as an officer and he really saved the ship on that particular occasion. Then I developed problems with my eyes and they found I had astigmatism and decided they would send me ashore for a while and they sent me to HMAS Rushcutter in Sydney which is the TAS school in Australia and I did a bit of instructing there and then
- 03:00 off to navy office for a year. Navy office in Melbourne has a very small group called the Director of Training and Staff Requirements that carries a specialists Signalmen, navigator, gunnery officer and torpedo anti-submarine and they really are the Naval Board's specialists to help the navy set their policy on where they're going for the future, the current usage and planning for future requirements in all those
- 03:30 specialities and that was an interesting 12 months. I think I mentioned yesterday we'd lost our first child with meningitis that year. I was due to go back to sea that year and the Second Naval Member sent for me and said, "Take on the job for aide de camp for the Governor General if you're offered it." and I said, "I'd have to think about that." I went home and Gladys wasn't mad keen. She was fairly shy and thought we might be thrust
- 04:00 into the limelight but eventually said, "Well, if you want to go, I'll go." We said, "Yes." and I was interested to know how it happened because I got to Canberra and I said to the official secretary, "How did you select anybody?" He said, "Well, the Governor General said he wanted a new Aide de Camp" and he initially started off with an air force guy that didn't work, an army man who didn't work and the next one happened to be Dacre Smythe who lives in Melbourne who is now a commodore as a lieutenant
- 04:30 and Dacre clicked and thereafter His Excellency would only have naval people. He said, "Well, in your case we offered to send three up to be interviewed." and His Excellency said, "Well, they'll have their best uniforms on, they'll be on their best behaviour, how will I know? You give me a list of three and put the name on the top of the one you want me to appoint." That's how it happened. I'd never met him. We took off on a wet day on
- 05:00 Australian National Airlines and the ticket was £7 10s to fly to Canberra which the navy provided and waiting at the airport was a Daimler with a nice gold crown on front and back and I thought, "Well, this looks alright." and picked us up. I then met His Excellency and I have an interesting RAAF sergeant as my secretary, Geoff Squires and Geoff took me in hand and said "Sir, there are two things you'll stand or fall
- 05:30 by in this job. On that wall is a chart of the Diplomatic Corps. Keep it up to date because they look at it zealously and they're waiting to get to the top. The longest term of service to be the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps. That's No.1. Know when the Russians are going to be first or who's going to be first and make sure when someone retires you take him off and put the new one at the bottom. Now the second piece is there is a thing called
- 06:00 the Government Protocol." He said, "That is where people sit when you have a dinner, the audiences you have, the order of precedence. If you don't know that like the back of your hand, you will fail. You will find a Charge de Affairs who thinks because his boss, the Ambassador is away, he takes precedence. He doesn't and you'll get all sorts of problems if you don't know that like the back of your hand." So I took that to task
- 06:30 and really didn't have a great many problems other than a few altercations with people. On one occasion the Dutch Ambassador had gone and I'd put his Charge down the end of the table and Ex Affairs rang the next day and said "We've got a complaint from the Dutch Embassy. They've been slighted. The Charge de Affairs should have been next to His Excellency and he wasn't. He was down the bottom with you. Why?" I said, "Well you can tell him, if he has a look at page so and so he was where he ought to be."
- 07:00 They said, "You tell him." I said, "It's not my job. You're the diplomat not me. As far as I'm concerned he can get stuffed." We resolved some of them like that but as long as you - what you had to do really and I was the only ADC who had to plan the Governor General's routine on a daily basis. The order that people came. You met them; you took them into His Excellency. Made sure they were right. Conducted them around the house if you had to and if he was running late, you filled in.
- 07:30 I remember Kissinger's offsider or equivalent, John Foster Dulles came out and he was the hardest going person I think I ever talked to. Fortunately His Excellency had opened the Snowy Mountains Scheme and they'd given him a lovely model in silver and you pressed a button and all the tunnels lit up and all the dynamos lit up. I was able to use this as a fill-in quite often. I became an expert on how the Snowy Mountains Scheme worked and I had

- 08:00 Foster Dulles for half an hour at one stage before His Excellency could see him and I think he was the hardest one I ever found but I thoroughly enjoyed that. Then if you went away, we produced what you called a Movement Order, which is in fact minute by minute of the Vice Regal Party from the time you left until the time you got home. Like 20 minutes to the airport, in plane, get out in Sydney, catch the Daimler to Government House, go to wherever it was, open a fete, His Excellency will speak, who you met,
- 08:30 what you were going to have for dinner, where you were. It was the running sheet really that you ran by and as long as Your Excellencies let you run it and didn't let them put any extraneous things in to make you late. Never arrive early, but try not to be late. Nothing throws anybody off as much the Vice Regal Party coming 5 minutes early. I had a very salutary example on my very first time away on my own. We were barrelling up the highway with a
- 09:00 police escort out in the bush and Her Excellency wanted to go to the toilet. Well there's absolutely nowhere so we drop her off behind a tree and go discreetly up the road and the motorbikes have lost us and they are screaming back down the road and I leap out and say, "Hang on! Don't worry!" Her Excellency gets out and hitches her pants up virtually and waves and we back up and pick her up. That then decided they were human beings like me and don't worry too much and don't pass up a toilet stop.
- 09:30 And we were having a civic reception, I think it was Canowindra and I'd been to see the Shire President and told them exactly the order I wanted them in because males take precedence over females and husbands always want to push their wife to the other side and that throws you out. You don't know who belongs to who. I said "We'll be here at 8 o'clock. Be on the pavement to meet us. Inside line up your group and I'll come in and take His
- 10:00 Excellency and Her Excellency down the line and introduce you." Well, we were out in the bush about 7 miles away talking sheep. His Excellency had a farm at Goulburn and wool had gone to 190 pence a pound which was enormous in those days and it was about five to eight with about 8 miles to go and I said to the escort, "Go for your life!" and he never worried, McKell's never worried how fast you went as long as you weren't dangerous. Got there as the clock went
- 10:30 8 and nobody there. Nobody. So I wait. His Excellency's coughing, "What's going on?" and eventually the Shire President comes out and we wind the window down and he said, "We ain't quite ready yet. Would you mind waitin' a bit?" Well I'm sweating drops of blood and His Excellency thought it was a bit of a joke. Finally he came out again and said, "She's right." and in we went. But she wasn't right and they were all mixed up and I said. "Please Your Excellency, stand over there while I sort this mob out!"
- 11:00 That happened quite frequently and as long as you kept your cool. That went for 2½ years because the King died and he didn't want to swap over and we went into mourning for a while and didn't do anything but we had some interesting times and then Her Majesty gave His Excellency KCMG which is Knight Commander of St Michael and St George
- 11:30 going by ship to England to receive it. So the Military Secretary went off and the senior Governor of the State always carries a dormant commission which gives him the right to become the Administrator of the Commonwealth should the Governor General be ill or indisposed or leave the country and Sir John Northcott carried that from New South Wales, General Sir John Northcott. He was an absolute delight to work for. He knew exactly what he wanted
- 12:00 and I'm afraid Sir William, having been a politician sometimes found it difficult to decide one way or the other and would often say, "What do you want to do?" and I found quite often the easiest way was to try and sell what I thought was a good thing to do and do that. Sir John would say - the first thing said to me, "Two things we're going to do. I want to go to the rocket range and see what's going on in Woomera and I want to go to New Guinea and I want to go up to Manus
- 12:30 because the Japanese General I fought against is a prisoner of war and I want to talk to him." That's all he said. I got hold of the Minister for Defence, Phillip McBride and Paul Hasluck was Ex Affairs and I told them what I wanted. About a week later His Excellency rang the bell and said, "How are we going?" and I'd heard on the grapevine that I was being investigated by ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organization] to see if I was fit to go to Woomera and
- 13:00 New Guinea was alright. I stuttered a bit and he said, "Come on. Give me the facts." So I told him what I'd heard and he said, "You're kidding me?" I said, "No Sir, I'm not." He said, "Get McBride out here!" So I ring up the Minister for Defence and say His Excellency wanted him and said, "What's it about?" "Sir, I'm not at liberty to say what His Excellency wants." "When does he want me?" "Now sir." So he came screaming out and I wheeled him in to the study
- 13:30 and His Excellency said, "Shut the door and stay there" Then with a big smile said, "Oh, Mr McBride how are we going and how's the Defence Force?" Oh, you know, thought everything was alright. Then he said, "How are we going for Woomera?" He said, "Oh, I've still got a few details." and he said, "Well, that's not my understanding. My information is that my Aide De Camp is being investigated by ASIO and let me tell you something, when he tells you to do something, he's me.
- 14:00 He's got my authority, he wouldn't be here if he wasn't a fit and proper person. You get back there and ring him tomorrow, Lieutenant Commander Gregory and tell him it's all fixed. Otherwise I'll ask the Prime Minister to get me a new Minister for Defence. Get out." Well, I took him out and he never spoke

to me again unless we were on something official that we couldn't get out of but he rang me in the next morning and said, "It's all fixed."

**Did you go to Woomera?**

We did. We went to Woomera

14:30 and had a wonderful show. They fired off rockets and told us everything that was going on.

**Well that event that you've just described. The relationship between the Governor General and Minister of Defence there is not the one that you imagine exists between the Queen's Representative and the Executive.**

Well, he's Commander in Chief in Australia. Under the Constitution the Governor General is Commander in Chief and as it so happened he was

15:00 a full general and he wasn't used to being mucked about and he would speak his mind and could be quite direct if he wanted to and he was really backing me up which was quite wonderful but it was embarrassing. It was embarrassing.

**But he was in such a position that he was able to?**

Yes, he would have said to the Prime Minister, "I'm not going to have him as the Minister for Defence. Get me another one." Well, McKell would never have done that. Never. He was most

15:30 decorous with his Ministers as they were with him. Of course he was a Labor Premier. The King didn't want him when Chifley wanted to appoint him but under the Constitution, the Prime Minister has the right to recommend and have it agreed to by the Monarch and he doesn't have to refer to anybody. He doesn't have to tell anybody what he's going to do. Doesn't have to. He might get advice but

16:00 in fact he dug his toes in and said, "That's who I'm going to have." and he did. He did a great job, quite impartially.

**So at that time it was accepted that there was actually real authority in the role of Governor General of Australia?**

Oh indeed. Indeed.

**Obviously that became quite problematic in the '70s. With your knowledge of the role of Governor General and your observations from that period,**

16:30 **were you surprised what happened in 1975 and the exercise of that authority by John Kerr?**

No really. I believe it needed a certain amount of guts on the part of the incumbent to do it but constitutionally he had that right and particularly if supply was threatened. The Governor General's role is to keep Government going and it looked as if the Liberals might cut off supply and there'd be a hiatus.

17:00 I don't necessarily agree with the way it was done. I think Malcolm Fraser [at that time Leader of the Opposition] hid in the back room and his car was out of sight and Whitlam [Prime Minister] if he'd been on his mettle would have said "I'm rescinding your...." and he had the right to do that if he wanted to. He should have if he wanted to gone to Her Majesty and said, "I'm going to rescind the Governor General's commission and you'll have to back me up." and she no doubt would have because they're there to take the advice of their Ministers as is the Governor General. But

17:30 he's also got the right under the Constitution to control things. Menzies asked for a double dissolution which as a lay person and looking at the Constitution which I was cheeky enough to do when Sir Robert arrived that morning he had the habit of saying, "Good morning young man, how are you?" and we'd have a bit of a talk and, "How am I going to go?" he said this morning as I wheeled him into the study. "I don't think His

18:00 Excellency can refuse you, sir." He came out after about half an hour with a great big grin on his face and said, "Very good advice you gave me. He granted it." Subsequently we had a photo of me holding the door open for him appeared on the front page of The Age the next day with I think, "Prime Minister Gets Double Dissolution Granted." It was only the second in Australia's history at that stage in 1951 and a month later he came out for an Executive Council meeting

18:30 which is any two Ministers, the Secretary and the Governor General and I used to have to dry all the signatures after it was all over which was a pretty boring job and he had something under his arm. He unrolled it and said "Here you are. I thought you might like that. It was not a bad one of both of us." It was a photo which he'd inscribed on the bottom "With all my regards, Robert Menzies 1951" which was rather nice.

**Indeed. After**

19:00 **you completed your role with the Governor General?**

Well, Slim was the next Governor General coming and he had an absolutely raw staff Englishman and he

said would I stay on for 6 months and help with his crew and Sir William McKell didn't want that and he told the navy to get me back to sea. I was appointed to the Admiral in Charge of the Australian Fleet on his staff as the TAS officer which is the top job

19:30 you could get for a specialty and to be on the admiral's staff at sea on the flagship which happened to be a carrier which was the HMAS Vengeance and I joined that and the other thing that happened - the Queen was then crowned and they produced the Coronation Medal which was pretty much in high demand but not too many were forthcoming. I understand that

20:00 Sir William Slim was given 6 to do what he liked with and although I never met him he made sure I got one and he said, "Anybody who had served 2½ years on his own deserved one." That's how I happened to get a Coronation Medal which was then sent to my ship and my captain had to present it in front of the ship's company and he didn't get one and he was a bit cross with that. It was a prize that happened for a bit of service.

#### **How long were you with the Vengeance?**

I was in Vengeance. I joined her

20:30 probably '53 and I was in her, I resigned in her would have been September of '54.

#### **And what were the circumstances of your resignation?**

We'd lost two children at an early age. Gladys had a couple of miscarriages and in fact Jane, our eldest was born while we were at Government House in Canberra. Occasionally she'll say, "Tell me about when I

21:00 used to drive around in a Rolls Royce with a gold crown on it in a bassinet." She was quite young when we left. Basically medical advice was that it would be much better if I was at home rather than being a roaming sailor and I decided, I was about 33 at that stage, if I didn't move then it was going to be too late and it took me a year to work out that they would accept it with a bit of

21:30 help from Sir Owen Dixon and Sir Murray Tyrell and Athol Townley who happened to be the Minister for Defence. Quite personal advice that Cabinet had liberalised compassionate grounds for resignations being accepted but they wouldn't tell too many people. The Admiral of the Fleet would know and the Naval Board but that would be all so nobody would know about it. He said, "That's very confidential but if you have a go, I think you'll be right."

22:00 I had seen so many people knocked back. I had seen the Governor General say he denied and dried his signature on it. Sir Owen Dixon's warning was, "Be very careful. Once you resign you'll be finished. You'll never go on to make commander if you resign and they don't accept it." He said, "They can hold you if they want to under the Naval Act so it's up to you what you do so keep on

22:30 investigating until you're sure you're going to get it. My advice is don't." I then took the risk and it so happened that my boss, Admiral Dowling, had just been told he was going to be the next Chief of Naval Staff and he said, "Are these the facts?" I said, "They are, Sir." He said, "We'll have no trouble." Within a week I was told I could go and I said, "I don't want to leave up here." and he said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well we're up on the Barrier Reef and I'll have to pay my own fare back to Melbourne." He said, "I thought you were in a hurry?" I said,

23:00 "Not that much." I said, "We'll be down for the Melbourne Cup. That'll do." He said, "Well send a signal to the Naval Board." so under his signature I said, "Intend to retain Lieutenant Commander Gregory for discharge to shore on arrival in Melbourne on such and such a date." and that's what happened.

#### **Was it a difficult decision to make?**

It was. I loved what I did. When I resigned my captain said, "You must know you're going to be promoted to Commander." I said, "I've got no idea I'm going to be that." You're in a zone for

23:30 a period of time after about 3 years there's lieutenant commander. Twice a year you get reported on and if you don't make it in a couple of years you then have to retire at 45 as lieutenant commander, 50 if you're a commander, goes up 5 years. I said, "I don't know that at all Sir. If I don't make it now, it'll be too late." He said, "We'll send you ashore for a year or two." I said, "It's only going to exacerbate the problem." and I had with the Governor General gone to Newcastle

24:00 for a State visit and we'd gone through the steelworks and I'd met the General Manager of BHP [mining company] and I said, "Mr Butler, what about a job in the future?" and he said, "You're too old for us. We take then in as cadets but we own 50% of Rheem Australia. I'll make sure you go and talk to the General Manager there." We had a nice lunch in '52 and there was a bit of downturn so they wrote to me and said, "Thanks." They wrote to me two

24:30 years later and said, "If you're still interested we'll offer you a sales job in Melbourne at X pounds." which was about 200 less than I was getting and I said, "Yes." I left the ship on the Saturday and started with Rheem on the Monday. They were at Footscray or Brooklyn. I knew nothing about trains. I had to catch a train to North Melbourne and another one to Footscray and then a bus. It took me an hour each way.

- 25:00 I arrived and they didn't want me because I was much older than all their people. The Sales Manager said, "Well I've been told to take you." I said, "What do I do?" and he said, "Well, there's a desk there. You can open up some cards and when the customers orders a drum you can write them in and when they go out the door you can tick them off." I said, "What!" He said, "That's it." I'd just left a ship; I'd just left the Governor General where I was somebody,
- 25:30 I'd just left a ship where I was about number five in about 1800 people on the admiral's staff and I'd left to become a Sales Clerk. I said, "Well, got to make the best of this. It's no good sucking your teeth." Gladys had said, "I love what you're doing but don't ever come back to me and say I made you do it."

**And did you?**

No. No I never looked over my shoulder again. After 3 months of doing that they then

- 26:00 said, "Right, you can be the Sales Planning officer." which was very responsible. It meant you had to plan, with production, the total amount of what sales wanted. I said, "I want to go out in the factory for a month." The Sales Manager said, "Why?" I said, "So I know what the hell I'm talking about. If they tell me they can't do something I'll change the line so I know that they can." "Oh, all right." So I went and worked in the factory for a month. Came back and did it for - at that time steel was terribly short
- 26:30 and we worked with all the oil companies, Shell, Vacuum, Caltex, Ampol and kerosene was a great product for heating in, this is 1954. And in fact they would order something like 120,000 drums a month, 4 gallon drums and we didn't have enough steel for about 12. Although BHP owned half of them they didn't get any special - so it was a real juggle
- 27:00 job and I had to get that line changed to do this and that. We had 44 gallon drums and 4 and 5 gallon drums and tanks. Another side was the Rheem Hot Water Service which I had nothing to do with. It was a pretty responsible job and I got to know all the executives in the oil companies in the ordering area and the purchasing bit. Made some good friends, Frank Arrowsmith at Shell. Used to go home and see him and his family but not do any favours. He'd say, "Look, I've got to have some more, for God's sake
- 27:30 do something." H.C. Slee were probably the least of all worries and we probably looked after Shell better than most.

**H.C. Slee were Golden Fleece, weren't they?**

Yes, they were. No longer around.

**I remember the Golden Fleece.**

On the bowser. The sheep. Yep. So that was interesting. I did that for 18 months and then they sent me out as a Sales Representative to look after the paint

- 28:00 and chemical industry of Victoria. Taubmans, Dulux, all those people with drums and then I decided I had to get some management education and there were no MHAs then and the best thing was the Associate Diploma of Management at Melbourne Institute of Technology. Six year part-time course. I said I wanted to do that. They said, "You haven't got any supervisory experience." I said "What! Twenty years an executive naval officer"
- 28:30 They said, "No."

**Didn't count?**

No. "Got to do the Supervision Certificate" I said, "How long does that take." "2 years." I said, "Haven't got 2 years" They said, "Well, if you come twice a week instead of once a week you can do it in one." So I did it in one. Then I started the Management Diploma which was 6 years part time while at work. After 4 years at Rheem, Hunter Douglas had come out to Australia, the big American aluminium people. Luxaflex. Were just starting.

- 29:00 They bought a beautiful big plant in Sydney and they were looking for two people to do two things. To train retailers on how to sell their products in the marketplace and to look after wholesalers that made the product. They supplied everything. They brought in the raw aluminium, they painted it. They gave the equipment to make the blinds and the awnings and I got one of the two jobs in Melbourne. Went up £500
- 29:30 and got a car. I'd got a car with Rheem and they said, "We buy our cars here." and I'd just started a house and I said, "I haven't got any money for a car. If you want me out there you give me a car." So eventually I got the only car that ever came with ease and out of your car allowance you started to buy it so you then had equity. I then had a problem. Hunter Douglas were supplying a car, I had equity in the Rheem car but no money to buy it out.
- 30:00 I convinced Hunter Douglas to lend me the money to pay out Rheem so I could sell the car. It was a black one and everybody thought it was a taxi so I had great trouble selling it for about a year. I had their money and their car and a lot of embarrassment, but they put up with it and after two years I was invited to go to Sydney to be the executive assistant of the General Sales Manager which was a good job. But Gladys didn't want to go to Sydney so I didn't go
- 30:30 and I moved. Doing my management course, one of my co-people on the course was the Personnel

Manager for W.R. Grace, the huge American packing company in Australia. He said, "We're looking for a Packaging Engineer" I said, "Well, I'm not an engineer." "No" he said, "Amongst our talks you've told me that when you did your long course in England you were able

- 31:00 to become an Associate Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society." I said, "Yes, but I never did" He said, "It doesn't matter. I'll make sure you get an interview. Put in an application. Tell them that story." So I put in an application and got the job. I knew nothing about packaging. They had a small group run by Mark Hesler, a very clever guy of about 4 who were their development group to take
- 31:30 new products and find applications for them in the food industry, prove the application, get the equipment to do it and then go out and find a customer to try it and then give it to the sales team and move onto the next thing. I would be one of half a dozen people. They said, "The first thing you're going to do is write a handbook on cellophane." I nearly said "What's cellophane?"
- 32:00 We don't have a cellophane plant in Australia and it's the basic raw material for so much packaging stuff and so I eventually wrote a handbook on cellophane and knew all about it and we had an American who was the Marketing Manager from Grace America. He lived in Ivanhoe and I was in Rosanna and I used to take him home occasionally in the car. He'd say, "How are you going?" and I'd been there about 18 months and I'd say, "Oh, this is the happiest I've been since I left the navy. It's great."
- 32:30 I said, "But I've got my eye on Mark's job." which I was being facetious because that was my boss and he said, "Would you like it?" and I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "He's just resigned and we want you to head up the group." I said, "Hang on. What about Owen Edwards?" who'd been there for years and could buy and sell me technically on a whole heap of things. He said, "No. He hasn't got the organising skills that you have and we want you to do it." I said, "Well, I'll take the job providing you tell him." He said "No.
- 33:00 The deal is you tell him and you keep him." I managed to eventually get Owen to stay there and I had 12 years with Grace and went on to run the group for a long time and then be Sales Manager in Victoria and at that stage I'd finished my Diploma of Management and I decided that I had to get known in the industry
- 33:30 pretty well so I got involved in the Flexible Packaging Manufacturers Association and eventually became Federal President. The National Packaging Association. We formed an independent group of packaging people, the Institute of Packaging for Australia. I served as the State President and then the Federal President. At the other end I was getting involved in the community with the School. Eight years as Treasurer of the Rosanna Primary and 4 years as President
- 34:00 and Treasurer of the Parents & Friends at the Ivanhoe Girls Grammar, became a Scouter. Took on Cub Leader. Took on Group Leader with a new group we formed because we couldn't get our children in and we formed a new group. So I was totally involved in a lot of things that kept me away from home at night many times. After 12 years I was much older than most people there and we got a new General Manager
- 34:30 and I reckoned it wouldn't take too long before he decided he could pay someone a lot less to do my job. I thought maybe I ought to look for something. The Austin Hospital was suddenly looking for a new job of Finance Development Manager who was going to fundraise for the hospital and look after public relations about which I knew nothing. I applied. Got down to the last two. We both went to their shrinks and what have you and the other guy got the job.
- 35:00 Within three months they rang and said "We think the shrink people got the results mixed up. Will you come and talk to us?" I said, "Only under a couple of conditions." They said, "What's that?" I said, "You offer me £500 more than you did last time and you don't have any other candidate. If you want me to go to an independent fellow again, I'll do that." We did that. I got the job. So totally new field.
- 35:30 They sent me overseas to go and look at fundraising in the United States, Canada and England and I learnt a lot from that. I had a lovely meeting with the fundraiser at Harvard. He took me for lunch. At the next table was Henry Kissinger who was an old boy of Harvard. I said to this guy, "How do you raise £7 million a year?" "Mainly
- 36:00 from wills." He said, "Well, seriously, if anybody who's anybody from Harvard and they die and they haven't left anything to Harvard in their will, God won't let them in!"

**Simple as that. All through your civilian life, you've obviously kept a relationship with the navy?**

Yes.

**Tell us a bit about, I know you're very busy with your activities in naval history. Tell us a bit about**

- 36:30 **those and what sorts of things you're doing now.**

There is a Naval Historical Society based in Sydney with State Chapters in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia but Victoria is the next biggest one. I joined that because they have a journal. Also the journal is a venue if you write a bit of naval history you can go to get it published. I was always

interested in that. To go back a little bit I got a number of packaging

37:00 journals published and then in '69 I was invited to give a paper in a big plastics conference, an International Plastics Conference in Sydney and it was the penetration of flexible packaging for marketing of food. That got some international recognition. I was listed by a university with the article and a number of people wanted to get copies and that helped things.

37:30 I always tried to be involved with journals. I've always had a great love for naval history. My own group, my College group, some were still in the navy. I would see them if they came in in ships or they'd invite me down. They're all out of the navy now. We had a 50th Anniversary when we all went to Sydney and we had one last year when we were all 80 during the year and the 9 of us went to the Sydney Yacht Club for a lovely long lunch

38:00 with wives or friends or daughters if widowed. The boys are living longer than the girls with this group as it so happens. So I then became Treasurer here in Melbourne and eventually I became President. I had 4 years as President and I'm currently the past President. They publish a journal that I occasionally get involved in.

**What's the name of that journal?**

Its the,

38:30 oh what do they call it - it's the Naval Historical Society's Naval Review and it comes out, it's supposed to be every quarter and they've got a net site and then I got interested in - Denise said, "You ought to be interested in computers." I knew nothing. We bought a computer when we were at Mt Eliza and I started to get interested. I then got onto the internet,

39:00 then I started to write things for the internet. A guy out of the blue offered to make me a website from Canada who I subsequently met when he got ill and we called it Ahoy Mac's Web Log and a gentleman from out of the blue, Terry Cairns from Atlanta Georgia said can I help, when I'm bleating about not being able to get access because the guy in Canada

39:30 had just gone off the air. He said, "I can't do it anymore, I'm ill." He disappeared into the night and I didn't have the password to access the site and the people running it wouldn't let me in. I'm sending them emails and complaining and Terry had picked this up somewhere and said can I help. When I looked him up and he charged \$60 US an hour I thought "Hell" but he really wasn't looking for any money and Terry's been absolutely wonderful. He's taken the whole website over and re-branded it

40:00 and done it nice and simply. We've now got 1/2 a million words on it.

**Now Mac, where can we find that website. What's the address of that website?**

Well, its <http://ahoy.tk-jk.net>

**Excellent.**

And he's hosting it. The tk-jk is he and his wife from Atlanta.

**So if people are interested in**

40:30 **naval history?**

Yes, there's a lot there. There's a trilogy Marauders of - Armed German Raiders of WW1, WW2 and the American Civil War. There's Underwater Warfare which is a book that I wrote about that in 1939/45 that the Society published. There are a couple of monographs. One on the Canberra. One on our AE1 [Australian WW1 submarine] and II and our J

41:00 submarines from WW1. Quite a bit on Nelson, the history of the Victoria Cross, Battle of Matapan, all the Solomons ones. Battles of the Solomons.

**Excellent. We're just about ready to wind up now Mac. So I'd just like to say thank you very much for you time. I really appreciate it. It's been absolutely fascinating talking to you over the last couple of days and wish you all the best for the future.**

Thank you, it's been

41:30 a delight to have you both with us and have the opportunity to record it particularly for my family. I think I've been blessed with the life I've had. I've done some wonderful things. Microlighting at 500 feet over the Victoria Falls, I've been a diver for the navy, escaped from a submarine, virtually in the submarine tower, where you've got to put on a Davis escape apparatus

42:00 and go up 60 feet, ballooned.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**