

Australians at War Film Archive

James Hume (Jim) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:54 **Can you start with a summary and introduce yourself?**

01:00 I was born in England of Scottish parents and arrived in Australia in September 1943 and joined the Australian Navy on the 17th of November. I then served in [HMAS] Kanimbla from 1943 to 1945 at the end of the war I was hospitalised at the Heidelberg Military Hospital

01:30 for nearly 12 months and then I joined the frigate[HMAS] Hawkesbury and served on her for nearly a year followed by nearly two years in the frigate [HMAS] Murchison followed by six months in the [HMAS] Australia, the flagship followed by three months HMAS [His/Her Majesty's Australian Ship, but here used as a designation for a naval base] Service training establishment then went to UK for

02:00 long courses followed by returning to Australia in December '49. I served in the working vessels Koala, Kangaroo alternating between the two ships working mostly at Manus in Seeadler Harbour recovering moorings and salvaging equipment.

What rank did you join the Australian Navy?

As a midshipman. I was promoted very shortly after as sub lieutenant

02:30 after the service on Kangaroo. I then served in Australia until she went off to UK and I was transferred to [HMAS] Sydney to go to Korea. I served on Sydney for the second tour of Korea and in the return of October 1954, I was appointed commander of HMAS Wagga. I served in Wagga both as a traineeship of Sydney and subsequently

03:00 New Guinea on fisheries protection and then on my return on March '56, I went to Western Australia as base operations and intelligence officer for the second Montebellos [Nuclear tests] and on completion of that in July 1958 I was posted in the navy office in Melbourne as Director of Operations Division for six months and then was the first of the navy people to move the navy to Canberra. I

03:30 served subsequently until 1961 as Director of Operations Division in Canberra and then I was appointed to the Apprentice Training Establishment HMAS Narimba September from '61 to '63 and I think it was probably one of the more rewarding tasks I had in the navy. And then in 1963, I was appointed back to navy office as Director of Navy Recruiting, an interesting job,

04:00 somewhat odd. In 1966, I went to the RAF [Royal Air Force] School of Languages and that was followed after six months for two and a half years with the Royal Malaysian, their main training establishment was KD Malaya. On my return from the Malaysian Navy in 1968, I was appointed Navy Officer first back as Director of Operations for a major exercise and then subsequently as the Assistant Director to the Minister for Planning

04:30 responsible for development of Cairns, Darwin, and in part, the new Western Australian naval base, but Cairns and Darwin controlled by bases [?] and in January 1971, I was appointed to Korea as Defence Attaché in the Australian Representative to the Military Arms Commission for three years and on my return in March 1974, I retired from the navy.

05:00 **When did you get married?**

I got married in 1951 at St Paul's in Melbourne to my wife Suzette at 12 o'clock on a Saturday and all the sailors up from Flinders [Naval Depot] and standing outside Young and Jackson's [Pub] saying, "You'll be sorry mate." So

05:30 it was a naval wedding.

That's what people used to say when they joined up?

They also said that when I got married, "You'll be sorry." I haven't been. I've been married now for 52 years.

Children?

Four children, two sons, two daughters. My eldest son's a professor of microbiology, a biochemist at Queensland University. The youngest son's an author and the two girls are married.

06:00 Are they in Canberra?

Both girls in Canberra with four grandchildren.

Complex career, can you tell us about your arrival in Australia?

06:30 Well I was posted to [HMAS] Lonsdale [naval base] and they looked at me somewhat askance and said, "Well you'll have to be fitted up with khaki." So I spent two weeks there and they saddled me off to the Western District to do I think, a war bonds tour. I'm not sure what I was supposed to be doing there but I was carted off to the district to collect money for something rather vague. I can't really remember what it was for.

07:00 military bonds or war bonds, something like that anyway. Then they said, "You are going to be posted at Kanimbla." And I said, "Kanimbla what's that?" I knew the ordinary warships but Kanimbla was a name that didn't ring a bell and the captain of Lonsdale said to me, "Oh that's very hush-hush."

07:30 You'll join her in Cairns." So I got my route orders and went off to Spencer Street Station and 12 o'clock on a nice autumn day.

How long had you been in Australia at this stage?

Three weeks. And the RTO [Railway Transport Officer] said to me, "You're on the troop train at 12 o'clock." And we started off about two when they sorted out the messes of soldiers embarking on the train.

08:00 It seemed to be somewhat late and we didn't arrive in Seymour until about 5 o'clock where we were given a very pleasant meal by the Country Women's Association. And I was a bit lost. There was a huge queue in the refreshment room looking for it and the chief petty officer said to me, "Rank has its privileges so you go the front of the queue." Put himself in behind me and we had wonderful... very remarkable food actually mashed potatoes, sausages,

08:30 plenty of good bangers [sausages], plenty of it and then we got back on the train. Well we arrived in Albury at just after midnight and of course the station was browned out in those days, not completely blacked out, but none of the carriages were marked because they seemed to think that the enemy might know where the destinations were. I didn't quite know why but ah, got sorted and I was put in a compartment with

09:00 five other officers and being the very junior, the major said, "Well." to the young captain and myself in the compartment, "The luggage racks are yours to sleep in. I've got this bunk; the other blokes got that and the third one's on the floor." So, we arrived in Sydney, arrived at Bowral I think, at seven in the morning, and the train kept stopping and getting shunted sideways

09:30 it seemed to go on forever. Ultimately we arrived in Sydney at 1 o'clock in the afternoon and the RTO said, "Well your train is going tomorrow. You're on leave till then." And I said, "Well where am I going to sleep?" I'd never seen Sydney before. And he said, "Oh well." Anyway he ultimately got persuaded I should go over to the [HMAS] Penguin naval base and I

10:00 must say somewhat reluctantly. And the next morning they dumped me back in Sydney and I went back to the RTO and he said, "Oh your train doesn't leave till 5 o'clock tonight so go and enjoy yourself." So I wandered off and I nearly got lost and asked a policeman for directions and he thought I was taking the mickey out of him. "How the bloody hell should I know?" That didn't go down terribly well. Anyway I got back on the train at 5 o'clock and we started off for Brisbane. Quite honestly,

10:30 that train seemed to wander forever. There was a young Lieutenant Rathke[?], naval lieutenant, who took me under his wing. He became a lifelong friend actually. He became Judge Advocate to the navy and also Judge Advocate in Victoria. He's recently died. He took me under his wing, organised a carriage which he said was for navy only and a little notice on the window saying 'Navy Only' and all the soldiers

11:00 who came and tried to get in were told to get lost. So we had a fairly comfortable.. at least we had somewhere to put our feet up and sleep. And there were only three of us in the carriage and I had the floor. The other two officers had the two seats, so we slept fairly comfortable. Anyway when I arrived in Brisbane, I presented myself to the naval RTO and he said, "Well the troop train for Cairns, the Kanimbla's in Cairns, goes tomorrow morning."

11:30 And a young sailor was standing behind and he said, "Excuse me Sir, the Kanimbla's in Moreton Bay." And the RTO turned around on this poor unfortunate sailor and bawled him out, abused him uphill and down dale for revealing the ship's position and said to me. "You're going to Cairns." And I said, "Well I hate to break it to you, but I don't think I am. If the ship's in Moreton Bay, it seems only logical

12:00 to join her there." "You're going to Cairns, that's the end of it." So I'd left my route orders with him,

nipped out of the office, grabbed the sailor who had offended and said, "Can you take me to the ship?" And he said, "I don't know about that Sir, but I can take you to Moreton, to the depot." So we trundled off to the depot. The depot didn't want me and they said, "Well you take him to the ship." So in having authority of another officer to deal with me,

12:30 I arrived onboard Kanimbla at 9 o'clock at night. She was down in Moreton Bay doing training exercises and the duty officer looked at me and said, "Oh I don't know, you'd better see the CXO [Chief Executive Officer] so I was trundled off to the CXO and he looked at me and said, "Where have you been, you should have joined the ship two months ago?" That didn't go down very well and he said, "Anyway

13:00 I'll get the snottie's nurse [the officer responsible for attending to the midshipmen on a vessel] to find a bunk for you." And off I was carted to but I wanted something to eat, I was getting starving at this stage and no scrum [food] at that time of night. The next morning I was wheeled before the captain and he looked me up and down and said, "Where have you been?" And I said, "Well I joined as soon as I was posted, sir." And he said, "We expected you two months ago. You are one of the few officers with any sea experience

13:30 and what's more you've got your sub lieutenant examinations in six months' time. Until you do them, you can't be promoted as sub lieutenant so you better go and study hard, that's all." Finish. That was my joining the Kanimbla. But it was an interesting ship because

There are some bells in the background...

14:00 **They are ships' bells. At each watch, 8 bells is the end of a watch so at midnight, you've got 8 bells, 4 o'clock in the morning you've got 8 bells, 8 then 12 and 4 in the afternoon and then you've got the dog watches that are only half that, so they are only 2 hours instead of 4**

14:30 **so on each half hour, at half past 8 it's one bell, at 9 o'clock it's 2 bells at, at 9:30 it's 3 bells, at 10 it's 4 bells, at 10:30 it's 5 bells at 11 o'clock it's 6 bells, and at 11:30 it's 7 bells, at 12 o'clock it's 8 bells and that's it. Ship's bells are used to run time, rung regularly at that time always and**

15:00 **the only time that you have more bells than that is on New Year's Day where they ring 16 bells so bells ring out the old and ring in the new.**

Is it a Royal Navy tradition?

It's a universal maritime tradition. It's not only Royal Navy. I think every navy in the world has it, but also it's a maritime... all ships use it. I mean it goes back to sailing ship days.

And how much do you use that time scale now?

15:30 They still use it and even passenger liners tend to use it.

Do you still use it in your house?

It's on that clock. There is nothing I can do to change it. It's an old ship's clock.

What was the relationship between the Royal Navy and the

16:00 **Royal Australian Navy. You were on secondment?**

I was transferred straight out.

And what was the need for additional officers?

Well there wasn't really. It was just a matter of that was where I was.

What was your first reaction to arriving in Australia?

16:30 Arriving on a different planet. In Melbourne, there was no sense of war. There was minor rationing but no real sense. There were uniforms around but there was no sense of war at all.

What year was this?

1943. Well compared with the Middle East and Britain,

17:00 it was strange. It was so different. It was suddenly going into a normal life again and it was I suppose staggering in its way.

Out of the cauldron of Europe into...

Yeah, it was an interesting change but there was amongst the, the captain of the Kanimbla the executive officer, the navigator

17:30 and six of the seamen officers had war experience. All had been in the Med [Mediterranean] so they all knew what the war was about. But of the whole ship's company, the average age was 19.2 and almost none of the other junior officers had ever been to sea and none of the boats' crews, the landing craft crews, the beach crews

18:00 any of them, had ever been to sea. It was a ship that... it really was quite extraordinary. To give you an example, the first major exercise we did was on Christmas Day actually, the captain having decreed that Christmas Day would be on the 26th of December instead of the 25th after we had landed the troops, but the thing that was interesting about it was it took 47 minutes to

18:30 unload the troops and landing craft.

Where was this?

Moreton Bay going to Bribie Island. Landing them on Bribie Island, that's initially getting out of the ship. We were able to do that in six minutes by the time we got to Lingayen Gulf and I use that as a demonstration of how extraordinary it was, and

19:00 there wasn't a feeling of urgency with a lot of them about what war was all about.

What was the culture shock of going from the Royal Navy to the Australian Navy?

Hugely different, the biggest difference was

19:30 the lack of, or the much easier relationship between sailor and officer. It's a difficult thing to describe. Perhaps because of my Scottish upbringing, I had no difficulty with it because there, in Scotland, there is very little class distinction while in England there is a huge gap. And

20:00 schooling wise, you can get the minister's son, as I was, with a ghillie [gamekeeper] or a labourer, same school, no difference, they were all treated equally. It's not so in England. There's a huge 'snob-ocracy' there is and that was a big difference. With Australian sailors, particularly

20:30 wartime sailors, you didn't have to tell them what to do. You could ask them what to do and it got done. Perhaps this is the best way of explaining it, if you wanted something done, it was done. You didn't have to say, "You go and do it." In Kanimbla of course I was, well the first 3 months I wasn't, the first 3 months I was in the ship, I was shovelled from

21:00 department to department because traditionally as midshipman, you had to learn every aspect of the ship from the engine room to....and I was actually made the assistant to the meteorological officer and had to get up at four o'clock every morning doing the weather maps, I can show you one of them in due course, and they had to be decoded and they had to be plotted and then you had to do forecasting. And I was always very grateful to him because he really taught me how to forecast weather.

21:30 He was a skilled meteorologist, He was a reservist who'd been taken from the Australian Meteorological Bureau into the navy admission as a meteorological officer and was extremely good at it and his tutorage was, I was very grateful for. Then I was moved to the engine room and then to the paymaster and then to the supply officer to see how people

22:00 cooked, etc, and supplied things and then to the signal office, where I spent my time decoding signals which is a painful task but necessary I guess. Then I became a sub lieutenant, then I became a wave leader for landing craft.

When you arrived in Australia, how prepared did you feel for joining the Australian Navy?

Well professionally no problems, there's no difference in terms of professional competence.

22:30 I mean particularly in those days when all the Australian officers were training pre-war with the Royal Navy, there was no problem.

What did you know of the Royal Australian Navy?

Quite a lot actually because, this was in the Mediterranean because the Sydney was part of it and the

23:00 Scrap Iron Flotilla [the RAN ships that did the run into Tobruk] was very much a part of it, but otherwise not much. It was I guess probably as much a culture shock for the junior officers of the Kanimbla as it was for me,

Were you with other Royal Navy colleagues at the time?

No.

23:30 **Can you tell us more about the atmosphere of wartime Australia?**

Well I joined Kanimbla and that was the last we saw of Australia for 16 months.

24:00 We departed and the Kanimbla was the longest serving ship away from Australia in the Pacific and that in itself was remarkable. When we arrived back in Sydney, it was like landing on a different planet, was the only way to describe it. It was quite horrifying this was, after Lingayen Gulf after the kamikaze attacks, things like that.

24:30 The black market was rampant, the waterside workers were on strike. In fact it disrupted our leave because they wouldn't load the ammunition onto the ship. There was an antipathy towards the

Americans - over-sexed, over paid and over here - was a fairly common concept.

- 25:00 Because curiously enough in our amphibious group which Admiral Boat [UNCLEAR ?] was an amphibious group, the only ship that didn't come down back to Australia with a break at least once every six months. Now there were a number of reasons for that. It was perhaps planned we should. First time there was [HMAS] Westralia - there were three Australian ships -
- 25:30 broke its mast and collapsed when they were loading a landing craft. The second time we were due to come down, the [HMAS] Manoora's refrigeration broke down and she went instead of us. So the two rotations we should have had, we didn't get. And one of the things that I have always emphasised about the Kanimbla and its importance was that we were in that ship, really in a sardine can, for nearly
- 26:00 sixteen months without almost putting our feet ashore on dry land. I mean on landing craft you occasionally got to a beach head. No leave in Manus. You might occasionally go to the beach for a volley ball game or football game but even that was fairly remote. So that the only time that en masse we landed was some brilliant
- 26:30 person, I don't quite know who it was, decided we would have a landing party. So a hundred strong, we were landed and we marched at Goodenough Island on the dreadful track for some twenty kilometres I think, by which time some people had blistered feet and were in no fit state to do anything for quite a while. But apart from that there were very few disciplinary problems
- 27:00 very cohesive and one of the reasons that the Kanimbla Association is so strong is the long period of time we were together and we learnt to live together. I mean you look at the fuss they have over ships being away for three months now from Australia and with visits, during that period to far east ports, and some of the more delightful night spots of the world,
- 27:30 and they go crook about it [express anger]. Oh three months away! We had sixteen months straight in the tropics. There were times when we were on dehydrated vegetables and dehydrated food. There were a lot of skin complaints. In one incident we ran out of shoes, everyone wore sandals. Most of us suffered constantly from different
- 28:00 skin cancers. In fact the incidence of skin cancer in Kanimbla ship's company, particularly in the landing crew, was very high but there were very few disciplinary problems. There was a happy ship and I've been in other ships that haven't been nearly as happy. In fact the two sister ships the Manoora and Westralia
- 28:30 I don't think were nearly as happy ships In fact I know they weren't.

They said when you were heading off to the Kanimbla - "hush-hush". Why was this ship "hush-hush" at that time?

I don't think it really was. I think it was just a sort of... one of the things that was very strange was the sea-going navy and the shore navy was something that didn't have much in common.

- 29:00 There were mostly World War I dugouts and manning the shore establishments or no hopers, perhaps I shouldn't say that, but I think it's true.

At the time did you feel that?

Yeah, there were sort of instances where they said, well you had to wear a tie if you went to shore in Brisbane.

- 29:30 Well, I mean, everyone... none of the soldiers did, why should we wear a tie? But the local Brisbane NIC [Naval Intelligence Centre] was a funny old dugout and I remember stories about the admiral in Sydney, he was complaining that the sailors were in overalls painting the ship. I mean there was a lack of reality between

- 30:00 the two establishments, the ships and the shore establishments.

Why do think that was?

I think partly because at sea, people realised that some of the peacetime bulldust of the navy wasn't appropriate. And they

- 30:30 made provision for that, you used your common sense. Common sense ruled how you ran a ship, not necessary that Queen's Regulations or King's Regulations in those days and Admiralty Instructions. One of the things that is interesting about the navy in those days is that they were only for guidance and one of the prefaced guidance[?] for King's Regulations was set for the guidance of commanding officers so they had the flexibility to be sensible about

- 31:00 these things and were, at sea. But in many cases shore establishments were people who felt that they needed the old traditions and used them.

Can you give us an example of this?

Well the classic example

- 31:30 was when we got back to Sydney, I was taking the Victorians on leave to Melbourne and the railways said if you had overseas service you were entitled to a sleeper as an officer. So with due course I went up the Sydney RTO and the RTO said, "Yes there's your sleeper ticket and
- 32:00 your train goes at such and such a time. Report back at 6 o'clock tonight." Got back there and the old chief behind the counter said, "Look I'm sorry sir but your sleeper had been taken, can I have your ticket back?" I looked at him a bit suspiciously and I said, "What do you mean it's been taken, who by?" and he said, "Oh Colonel Silver has taken it." Might be wrong over that. So
- 32:30 I said, "Well has he come back from...." and he said. "No he's in army headquarters here, rank has its privileges." the RTO said. "Well." I said. "I've got news for you. You are not getting my ticket." So the chief went off and saw the RTO and the RTO came back and said, "Well he's a colonel. You've got to give him the ticket." And I said, "I've got news for you. The rules say that if you've got overseas service you get a sleeper.
- 33:00 If you don't have overseas service you don't." "But you're only a junior officer." And I said, "So?" I don't know who subsequently lost their sleeper, but certainly I didn't and the RTO was really getting cross with me and said, "I'll report you to your ship in an instant." And I said, "OK do what you like." And then on the return back to the ship, I think they were commissioned porters quite frankly,
- 33:30 they knew the railways but I don't think they knew anything about the navy. My coxswain had just gotten married and we were going back and I was on the troop train with most of the leave train and his wife had been put on the Spirit of Progress and he said, "Is there any way I can get on the Spirit of Progress with my wife." and I said, "Oh of course. Go and see the RTO." And the RTO said, "No way. He's got to go on the troop train and the wife's got to go on the Spirit of Progress."
- 34:00 And I blew a fuse, told him what I thought of him, in no uncertain terms. In fact I was quite rude to him really to the stage I could have been court martialled truly because I told him exactly what I thought of him. And he was so astonished that he then agreed that Bert Ross who was one of my coxswains, should accompany his wife on the Spirit and they got on the Spirit
- 34:30 and I still keep in touch with Bert Ross. I had a Christmas card from him last Christmas. He is actually very sick at the moment, cancer. Again rather interesting. The boats' crews, they wore the little sailors' hats, of course caps, and their ears were very prone to sun exposure and he got a melanoma in the ear and it's spread. He is a pretty sick person but he has
- 35:00 never forgotten that that's what I did for him. Mind you, when I got back to the ship I told the commander what I had done and he said, "You're reprimanded." And I said, "Yes sir." And he said, "If it happens again do it again." Well I never heard from them. I might say, I did the right thing. I guess it was too.
- 35:30 **Who was your first Australian friend?**
- A bloke called Bert Deak[?] who also my boss in actual fact on Kanimbla. He was the flotilla leader. I worked with him for most of the time on Kanimbla and we were life long friends. We became very, very friendly and he died of melanoma three years ago and his wife died a fortnight ago
- 36:00 but the two families got very close together and he often used to come and visit us here and I'd go and visit him in Sydney, Brisbane.
- Can you tell us about meeting Bert for the first time?**
- Don't know how I met him actually. I think I got saddled with being his assistant in his office. He had the flotilla office and in fact I subsequently wrote all the flotilla orders for the landings.
- 36:30 I used to analyse main fleet landings and do the coxswains' briefings.
- Coming from the Royal Navy, were you going to teach the colonials a thing or two about being in the navy?**
- No, no, never saw it that way.
- 37:00 I had a lot of experience but against that I was given jobs by the captain of the ship which were commensurate with my experience and that meant that I was doing jobs that might normally have been done by someone more senior than myself.
- What did you know of the theatre of war when you joined Kanimbla?**
- 37:30 Well I knew of the fall of Singapore of course, the disaster of it and the loss of the [HMS] Hood which, no the [HMS] Prince of Wales, loss of Singapore of course, two of my old shipmates were in her. Knew a lot about the Japanese.
- 38:00 I, curiously enough, didn't have the idea that they were slant eyed ignorant little monkeys. I saw them as very experienced seaman with a very good navy and that's perhaps because I served with people who taught me that, but it wasn't

38:30 universal. There were a lot of people who said they were short sighted, they couldn't do this, they couldn't do that. I had a very different opinion of the Japanese. I saw them as a real threat, and quite ruthless.

Tape 2

00:36 **Can you tell us where the Kanimbla served?**

Well from the time I joined, we left Brisbane, we went north to Port Moresby taking a black battalion, curiously enough, of negroes, and the comment I would make about them was they were much cleaner than the other American troops.

01:00 But we landed them at Port Moresby. We then went round to Goodenough Island where we did the basic training to go to the Hollandia, Tanahmerah Bay which was the first major amphibious landing by the 7th Fleet in the Southwest Pacific. It was very, very successful

01:30 we then went back to Port Moresby took some of the Kokoda Trail people back to Townsville relieved soldiers, sadly one of them shot himself when we arrived which is one of the things I remember about that, and of course we were in Townsville

02:00 just after that problem between the Americans and the Australian troops where they had a shooting match between themselves so we didn't have any leave there, went back to Port Moresby, then went back to Manus, we did a number of training runs we went to Wakde Island where we landed on Toem

02:30 Beach where the Americans had a very, very loose beach head. We took the reinforcements to the, and that's the only place the actual landing craft were exposed to shooting, sniper fire. We then went back to Milne Bay and in Milne Bay we were exercising, we kept exercising a series of American troops for amphibious landing,

03:00 bay landing, wet and miserable there too, Milne Bay was an awful place to be. We then went to Manus and we did the Morotai landings in between, one of the rather more interesting experiences I had was a,

03:30 before Kanimbla was at Cape Cretin when she ran aground in a storm, but the day before boat deck and myself flew in what they call flying jeeps, little jeeps up to a beach where they wanted to do a survey of it and we got into a storm and in actual fact the aircraft landed in the sea rather than the beach and we were stuck with

04:00 an American general who came up with us we were doing a major pre-Morotai landing exercise and the aircraft was written off, we got out without any injury, a bit wet. Anyway we did the beach survey and we were able to get a jeep to take us back to Cape Cretin and it was coming down in buckets. We were absolutely wetted,

04:30 soaked to the skin and I arrived back at the wharf to get picked up by landing craft we were diverted I think about 10:30 at night and we were soaked to the skin and the army general had said to us, "Oh it's alright for you blokes." firmly convinced that the army was quite the wrong place to be. I got woken at 4 o'clock in the morning having only really just got to sleep, the captain said, "I

05:00 want you to take over the aft end of the ship." he said "The ship's aground. Well and truly aground." and all our troops were saying, "Oh good we are going to go to Sydney." but we didn't of course because they got it off but it took, it took us a day and a half to get her off, without a break so I had no sleep for a day and a half

05:30 working flat out reeking kedge anchors and towing lines and actually we got her off with the landing craft, rocking it like that, so that was a fairly interesting period. And one of the other things that was interesting every now and again in reinforcement runs they would leave our landing craft behind in a remote anchorage

06:00 and we'd stay with them, living in the landing craft, and have to fend for ourselves. Bert, Dick and I did one of these at Chatufa [?] Bay which was actually a landing and which was Dutch territory, and one of the coxswains taught me to drive a truck there, he was ex-army before he joined the navy, and that was a very close knit, there were

06:30 two officers and 20 landing craft so that's about 60 sailors, and we were living on top of each other making do and we had to scrounge our food.

Why was that the strategic case?

Well the ship was ideal for ferrying landing craft up to forward areas we were carrying, in other words

07:00 how do you get a landing craft up to Port Moresby how do you get it into a forward area unless you are

using a ship and they wanted them for their Sea Bees [US Navy engineers] in the forward area so they used the ship as a ferry. And we just got dumped wherever they could dump us, but the thing was that we didn't have a single case of malaria which meant they were taking the Atebrin so we

07:30 looked as though we all had jaundice because Atebrin turned us all yellow.

What happened after that did you come back to Australia?

No we didn't, we did Leyte, we did Morotai, we did Leyte then we did Lingayen Gulf which was the biggest amphibious landing in the war

08:00 and, it was a particularly, I think Lingayen Gulf was a particularly spectacular one. I really feel that, no have I got this,

08:30 this is, I gave an address to the Naval Historical, whatever they call themselves, to a very large audience on this one.

09:00 What became clear in actual fact, later, the Japanese kamikazes were suddenly getting active and it was the first time we felt there was any major opposition. Admiral Barbey [Commander 7th Amphibious Force] had always insisted there were three ships, that we had a good carrier group covering us, but in this particular one the kamikazes were particularly active and

09:30 not only was it the largest landing of the war, but it was the largest number we had ever carried and we had the attack force of the 37th Division of the US 6th Army and they were really Rangers, they were a

10:00 very, very good battalion and the reason for it was, it was felt the Japanese that were at Lingayen Gulf were crack troops and that they would be fairly heavy opposition but before the actual landing, we did a dummy landing

10:30 for the whole landing then we back to Manus for Christmas and we celebrated Christmas in our traditional manner of the navy and much to the amazement of our allies, where the youngest ordinary seaman becomes the captain of the ship and in this particular occasion he'd even, and the officers all become sailors and the sailors all become officers so it's a complete

11:00 sort of turn around and I have never seen it abused, but the captain on this occasion who was a young ordinary seaman received a senior American naval officer with absolute aplomb in Seeadler Harbour, he carried it off extremely well and my actual task, including scrub out..... my boat crew's mistake being one of the duty boat crews was taking back an American officer to

11:30 Titania which was one of the AKAs [American attack cargo ships] and our Christmas day antics he said he thought it would be quite untenable to try and do that on an American ship. And one of the things that is very interesting, discipline was much tougher and rougher than ours, it really was quite sort of, well their military police were awful, they'd just hit them over the head and went bang and it didn't matter at all.

12:00 Then on the 31st of December we departed Manus, and in Seeadler Harbour at that time there were over 1,000 ships the mass, I've never seen such a huge group of ships together anywhere since.

12:30 We came under attack on the 7th January and the whole amphibious group was spread over 620 nautical miles and you can imagine the size of it, but we were in one of the foremost groups. Two days prior to the landing an army colonel briefed his staff and company commander of each wave on latest intelligence conditions of the beaches, exact targets and

13:00 various regimental headquarters was to be set up. To the commander allocated my wave, he said we could expect the opposition would be sporadic but fierce with the latest intelligence suggesting the Japanese 58th Mixed Brigade had dug in there. Now the 58th Mixed Brigade was the one that had raped Peking, so they were a particularly notorious group.

13:30 Not Peking, rape of Nanking, said to his company commander he would have the honour of leading the part of the regiment that had the hardest time. And I'd say to my boats' crews.... when I told them this they were singularly unimpressed. They thought this was woeful, but in actual fact, the actual landing, apart from the fact there was nothing left

14:00 on the beach area at all the Japanese had retreated, they had left the beach head area and by this stage of the game they had learned that you didn't oppose American forces on a beach head. And can I say, quite right, there was nothing left standing, a few bits of coconut palm without any leaves would be all you'd see, cause it was not only the huge shell bombardment but there was a flame throwing bombardment as well,

14:30 the beach was just absolutely nothing, so, prior to landing, there were shells over the top of our heads but they were allied shells, quite comfortable with this and some of the troops were sick, seasick and you couldn't get them to keep their heads down, always a problem because they want to spew [vomit] over the side which we preferred to having to clean the mess up

- 15:00 and it was the bombardment of the beach was absolutely unabated, it was nothing, there was no one there, it was just an empty beach for them to charge up. The Japanese later in the day started shelling the beach from well back but by that time we had unloaded and
- 15:30 the carriers had to start at dusk, we finished unloading in 2 hours 59 minutes the whole of the ship, the battalion we had on board so our landing craft then were found out to go and help other ships with the unloading, at dusk we were getting ready to sail and they made total smoke the whole area was covered, everyone made smoke, because the aircraft were no longer operating
- 16:00 off the carriers and curious enough the only casualties were from a stray shell off an allied ship hit the bridge of [USS] Chicago but there were no major casualties from our point of view, after a very long day from my point of view, 11 hours, I had the first watch going back and we got out, and getting the amphibious group out under smoke and using radar to
- 16:30 get out it was spectacular and we got out without any problem. Went back to Leyte, by this time of course the Japanese had resorted to suicide boats so we had to use landing craft and patrol the area at night so there were long days but we were lucky. If the Japanese had attacked the landing ships instead of the cruisers and carriers and
- 17:00 battleships, if we had been hit the devastation would have been appalling, we were a converted merchant ship, we were a troop ship virtually with landing craft and there was no protection. In fact I asked, rather stupidly asked the XO [Executive Officer] on
- 17:30 one occasion why we didn't exercise abandon ship, he looked at me and said, "How would we do that?" It was a very good question because all the landing craft were on electric winches, if we had lost power there was no way of landing the landing craft or anything else, and we hadn't got anywhere near enough for the ship's company
- 18:00 far less for the 2,800 troops.

Did that give you cause for concern?

Yes it did. One always, I think the thing that's interesting, I say this to school kids when they ask me at the War Memorial, your fear of what might happen when the action is going on, you know what can happen,

- 18:30 you know what a disaster it can be, and you say, "Oh God is it going to happen to us?" if you had looked at after all Lingayen was after the landings in France where the beach head casualties were very high and we all knew that and we all knew that that could happen to us, those of us who knew what had happened in France or in Europe generally
- 19:00 I guess, my preoccupation in that landing, it's quoted in one of the naval history books, just been recently published, my main concern was that I got those landing craft to the line of departure on time, on the beach on time, and when you are thinking of those sorts of things you don't worry at all
- 19:30 about shells whistling overhead or possible enemy fire, you are much more concerned about getting to the line of departure when you are scheduled to get there and getting those troops safely ashore, that's your main concern to get them safely ashore. That was the way the cookie crumbled.

What was your greatest fear in terms of things that might happen?

Kamikaze hitting the ship

- 20:00 I guess, from my point of view, I knew what a disaster a bomb on any ship could do and the huge loss, I knew it would be a huge loss of life if it happened to us

When was the first time that kamikazes came on the scene?

Leyte.

- 20:30 **Let's get back to chronology. After Lingayen is that when the Kanimbla came back to Australia?**

Yes

It went to Borneo

Yes

Where in Borneo?

We did the Brunei landings first and foremost and I've got a photo of the Green Beach landings there, I've got a map of

- 21:00 Beach Head, we landed very successfully at Green Beach and after we had done the initial landings there was no opposition to speak of so they decided we'd do the final runs into Brookton which was up a river estuary, again the only opposition was monkeys, although I might say that

- 21:30 several people since have talked about they got shot at and they blew up a wharf and what can I say to you, having been in the group of landing craft that went up the river, we didn't see a thing except chattering monkeys, I mean there was the risk that they could have, there was a relatively
- 22:00 narrow estuary with mangroves on both sides and the Japanese could have been there but they weren't, was really no opposition in Brookton at all, The Balikpapan landing on the other hand, the Japanese, no the Japanese had prepared to set the beaches on fire and
- 22:30 that would have been a real disaster, but the shelling by our ships in actual fact broke the pipeline so there was no oil. Although the tanks caught fire and you saw the burning oil fuel tanks, the beach head was relatively safe, there was a mortar up on a hill behind that was dug in
- 23:00 that lobbed a couple of mortars early in the morning at the landing craft not very successfully, then late in the evening you would open up again, and I got a minor scratch from shrapnel, so minor just a scratch, we had a very busy day backwards and forwards and
- 23:30 but it, the tragedy of the Borneo landings was they were totally unnecessary. We should never have gone there. The only reason we went there was [General] MacArthur didn't want us in the Philippines and of course Barbey defeated him though, because each of our ships Australian ships had 100 AIF [Australian Imperial Force] soldiers on board as their docks' operating companies so that Australians were at the Philippines landings anyway, Barbey knew it
- 24:00 MacArthur didn't want the Australian ships in those landings, Barbey insisted on it, in fact he kept Kanimbla always in the van, he said we were probably the most experienced of all the ships and he gave us always a very important role

In the Philippines landings, but they were unnecessary as well, people have argued?

I don't know that one could argue that,

- 24:30 some would argue that Morotai was unnecessary that we could have gone straight to the Philippines, but I think the kamikaze if you look at Enola Gay and the dropping of the bombs, yes, unnecessary we could have waited for that and just left them to rot, but I don't think they knew whether those atomic bombs were going to be successful or not, at that stage
- 25:00 and certainly in the plans for the [Operation] Coronet which was the landings for southern Japan, the estimate was very heavy casualties in our amphibious group and that was scripted into the orders, they were actually written, the plans were there for the landing on Coronet and it was estimated that there would be a very high casualty rate, it didn't happen of course
- 25:30 but I think the Philippines were, I would argue that the Philippines were necessary I'd certainly argue against the Borneo landings, they were a tragic, they were political not military, they were entirely a political....

You mentioned Coronet, did you know about that at the time?

We were

- 26:00 doing the briefing in Coronet at the time the atomic bombs were dropped.

You were actually being briefed on operation to land in Japan at that time?

Yep

- 26:30 **When you joined the Kanimbla it had just been converted can you explain what the changes were?**

There's an irreverent song that the sailors used to sing at concerts on board

- 27:00 \n[Verse follows]\n "There is a ship known as Kanimbla used to be an AMC [Armed Merchant Cruiser]\n But they have taken all their guns off and shipped on LCDs [Landing Ship Docks],\n Instead of taking convoys and receiving grateful thanks,\n They filled her up with guns and herds of seasick Yanks,\n A gunnery department is enough to make us sob,\n A navy comic opera produced by Uncle Bob,\n It's probably the only one where gunners get a run,\n On a submarine that's flying somewhere around the sun,\n

- 27:30 A sub is all wonders and possibly unique,\n They're an all sort production that army navy freak,\n They often make us wonder and leave us in a daze,\n How the navy turns them out in only 90 days." \n

That probably sums it up.

Who wrote that?

I think Bert Deak and myself were responsible for that, I had a feeling we were responsible for that

Was it sung aboard the Kanimbla?

It was sung frequently at concerts

28:00 and we had a group of concert parties we had some real talent on board, we had a volunteer jazz band and concert band and the ward room where the officers 'Troppo Troubadours' I think they called us, doing a few skits usually slinging off at ourselves. One of the things about Kanimbla was that you had to make your own fun, we got occasional movies from the Americans

28:30 fairly good supply of movies from the Americans, but we had, apart from deck hockey, there really was no other, well there was tombola which was the traditional sailors gambling, loathed by law, but deck hockey was perhaps the only real physical activity

29:00 apart from occasional PT [Physical Training] I had a bad reputation at deck hockey unfortunately, I was considered vigorous,

You must have needed these entertainments with the ship being away from port for so long?

Of course we did but we made the sort of activities that really were enjoyed and occasionally the troops were able to participate

29:30 and produce some good bits and pieces, so it was a mix, one way or the other, but we made our own fun.

Getting back to the ship, they'd taken all the guns of and filled it with seasick Yanks. Can you explain?

Actually in that I changed the wording of seasick Yanks because I was giving that to a presentation where I knew there would be Americans present but

30:00 the words we originally used were, 'Herds of stinking Yanks', the reason behind that was the water was rationed on board, we couldn't make enough water to allow frequent use of showers in fact, there was, water was only turned on in the bathrooms for an hour a day, half an hour in the morning, half an hour at night. The Americans used Johnson's Baby Powder instead of

30:30 showering very largely and sweat in those troop decks with a mixture of stale Johnson Baby Powder, very well described, 'herds of stinking Yanks' is a fair comment. And I commented about the Negro battalion, they all used salt water, they got under the hoses on deck and used salt water and I'd been reminded of this only the other day at a recent reunion

31:00 several of our sailors said, "Well, watching the niggers on the foredeck we all went and had a good goof at them because they were so well hung compared with...." ha ha an interesting memory, I guess I don't remember that happening but I was reminded of it the other day

31:30 **That was the first trip out, can you describe the Kanimbla and how it had been set up as a landing ship?**

We had some armament, we had 12 Oerlikons, we had two old 3 inch guns that had been converted from World War I vintage, low angle guns into high angle

32:00 guns, they were 12 pounders in actual fact, a better description of them, but the problem in firing them was that the breeches used to blow off so they weren't really.... they were antiques rather than good anti-aircraft weapons, and we had a 4 inch on the stern which was a good 4 inch Mark 16 which was a good gun anti-aircraft gun

32:30 but after Lingayen Gulf when we got back we had the 3 inch removed and we had Bofors I think 8 Bofors placed in so we suddenly became reasonably well armed. We started off with 12 landing craft assault

33:00 12, it might be more, we had 3 LCMs [Landing Craft Mechanised], 5 landing craft vehicle and the rest were Australian landing craft assault which were a petrol engine landing craft which couldn't carry vehicles they could only troops and they were ideal for the sort of night raids that Britain had been doing

33:30 in places like that but in a surf they were absolutely hopeless. And Barbey took one look at them after we had been exercising in Moreton Bay and when we got to Cairns they took them off put them on the beach and burnt them, and replaced them and the LCVs [Landing Craft Vehicle] and replaced them with LCVPs [Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel] and then we had one landing craft personnel as a control boat, 3 LCMs

34:00 and 21 landing craft vehicle personnel so and the landing craft personnel could carry 30 troops or a jeep and a gun and landing craft mechanised can carry a tank or heavy vehicle so you could put an operational battalion ashore fully equipped.

Can you describe in detail those various types of landing craft?

34:30 Well landing craft vehicle personnel which were our main landing craft were 30 feet, I think 30 feet's right, they had a grade marine diesel single screw with a coxswain's position, two 30 calibre gun pits in the stern and the bow, a ramp, so that, and a winch so you can run up in the

- 35:00 beach with them, drop the ramp and the troops would clear off to the beach or the vehicles would go on the beach. Landing craft mechanised were twice as large, they were twin screw they had an encased cockpit for the coxswain which was high out above the main deck of the landing craft
- 35:30 and they were powered by two grade marine diesels so changing from landing craft assault the petrol driven landing craft assault it had to LCPV was we suddenly carried no petrol and that I tell you is a great relief.
- Why was it such a relief?**
- Petrol in ships
- 36:00 is an absolute disaster, You've only got to get one hit and you've got a mighty big bang and no one likes carrying a case of petrol if they can avoid it.
- Diesel doesn't have the same....?**
- No it's very hard to set diesel on fire, relatively easy to extinguish, it doesn't have the high gas content
- 36:30 which can cause the explosion.
- With the landing craft vehicle personnel, how many troops could land on those?**
- 30.
- And with the larger more mechanised what sort of equipment could you put on those?**
- You could put a small tank on them or a 3-ton truck, you can put a gun and a jeep in the landing craft vehicle personnel with its crew or you put in a large truck or a small tank in the landing craft mechanised
- How would all this equipment fit onto the Kanimbla?**
- 37:00 Well it was all stowed in the hulls, I mean all the troops' equipment, the ammunition, the guns and the jeeps and they went into the holds, and I have a diagram of Kanimbla as a landing ship infantry which shows all the spaces there the troop decks, landing decks, bits and pieces
- 37:30 so the reason we had these LSD, Landing Ship Docks, operating company soldiers, some of them were ex wharfies [wharf labourers], they'd had stevedoring experience and they were trained stevedores and each of the ships had this army company that would handle the cargo, they did a great job with it too. And we started slowly
- 38:00 talking about Moreton Bay it was absolutely pathetic but by the time we got up to Lingayen Gulf it really was tremendous
- What about the landing craft themselves, you mentioned winches, where were these stowed?**
- Well the winches on the starboard side forward they were hand winches and the bowman had to wind them up or you tipped the catch off and let them crash
- 38:30 **And how would the landing craft be positioned on the ship to get on?**
- Well some of them were in davits on the side of the ship we had 16 off davits on each port and starboard side and we had 3 nested inside the LCMs and we had others on deck as well so you had to have other
- 39:00 booms I think, they had to be lifted and boomed up from the upper deck while the davits went down quickly
- It's quite an organisational feat?**
- It is, that's why the training period in the Moreton Bay
- 39:30 was so important, not only training us but training the troops that would subsequently, the thing was interesting was the Torbell, huge army base at Torbell and we rotated the troops through so they got experience. See the other thing they had to climb over the ship on nets down into the landing craft from a fully equipped soldier with a rifle and pack that took some getting used to
- 40:00 too, particularly if it was a bit choppy so it wasn't really a matter of training our ship's company and the crews to perform well but also training troops, and they had to be trained for each subsequent landing we had to retrain them because they had gone back to what they do best which is being soldiers they didn't like being at sea.

Tape 3

- 00:29 **What was the relationship like between the different forces onboard the Kanimbla?**

Good. It worked very, very well, there was an army major in charge of the docks operating company, a landing ship attachment and he had a warrant officer as well, they did not only the

01:00 operating of the docks but they did the embarkation of allocating the troops to troop deck so the liaison was extremely good and it worked very well and the comment I made before, there were very few disciplinary problems in Kanimbla, one might expect that there would be differences but there weren't.

How did the command structure work because they weren't navy? Were they under the control of the captain of the ship?

01:30 Yes, anyone on board a ship is, well the captain is god in a ship, it having commanded a ship myself it is one of the most lonely jobs you can get, you've got no friends, your word is law whether it's right or wrong, if your captain says you do this it's done. And of course

02:00 under the articles of war which we all were governed by and I'll mention a rather curious thing about this in due course, but it was still the articles of war in the Australian Navy, it was still the articles of war until the joint defence code which is fairly recent years, well after I left the navy, and those articles of war go back to

02:30 that British Act of Parliament some 200 years ago and can I say to you that the power that the captain has is enormous, so once you are onboard a ship whether you are a passenger or anything else if the captain says jump, you jump and if the captain says jump overboard you jump overboard or go to jail, one or the other

03:00 **What dealings did you have initially with Captain Shaw?**

He was a marvellous bloke, he was a brilliant ship handler, he'd been retired from the navy under the Geddes Act in the late '20s during the Depression and had gone farming at Bowral I think, he came back on the emergency list and was

03:30 commander of Kanimbla but he really he drove that ship to be a really efficient ship, I mean he was a good leader and he was a very able captain and a very skilled ship handler, he drove that ship like a destroyer, I've never seen people handle a ship as big as that the way he handled it

It was one of the faster landing ships wasn't it?

04:00 It was the fastest of them and not only was it the fastest it was the most modern of the landing ships, and in addition to that it was a very manoeuvrable ship, it was a beautifully built ship, I mean one of the things you can say about Harland & Wolff the ship builders of that ship, was the whole time we were away we had no mechanical failures of any sort that says a lot

04:30 particularly in the stressful conditions that ship was under. And of course the engineers stayed with her. The other thing that was interesting is they stood by the ship when it was building. They were with McIlwraith McEacharn when it was a passenger ship, they stayed with the ship as an armed merchant cruiser as naval officers, and they stayed with the ship as landing ship infantry

05:00 and they looked after the owners' engines.

What was the company of the Kanimbla?

The ship's company was 680. In size she was the largest ship in the Australian Navy, she was bigger than the cruiser

Again back to the organisation and training, can you describe those early days?

05:30 Well, people recognised mistakes and the captain was good over mistakes, I mean he would get hold of people and say that's not good enough, do it again, do it again, do it again, that sort of thing, but he recognised that the ship's company was green, really green and he accepted that, the officers as a whole the experienced officers as a whole accepted it and he said well that's

06:00 wrong you said why did it go wrong, and next time you did better. The same mistakes weren't made twice.

What was it like getting used to that greenness and everybody getting used to this new ship?

I guess inexperienced people made silly mistakes, slowness in responding to orders because they weren't aware really of what they had to do

06:30 **What about dealing with the troops on board?**

That never seemed to be a problem because they had their own officers and they were keen, they were keen. I think that we always used front line troops, that was part and parcel, they were by and large the better

07:00 American soldiers as indeed were our troops when we did the Borneo landings. There were a few problems, it's very hard to get them to carry their life jackets, soldiers from time to time, that sort of thing was sometimes hard to police, but they settled down quickly and the food was good

- 07:30 unlike the American ships we gave them four meals a day, we gave them breakfast, dinner, afternoon tea and an evening meal, an American ship they got two meals so and one of the things, one of the reasons we were such a contented ship was we had incredibly good cooks, if you look at the supply branch in that ship we fed
- 08:00 well compared with, sure from time to time we had dehydrated eggs, and dehydrated potatoes and dehydrated onion and, one of the worst concoctions the Americans rebelled over more than anything, really got quite upset about was allegedly coffee which came in a bottle with HP label on it which was mostly chicory which
- 08:30 was absolutely awful, it was horrible and the Americans would say, but this is coffee and they loved their coffee, they'd say, "Wow what's this, Germans with their ersatz [fake] acorns wouldn't make this crap."

Were there many cultural differences between the Americans and Australians?

- 09:00 Not really,

For example the Americans' love of coffee?

Well yeah, coffee was served in the ship which was never normal, and the canteen suddenly we were able to acquire, one of the advantages of being under American command was we had access to American PXs [Post Exchange Stores, official canteen units] so we had Camel cigarettes and Sir Walter Raleigh tobacco and Hershey bars and coke, I think most Australians wouldn't have been, I found no

- 09:30 culture difference between myself and the Australians but then in naval life there is very little difference so it would be hard to gauge but there were with Americans, particularly over food, I mean they slapped ice-cream onto the.... jam and meat all on the same tray
- 10:00 **This was the first time you had dealings with American forces what were your first impressions?**
- That's a good comment, not very impressed, initially but then can I say that's probably unfair too
- 10:30 because they were green. they'd been shipped out from America very largely in the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth, the group we were dealing with, a lot of them were country hicks who didn't even know where New Guinea was or Australia was or anything else and they were lost,
- 11:00 they were really quite lost originally, but they learned fairly quickly, we had one, a very good American General who MacArthur hated, I think got rid of him ultimately, but his troops were excellent, they were well trained and the troops we landed in the Philippines
- 11:30 you couldn't ask for better troops anywhere, but by that stage training them, well the early troops and some of our early troops were equally ragtag, lets be realistic about this, there were CMF [Citizens' Military Forces] forces on the Kokoda Trail who were so badly trained it was pathetic.

Were you training any Australian troops?

- 12:00 No we were almost entirely Americans

Was the Kokoda trip the first Australians that had come onboard?

Yes

Can you explain how the training took place at Moreton Bay?

Well, we'd go up to Brisbane to New Farm Wharf, we'd load the troops, we would go down to Moreton Bay and we'd land them either on Bribie Island or

- 12:30 one of the varied beaches, Red Beach or Bribie was a particularly popular one that's why it's now called Red Beach. Historically the beach was known as Red Beach but now it's Bribie, you'd see a sign going to Red Beach. And we'd land them across the beach and then we'd go back to New Farm Wharf, we'd load another lot and go down to Moreton Bay land them across the beach.
- 13:00 Sometimes we recovered them and did a second landing depending on I think, it really depended on the CO [Commanding Officer] of the battalion we were landing whether he was happy with the landing or not so sometimes we'd do a reload and embark them onboard and re-land them and back to Brisbane, so we'd head up the river,
- 13:30 we did some night exercises but none of the American landings were night exercises at all, that was really a bit of a lost cause.

What concessions were made during that training to prepare the troops for the real thing?

Not much

There was no fire?

14:00 No, just the running across the beach and keep your heads down when you are on the landing craft it was really trying to get them used to scrambling down into landing craft and going across a beach and the Americans I think by that time, after the Normandy landings, I think the Americans decided that they were not going to land on a beach where there was any opposition

14:30 virtually, I mean the beach heads were absolutely annihilated a mile from the water line there would be nothing left standing so it didn't really matter

Were there any accidents?

Yes, the Morotai landings, not in our ships but one of the landing ships some of the crew had gone into a pot hole and drowned with the equipment

15:00 because the Australian troops didn't have rapid release equipment. I'm not sure what happened there because it was all a bit under wraps but certainly none of our troops were involved but it was a bit of a mess.

15:30 **What sort of accidents were there in training?**

The sort of accident you would have would be someone with a broken arm, a winch broken, talking about the ship's company, or someone knocked by the landing craft when it was being lowered out or there were occasional accidents on the beach head where ramps, people with broken toes and things like that, not a lot.

16:00 Kanimbla was very, very lucky, In the Morotai landings, some of our ship's company had been flown down for leave, they brought mumps back with them and on the Morotai landing I did the actual landing but in the first watch after ,when we were going back to sea I felt

16:30 sick as a dog on the bridge and was sick and I said, "Oh it's only sunstroke I'll be alright." and I thought it was... it wasn't, it was mumps and I'd caught the mumps because three weeks before I'd been in sick bay with appendicitis and one of the things absolutely unique, as I had one of the smallest appendicitis scars of all time and the surgeon who did it was our ship's surgeon, was a bloke called

17:00 Sammy Sewell and every annual medical I had in the navy from that day they would say, "I know who did that." and you say, "Guess who?" and they'd say "Sammy Sewell." and he was renowned, I read only a couple of days ago he died, but he was renowned as a very good surgeon and a little tiny scar.

17:30 **This operation took place onboard the ship?**

Onboard the ship. the dentist was the anaesthetist and he spilled the ether on top of me and it nearly killed me, his hand shook and splashed more ether, they used a cone mask in those days and they splashed, I didn't know this but apparently he spilt more ether than he should have done and the doc said afterward he nearly got killed.

18:00 We had a good sick bay, a good surgeon, a good dental officer

Were they responsible for injuries among the army as well?

Anyone on board yeah,

They must have been kept busy in those early days?

Yes they were, they were a very professional team too, we had a very good sick bay good theatre and hospital.

18:30 **What was your role as a midshipman at the time?**

As a midshipman, first of all I was assistant to the met [meteorological] officer, then I was assistant signal officer and did all the decoding, then I went to supply branch for a month and then I went to engine room for a month, then I became a sub lieutenant and having passed the dreaded examinations which I'd been threatened with

19:00 which I thought people had forgotten all about.

Was there general training on various parts of the ship before you became assistant to the met officer or were you thrown into that job?

Yes.

Can you tell us about that job?

Twice a day we got from Australia, from all the weather stations and all

19:30 the south west pacific weather stations, we got a coded signal, little code about 22 groups which gave you wind direction, barometer pressure the cloud base and all the met observations from that observation place in code, the one thing no one wanted the enemy to know so they had to be decoded and then you had to plot them on the weather map and the met officer would say,

20:00 "Got a low there, got this, we are going to have this sort of weather tomorrow." and he having been with the Australian Weather Bureau most of his life was a very skilled analyst of this. I learned a lot about forecasting, even today I can look at cloud and say yuck.

What are some of the things that you learnt?

Well the affect of your lows and your cloud base and

20:30 how important they are, it's surprising how little really, I mean apart from radar now plotting a little, weather reporting has changed, it's a matter of looking at your isobars and say, well that's the pattern.

Where were you stationed onboard for this work?

He had an

21:00 office on the aft end of main superstructure, a little met office, tiny place, he had two met sailors as well, we would send the balloons up for our own particular observations, be about from here to that door.

About 6 foot by 6 foot

21:30 What were your tasks as an assistant?

My tasks were to decode the signals that came in and then put them on the chart for plotting and he'd analyse them.

How long were you doing this job for?

Only for the first two months I was on the ship and then we changed captains and we were no longer the senior ship so we lost our

22:00 met office.

Only the senior ship had a met office?

Yes.

Who was the new captain?

Commander Andrew Veitch Bunyan who was a naval sea going reserve, ex merchant seaman.

22:30 He joined, our captain left us after, there was some dispute with Admiral Barbey over mail and I don't know the ins and outs of it but, our captain, Commander Shaw was relieved of his command. I think the differences with Admiral Barbey would be a fair comment and Commander Bunyan took over as captain which made us no longer the senior ship so we lost

23:00 our met office we also lost, about the same time lost our main beach groups, we suddenly had a little more space around the place because they went, under American doctrine, under British doctrine we carried our own beach groups onboard each landing ship and the American doctrine, the troops went to the beach with the battalion that was being landed, trained with that battalion

23:30 What were these beach parties for?

They were actually for controlling the beach and the landing and the movement on and off the beach the equipment off the beach to the army.

All these changes happened before you left Australia right?

Ah, it happened after Hollandia, Tanahmerah Bay landings after the first landings.

24:00 One of the first was transporting an American Negro battalion?

They were a construction battalion and they were going up to Milne Bay in actual fact to build the airfields at Milne Bay.

What dealings did you have with those troops onboard?

24:30 Not much, they were around and we made regular rounds of the troop decks at night particularly during the silent hours to make sure there were no fires, no problems or gambling or any other nonsense and yes I saw them then and they were always quiet, they had some wonderful voices, some beautiful singing but

25:00 they were clean, they were quiet, I don't think they knew where they were, I think they were slightly frightened of what was going on but they were docile.

Was there a lot of overt racism?

25:30 Amongst the Americans there clearly was very much so there wasn't between our ship's company and the Negroes, quite the contrary, they got on very well together, but there certainly was racism among

the Americans very, very substantially so. The Negroes were kept as a labour battalion and never to mix.

26:00 **How did you see that racism in evidence?**

I saw it with the white officers, well the way they treated them, well not the way you treat a dog

Where did you land these troops?

26:30 Milne Bay

Was this your first sight of New Guinea?

Yes it was.

And what were your impressions of what was going on there?

Well from the ship, wet, humid and not a very distant shore, difficult thing there was a war going on there

27:00 the plantations came down the edge of the water and the mountains behind which dominated, the smell of New Guinea is somewhat unique and rotting mangrove I suppose, but it's a smell that hits you

27:30 **Even from the sea?**

Yep, they tended to anchor sufficiently far off so we wouldn't have mosquito problems.

How much do smells govern your introduction to places when you are sailing?

Quite a lot, there some unique smells out of different parts of the world

28:00 **Are there any examples of smells becoming a map if you like?**

Calcutta, yuck. Well yeah and the Basra which is the main sewer of Iraq and Iran.... terrible

28:30 If you want bad smells that's a good place to go, in fact I wrote an article in recently about the second Kanimbla with the clearance divers up there, for the journal I edit, they used the words 'murky waters' and I said that was the understatement of the year

29:00 **What about not necessarily bad smells, what about Australian waters?**

Yes there is, there's a smell of gum trees, there is nothing quite like landing, whether it's by aircraft or sea, landing back in Australia you can smell the eucalypts. You don't consciously notice it

29:30 normally when you are living here but if you are away for any length of time, you do notice it when you come back

What would happen on board when that smell suddenly took hold?

Everyone started getting their number ones out ready and, "You beauty, I'm going ashore!"

You wouldn't experience that for while after the Kanimbla left Australia for the first time. Were you aware of what you would be doing and how far you would be going?

30:00 No, I don't think anyone anticipated we would be away that long. It was the circumstances that the other two landing ships both developed problems, but it was unique in the navy, and of course an armed merchant cruiser she was away just as long. The first time

30:30 she was away was equally long because she'd sailed from Australia and then went onto Durban and on the guarding troop ships from Durban to Aden and also the Pacific. She captured a Russian ship actually and she was away just the same sort of period, she was a terribly lucky

31:00 ship she only got out of Singapore by the skin of her teeth.

By the end of 16 month period what was going on onboard the Kanimbla?

There really wasn't any notable change, the ship's company were proud of what they had done they knew they were

31:30 doing a good job, we'd had bouquets from the admiral, "Congratulations on another job well done, you've once again excelled." and that sort of permeates through the whole ship's company, they knew they were doing a good job. Mail was the biggest problem we had, lack of mail, mail was always chasing us

32:00 **How often did you receive mail?**

There was the dispute between admiral and Barbey, we hadn't had any mail for 6 weeks. And I think that's what triggered it quite frankly, I can't be certain, that's a long time for people who have got

problems at home, maybe have problems at home

32:30 most of the ship's company, the average age when we left Brisbane was 19.2 years, the whole ship's company.

What does mail do for the morale of the ship?

Tremendous, you could see the lift when people got mail, also the cake tins, fruit cakes used to arrive and it was just something

33:00 that would remind you of home, that people were all thinking of you and you weren't forgotten. I think sometimes there was a feeling that the ship was forgotten, I mean we ran out of clothing, we ran out of shoes, for instance and we were all wearing sandals, because one the doctor thought that it would stop tinea which was rife in the ship because of the lack of fresh water facilities

33:30 and the other was in actual fact we ran out of shoes so everyone decided to wear sandals, we were told to wear sandals. So there was a feeling sometimes that the ship was forgotten, we didn't belong to anyone - well we did, we belonged to the Americans, we could get stores from the Americans

34:00 but often we couldn't get Australian stores. One of the big boosts was when the Mercer arrived in Seeadler Harbour just before the Lingayen Gulf landings, just before we sailed and we got a shipment of beer, Australian beer, and we were able to give every member of the ship's company on Christmas, two bottles of beer, little things like that uplifted the ships' company very substantially

34:30 **You mentioned the youth of the company, what difficulties did that bring?**

Well you'd have thought that it would have brought difficulties but it didn't, we had I think sufficient number of older hands, really old staid officers to deal with that

35:00 and the other side of the coin was they were pretty intelligent group of sailors, they ended up in, one particular friend of mine a bloke called Evan

35:30 Philips who runs a major neon manufacturing group, accountants, bank managers, diplomats, what they ended up after the war was an indication of what they were, the recruiting was fairly high standard of intelligence and I think they probably had a lot to do with it.

Were you an old hand at this stage?

I was considered an old hand.

36:00 I was allowed to keep night watches, most of the younger officers were not allowed to do. The captain recognised that I had a lot of experience in watch keeping; my other job was action of the watch, so if we ever went to action I was on the bridge which was an open bridge so I was one

36:30 of the command team in handling the ship, certainly the captain was there as well, the navigator, but I was considered one of the more experienced officers who could cope with something getting out of hand

How else did your experience come to bear on greener members of the crew?

I think they respected it, I never talked about it, I never really wanted to, there were a number of reasons for that but

37:00 I think they knew because apparently Commander Shaw told them before I joined the ship, I was a bit of an oddity

37:30 in some ways but I don't think it ever went to my head, I had too much respect for the people I was working with, if you look back on it, the quality of sailors in the navy at that time were extraordinarily high

What was your role as an old hand in getting these fellows up to speed?

38:00 Teaching them tricks they shouldn't know I think is a fair comment

Could you share one of those tricks with us?

One of the things was in Brisbane midshipmen had what they called 'boy scouts leave'. They weren't allowed to go to shore after 8 o'clock except they were allowed to until 10 o'clock one night a week. I taught them how to get around that

38:30 in no uncertain terms, I taught them how to cheat over midshipman's journals when they were in trouble, not exactly cheat but I think there was a certain amount of plagiarism from my journal from time to time

39:00 **How do you get around the leave situation, is that still a closely guarded secret?**

Yeah, better left unsaid I think.

Tape 4

00:31 **Have you ever been seasick?**

No, never been seasick.

How does seasickness affect morale on a ship?

It can be a major problem and in actual fact when I was in command of Wagga to on the way to New Guinea, I had to go into Brisbane and land a sailor because he was so chronically ill that he was bleeding.

01:00 He was vomiting blood and he really was in such a mess that I had to divert into Brisbane and land him and I also had a sub lieutenant who was my navigator, I won't mention his name either because he is prominent in Canberra, who was a chronic seasick case and he really couldn't continue to serve in ships.

01:30 He became a clearance diver in actual fact. I mean seasickness for those who suffer, it's awful, it can be terrible and my eldest son is a chronic seasick case. He's sick when he travels by air too and he has to travel a lot. So yes, seasickness is an awful thing for those who suffer from it.

02:00 **Where did you feel most at home, on land or on the sea?**

Probably at sea.

What is it about the sea?

It makes you realise how puny a human being really is,

02:30 it's got a might and a rage of its own. A North Atlantic storm or in the [Great Australian] Bight or even a cyclone in the Coral Sea they can be frightening, the very power of the sea, you're like a cork and a lot of people don't realise how powerful the sea is,

03:00 it's the raw elements.

You are going to war in a ship but essentially you've got to be there in nature.

You are waging a war against the sea as well as against the enemy

Are you waging a war or are you trying to live with it?

03:30 You try to live with it I guess but it's one of the worst parts of war, the sea and its ferocity is really quite frightening.

Can you describe any moments in particular?

When I was commander of Wagga

04:00 I'd been in New Guinea for their centenary celebrations and I was due to be in Melbourne where the French fleet were visiting to be the host ship for the French. I got into Bass Strait in one of the worst gales I think I have ever been in and we were getting down to the stage, I was 'hove to' for nearly two days or making very little progress at all and we were getting a hell of a belting

04:30 and the rip was closed and I was running out of fuel, so ultimately I had to brave, make the decision to go through the rip, come hell or high water and I got through and the coxswain at the time, well we had one engine going full ahead and one engine going full astern and the rudder and we just got around the corner.

05:00 That would be the most worrying time I think I've ever dealt with the sea. I know I get through those sort of conditions, it always happens when you've got a limited range, your decisions.... what you going to do with the weather? Your decision's got to be, the ship's capability, in my case we were running short of

05:30 fuel, I couldn't stay out there and run out of fuel

Were there times when you were in the islands and looked out at a glassy sea and thought you don't want to be anywhere else?

No, you look at the sea, can I say, we were always escorted we always had problems of keeping

06:00 station and whatever, so in Kanimbla you never really had the opportunity to think that way, you were too much preoccupied with keeping station; where were your escorts, your operational status was such that you never really....

- 06:30 I never saw the sea as a beauty at that time at all, there were always concerns you always had, landing in Lingayen Gulf you become occupied with the task at hand, that is your position, station keeping, the task force you're in, alterations course and everything else, so you don't have time to think about the beauty of the sea
- 07:00 or otherwise. I think that is a fair comment. In peace time I subsequently in ships on my own I've looked at the sea and said. "Oh beauty!" and there is nothing more beautiful than steaming up and down the Barrier Reef and the Whitsunday Passage, Whitsunday Islands, but again
- 07:30 I remember the Whitsundays when they weren't big tourist resorts. Percy Island was owned by people with sheep on it and goats, wonderful spot, you'd go fishing there and put a net over and catch fish and idyllic, it's all been commercialised now of course.

What did you fear at sea? Shipwreck, drowning?

- 08:00 Fire, more than anything else, there is nothing worse than a ship on fire. I think anyone who has served any length of time in the navy or at sea in any ship would say the same
- 08:30 thing, that fire is the worst nightmare you can have.

What is it about fire?

Well what happens if it takes over the ship, where do you go? If you are in a house you can walk over the land but what do you do if your ship catches fire, it's a long way from home?

A lot of water to pump on it too

- 09:00 Yeah but, fire can take over very quickly.

Were there any occasions when you had to deal with fire on the Kanimbla?

Not on Kanimbla no.

Any time during your service?

Yes I've been in fires on ships but I don't want to talk about them.

- 09:30 **What made the Kanimbla a happy ship?**

I think more than anything else good leadership. And by good leadership I mean that the captain lays down

- 10:00 that's what's going to happen... this is what I expect from you and if you do it you'll get praise and if you don't I'll kick you up the backside, you know exactly where you stand. That makes a happy ship, you must know where you stand. you must have consistency from your officers and in authority and if you've got that. you'll probably get a happy ship

- 10:30 **What about interpersonal relationships?**

Well there were, clearly in a ship that size and away for that length of time there were people couldn't stand each other and they just kept out of each other's road I guess, but there were a lot of very firm friendships made. One of the reasons I think the Kanimbla Association is so strong today is because they did all live together and get on together, and the few that didn't probably didn't belong to the association and

- 11:00 drifted out of recognition from people anyway.

Can you tell us about the brig?

We had cells on board, in fact we had a murderer onboard on one occasion. not from our ship, he was I think from the Australia but I'm not certain and we brought him down when we went to Townsville with the troops and we had him in our cells and we had to provide cell sentries for him

- 11:30 **Of the crew were there people who had served on the Sydney?**

Yes, one of my crew who has just gone home yesterday from hospital with a knee replacement, was Ian Wales who served as a sailor in Stuart in the Mediterranean. He was

- 12:00 one of the few junior officers, in fact the only other junior officer other than myself who had any sea time.

He was one of the old hands?

Yes.

Did he ever talk about the Sydney?

He talked about the Battle of Matapan which Stuart was involved in with the Sydney he talked endlessly about the Battle of Matapan

12:30 but he has also been president of the Stuart Association for a number of years now. I think you can, and she was a very happy ship, Stuart had the same sort of reputation, you can get very close, a ship can become a very close

13:00 community against all comers for want of a better word. If a ship is a happy ship, there is a pride in it if anyone takes your ship's name in vain then they are buying a fight.

Was there any times when they did that?

Yeah Kanimbla is come to task with Manoora in particular

13:30 but we were always able to sling and say well you deliberately broke down your fridges so you could go south and take our turn going on leave, that's always good for a good barney.

Can you describe any of those incidents?

I've heard of them but no, I don't know what happened

14:00 one thing is you need a blind eye, Nelson produced the tradition of the blind eye, very important thing as an officer that you have a blind eye because there are occasions when you just don't see what's going on.

Is that where the expression comes from?

Yes from Nelson, turning the blind eye from Nelson. And Nelson of course was the master of it

14:30 tactically, he didn't do what the admiral told him to do at all.

It's said about leadership 'Don't obey to get things done.'

But there are times when really you've got to turn a blind eye to what's going on and can I say to you, the case that I had that's most apparent is when I was commander of

15:00 apprentice training establishment in Merimbula. I had fifty 15 and a half to 21 year old boys which I was in loco parentis [in place of parents] for virtually and I tell you what, I kept my thumb like that on them, but there were times when I didn't want to see what was going on, I mean they are young, they are healthy and you want spirit and there are times when you just

15:30 let it go. They knew I knew though, that's part of the act probably of reasonable leadership and one of the greatest prides I've got of that period is that one recently said at a reunion that I was probably the greatest influence he ever had on his life.

16:00 I felt well the two years I had there were well worthwhile. So you can get some rewards, it's tough for your family and your wife, that job. I was there at quarter to six in the morning, then I took a PT [physical training] jog around the air strip before I took PT and I was there at 8 o'clock at night, six and a half days a week

16:30 The Kanimbla makes its own fresh water?

Yes it does. You had an evaporator and pumped in sea water and distilled it

17:00 but the vaps only made I think 40 tons a day and we were using 60 tons a day with it rationed so we had water tanks plus the evaporator. But it was tough when you consider it in the tropics having two half hour periods a day and if you were away like I was on that beach and came back wet and soaking there was no water to have a hot shower or

17:30 get clean at all, you had to just had to put up with it and if the boats' crews were away, they weren't there when the showers were on, shocking bad luck.

18:00 Can we move on to the first landings, at Morotai or Manus?

Manus, Tanahmerah Bay to be precise which is in the Hollandia Peninsula

Was that where you were on the flying jeep?

The flying jeep was just prior to that when we were doing an exercise

Can you tell us about that?

18:30 Well they are little baby aircraft with a pilot and seat four, one along side the pilot and two behind him, we called them flying jeeps, I don't know what they were, they were American aircraft

Where they pinched off the back of a ship?

No this belonged to the army, they flew us up from Cape Cretin up to the beach to look at it because we were going to do the pre landings,

19:00 the exercise landings on this beach. We had some misgivings, the Americans didn't know what this

beach was like they said, "Oh there is a good beach up here, this is where we'll do the exercise landing." well we wanted to have a look at the beach, so I was detailed off to fly up there and do a survey of the beach to make sure it was suitable. In actual fact it wasn't in part, one part of it was alright but the other part was not, it was rocky and we

19:30 lost propellers left right and centre from the landing craft, well it was one of those things.

Can you tell us about that first landing at Morotai?

Again you could see the bombers the previous night. The Atlas Mountains, the

20:00 landing at Tanahmerah Bay would loom up to the mountains and loom up out of the background, but you could see the bombers all the previous night, you could see the flash as the bombs are being dropped on the three airfields there and then we just went in the landing craft we were away all boats

20:30 **You were in charge of all the landing craft?**

Yes.

Can you tell us about the atmosphere of loading troops at night?

You start at four o'clock in the morning on a pre landing day, all the landings were dawn plus with the Americans, in the Pacific, there were no night landings at all, but that meant that you had to start at 4 o'clock in the morning, you briefed your landing

21:00 craft crews gave them a final briefing, checked the equipment in all the landing craft group.

Who was in your crew?

One leading seaman, one stoker and one bowman, you had a crew of 4 in each landing craft

Who was operating the guns?

The stoker and the

21:30 stern sheetsman, the second crewman operated the guns on the stern of the LCPVs

And what was your role?

As a wave leader you were responsible for taking x number of landing craft to what called a point of departure, making sure you've got to the point of departure at x time and that you landed on beach at y time exactly on the time, so you had responsibility for the movement

22:00 of the 6, usually 6 landing craft under your control, either 5 or 6.

What things were you told at the time of the briefing?

Well for Lingayen Gulf we were told we were going to have a crack regiment against us, well the army were told they were going to have the Nanking troops against them and in actual fact they weren't there,

22:30 they'd retreated, and this was the case in most cases, we were told the worst scenario. And what to do if we were left behind there, if we had lost our landing craft, one of the things which was based on activities in Europe if your landing craft got hit and you survived what did you then do, so there was a briefing on what to do, whether you joined your beach crew or got in the

23:00 next landing craft came in or whatever, it depended on the circumstances but there was a proper briefing and of course there was also a briefing if you were taken as a prisoner of war.

What did that involve?

Well name, rank and official number, I mean we told to never say any more than name rank and official number.

23:30 **Of the opposition, how were you so aware of the Japanese?**

I had some fairly significant interest in navies period. For instance I had nothing but contempt for the French although they had some magnificent looking ships and the Italians weren't much better.

24:00 But by the same token, in foreign navies,, you look at them and judge them against your own capacities and I just felt that the Japanese from the China wars were very, very good. And they were, the reality was they were extraordinarily good.

What was the opinion of your shipmates of the Japanese?

Some of them had fallen for the

24:30 propaganda that they weren't really any major threat, they were half blind, but I think there was a growing realisation, there were difficulties at that time, I'd learnt that there had been some cannibalism by the Japanese

- 25:00 and I got jumped on very, very heavily for repeating what I had heard. There was a sort of, our propaganda wasn't terribly clever in my book, a lot of us just knew that the Japanese on the Kokoda Track really fought damn well. Let's be realistic about this, our troops fought well but so did the Japanese
- 25:30 and when you talk to your own soldiers, they tell you this and then you are told you mustn't, you can't talk about this, so the propaganda, the Government's propaganda was to suggest that they were an inferior race. Didn't go down very well with the people who knew.
- 26:00 **What contact had you with troops discussing this?**
- We brought some of the Kokoda Track people back to Townsville from Moresby and I was talking to several of their officers and they were quite blunt.
- In what way?**
- They said that their troops were badly equipped, under rained
- 26:30 perhaps, they were absolutely superb but that the government had a lot to answer for, I think that is probably right too. We had people there in short sleeve shirts fighting jungle warfare.
- What sort of shape were those troops that you brought home in?**
- Not good, some of them were
- 27:00 pretty knocked around.
- How did that affect you?**
- I think I just accepted it was one of those things that happened.
- You mentioned one of the troops suicided on the boat can you tell us about that incident?**
- Again they tried to hush it up, but as we berthed in Townsville he shot himself with his own rifle.
- 27:30 Now whether he got a Dorothy Dix [US journalist who wrote a syndicated column of advice to the lovelorn (1870-1951)] or a letter or whatever.... I don't know what the circumstances were but again it was typical, hushed up and not to be discussed. As I guess for morale reasons it shouldn't be.
- 28:00 Its very hard, one had a feeling that our own leadership, Australian leadership wasn't terribly adequate. There was an uncomfortable feeling that the army clearly didn't like Blamey because he was fat and he was gross and the
- 28:30 soldiers we carried were really unflattering about Blamey
- He insulted them, he questioned their courage?**
- The reality was even at that stage they were very unflattering about Blamey and that permeated to us too, we were very impressed with Admiral Barbey and the American navies,
- 29:00 their carriers and their supporters, and their management, they really did things that were worth watching - Manus grow, Seeadler Harbour grow from an open harbour with nothing there to a fully live base with nearly a million people in a full city almost with dry docks and repairs, the whole shooting match, the American capacity to do things well sort of rocked us a bit,
- 29:30 so Blamey and we felt our soldiers were being short changed a bit too in the campaigns there was a general feeling that some of the New Guinea campaigns were unnecessary too.
- How well backed up did you feel Kanimbla was?**
- There's no doubt Barbey always ensured
- 30:00 we always had an escort carrying us and we were always well protected, the difference in the theatre of war, the war at sea in the Pacific was that we had adequate air cover and the war in the Mediterranean was quite the contrary. That was the huge difference between them and Barbey said when they were doing the landings at Manus somebody asked him
- 30:30 why he didn't use Kanimbla and Manoora Australia, "They are far too valuable to be put at risk until I have adequate air cover." words in his autobiography.
- Take us through the 4 o'clock briefing for the landings?**
- 31:00 It was a little island in the entrance opened fire, some brave Japanese opened fire as the first landing craft were going in. The Australia, the Shropshire I think it was, two destroyers just blew that island to pieces, it just went like that and disappeared, that was the only resistance there was
- Where were you at that moment?**

31:30 We were about two miles offshore I suppose

And what could you see?

Well I saw the island disappear, just whoosh, whoosh, and bang and there was sudden silence and a few bits of trees and smoke, it was only a little tiny island

What can you see out the front of your landing craft as you are coming in? How was the light for instance?

32:00 You can see where you are going, there is sufficient light, I think it was the earliest we did a landing it was just after dawn, first light, you could see where the beach head was, where you were going to go. All my occupation was with line of departure, such and such a time, hit the beach at such and such a time,

32:30 absolute priorities, so you are not worrying about anything else you know, your job is those two things - get landing craft and the troops from position A to position B such and such a time

How worried are you that your performance might not meet those expectations?

Of course you are worried,

33:00 there is an anxiety that you'd be letting your team down, you could be putting them at risk, put your troops at risk too, you've got 180 soldiers you are putting on a beach and if you are not putting them there in accordance with a plan you are in trouble, you've got to get to the right beach time to get them there, sure it's a worry, that's why

33:30 your preoccupation is with those times and you don't think of anything else.

So how fast is your heart beating as you approaching?

I don't know that I know what the answer to that is.

What's the atmosphere in a landing craft like?

Tense, it's always tense

34:00 and your big problem is the beach contour right, are you going to get the troops dry or are you going to hit a ditch they can fall into, between where the landing craft hits and where the actual beach head is, there are all kinds of ifs and buts, there are worries.

What's the feeling like when the thing drops at the front?

Relief when everything goes well.

34:30 **What's it sound like when that happens?**

It's not only getting them off the ramp and racing off, and they are racing off because they don't want to be exposed, they want to get up under cover, because that bit of yellow sand is a very inviting target

35:00 for snipers, so they want to get quickly under cover, the troops they go pretty fast out of the landing craft.. And as soon as the last foot is off that ramp the winch handler is winding that ramp up as quickly as he can and you are reversing, got your full throttle reversing off that beach as quickly as you can

35:30 because you are vulnerable while you are a sitting target, you are much safer when you are moving, so it's a speed reaction, it happens so quickly, so the roar of your diesel engine if you want the noise, it's the roar of your diesel engine.

What are your preoccupations at that moment?

I guess relief that you got them out safely and no one's had a go at you

36:00 **But you're not out of danger yet?**

No you're not, in fact curiously enough often the danger will be later in the day, when the enemy has had a chance to regroup or drop batteries where its got the beach under shellfire so you are not out of it.

36:30 But it's still a relief to know you've done, there's a satisfaction knowing you have, you got them landed safely and that you were retracting, simple as that.

What communications do you have on board?

Radio, with the ship and, only with the ship. Because you are using hand signals to your landing craft.

37:00 **what are some of those signals?**

Speed up, Slow down you've got to get that timing exactly right so you are getting a speed control by hand signals, it's quite easy to do, but you are a bit exposed because you are standing, you've got to be

seen.

I had this vision of

37:30 **you are advancing to the beach you are looking left and right I can almost hear a sound track in my head, take us through ...**

The diesel engine noise of those landing craft is quite strong, grade marine diesels they are powerful engines they drive these big trucks today.

Could you talk at this level?

Oh you can shout at the coxswain you can be heard.

38:00 **You are not actually the coxswain on this?**

No, you've got a coxswain beside you and he's driving the landing craft, handling it, and you are very reliant on them being good, particularly on a surf beach, actually retracting and not getting broached on the beach and of course we are cross trained; if I got knocked over the coxswain can take over my job and if he got knocked over I could

38:30 take over his job and any one of the landing craft crew could do the same thing, all the members of the crew are cross trained to take each others jobs if you do get into trouble.

What particularly are you doing and what orders are you giving the coxswain?

Well, I'm controlling the speed of advance and the direction if you like to make sure we are the part of the beach we are going to land on

39:00 but he's doing the handling. He's my driver for want of a better word but I've got control.

After you have landed and you are in reverse thrust take us through getting out of there.

39:30 If there is no surf, which at Hollandia there wasn't any surf, it's relatively easy retracting because you have got no problems with that and you can retract almost all the landing craft retracting all together so you are taking a whole wave of the second run in. But on a surf beach where things get a bit dicey you may have

40:00 a jeep, which happened on one of the last runs in Lingayen Gulf, it got stuck on the ramp, half in half out of the beach, that gets a bit hairy so a certain amount of energy pushing and getting the beach party to pull the damn thing off the ramp so you can get out again

40:30 some things, and you can also broach, you get a bad wave just as you are retracting and get the side of, then you are in real trouble.

Tape 5

00:30 **This was the first time you'd seen action at an actual landings?**

Well all our were white ensign so each landing craft, well exercise landings but in battle landings we always wore a white ensign on each of our landing craft and there is a curious sequel to that because in the rushes of MacArthur doing his 'we shall return' in the films

01:00 he saw a white ensign and he re-enacted the whole landing without any white ensigns appearing.

Let's go through that landing again sequentially

01:30 **You are in charge of the landing craft?**

In charge of a group of landing craft.

You are preoccupied with time, etc, can you detail from 4 o'clock onwards?

Well at 4 o'clock morning you are going to have breakfast, that's the first thing, landing craft and make sure that your

02:00 coxswains have got all the right gear, that you've drawn your side arms because you take side arms and the ammunition as well all has to be accounted for because you draw it, because you don't carry arms normally, they are all kept under lock and key, you draw your side arms, you then check your boats crews, make sure they have had their meal, they've got all the food that we need

02:30 because we have also got rations on board because we probably won't get back for a meal during the day, and then at the time the ship arrives in the disembarkation spot A which is usually some distance off shore for the first run in and the call is, 'away all boats', and all the landing craft from the davits are landed.

- 03:00 Those that had to be derrick lifted off the upper decks are hoisted out as well and they circle on either side of the ship waiting to be called to the nets and there is a sequence for your landing craft. If you are in the first wave you might go to net 1, 3, 5, and 7 and the other side might be 2, 4, 6, 8
- 03:30 so each of your coxswains has been told which net he's got to go to. Alongside the nets, the troops are embarked, then you go back and circle again, until I decide what time is necessary for me to go to what's called the line of which is a predetermined position for the run into the beach.
- 04:00 **How many landing craft are running in at each time?**
- Normally 6 but it may vary it's, sometimes 5 can be 4 LCVPs and an LCM later. Waves usually are a mix of the LCM because the heavy equipment is not the first waves or second wave stuff.
- As a wave leader where are you positioned within those 5 craft?**
- 04:30 Usually in the centre of one of the centre craft because all of the signals to the other landing craft, although you've got a radio in your craft, all the other landing craft have not and it's a matter of hand signals.
- What happens next after the wave has started to go in?**
- You're preoccupied with making sure the time from the line of departure to hitting the beach timed accurately, because the requirement is that if you were to hit the beach at zero
- 05:00 plus eight, you hit the beach at zero plus eight, zero being the start time of the exercise or the operation so the timing is very, very important. It is important from the point of view of troops moving across the beach head, if you arrive early you put too many people on the beach, if you arrive late you haven't got the numbers for gun fire support or as the case may be so it is terribly important.
- 05:30 **At that landing at Tanahmerah Bay where were you in the waves that came in?**
- I was in the second wave, which is commonly known as the suicide wave.
- Can you explain what it's like being in the second wave?**
- The second waves, based on European experience, the first wave is usually a shock to the enemy if they are beach entrenched
- 06:00 because they are getting, "Oh God, they've hit us on the beach." but second wave gets there they have usually got the range, so commonly known as the suicide wave, but in the Pacific that occurred.
- You mentioned this was one occasion where there was some resistance from the beach?**
- Not from the beach from an island on the way in and it was just a single machine gun opened up but
- 06:30 I mean I don't even know what he was firing at.
- In the sequence you've just laid out for us, when did that machine gun open up and what was going on at the time?**
- We were still probably half way between the island and the ship. After the initial waves, of course the ship comes in closer, once the landing has been successful, you've got your initial waves, so the distance the landing craft have got to travel
- 07:00 for putting stuff on the beach is much shorter.
- Where is your artillery support coming from?**
- Cruisers, destroyers usually, in all the American landings extraordinary the pre-bombing, the pre-shell bombardment and then the actual landing and then in the later landings, for example Lingayen Gulf, and at
- 07:30 Brunei, you've got what they call landing craft rockets, which is a battery of fairly large landing craft about 600 tons, it has batteries of rockets which are pointing to just in one direction, the beach. And they go in on the beach and just fire the whole 20 or 30 rockets broadside at the beach, if there is anything there it won't be after they finished firing.
- 08:00 And that was a development from Europe, it was successful there and they brought it to later landings and it was very successful there. They didn't use rockets at Tanahmerah Bay but they did in subsequent landings.
- You have taken the second wave in again, sequentially what happens next?**
- Well go back to the ship, load a second contingent of troop go back into the beach, go back to the ship,
- 08:30 load, probably a third is getting vehicles and stores back to the beach, when the ship's fully unloaded you hoist your boats. And of course in Kanimbla we were always proud of the three ships we were always first, we had the biggest number of troops and we were still always first finished.

Can you tell about the timing you mentioned, zero plus eight what would you be working on here?

09:00 Depending, I think on Tanahmerah Bay we're 6 hours 20 minutes to disembark the lot, but often it was down to 4 hours 29, depending on what cargo you had and the distance from the shore. In some places like Tanahmerah Bay there

09:30 was some distance of relatively shallow water, the ships couldn't go close to the beach, where at Lingayen Gulf where we did it in 4 [hours] 29 we were able to come to deep water fairly close into the beach so the ships moved after the initial landings, the ships moved fairly close in. The timing depends largely on the distance off shore.

10:00 **In that 6 hours at Tanahmerah you are constantly on the job?**

Yep. You are just rotating - ship, shore, ship, shore.

You mentioned rations on board, when did you get a chance to eat?

Usually on the way back when you haven't got any troops on board

10:30 you just have a bite when you feel hungry. We had Tiddy Oggies which are a lovely naval term, Tiddy Oggie, well it's a Cornish pasty really and the Kanimbla ship's cooks made absolutely superb Cornish pasties. It was a fairly standard cooked meal for action stations in all

11:00 our ships, not only in landing ships were ships because they could be handled as a pie if you like and people could eat them at their action stations. And they were very sustaining. I always said Kanimbla's cooks did a marvellous job they were one of the reasons it was a happy ship.

Why were they called Tiddy Oggies?

I have no idea, it is inherited I presume from Cornwall

11:30 **What about if during that six hours someone needed to go the toilet?**

Well there was always a bucket or over the side, not much privacy in those occasions, but if you had to go to the toilet you had to, there was always a bucket.

What about the nervous American troops lined up to go on shore, did you ever have any for a bucket on those occasions?

12:00 Not to my knowledge but we did encourage the troops to deal with their problems before they disembarked. It was one of the things the Americans were very firm about in briefing their troops, you know, 'You've got decent heads [toilets] on board this ship, use them before you go to shore because your chances of having another opportunity can be quite a way down the track.' so most of the troops I think did the sensible thing.

12:30 Seasickness was the main use for buckets and trips ashore.

Those flat bottom landing craft were renowned for being a little bit rough, how did the troops manage that?

Well there were cases of seasickness, some of them got quite sick. One of the problems was and particularly with Australian troops who were much worse over this, you

13:00 couldn't get them to get their heads down, the Australians, I mean you kept saying 'Keep your heads down, keep them below the gun oar because.....' but the Australian troops always wanted to look where they were going. You'd shout at them and scream at them and they'd still tend to poke their heads up. In fact one of my coxswains was very good at it he'd say to his crew and would go bang like that

13:30 every time they popped their heads up.

Were you ever under fire in these landings from snipers or....?

No, well the closest we came was in a reinforcement run to Wakde Island where there was some sniper fire, not that I experienced it but some of the boats crews did, the Americans had captured Wakde Island and across the other side on the

14:00 mainland they landed a battalion of troops and they had got into, fallen into fairly heavy Japanese concentration and they were in trouble and we were sent up with reinforcements to support them on Toem beachhead and there was some sniper fire and in fact running into the beach, you are right on top,

14:30 their front line was only about I guess 100 metres from the beach head, so there was an element of risk, several people claimed they heard bullets whistling over their head, but whether that is true or not certainly you could hear the machine gun fire, you could hear the firing from both sides, it was 100 metres, not very far from the water really. That was

15:00 a bit hairy, because not only was the enemy that close but it was very heavy surf beach, we had a lot of trouble with the landing craft.

How did you deal with that trouble of the surf?

It needs great skill from the coxswains which I might say ours had, but two or three landing craft actually broached, I mean even the best coxswain in the world can broach if you are retracting

15:30 just at the wrong moment so even if you are going full astern it sticks for a moment and you judge the next surf coming in and said, "Oh it's time to go." and you the beach has held you back a little bit so your timing is not right, very easy to broach then, you've got another landing craft who's got to sit on the stern, send you a line and pull you back in off the beach

16:00 and that needs quite a lot of skill, it's really quite difficult.

How would this situation affect the crucial timing you were working on?

Can affect it very greatly although by and large the most of the, that particular timing there were reinforcements, it wasn't imperative time anyway, imperative time is only when you are doing an initial landing.

16:30 We were lucky with the other landing, the major landings we didn't have a major surf. That's the way the cookie crumbles as I say, Wakde was the worst feature we came over really trying to get people ashore quickly under somewhat hazardous conditions

Was there a margin for error for changing this timing if it got rough?

The fact that you as a wave leader had the, the beach controller for the flag ship, the commander of the operation could say, and that's why the wave leaders all had radio, could say change minus 8 to minus 12

17:30 yes there is always the flexibility there, not for you to do but for the overall commander to change.

Can you describe where the beach controller is and how your communication works?

Well the flagship which is either the Blue Ridge or Wasatch, the other had Admiral Barbey on board as controlling admiral and he would have at the line of

18:00 departure he would have a patrol craft anchored there, and if that patrol craft said to him, "Look we are running out to the beach we are having problems flagship." and the flag ship would come to us. So the control the ultimate control for changing the timings was with Admiral Barbey

18:30 or Admiral Kinkaid, whoever was doing the actual landing, Kinkaid did some of them.

And how would the chain of communication work?

It would come from the flag ship, via radio.

How much were you using in normal procedure during the landings?

Absolute silence unless you've got orders contrary, after the initial landings of course it was used to tell you

19:00 if your own ship had finished with you it would tell you to go to another ship. It could be used in the later stages more, but radio silence was maintained largely

Was that an eerie situation, was it actual silence?

The roar of the landing craft engines drowned all noise. As I say grade marine diesels are very noisy engines, the fact

19:30 is there is no noise reduction.

After that first experience at Tanahmerah the next time you were involved in landings was as reinforcements at Toem beachhead?

Yes

After that, where was the next operation?

Morotai

Morotai was with Australian troops for the first time?

Yes

What was the first time you came into contact and trained with Australian troops?

20:00 The same way, we went back to Cape Cretin and we did rehearsals there with them prior to the landings and, rehearsals and then the actual landings.

You mentioned before the landing at Tanahmerah Bay the craft was beached at Cape Cretin?

- 20:30 No it was after Tanahmerah Bay. This is when I flew up to Blue Beach, yes it was a storm at night and she ran aground, it would be easy to blame who was responsible but I'm not going to. I wasn't there but
- 21:00 I think it's better left unsaid who was responsible. Anyway the ship ran aground; of course everyone thought "Hooray, we are going to go to Sydney." not a bit of it ,didn't do any harm at all

Can you explain how you got the ship out of that situation?

Well really the ship was

- 21:30 broadside on, I've got a photograph there, broadside on the beach, sitting on the beach and first of all we had two corvettes came and try to tow us but our corvettes are not good towing vessels. Then we had a tug came to help and that wasn't terribly good either, then we had the Caledonia Salver from memory, one of the big salvage tugs came then we laid out kedge anchors so
- 22:00 that our own winches could help pull, so laying out of the kedges was a fairly substantial exercise, so we had the kedge anchors and we had the big salvage tug and two corvettes pulling and our own winches, we were moving up and down like this, it wasn't going terribly well until some one said, "Why don't we hoist down the landing craft and get the ship to move a little bit up and down?"
- 22:30 And that in actual fact worked, it just broke the suction and she came clear. And the divers went down and had a look and there was absolutely nothing, such scraped a few barnacles off the bottom which meant she had a cleaner hull than before. Less reason to go for a refit or go to dry dock.

How many foot of water are we talking about here

- 23:00 When she was aground? She drew 24 feet so....

She drew 24 feet. You mentioned the divers, what was their role on the ship?

We didn't carry any divers ourselves.

Where were they from?

They were from the Caledonia Salver I think.

- 23:30 **Without laying blame, was that an embarrassing situation for the ship's crew?**

Of course it is, it's terribly embarrassing, especially for your captain. I mean if you run a ship aground you get court martialled normally. In fact one of the things is in this particular occasion although there was a board of enquiry, I don't think anyone got court martialled, in fact I'm sure there wasn't a court martial

- 24:00 Exigencies of war, I suppose, well we got her and off thank God for that.

Was that a nervous time when she was aground, particularly for the officers?

Oh yeah, the worry was that there is very little tidal range

- 24:30 in that part of the world and the worry was that she was stuck fast, because it had been a very strong blow. So the real worry was that we weren't going to get her off.

What was the moment when she finally started to move like?

In fact I had the looking after the after winches and the stern end of the ship, the

- 25:00 kedges and it suddenly starting going, just an inch at a time, and I thought, 'No, that's just the sea movement.'" and then I said to the bridge, "I think we've got some movement!" and suddenly she almost started, I mean feet started coming in and the captain said to me "Are
- 25:30 you sure you are not dragging the kedge?" "I don't think so." But even then you weren't sure whether it was the winch being dragged across the bottom, but no she started moving and, then of course one of the corvettes got wrapped around the Caledonia Salver hawser and there was.... it was an interesting exercise.

- 26:00 **How much do those kedges weigh?**

About 20 tons

And how did you get those out? You would drop them in deep water normally?

Use the corvette.

Must have been an incredibly difficult operation in itself?

There was a certain amount of skill in getting her off I guess, just good seamanship.

26:30 **So what were your emotions at that moment?**

In my case relief, I was dog tired I'd had that hairy exercise up at Blue Beach and I'd had almost no sleep, 36 hours later I just wanted to put my head down and go to sleep.

Was that fair to say of all the crew at that time?

Yep, all those involved, yep

27:00 I think.

Tempers frayed?

Looking back I don't remember tempers being frayed. One of the things about the tropics is it's very enervating and in that high humidity I think people get lethargic, couldn't be bothered getting cross with each other, they just wanted to put their heads down and go to sleep.

27:30 **People also go mad in the tropics?**

They go troppo you mean, common term, yes they do, and one of the things that I think is very interesting is that, put 680 men in a sardine can for 16 months and no one did. Says a lot for the ship doesn't it?

Says a lot for the ship's cooking, the galley.

28:00 Not only the galley but the whole ship, you might say that the doctors the dentists, everyone involved. See the other thing is we didn't have a single case of malaria in those landing craft crews, we were all on Atebrin and I know a lot of ships sort of forcibly supervised the taking of Atebrin but from memory I don't think we did.

28:30 People just took it. And we also took salt tablets which many of us are ruined today.

Salt tablets?

Yeah.

Why would you have to take those?

Well it was the theory was it helped avoid sweating and dehydration of course now medical knowledge shows that it's a major cause of chronic heart disease so I don't know.

29:00 **Is that something you were able to seek restitution for, the fact that you were made to take these tablets?**

I don't know if it's ever been argued. I think [the Department of] Veterans' Affairs now accept that heart disease was one of the things that occurred, and if you've got heart disease that's one of the things that's looked after, I think.

29:30 **What was different about the Morotai landings compared to previous landings?**

First of all, A, there was Australian troops. B, there was a large coral niggerhead [isolated coral head] along the beach that no one seemed to realise so that some of the troops got out of the landing craft went into relatively shallow water and then they went into deep water up to waist or higher in some cases wading onto the proper shore beach.

30:00 The landing was successful, it was only successful because there was no enemy opposition, given the beach head, if they had opposition it would have been an absolute disaster area.

Can you comment on how the Australian troops differed from the Americans?

They're more colourful in their language, there was

30:30 good natured banter between the landing craft crews and the soldiers and we always suggested to our own troops who were silly enough to be a soldier when you can have hot and cold running water and a decent bunk, we used to tease them unmercifully. That would be the difference, American humour doesn't grab that at all

31:00 **That's something they say of Americans today, lack of cynicism.**

Yeah, I would agree with that.

How is the relationship between the Australian Navy and Army then?

Good, it really was very good in fact it was a great

31:30 pleasure to get our own troops, I think it's a fair comment

What about the way they performed in action, was there any difference?

Well it would be very hard to, no, physically from a ship's point of view you couldn't see it, we were

putting them on didn't see them action so it would be unfair to make any comment on the difference it would be

32:00 hard to perceive any difference, they all got out of landing craft they all ran up the beaches, the only difference was the Australian troops wouldn't keep their heads down in the landing craft.

Where they as green as the American troops?

At Morotai, yes I think they were. At Brunei and Balikpapan no they weren't, because they had all seen

32:30 I think even in Morotai some of them had been in the Middle East, in general they were less green, in general, but the reinforcements it's hard to say.

What time of the day were these landings?

They were broad daylight, 9 o'clock in the morning at Morotai, and all the subsequent landings were broad daylight

33:00 Morotai was just one of those things where, I think the lessons learnt at Morotai were taken well care of, they used SEALS to do beach reconnaissance in other beaches as a consequence before the landings, covertly to make sure it didn't happen again, so I think a lesson was learnt from Morotai

33:30 but the beach that was chosen was a bad beach.

What did happen you mentioned there were accidents with men sinking?

The trouble with Australian troops were they had no quick release gear of their belts and packs. I'm not sure but I'm told there were some drownings

34:00 the rumour was there were, I don't know, I think there probably were

Were these rumours came up at the time or later? What were you experiencing at the time of these landings?

Well the beach sector we had in Kanimbla we got them all ashore some of them up to waist and chest high water on the way

34:30 that's not a nice way to land on a beach

What about the other heavier equipment, how did you land that?

We used another beach for that, later on during the day we had to use another beach. Because there was no way that the beach that those initial landings were on you could take the equipment across.

What sort of things were these troops carrying?

They were carrying a pack and a rifle

35:00 machine gun, some of them had machine guns but most were just a rifle and a pack. Our troops weren't very well equipped.

I've heard that said in comparison to the American troops at the time. What were the main things that they lacked?

Well they used the old .303, the Enfield where the Americans had much better high powered rifles, the Americans had far superior equipment

35:30 both in clothing and firepower.

Did this affect morale of the troops?

I don't know that it did because the Australians thought they were better fighters than the Americans anyway and I think records show that as jungle fighters they were.

36:00 I think they were very jealous of the American equipment and a lot of them probably acquired American equipment one way or another, I think we all did, I mean the jungle greens we wore in landing craft were all American jungle greens which we acquired one way or the other.

Which brings up

36:30 **the point that the Kanimbla was very lucky in its PX stores, did you feel that at the time?**

Yes we did. There's no doubt we felt that very strongly, we were well looked after by the Americans and we knew it, because we were Admiral Barbey's first three ships. Later we were 3 out of 50 or 200 ships, but we were the first 3 ships under his command

37:00 and he never forgot that.

What were the greatest luxuries that you had access to from the American stores?

Steak. I think, we got some magnificent steaks from the Americans.

I find that quite incredible.

37:30 From time to time our supply officer would go over to supply ship and they would have steak, we were living off, our own food was mutton or bully beef, and the American food, they would provide steak for their own troops, we had steak occasionally.

38:00 **What about ice cream?**

Yes we had ice cream too and gallons of it from the Americans, although we made our own, we could make our own, but they put their ice cream with everything. They'd put it on the same tray as they had meat and everything else

At Morotai there was no resistance on the beach. What were you expecting?

38:30 Well we were told that the Japanese were there, we could expect resistance, but we were told that everywhere. In briefings you were always look for the worst scenario, and they should, so we were prepared for resistance but there was none.

How much briefing given on the morning of those operations?

Well usually the night before the briefings,

39:00 the wave leaders normally are briefed with the army so they know what the army briefing is, and then they brief their coxswains. So what you pass on, you won't pass all the information on because it is not necessary but what you would pass on what you would consider it essential for your coxswain to know.

39:30 **Would that involve intelligence regarding gun emplacements? What was the most important information you would pass on to coxswains?**

Exactly that, if we knew of any gun emplacements, for instance at Balikpapan there was the possibility they would fire the beaches and we knew what the alternatives would be if that happened but it didn't happen, they were warned it could happen.

Tape 6

00:30 Reading journal entry "The amphibious component of the Lingayen Gulf attacks force go to Kanimbla, Manoora and Westralia. The 3 Australian ships, 2 escort carriers, the amphibious command ship Wasatch, and with Admiral Kinkaid and General Krueger on board, and they left Manus on the 6th. The various other groups subject to attacks, both by service ships and between 50 and 60 kamikaze attacks on the 5th

01:00 US Carrier Ommaney Bay was severely damaged had to be sunk. Australia suffered damage and casualties but remained operational was again the victim of suicide attacks the following day. The US battleship New Mexico was also twice damaged by these suicide attacks. Meanwhile the third group was attacked by aircraft without damage and an attack by a Japanese destroyer was driven off, and the destroyer sunk. On the 7th the Australia suffered her third and fourth suicide bomber attacks, despite damage, met her scheduled tasks.

01:30 Four enemy aircraft attacked our amphibious group and three were intercepted by carrier based air cover on upper quarter and after a 3 minute dog fight, all planes were shot down. At 18:50 another, after a kamikaze attack the Kitkun Bay, another Woolworth carrier [small, quickly built aircraft carrier], attacked it and attempted to crash on Westralia. The barrage from the ship blew the aircraft to pieces

02:00 but parts of the wreckage sprayed the aft part of the ship, disabled the steering gear of Westralia which was quickly repaired. At 5 o'clock on the 5th June we went to breakfast then to action stations, weather conditions were clearly going to be ideal with little wind. Dawn followed an unusually clear night with beautiful bright sky and stars as we traversed the last quarter moon. Throughout the night we steamed with paravanes and streamed down the gulf towards Lingayen Gulf

02:30 At 6:42." this is perhaps important because this is when dawn was, "we went to action station, the kamikaze attempting to attack us was shot down in an awesome barrage from the escorts. 7 o'clock we synchronised watches. At 8 minutes past, went to operational action stations, after recovering paravanes. The battleships commenced bombardment with cruisers in close support. Australia bombarding Dagupan immediately behind Dalanier.

03:00 Control of the air was so nearly complete, that only a few single kamikazes managed to get through the barrier. The destroy escort Hodges was hit at 7:00 and the cruiser Columbia 7:45. They were the only two ships damaged. We then went to the main anchorage, all boats were lowered and we proceeded to the beach. I was in command of the second wave with LCVP K-15 Leading Seaman Winkle was my coxswain and the

03:30 other LCVP were K-4 11,14, 16 and 22 and then we proceeded to the line of departure. At 9:10 rockets fired from the LST. Landing craft support bombarded the beach saturating the beach heads and shifting gunfire to both flanks of the beach head. The thunder of gunfire, and the roar of the rockets was deafening the whole beach area was shrouded in smoke from exploding shells.” Is that enough?

That’s a very detailed description

04:00 The other thing I might say is to mention there was an air of tension amongst the embarked crews and my boat crews, we knew from determined kamikaze attacks that we could expect fierce resistance from the Japanese but my main concern was to reach the line of departure at the correct time, run in from the line of departure was only an estimated speed of 3 and a half knots due to the delays of turning around in AVT’s [?] and ducks ahead of us and the fact the wave ahead of us was delayed

And this is reading from which journal?

That is from my midshipman’s journal, I wrote it as a sub lieutenant

04:30 in 1945 at the time of the landing, just after the landing.

How do you keep track of these, do you always carry a journal or purely from memory?

From memory

What’s it like to see a kamikaze and know they are out there?

05:00 Really frightening. I mean it’s very interesting. The German JU 88 dive bombers [the JU 88 was actually a level bomber - the JU 87 was a dive bomber], you could hear them coming, and if they dropped the bomb and you didn’t hear it you knew you had been hit, but with a kamikaze you could hear it, but you would go on hearing it until it hit you. So I mean

05:30 we knew they were hitting the ships so it was quite a different feeling over it. They had to be destroyed so there was an absolute blind blanket of fire at them. A lot of courage by the Japanese to do that, people knock the Japanese, I know their philosophy is different but

06:00 you’ve got to give them credit. How many of us would deliberately sacrifice our lives for king and country as it was in those days, there were some reservations, I don’t know if we’d be quite so enthusiastic if we were told we were to go on a mission to kill us.

06:30 **Can you talk us through the moment on the ship when you realised there were kamikazes in the area?**

Well I mean the immediate, I was on the bridge on action station on the watch and to see the aircraft nearly hit Westralia and to see it hit the light fleet carrier, the American carrier was appalling

07:00 you had a mixed feeling, what incredible bravery on their part, those pilots, how fanatical they must be, is that the sort of enemy we were going to face when we land? This is the sort of thoughts that went through your mind I think; they went through my mind and just hoped to God they didn’t attack us,

07:30 and the tragedy, one of the notes I made after the landings was, if they’d attacked the landing ship infantry rather than the cruisers and carriers we wouldn’t have had the force to land. If one of those had hit us it would have destroyed the ship, we had nowhere near the protection the warship had either in watertight compartments

08:00 or any of the other safety measures, a warship is very closely compartmented so if one part is damaged you’ve got another part that can take over, you’ve got dual systems, you’ve got a dual electronic systems and dual ring main, you’ve got dual almost everything so when things go wrong you can quickly fix it but in Kanimbla and Manoora and Westralia they were passenger ships converted

08:30 so the thought that we might cop it was a little bit sort of scary, I think is a fair comment.

Can you describe the scene as these kamikazes are coming towards you, what can you see?

Well, an absolute blanket of burst of gunfire in the general direction and they would fly straight into it

09:00 it was almost as if you were squirting ink at them, that was the way the horizon looked and they were just flying straight into it. You know, and of course the Australia was, well all of us, the Australia, her funnels were leaning over, she was in a shocking mess, heavy casualty rate

09:30 it was a pretty sobering thought. But what was remarkable of course was that Australia survived it.

You would have known people on the Australia?

On the Australia, oh yes.

What radio communications were you receiving at the time?

Well we knew exactly what the damage was and what was happening to her we knew the captain

10:00 had been killed, in fact his son, is an engineer, Commodore Dechaineux lives just around the corner from us. He was only a small boy then of course.

Have you ever talked to him about what you saw?

Yes, he is a very nice person Peter Dechaineux.

10:30 **What's the feeling on the bridge?**

Open exposed bridge, you've got no protection there at all, apart from anything else there is also the danger from exploding shrapnel from the shells raining down on top of you, bit disconcerting too, but we were lucky I guess.

11:00 Told you she was a lucky ship.

Yet you pressed on?

You have no alternative really, we had a job to do

And precisely what was that job?

To land troops at Dagupan and in Lingayen Gulf.

Can you take us through the period, you are obviously not just thinking about the Australia?

Well my main job as action officer of the watch was to keep station, just

11:30 make sure that we stayed where we were supposed to be and in station keeping you have got to keep X number of metres if you like, or yards in those days, off stern of your lead ship and you keep onto your guide which is the Wasatch with Kinkaid on board, you've got to keep a certain distance from her

12:00 and watch that so your main job is just, up and down the speed of the ship, and keep the course that you are in your proper station, your job is station keeping. Sincerely and simply, and that occupies you so you've got one eye on the bridge compass, one eye on the distance apart of your ships and bearing of your ships on your beam and

12:30 you're also listening to TBS [Talk Back System] which was voice command coming from the command ship so that if there were any alterations to the course you can pick it up, so you've got the chatter of TBS, so you may get an aircraft alert, or a bogie, you can hear the term 'bogie at 275 16 miles' 'bogey at 275' or 180 32 miles, 8 bogies at such and such a, they are talking all the time, so all the time you are

13:00 not really thinking about the air attack, in the job I had you are thinking about your job which is station keeping, I mean the captain's got other concerns, he is relying on you to keep the ship in the right position.

What did you know of the number of casualties on the Australia at the time?

I think we knew exactly the number of casualties

13:30 not certain but I think we did.

What sort of assistance could you have provided if required?

Well we could have taken casualties into our sick bay when we got to Lingayen Gulf, not while we were at sea, but when we got to the landing area we could have taken casualties, in fact we didn't but Manoora did. I can't remember why but

14:00 I think those that needed hospitalisation from the Australia were sent to the Manoora.

This is prior to the landings?

No, at the landings.

And where were your landing craft at this stage?

They were all on our davits, on board.

So you were yet to deploy them?

Yep.

Can you take us through the details of what happened next?

14:30 Well the start of the kamikaze attacks were the previous afternoon and evening as I told you then we steamed through the night with our paravanes, we put our paravanes down the first time we'd actually used the paravanes which were sweeping mines cause they thought there might be mines there and then we went around the corner and down into Lingayen Gulf itself, and the night was fairly

15:00 it wasn't a, it was a reasonably quiet night, there was some alerts but nothing very spectacular, again keeping station at night and the difficulties of darkened ships, another problem and we needed to be

fairly alert, and then when dawn came we went into action stations and as soon as we got into positions we lowered the boats and off we went to the beach.

Did you actually go to the beach?

Oh yes,

15:30 I had the second wave

Can you describe in brief?

I was in K 15 which was a boat, with Leading Seaman Winkle, who I might have said has remained a friend, we've kept in touch ever since, he's up in - just moved to Bundaberg from Brisbane, he lived in Brisbane for many years, he ran a transport business after he got out of the navy but

16:00 he was my senior coxswain so I was with him. We had five other landing craft in the second wave. All of which were my landing craft, I was responsible not only for that particular operation but I was the divisional officer so I was responsible for their welfare as well. And we got a good second run in, it was very slow because there was a delay on the beach,

16:30 the alligators and ducks which were the amphibious track vehicles were for some reason delayed on landing and the amphibious tracked vehicles went in first and I think, not certain why they were delayed but they were delayed, so we got up to the line of departure at the right time and then we were told we had to go back

17:00 five minutes, land five minutes late so the going from the line of departure to the beach was very slow, painfully slow, and I might say with the bombardment going sideways on either side of the beachhead and the cruiser shells whistling over the top of us, it was little bit disconcerting, but they were pretty accurate and they were off to the side so it was all right.

Before you clamber over the side to your landing craft what final words do you say?

17:30 No, it's broadcast, 'away all boats', and you just go in your boats, it's as simple as that.

Did people ever wish you luck?

No. The navy is much too matter of fact for that

Was there anything that you carried with you, like a keepsake or a talisman, something superstitious?

18:00 No. My only superstition is Friday the 13th.

Would you conduct operations on Friday the 13th?

Well the British did in the Mediterranean because they thought that the Germans would think that they wouldn't. But the Germans didn't think they wouldn't

18:30 and there was a resulting disaster, a major disaster. So Friday the 13th I don't take kindly to at all.

What about the Australian Navy, did they have any superstitions?

I think the same superstition, sailors are very superstitious about Friday the 13th, I don't know why, but they are.

What about on Kanimbla?

We never sailed on Friday the 13th.

19:00 I think in general people avoid sailing on Friday the 13th if they conceivably could.

Were there any other superstitions?

No, the only real naval superstition I know of is Friday the 13th.

There's always been naval superstitions, people would not sail under Orion rise and things like that?

Yep, true.

19:30 **Back to the landing, can you keep describing the events as you remember them?**

Well we unloaded our troops, Kanimbla at the time was some distance off shore and then she moved further in shore, so we did two runs from a long distance and then we started running in, after that we ran in

20:00 well we didn't run as waves any longer as soon as the, after the first 10 waves had landed there was no sequence, landing craft just loaded and went straight to the beach and found a spot on the beach and deposited the bodies.

What opposition was there as you were coming in that second wave?

None, there was nothing left, in fact, it wasn't until the evening that the Japanese, or towards late afternoon that the

20:30 Japanese from the hills behind found their way to the beach and they actually hit one of the landing ship tanks on the beach and they started dropping shells on the beach, but it was all right, a bit uncomfortable, one of the vehicles when they were unloading got stuck but it was very hastily pulled off and we

21:00 were glad in the evening, quite late in the evening, we were glad to get off the beach, I think is a fair comment. Then of course what happened was the overhead air cover had to stop because no light and all the ships made smoke and we got back on board in the smoke and

21:30 I think it was almost 8:15 when our last boat was hoisted and we got away and seeing that huge task force leave in a thick fog of smoke without any collisions was really quite an exercise.

How is the smoke being generated?

In our case it was generated by chemicals, we had a chemical smoke making system

22:00 the destroyers, the oil fired, see Kanimbla was diesel but the oil fired ones just burned black smoke, they changed the air so that they poured black smoke out of their funnels, so that was a yucky brew and our chemical smoke didn't help, it had a horrible stink.

How were you finding your way back to the ship in all this smoke?

22:30 Well it was not too bad because it all sort of came up a bit, it was all right, we found our way back.

What are you really concerned about at this time with smoke all around you?

Collision, I mean that's the fact, that not a single ship I know, we've got radar but the fact that not a single ship collided

23:00 in that sort of mass exodus from the area really was a very significant achievement, it says a lot about the skill of everyone involved.

Are you getting radar vectoring back to your ship?

No but really, we were almost back to the ship when they started laying the smoke, there wasn't any real problem for us, the real problem came when we all hoisted the boats and started departing, that's when the Colorado got hit by a friendly shell,

23:30 American battleship.

How did that come to pass?

Oh they were firing over the top of the smoke at a kamikaze.

The Colorado was hit by friendly shell?

Well there was kamikaze over the top of the smoke somewhere and they were firing by radar and just the

24:00 safety angle there with no visibility wasn't there, so it was hit by a shell, there was some quite heavy casualties.

You also mentioned kamikaze boats?

Yeah, well that when we got back to Leyte from that attack, they started using suicide boats to attack the vessels on the anchorage, because Leyte was considered then reasonably safe anchorage and they were using suicide, in fact there is one in the war memorial, one of the suicide boats, they were little motor boats

24:30 full powered boats with a warhead explosives in the bow of them and there was, went, rammed straight into you, thing the Al Qaedas [terrorist organization] took up not very long ago.

Were you involved in any actions?

No I was, much to my, A we were all pretty tired and stressed after

25:00 fairly heavy time and we arrived in Leyte and we found we had to sit in a boat all night doing anti-suicide patrols, we used our landing craft.

What did anti-suicide boat control consist of?

Just going round and round the ship a certain distance from the ship to make sure no boats approached us, we had machine guns on board,

25:30 whether we would have been effective at knocking over any suicide boat is a bit debatable but we

thought we would.

There must have been a lot of discussion about the kamikaze planes especially in your wardroom?

There was, I mean, it varied from 'the bastards are mad' to

26:00 'they have got some courage'. The feeling was at that time, of course, the atomic bombs hadn't dropped, they were doing this in the Philippines, the discussion was what the hell is going to happen when we attack Japan? I mean that was really what the major discussion sort of circled around

26:30 we've had an easy go until Lingayen Gulf because Leyte was totally unopposed and quite quiet cause the Japanese had moved out before we landed there. But Lingayen Gulf was the first time there had been any real opposition from the air and the general consensus is, you know, things are going to get a lot tougher.

27:00 **How long were you under air attack in Lingayen Gulf?**

Well all day, I mean they didn't get through, very largely didn't get through thanks to the American carrier groups, but they were there all day and all the previous day on the way to Lingayen Gulf. So there was plenty of go in them.

After the adrenaline subsides and you are back in Leyte

27:30 **what's happening in the wardroom over a cup of coffee with your fellow officers?**

I think most people have got their heads down, they were that tired.

Was there any sense that you had lost some of your own, how does that affect you?

You didn't like to think about it, I think is a fair comment.

28:00 Loss of shipmates is always very, very difficult and very hard to come to terms with. So you put it out of your mind you don't want to think about it. I think

28:30 in fact the one officer in Kanimbla that did think about it, he'd been in Canberra before in actual fact went around the twist. Subsequently after the war, not very long after the war. And I think he brooded about it and he, in actual fact he suicided

29:00 the only case I know of. No, it's not the only case I know of because when I was in Heidelberg Hospital there was a bloke who had been in the Perth was a POW [Prisoner of War] came into Heidelberg when I was there came in same ward, in fact was in the next bed and, he died of an overdose, he overdosed himself. Just couldn't face coming

29:30 back to reality, so yeah sure, there, you really have to put it out of your mind altogether and if you don't I think you are in trouble. It's as simple as that, there's a

30:00 natural defensive mechanism in a human being against it which most people can cope with, some can't, and I think naval training is pretty good from that point of view. I think it teaches you to be an optimist if you like.

Must be important to have close friends or people you know, some comrades?

30:30 Yep, and people you know you can trust, who are reliable.

Without mentioning any names was there anything about this particular individual you thought might have made him affected by it?

I think he had a very rough time in Canberra, when she was stuck in the slot, and

31:00 he came to us from the Canberra, and I don't think should have, I think he should have gone to a shore job, but one of the problems was shortness of experience, our navy rapidly expanded, there were 3 cruisers and 6 destroyers to

31:30 60 corvettes, 5 destroyers, 6 destroyers, and 2 cruisers, it was a huge, and 4 frigates and later 6 frigates, I mean that was a huge expansion when you think about it. Plus the 3 landing ship infantry, and all the shore echelons that went with it

It had also taken a bit of a hiding, Sydney, Perth, Canberra?

32:00 Yeah, and the scrap iron flotilla and the slips. So there was a huge, there was desperate shortage of experience, and if you had experience you were at sea if you were young enough and fit enough, that's what it amounted to.

The Kanimbla has been away from home for a long time now, how

32:30 **are you all coping with these things?**

I guess it passed fairly, 16 months is a long time to be away or are you talking about the present Kanimbla.

No, your Kanimbla?

It is a long time to be away, I think the married people in particular, who I think the greatest stress was on, we

33:00 had a very young ship's company so that helped I think but for the married men I think it was a huge stress. They coped very well.

How were you coping?

I got by alright.

You hadn't been in Australia very long, was there a sense that Kanimbla was your family?

Yeah, and still is in many ways, I'm very proud that,

33:30 in many ways it helped me recover my sanity. I'd had a very stressful time before, and it was

34:00 yeah, I guess it was my family really. I think that was very much a part of me and still is. Under different circumstances things could have gone bad, really bad, and they didn't. It gave me a new, it gave me a purpose

34:30 in life, a major purpose so I guess yeah, that comment's probably right.

After the landings in the Philippines what happened next?

We came back to Sydney and they put additional armament on

35:00 because of the kamikaze attacks, and we were all sent off on leave, well most of us were, and the waterside workers wouldn't load the ammunition on the ship because they wanted more money, more danger money, so we had to have our leave shortened. And Sydney was unreal, it was really like landing on a different planet, you wouldn't have believed there was a war on

35:30 it was absolutely extraordinary. I mean there was the black market which was really at its worst and one of the few condemnations I've got of these Australians who were in the black market who really exploited the war for their own benefit and some very, some people became very wealthy over it, there's no doubt at this at all. Not very nice people, but I mean a quid [pound] for a bottle of Flag Ale!

36:00 How was the Kanimbla received as she sailed through the Heads?

No one noticed her, we came in at 8 o'clock in the morning at Circular Quay, at liner wharf, I don't think anyone had noticed it had come in, there was no fuss about it.

36:30 You were away for 16 months it must have been a ...

Well there was no welcome committee or bands or anything like these days when they are away 3 months, and there were no sailors crying on the wharf because they were going overseas when we departed again, I mean things have really changed, I look at it and I think oh, some of the nonsense that goes on now is ridiculous, quite frankly.

What did you get up to on your first few days of shore leave?

37:00 A decent meal and we went into the Australia [Hotel], lower bar of the Australia and there if you were in uniform, a returned sailor, they found underneath the counter, they were prepared to provide you with, which no one else, I think the manager of the Australia must have been an ex-sailor, the lower back bar of the Australia Hotel was

37:30 the sort of navy's bar there and they always, if you were returned from overseas they were always happy to find a couple of beers for you, and they were strictly rationed and there was no beer for the public, if you were in civilian clothes you wouldn't have got a beer. So a few beers in a pub and a decent night's sleep in a clean bed, it passed very quickly

38:00 Get up to the [Kings] Cross at all?

No, I didn't, the Cross was absolutely American then, I mean no one in their right mind would have gone near it. As I say the cry then was 'over paid, over sexed, and over here', and they weren't exactly the right boys around the town.

38:30 Some of our sailors did and got into fights there and, in fact I think I bailed one out of a police station and I told the old sergeant that he had just got back from 16 months away and the sergeant tore the bit of paper up and said forget it.

39:00 It was quiet, I think everyone wanted to be quiet, get a bit of peace.

How long was your leave before you went back out again?

We had 10 days' leave each half of the ship's company. It should have been 14 days but for some reason, I think it was the wharfies were on strike because they wanted danger money. To load the ammunition we had to come back early

39:30 and then we went north again.

So you couldn't have been too happy with these wharfies?

Well can I say to you, rather interesting this because, I would say that no one in Kanimbla would have voted Labor at the immediate post war election, because of the trade unions. And can I say to you Simon Crean [Labor Leader of the Opposition] has done exactly the same thing to the present Kanimbla,

40:00 the address he gave before they went to the Gulf, and the reason I know is the engineer officer was a naval apprentice that I trained so I know him quite well. He said that without any doubt whatsoever, what [Simon] Crean said when he addressed them made sure that none of them would vote for Crean. It's an interesting thing, he just said the wrong sorts of things.

Tape 7

00:30 **When the unions were on strike, what of the docks company, the stevedores below, what was their opinion of the strike?**

Well, one of the reasons they joined was because they thought they ought to do something for Australia, their view of the unions was probably not printable,

So you could say they weren't unionists themselves.

Certainly not unionists themselves

01:00 and I doubt whether they would get back in the union after the war. It was a very closed shop, the waterside workers union.

Did you have much to do with those men during your time on the Kanimbla?

Yeah a lot, they were just part of the ship's company, we played them in deck hockey, in the inter, part of the ship competition we all played sport against each other, deck hockey,

01:30 and they just moved as though they were sailors, apart from the difference in uniform, they wore khaki and our sailors wore blue overalls, working dress, there was no difference.

You mentioned deck hockey and other entertainments on board, can you talk about your reputation as a mean deck hockey player.

Well I unfortunately had a reputation for being a bit

02:00 vigorous in my deck hockey, my boats' crews I played for two teams, I played for my boats' crews a particular group of boats' crews and I also played for the gun room officers' hockey team and we were very successful, some people thought that I was too vigorous. There were all sorts of bits of magazines lockers on the side, and if you wanted the

02:30 puck and someone was in the way you could knock them into a ventilator or an ammunition locker rather vigorously and they weren't so keen to attack you.

How organised were these deck hockey competitions?

We ran a series of competitions, they were well organised, there were rules to deck hockey, very like ordinary hockey balls, the puck, a little rope puck and the hockey sticks are bamboo

03:00 sticks bent at the bottom into a very small hitting area but you can also hit a bloke's shins very hard with a hockey stick too, if you miss the puck.

What was the prize for these competitions?

Just winning I guess, the only two activities we had to keep physically fit were PT and deck hockey virtually.

03:30 There was limited space for exercise, very few opportunities to play games ashore at all.

There's a limited amount of deck space.

Well there was sufficient space for a deck hockey pitch, which was just fine, but there were a few obstructions in the corners which were a bit sort of useful.

I have an image of a young sailor with his legs coming out of a ventilator...

04:00 **With limited deck space how did you organise PT?**

It was only the other side and the other space that was you could do it in groups of 20, there was space to do PT in groups of 20, mostly exercises.

Was that strictly rostered?

Yeah, we kept it going as much as we could, it was terribly important to keep people fit.

04:30 One of my cries has always been you must be fighting fit to be fit to fight. And if we get around to apprentice training, there's a story I can tell on that is I got in the big aircraft hangar we used as a gymnasium a huge sign painted there, 'you must be fighting fit to be fit to fight', and they changed the word fighting to, well we won't say it on camera, they changed it to....

05:00 they painted it out one night and at divisions the next day which was in front of the hangar and here I was ceremonially taking divisions and there were broad grins on all these kids faces, and I turned around and saw what they had written, painted out and replaced it with. However I knew who the culprit was, and I said to him afterwards, I said, "Well I'll give you full marks for initiative but this weekend instead of going ashore

05:30 on leave, what are you going to do?" And he said, "Yes sir I'm going to do it".

Wasn't that an opportunity for the blind eye to come in?

Well the blind eye was fine but it had to be repainted and the person who was going to repaint it, clearly, I mean, what I should have done was put him on a disciplinary charge but much more appropriate that he spent the weekend repainting it.

Were there any such incidents of disciplinary trouble on board the Kanimbla?

06:00 No, I don't think so. I can't think of any really. As I say I'm surprised how few discipline incidences, there were minor ones, skulk from church or was absent from place of duty for some reason, they were all relatively minor silly things.

06:30 And I spent a lot of my time defending boats' crews against the chief bosun's mate who wanted them to do work in the ship rather than on the boats and every now and again there was a certain demarcation dispute between the boats' crews and the other parts of the ship's company. I spent quite a lot of time sorting that one out or the other

Where did you see yourself in that demarcation?

07:00 Well I was in a difficult position because I was both, but I had a lot of sympathy for the boats' crews.

These were your men?

I was responsible for them and I was keeping them out of trouble

What about keeping people out of trouble on leave?

Yes, well, that's occurred from time to time

07:30 not in Kanimbla but on another occasion in Central Court in Sydney and one of the traditions is that if a sailor appears in civil court an officer from the ship, usually the division officer has to appear and say he's a good sailor. On this particular occasion I went up to the Central Court and the sailor had been accused of arson, and what had happened was he had gone up to a brothel in Kings Cross and he paid

08:00 this money for a long time and the girl had given him only a short time and had a bit of angst about this and they had an argument and the candle was knocked over in the bedroom and caught the curtains on fire, he got arrested for arson. Well the prostitute had sort of tossed it out of the court, the case of the fallen candle setting fire to it, but didn't say that it was a house of ill fame or anything like that, and the magistrate said to me

08:30 "Have you got anything to say about the sailor?" "Yes I have, the police prosecutor's failed to say that it was a house of ill repute and the sailor in actual fact had paid for all night and only had a short time and the angst in the argument that followed that the candle went down and that's not arson that's just an accident, surely." And he looked and me and he said, "I think I agree with you, case dismissed." and Tilly Devine otherwise known as Polly Parsons then

09:00 attacked me with, I was in full sword, medals, full court regalia, Tilly Devine who owned the house attacked me with her umbrella and hit me over the bloody head, she said, "I hope you know I am a married respectable woman, it's a respectable house." it caused quite a laugh in the court house, that was a bit uncomfortable getting attacked by Tilly Devine with an umbrella.

No many people could share that honour.

09:30 That sort of thing does happen.

What ship were you on at that stage?

The Australia.

Getting back to that leave from Kanimbla after you had been away so long, was it difficult to leave again?

Yeah, I guess it was, yeah

What were the biggest difficulties there?

10:00 Well it was the feeling that we were going back to a real war and it was going to be a very rough one. After Lingayen Gulf we all thought that things were getting rough, I mean we had huge addition to our armament put on board to start with and the Beaufighters were certainly a very good kamikaze weapon but the feeling was

10:30 that after Lingayen, the relatively easy time that we had wasn't going to happen again. Yes it was it was a feeling that, a lot of people thought would our luck hold any longer. I think that's a fair comment.

In that environment did talk of the futility of the island campaigns that you were embarking on come up?

11:00 No because at that time we didn't know we were going to Borneo as soon as it did come up, yes. There was a lot questioning amongst the officers anyway, about whether, there was a strong feeling that MacArthur had sold us down the plug hole, and that our politicians had fallen over and, people said

11:30 "What on earth are we going to Borneo for, what's that got to do with the bloody war?" And I think they were right.

There was a small air force mutiny at Morotai over the same issue, would there have ever been a mutiny in the navy if it had gone on?

No.

Why not?

Because we were part of the 7th Fleet

12:00 and we knew that the 7th Fleet were looking after us, I mean we might have been landing in Borneo but we knew that we weren't under Blamey or MacArthur we were under a very good admiral, American admiral and I don't think anyone in the three landing ships had anything but high respect for Dan Dan the amphibious man

12:30 as he was called then, Dan Barbey, he was known as Dan, Dan the amphibious man, and he really, he had the respect of everyone. And I think the navy, there have been mutinies in the navy, one of the corvettes I think, that was badly officered, but I think by and large

13:00 we felt we were doing something useful, and we knew that we were going to be involved in landings in Japan, we knew we were going to be involved in Coronet, so although we thought Borneo was complete waste of time thanks to Macarthur, I think we all felt, oh well so what, we still were going to be involved in the main fight despite him. And it was nice to be

13:30 having Australian troops on board for a change. That was pleasant too, but can I say to you really it was an absolute nonsense to go into Borneo.

A lot more has been said about that since, but was that completely obvious to the entire ship at the time?

I don't think it was obvious to everyone, I think as officers we were careful not to.....

14:00 I think some sailors, some of my coxswains felt it was a waste of time but that was their own private opinion. It wasn't ever discussed as a main issue, certainly not with the sailors, and I don't think it was appropriate to do so, but I think certainly in the ward room there were a lot of misgivings about it.

What do you do with situation, when you are put into that position by the country you serve?

14:30 Do what you are told, that's what you are trained to do. Simple as that I mean, and in fact one of the things that is very interesting about war crimes is, I mean, this argument that some people raise that if you don't believe the thing is morally right you should refuse to do it, under the articles of war which

15:00 we were legally bound by in those days, if the captain told you to do something you did it. There was no, you couldn't go and argue the moral right of it, if you refused to do... the articles of war said you will obey orders.

And yet there is discussion in the ward room about these orders none the less?

Oh yeah. I mean the very fact that there was such a substantially lesser

15:30 naval amphibious group that was involved, or naval support group that was involved made it clear what the Americans thought about it.

You had been a favoured force of the 7th Fleet, and now the 7th Fleet was being abandoned in a way, was there a feeling of betrayal?

Well, the 7th Fleet did the Borneo landings or a part of it did, not the

16:00 whole part, but there was feeling that it was a lesser operation. Sort of a side line, and, but that's the way it was.

What about Japan, what were you thinking about a possible Japanese invasion at this stage?

Well we thought it was going to be

16:30 very tough. They were talking about 100,000 casualties.

What specifics had they been talking about?

We knew that it would be the whole 3rd and 7th fleet involved, and the British as well, the British specifically became involved.

17:00 We knew the assessment was that it would probably cost 100,000 lives, they bandied that around quite freely. And they felt that the cost in ships would be very high, that the kamikazes would be more desperate and that there would be more ships sunk, but that was a

17:30 sort of broad brush, and the navy clearly did not know about the Enola Gay or the atomic bombs at that stage, neither Barbey or Kinkaid or any of those commanders were aware that it was planned to drop the atomic bombs. So the planning was clearly and simply about how many ships you need, how many divisions you need to do the landing

18:00 and that's what the planning was all about, but the only people who were, the people in the United States and Churchill.

So the Kanimbla headed to Brunei, before we get to that, you designed the camouflage on ship can you tell us about that?

Well it happened in Manus, Admiral Barbey decided that the ships

18:30 in grey, the American ships were all camouflaged, all had this sort of funny camouflage painted, and Barbey wanted us to do the same so our captain said, "Oh well, lets have a competition, that'll keep the ship's company occupied." So we were all offered a first prize of a dozen bottles of beer, well I designed one particular design, which is the one in that photograph

19:00 starboard side of the ship and Nevin Philips who was one of my stokers designed the other side, they were similar, not quite the same and out of the 60 or 70 entries that people put in with the colours and things, and we were restricted in the colours by the paints available, there was Chicago blue, light grey, dark grey and black, so there was a

19:30 fairly distinct sort of limitation on what you could design, and I did one side and much to my surprise the captain decided he liked my design, he liked Nevin Philips' design, so those were the two that were painted on the ship, I got six bottles of beer and Nevin Philips got six bottles of beer, and he shared his six bottles of beer with his boats' crews and I shared my six bottles of beer with my boats, crews, I gave it to them actually

20:00 **Was it unusual to have alcohol on board ship?**

No, we had a beer issue, that's perhaps what helped with morale. The wardroom, all our ships wardrooms are wet, with alcohol, although traditionally you never drink at sea, it's fair enough to say that traditionally that people don't drink at sea

20:30 a few of the sort of doctors and supernumeraries might, but anyone who's got duties doesn't drink at sea, but in Kanimbla we had plenty of space so the ward room bought from Tooheys enough duty free beer, not only for our own use but the ship's uses or, and once a week, no twice a week, one bottle of beer

21:00 was two bottles of beer per sailor we worked out, we'd bought it, in actual fact the wardroom would have been up of the loss of it if we had been sunk, but we bought it and the ship's canteen paid us back for it, and most ships I think did the same thing, I mean, it's a blind eye thing, there's no provision in the navy, well in those days there was no provision in the navy for sailors to get beer, but certainly in the cruisers they did

21:30 get an issue and certainly in Kanimbla we always had an issue. In fact when we ran out of Australian beer, cause we were away that long, we went on to American beer which was awful stuff, dreadful, but until the Mercer arrived with a new load of, when we were at Manus for Christmas in 1944, we'd been on American beer for about 5 months, 6 months, garbage, but we could get the American beer no trouble at all from the American sources

22:00 so we were then issuing two cans of beer to our sailors. So yes, the law, there was provision in the rules

for it but there was a way around it which was used by most ships I think.

What sort of celebrations were there on board ship?

Well we had of course the crossing the line ceremony

22:30 which we should have had on the way to Morotai because Morotai is north of the equator, but because we had troops on board we couldn't do it. So we had it coming back and King Neptune came aboard and all the sailors who hadn't crossed the line before got duly dunked and medically treated, in fact,

23:00 **Can you explain where this description comes from before you read it?**

It goes back to sailing ship days, clearly way back when there was a superstition there was a king of the sea, who rules the waves and ruled the sea and it's pages and pages of this

23:30 and there is the actual King Neptune in all his glory on board, and there is the whole story of King Neptune.

Who was King Neptune in your crossing the line celebration?

It was the chief bosun's mate

24:00 Chief Petty Officer David I think, from memory, cause he was big and fat, and older, and the challenge was he got on the ship dressed as King Neptune and challenged the captain and say, "Well you are entering my domain." so there is a ritual written into the Royal Naval handbook for physical training is where it comes from, it's a ritual

24:30 that goes back to 17th century I think. It hasn't changed, passenger liners use it, P & O [Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company] used to use it for crossing the line with their ships, in a slightly modified form because they didn't treat the new incumbents quite as drastically as the navy does, I mean they got dunked into filthy dirty water and my case, when I crossed the line I was

25:00 forced to drink a glass of rum and castor oil mixed with something else, I don't know what, but it was the most revolting, the consequence is somewhat undesirable, but there was a sort of foul smelling liquid poured down your throat, it's rough but it's fun, and if it's done properly

25:30 it doesn't get out of hand. There have been occasions recently in the navy, when crossing the line in one of the submarines got totally out of hand, but if they keep to the guidelines, and there is that ritual that's written down there a lot of relaxation of tensions and it's an old tradition of people who have crossed the equator. In fact the airlines now give certificates for people if they fly across,

26:00 similar sort of thing, without any of the indignity that the navy imposes on the people.

Would this apply to any troops, on the way you didn't.....?

Well there were just too many on board, going into an operation as we were and the day before the actual landings. A, we were far too busy preparing for the actual

26:30 landings, and B, with those troops on board it would have been very difficult to achieve in any sense responsible.

What of other celebrations on board?

Well Christmas Day is always.... traditionally being the youngest sailor on board become the captain and everyone sort of changes around or used to be, I don't know if it still does and

27:00 The Americans of course thought that we were Christmas Day in '44 we were in Manus in Seeadler Harbour, and the young ordinary seaman whose name I can't remember, we were trying to remember recently at a reunion but couldn't place who it was, he received the captain of an American ship with absolute aplomb and full ceremonial, everyone changed around, the officer of the watch was a young sailor and boats' crew were all officers and

27:30 taking that and then entertained the senior American officer in the captain's cabin, gave him a gin and talk to him, got away with it too, I say completely, apparently. And on the way back his own ship that American said, "You know you've got a very young captain haven't you?" he was dressed as the captain, and I explained to him what happened

28:00 and he said to me "You could never do that on an American ship." it was a very interesting comment. The other tradition is of course on New Year's Day, the youngest sailor aboard rings 16 bells, he rings the 8 bells for the old year and the 8 bells for the New Year, ringing in. That's always been a tradition too, again all these traditions go back in part to superstition, they are very old, they are not only in the Australian Navy, they are in the Royal

28:30 Navy, they are in the Dutch Navy, in the German Navy. don't know about the Japanese, Chinese but in the old maritime nations, the Dutch do it the Norwegians do it, it's an old practice, and I think probably all from sailing ship days. But it's a release of tension, and I've never seen it step out of line, it's done in good spirit

29:00 we served the troops Christmas dinner too, and I've never seen it abused the whole time I was in the navy, not once. And that says a lot for discipline, it's just totally good fun.

Was there ever any cause to abuse alcohol on board the ship? Any drunkenness ever?

29:30 Not to my knowledge, not that's not quite true. I've seen sailors come back on board from leave in Brisbane, nicely thank you. And that's sometimes can be an occasion for blind eye, depends on whether, one of the things that's important about sailors returning drunk is the safety of the sailor and if you

30:00 lock him up in cells for the night it is for his safety, but if you get two of his mess mates to cart him off and put him down in his bunk without any problems I personally think it's worth the risk. Some people don't; you are leaving yourself open if you do, if there is an accident and he hurts himself, but it's really

30:30 for their protection that they are disciplinary dealt with but I guess in Kanimbla we sort of tended to make a judgement whether they were going to be a nuisance or they were going to be safely tucked away. Safely tucked away I think was the answer, I think that was understood by the sailors too.

Where were the sailors accommodated?

31:00 All over the ship, there was part accommodated in the combinations in that ship's plan, in Kanimbla they were all bunked and in most of the navy they were still in hammocks. As were midshipman, but Kanimbla was all bunks, so every sailor had their own bunk

What about the officers?

31:30 The officers had junior officers had an 8 berth cabin, some officers who were watch keepers had 2 berth cabins, mix, and the very senior officers had a single berth cabin.

Who was in your cabin?

I was in cabin with a bloke called Ken Schultz who was another friend of mine who, well we became good friends, he was a sub lieutenant, lieutenant

32:00 **What sort of concessions to making your cabin homely?**

Well those days very little, we were away so long, and we sort of moved up in the ship from being midshipman with no space at all to having a little bit of space, a couple of photographs, that's about it. And because of fires there was no wood in the ship, everything was steel

32:30 furnishings, so it was a pretty sterile, in fact the only decoration we had was that one Frank Norton did in our gun room, painted on the bulk head for us, it was a war artist, we took him to either Brunei or Balikpapan [Balikpapan], I'm not sure one of those two trips he came as a war artist and he painted that on the bulk head in our gun room for us.

What

33:00 **did he paint?**

He painted the Kanimbla as an absolute disaster area, the sort of thing that you'd put into Punch or that sort of magazine that you could laugh at, I mean everything going wrong, all the derricks bending and people falling overboard and smoke puffing out of the funnel and every thing that shouldn't happen was happening, I mean it was a real humour

33:30 cartoon, it was a cartoon as much as anything else, in fact it stayed in the ship after she returned as a passenger ship, they framed it on the bulkhead.

Maybe it was still there when it became Japanese?

I've got some doubts about that, I don't think the Japanese would have appreciated that, I think they would have hurriedly painted it over.

Were there any other opportunities

34:00 **during the war to meet with war artists or journalists or....?**

Yes, we had them on board from time to time, Frank Norton comes to mind, but there was someone from the Sydney Morning Herald, was a photographer from the Sydney Morning Herald, Gordon Short I think,

34:30 so yes there were opportunities. But they sort of came and went, we were too busy to take much notice of them, they came and went and sort of

it affected how you were seen back home though I'm sure.

Well we got very little publicity at all because we were with the Americans; in fact the only time we got any publicity was when we got back to Sydney

35:00 there was photograph that appeared in the Telegraph, both the captain and myself, with Kanimbla and

sort of a story about Kanimbla being away for 16 months. But again MacArthur was the trouble, he always talked about allied forces landed here there were allied forces did this, if an Australian/American

- 35:30 were involved and he always talked about American forces as if there was no Australians involved. So there was very little, his spin doctors were designed for the American public and we got very little, and the Australian troops complained about this too, there was a lot of complain about it, the Americans got all the
- 36:00 the releases, were always the allied forces did this, the allied forces did that, it wasn't terrible damaging for us but it must have been damaging to the Australian army, in morale I would think.

How much has that grated you since, that you may have been written out of the war in a sense?

Well I'm editor with RSL [Returned and Services League] journal of servicemen and what can I say to you I've published a lot of it back again

- 36:30 and I'm fairly frequently at the Australian War Memorial talking to kids so, Yeah a lot of it was, a lot was left out of war histories, particularly the amphibious group, but I guess we have gradually overcome that.

How much do kids know today about what the navy did in the Second World War?

Very little. I mean people talk about the battle for Australia when they should be talking about the battle for the Coral Sea, because it was the battle for the

- 37:00 Coral Sea that turned the tide. It was never a battle for Australia, one of the nonsenses today is all that talk about the battle for Australia, there never was and what's more the Japanese had no intention of landing in Australia, but the Battle of the Coral Sea is what turned the tide, and that is lost in history and it's lost partly because the navy and air force were relatively small
- 37:30 I mean the air force had two problems, it had a huge European component and it had a huge Pacific component and the two air vice marshals were absolutely at loggerheads with each other anyway, they hated each other's guts so, the European RAF never got any acknowledgment at all, and the RAAF in the South Pacific was called
- 38:00 allied forces, bombed this that and the other, so they got very little, and the navy was really in the same sort of position. So the army dominated, the Middle East campaign, people complained about the Syrian campaign got no publicity, I mean it was sort of a side track one with the Australian Army, Greece, Crete, Singapore, that's what the kids are taught in history in school
- 38:30 we might, for most part, you might as well not believe there was a navy or army or air force but in actual fact as I said to soldiers, who took you there and brought you back, who landed you, who recovered you from your military misadventures in Greece and Crete. That gets them really uptight of course, but it happens to be true

Tape 8

- 00:28 **Can you tell us about those times you were left on landing craft and where that was?**

Well in my case, there were two major occasions, Kanimbla ferried CB landing craft to forward areas which our landing craft were left behind in, and some of them from Manoora and Westralia as well and the first one was at Jachoofoa Bay [?] which is near Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea and we were just landed with, and said "Oh well the American

- 01:00 base up the road will be able to feed you and clothe you no problem at all." but of course, first and foremost we found that the Americans were the least bit enthusiastic about feeding us or anything else. A, it was 10 kilometres away from where we could safely put the landing craft, so we managed to acquire food and stores and a couple of jeeps which we painted grey and put RN [Royal Navy] on
- 01:30 so we had transport and then we had the means of getting food backwards and forwards, so we virtually picnicked on board the landing craft, we were able to find awnings and cover them from the torrential rain so we could keep dry, and that was really quite a comfortable break.

Who was on board?

Well Bert Deek

- 02:00 was with me and he was the flotilla officer, so he and I shared landing craft and we had all my coxswains, Leading Seaman Winkle who was the senior one, he taught me to drive the 3 ton truck we'd acquired and he'd been an army driver at one stage, he's been military police I think. And we just sort of went where we pleased and
- 02:30 the Americans didn't stop us because it was Dutch territory and we said, "You don't belong to us you

can't stop us." I mean I put RN white on all the vehicles we'd acquired. One I think we got for a bottle of Corio whisky which was awful stuff anyway but it was a useful commodity for trading with the Americans and some left a jeep where they shouldn't have left it and that suddenly

03:00 found its way to us and got painted grey and RN written all over it. So we did pretty well for wheels and we did well for food too, we picnicked for 8, 9 no 10 days in the landing craft and sort of lazed and swam and picnicked but it was very close quarters so we were just enjoyed ourselves in was a break

03:30 from routine.

How did you find the weather?

Awful, I mean a British admiral's comment about Seeadler Harbour that it was the worst environment he had ever been exposed to in his life, that's when the British Pacific Fleet arrived there and we'd been spending a lot of time there at the time. It was wet and humid and

04:00 a constant sort of 37 degrees Celsius and it always rained, every day it rained, the humidity was enervating. and of course that was one of the problems, the ship with troops was enervating, the ship wasn't air conditioned at all

04:30 when you closed down with the ship darkened, as it had to be at night, wasn't a very comfortable place to be.

What difference is there being on land to being at sea?

Oh, the mosquitoes were appalling and we were all covered in mosquito repellent which was not very effective anyway and taking loads of Atebrin. The mosquitoes were bad, the

05:00 swamp stench was bad, it was just New Guinea and we always used to say, "Well thank God we're not soldiers!" simple as that, they had to live in it all the time.

What insights did that give you as to what the soldiers were suffering?

We all said, "Thank God we're not soldiers." anyone silly enough to carry their bed on a pack on their back wants their heads read, this is what the average sailor thinks anyway.

05:30 **What did the average sailor call the average soldier in slang?**

Swaddies

What were the characteristics of a swaddie?

I don't know, I guess someone silly enough to be in the army.

Did it have any meaning beyond the name?

I don't think so it

06:00 probably did, but where swaddie originated from I don't know.

What did they call you?

Politely or otherwise? Soldiers? I don't know I just think they thought we were all mad. Their attitude was who'd be crazy enough to live in a sardine can

Could you

06:30 **see their point?**

No, our environment was singularly better than theirs.

Were their slang names for particular men in the navy? The reserve or new troops?

Rookies, yeah.

What did a rookie refer to?

All the naval reserves who were RANR [Royal Australian Naval Reserve] they were called rookies

07:00 **How pejorative was the term rookie?**

Not really it was just a, in those days their stripes were different, I mean there were three groups. There was the regular navy, there was the Royal Naval Reserve sea going, which were merchant service officers who, they were professional seaman trying to be gentlemen

07:30 the rookies were gentlemen trying to be sailors, and the straight stripers, the regular navy were neither. This was the general sort of consensus.

Who were the real gentlemen?

The rookies reckoned they were the gentlemen, the gentlemen trying to be sailors, the naval reserve sea going were sailors trying to be gentlemen, and the rookies and the

08:00 other naval reservers said well the straight stripers were neither. But it's done in jest very largely.

What about personal nicknames?

Yeah well I was known as Kipper, because that was what anyone from the RN was called, a Kipper.

08:30 **Again, was that in fun?**

Had an edge to it, well the answer to that is that the Kipper had, what was it, it was rude, but in my case it wasn't, it became a term, most of them called me Kips and it was a term of affection as much as anything else

09:00 spineless with no guts is what a kipper fish has, but ah, I don't think Kanimbla ship's company regarded me in that light, I know they didn't but it's interesting, I mean,

09:30 our second captain was a Scot, Andrew Bunyan, in fact they argued the reason I was the action officer of the watch was because I was the only person who could understand a Scot's accent, which is probably true, my parents being Scots.

What was he called behind his back?

Oh, I mean the old man is always known as the captain, so it was always the old man

10:00 I don't think I heard him called anything else, he wasn't nearly as much liked as the previous captain, he was very dour and somewhat humourless, but he was a good seaman, you can't have everything.

Getting on to the next actions....

10:30 **The next landings were in Brunei?**

The next landings were in Brunei, we landed the initial waves on Green Beach and they were so successful and moving through so quickly instead of putting the rest of the reinforcements on Green Beach we rounded up the estuary into Brookton. Which was interesting because there were mangrove swamps on two sides,

11:00 there was the possibility of course that there would be snipers there, but in actual fact the only thing that was there was screaming monkeys.

Can you describe that estuary in a bit more detail?

Well Green Beach was lovely, I've got a photograph there, beautiful sandy beach and we just went in, they bombarded it with rockets, there was a plantation there,

11:30 nothing left by the time we got there, just a few stumps of the coconut palms were left, there was nothing there at all, absolutely devastated, so the Australian troops went through so quickly they were getting up close to Brookton, there was no sign of the enemy, I mean the only thing stopping them was jungle, so the amphibious commander Wrightly said, "Well

12:00 send the reinforcements around to Brookton itself." So we then and we hadn't been briefed on the river so I then lead a group of landing craft up to Brookton and we landed actually at the wharf, no problems at all no one there, a few locals, we said, "G'day, nice to see you." But I mean it was the most unopposed of any of the landings we were involved in

What was the response on board

12:30 **to this complete lack of opposition?**

I think relief as much as anything else, you know there is always, what a piece of cake, isn't that nice. See Tarakan, Kanimbla didn't take part in Tarakan because we were in Sydney for Tarakan and Tarakan wasn't nice, Tarakan was apparently quite rough, so there was an expectation that Brunei would be too, and it wasn't

13:00 the Japanese had moved out, so their was relief as much as anything else, and it just went so smoothly that like clockwork.

Did it bring up arguments again about what are we doing here?

Yeah I guess people said, you know, then we knew we were going to Balikpapan and people said "Oh there is oil there, there will probably be Japanese there." but there was a feeling that, oh well it was all over

13:30 **War in Europe had ended at this stage, where were you when you heard about that?**

I think we were in Manus, yes we were in Manus. It was a relief, the feeling was that things were winding down, the Japanese couldn't last long without the Germans in the war

14:00 I mean there was a general feeling that things were on the improve, and again people said "Well why are we going on with Balikpapan?" It was a feeling almost of déjà vu over it, one wondered just where we were going

Before operations

14:30 **in Brunei, you were given quite detailed maps and photographs can you explain where they came from?**

Well, at the pre landing briefing, the flotilla officers were briefed by American officers and we were given the actual plans, the photographs, etc, etc. So we all had, I had in the flotilla office, in fact I was responsible for making the flotilla order out for the

15:00 landing craft, the written orders. So I had access to all the documentation, some of which I kept, probably illegally, but the fact remains is, well rather interestingly I don't think I could be blamed for having kept it because after Balikpapan I got a very minor scratch at Balikpapan

15:30 and two days later my leg had swollen up to, I was doing PT two days later and I just jumped on it and a pain went through my leg and obviously I had some form of septicaemia or blood poisoning in my whole body and I became very, very sick in fact there was some talk of medivacing [medical evacuation] me from

16:00 the Philippines from Manila to back home, but I persuaded the doctor to keep me on board, very good sick bay, and we knew we were going south anyway. But I was in the Kanimbla sick bay until we arrived in Brisbane and all my gear in my cabin was packed up for me because I was medivaced to hospital when we arrived in Brisbane so

16:30 all this documentation which was in my cabin went into my big wooden case, an old ammunition box actually, they made for packing it up, and I've still got it today. No one has ever asked for it back, well they can't have it back now, it's mine, the Americans aren't likely to ask for it back and they really own

17:00 **And quite conveniently the war ended at the exact time?**

Leaving Kanimbla for me was really quite a shock because I was then in Greenslopes [Hospital] in Brisbane and the young doctor there said, "Well we'll have to amputate that leg." So to say the least I wasn't very happy with the thought of that, and my wife to be's

17:30 father was an ex retired medical director for the air force, well he was actually a Collins Street specialist but he was also air force group captain at the same time, World War II. And I rang him and said, "They want to take my leg off and I want a second opinion." and he organised for me to be medivaced from Greenslopes to Heidelberg [Hospital]

18:00 in a hospital train that took three days on square wheels, I'm sure it had square wheels, I swear to this day the wheels were square, very, very uncomfortable train trip and I wasn't very with it much, and I had nearly a year in Heidelberg Hospital. They fixed me ultimately thanks to Collins Street's best specialists, orthopaedic surgeons

18:30 but so the end of the war came rather suddenly for me.

When you say scratch, where had it come from?

Bit of mortar bomb I think, it was minor, it was really, it didn't even merit a shell dressing, just a very slight cut and I didn't even think it merited putting a shell dressing on, in fact I didn't even go back to the sick bay when I got back, I just said, "Oh well it's

19:00 stopped bleeding, no problem."

Lets go through the Balikpapan landing, it was different because of the oil can you describe the scene at Balikpapan?

Well the thing at Balikpapan was there was a huge bombardment and we'd been warned that the Japanese planned to set the beaches on fire and they had laid oil trenches along the beaches and pipelines down from the beaches too,

19:30 they were going to set the beaches on fire, but the shelling in actual fact destroyed the pipelines to the beaches so although the storage tanks caught fire and were black with smoke, there was no hazard on the beach to speak of, there was a mortar in the hill to the right of Yellow Beach which was dug in and it fired a couple of rounds in the morning, which we never took much notice of

20:00 because the Hobart just turned its guns on it and went 'Woof!' sort of shut it up and towards the end of the day it opened up again, and this probably when I got the scratch, but it was a quite, I mean apart from the burning oil there was no opposition on the beach, the Japanese had again decided to sensible thing to do was retreat from the area because the saturation of fire. So there was an awful mess on the beach from the

20:30 smell of burning oil. Those photographs I think you can see it, again there was no opposition to speak of, it was the last amphibious landing of the war. As it turned out, because when we got to Manila, after

that, as we got to Manila, they announced that the Enola Gay had dropped the first bomb on Hiroshima.

When you were

21:00 **scratched, the mortars must have been landing reasonably close to you?**

Well yeah, one of those things

Was that something you had experienced before?

No, not really it was just bad luck

When I say close, what could you see of the mortars coming at you?

Well one splashed about 10 feet 15 feet away, they

21:30 were fairly random, a dying gasp you might say, by the Japanese.

What of the massive artillery fire that was coming from the ships offshore, was that all over by the time you landed?

Yeah, but as soon as it opened up again in the evening, they opened up again, needless to say

Where there any other difficulties that happened at Balikpapan that you hadn't experienced before?

22:00 No, it was really a very, very simple landing.

How many hours did it take to land the troops there?

We started at 9, we finished by, from our ship we were finished by four and a half hours unloading our own troops but then we were still running stuff from other ships so we were, it was just on dusk when we finished, about 5:30 at

22:30 night 6 o'clock.

How long did you stay at Balikpapan?

We left that night,

23:00 the procedure was for the landing ships to never to stay overnight at an anchorage where they had landed.

You must have seen something of the bombardment, can you describe that to us?

Well I mean it's, a bombardment is really massive, first of all you've got the cruisers,

23:30 in line ahead with their guns always on broadside just firing at a group of targets and you can see the salvos going and the flashes of their guns and you see this whole mass being landed on, thump, thump, thump and the oil tanks spurting smoke. Then of course when they finish bombardment you've got the LCRs - Landing Craft Rockets, landing craft who very promptly and immediately prior to the

24:00 landing they go and fire their rockets at the beach head, and that just flattens everything within a mile I guess.

What does it look like when they are going off?

Well they're a range of rockets, a battery of rockets about in rows, so that there are probably about 20 across and there are probably about 10 rows of them and they just fire out each row

24:30 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, each row simultaneously, they are not all going at the same time but they follow each other, and all you see is a sheet of flame roaring across, all these rockets roaring across the beach head. It is really quite spectacular, but anything that's at the other end, doesn't survive

What does it sound like when they are going off?

'Whoosh,' that's all just a great big Whoosh.

25:00 **As you are heading in despite the fact that you've done this before is this something you get used to?**

I think you do get used to it, again what you are really thinking about is am I right for the line of departure and am I going to land on the beach head at the right time.

What were the murmurings of the Australian troops on the landing craft?

Well I mean you say, "Keep your heads down!" and they say, "Get fucked!"

25:30 it's as simple as that, they want to keep their heads up and watch what is going on.

Was the army officer who was in charge, was he up there with you?

No he was in the well with his troops, but can I say by this stage of war I don't think anyone cared anyway. I mean the knowledge

26:00 was there was not going to be Japanese firing back at us, we still traditionally still said "Keep your heads down." because that was the routine, they equally spelt, what are you on about.

But you are going into a pretty hellish scene, oil fires burning, that can't be encouraging?

No, but they didn't seem to mind.

26:30 **How was the morale on the Kanimbla at this stage?**

Good, I think we knew that we wouldn't be another 16 months away, I think the general consensus opinion was the war was coming to a close

27:00 We thought there would be Japan after the Borneo landings at that time until we got back to Manila and we'd the dropping the bomb on Hiroshima, no one knew the war was going to end as quickly as it did, but by the very same token I think everyone felt that the next landings would be in Japan and that would be the end of it.

This was Operation Coronet. Where did you think you would be going specifically in those landings?

Well with the 7th Fleet

27:30 and probably in exactly in the same position, our three ships would have been in the same position as they were in Lingayen Gulf in the van, in the south island.

Did you know where you would be landing on the south island?

Yes we did but I can't remember what it is without looking it up.

You were actually planning on going to Japan?

Yeah

28:00 the ships were, I don't think the Australian troops were involved.

You as an officer knew this?

Yeah.

Indeed the war was coming in a close in Balikpapan, only a couple of months later, where did go after that?

Went to Manila which was where was going to be the briefing for Coronet.

28:30 **Where were you when the bomb was dropped?**

In Manila, Manila Bay.

Can you tell us about that time, what your impressions were?

Well it's very interesting, the first indication was on US Armed Forces Radio which was broadcasting there and it was a bit vague. There was no mention that it was an atomic bomb in the first news

29:00 just said that there had been a massive bombing at Hiroshima, then it came out and said it was a new weapon but again didn't say what it was, it had caused mass destruction. They didn't talk of the word atom until after Nagasaki, it was only after Nagasaki that they talked about it being an atomic bomb.

What did you know of the second bomb?

29:30 Only again that it had been dropped, and then from memory they said it was an atomic weapon, and everyone said, "What's an atomic weapon, haven't got any idea?"

What did you think an atomic weapon was?

I had no idea, I'm not a scientist, you can't expect a simple sailor to know about atoms, I don't think anyone, I mean at that stage I mean it was

30:00 just a massive weapon of mass destruction, that was the general consensus but what exactly and how it was created I don't think anyone knew.

How mystified were you of this?

I think everyone was mystified,

How tinged in regard to any other feelings about this weapon?

No I don't think so, mind you I was in sick bay at this time and I really sort of beginning to lose interest in things.

30:30 I wasn't very well, in fact I was decidedly crook [ill].

What was wrong with you?

Well I got a scratch at Balikpapan and when I was doing PT a couple of days later I suddenly got a staggering pain up the side of my leg and it swelled up like a four times the size of normal and the doc said, "Oh God, what's that?" and then he saw the scratch and said

31:00 "Where did you get that?" and I said, "Balikpapan." and he said, "Oh I think you've got septicaemia." which I had, but they tried all sorts of things, but as I say I ended up a year in Heidelberg Hospital, before they fixed it.

Long time in hospital there?

And I was one of the bunnies for the new wonder drug penicillin and they used those elephant guns to inject it, it used to be right arm left arm,

31:30 left buttock, right buttock for weeks on end, four times a day.

You must have been gravely ill?

I was really crook.

Did you think you were going to die?

Not really but I had some very considerable worries about whether I was, at Greenslopes when they landed me in hospital in Brisbane

32:00 the surgeon there wanted to cut my leg off, he actually came around the ward and said "I'll put him down for surgery tomorrow." I rang my father in law to be who was a Collins Street specialist and also a group captain, an air force doctor and he very smartly arranged for me to be medivaced to another hospital, went to Heidelberg. And I was in and out of surgery in Heidelberg

32:30 and they did all sorts of things to try to find out what was causing it, of course. But they saved my leg, Sir William Upjohn was the specialist who looked after me, marvellous bloke, in those days he was Mr. Upjohn and he also brought in the other really top Collins Street specialist Sam Newton and they played around and they ultimately said, "Well, nature cured it

33:00 I don't think we did."

How did you get back to Australia from the Philippines?

In Kanimbla sick bay.

Do you remember much of that journey?

No not really.

How much able were you able to participate in the end of the war celebrations?

Not at all

33:30 but I was well looked after.

After all that time at sea, how does a year in hospital affect you?

Well it's very interesting because it really I mean I had to make the decision then of whether I was going to stay in the navy or not, and they sent me to Hawkesbury which

34:00 was a frigate doing daily running out of Sydney so it had medical facilities available. I was what they called category Y, which meant I had to be either in a shore base or where they was a doctor, and then the navy in their wisdom sent a signal to the Hawkesbury saying I was discharged forthwith was permanently unfit for naval service. Which shook me to the core because I had been weighing up going to rehab or university which was the option that was open to me

34:30 and anyone in the navy, or to anyone in the services, and I'd weighed my pros and cons and decided I wanted to stay in the navy. And I was pretty upset about this and Commodore Collins he was then was the Commodore Commander of the Australian squadron he came over the Hawkesbury for our annual inspection. Any my captain said, "Look I've got this young officer who's not mad keen about being discharged and just got the

35:00 signal saying he is permanently unfit for naval service." And Commodore Collins intervened on my behalf I might say and got the naval board to change their decision. So I've got a lot to thank John Collins for.

Had you met your wife when you were in hospital?

Yes, she used to come and visit me everyday and bring me boxes of Black Magic chocolates

35:30 **Is that where you met? How did you meet?**

She came to hospital visiting.

Did she know you before you were in hospital?

Yeah.

You had met on a shore leave?

Yes.

Did you meet her after your 16 month leave or...?

No before that

Do you want to tell us about that?

No, but she was marvellous she used to come and so did her mother and father.

36:00 Her father was a group captain who was Collins Street specialist he used to bring in the family over they were really very good to me. And can I say without a doubt I don't think I would have coped, really was in despair whether I was ever going to get my use back in my leg again.

How were you coping with peace time?

36:30 Well that was again part of the problem I guess, it wasn't a very easy time for me, but it worked out. I got married ten years later.

What effects did you have of suddenly being away from the war?

37:00 Well it was very, it wasn't really away from the war, because in the ward I was in there were people who had been prisoners of war of the Japanese and the people who were survivors from the Perth and I mean we were all walking wounded, you might say, or not walking wounded, bed bound, I mean the first three months I was there I wasn't out of bed

37:30 at all then I got around on crutches for a bit. So it was a pretty depressing time because people died, some of the POWs came back they just gave up, that was really the most heart rendering thing about Heidelberg, the number of people who got home and suddenly said "That's it, it's enough."

38:00 **After surviving all the difficulties, what is it about peace time that takes away the reason to live?**

They couldn't cope

What about this chap next to you who OD [Overdosed]?

38:30 I suspect but don't know that he wasn't a model prisoner, I suspect that he wasn't held in high regard by his shipmates, who'd been POWs with him, I suspect but I don't know

39:00 two people suggested to me that that was the reason. He never said that to me, but because two people I know said you know that was his problem I don't think he could live with himself. I think that was the real problem, I think that happened with some of them.

Living with the memories?

Yep,

39:30 and the war is a very difficult thing to talk about in some cases, a lot of it better left buried and unsaid, I think you find an awful lot of people say this to you and you've got to come and live with the world again, and that world may be something you find rather

40:00 strange after war and seeing humanity in its raw, and seeing the greed the avarice the cheating some people, I mean the black market was an awful, to people who served the black market was really an awful offence

40:30 the greed and the money they made out of it, a lot of people say, "I can't talk to these people they just don't know what it's all about. " And I have spoken to ex-POWs and they say well I can't talk about it because you weren't there. I can only talk to those that were there, and I think that is true.

41:00 My wife's father-in-law, who curiously enough, I would think the only doctor in World War I who got the Military Cross was very rare for a doctor to get. He told me about the war and couldn't talk to his own family about it, he said I would understand, but he wouldn't talk to his own children about it, and my kids have blamed me, they say to me, "Dad, you won't talk about it."

41:30 Inherently you don't want to talk to people that don't understand. It's all too difficult, and some people found it so difficult they didn't want to go on living. I think that when one really gets down to the talks

about it and I'm sure we are all impossible to live with from time to time

Tape 9

00:31 **You went, stayed in the navy and served on several ships, the Korean War quickly came up again where were you at that time?**

Well in the early part of the Korean War I was in Manus. And we had two boom working vessels, Koala and Kangaroo

01:00 and I had just been trained as a marine salvage officer in the UK. So when I came back I was appointed to Koala, I think, and we went off to Manus to clear the harbour of the wrecks and do some quite odd jobs, there were boom defences up there that were salvaged out of the jungle I went with my hands up and

01:30 this is a waste of money and time but the fact remains that it happened.

This was cleaning up after the Second World War?

Yeah, and my crews changed, but I went back each time, we went up for 6 months in Koala and got back to Sydney, I'd then go on Kangaroo and take her up, and work on her for 6 months with a different crew.

What was your rank at the time?

Lieutenant.

But you were in command of the vessel?

02:00 No I was the first lieutenant, I was the salvage officer so I wasn't captain of the ship, I was the marine salvage officer so my job was the actual operating the ship in the salvage role. We did all sorts of things, we pulled boom nets up and the jungle and we rebuilt the wharf at Manus and pulled the piles and I might say at the end of two years doing this, and Manus is not the most happy environment, I then came back

02:30 to the Australia, I blew the whistle on what was going on and said, "We are wasting money and this is absolutely crazy."

What was the objective of doing that?

Well they really believed that we might be able to use the boom defences again, can I say to you they weren't consistent with our own boom nets and

03:00 they were in bad condition and I thought we were wasting an awful lot of money doing these things that were absolute nonsense. Anyway I subsequently went into the Australia and then I was sent from the Australia to Sydney because Sydney needed a senior watch keeping officer, they were short of officers, I mean Korean War, we were still short of officers.

What did you know of Korea at that time?

Nothing, absolutely nothing, I knew where it was, but knew absolutely nothing about Korea at all.

03:30 I didn't even know the sort of history of that time why the Korean War had started. But I soon learned, but working up in the Sydney we had a number of flying accidents, we worked up in Hervey Bay, Queensland before we went north. Had a number of accidents lost a couple of

04:00 pilots.

Can you tell us about your first viewing of Sydney, this is an aircraft carrier?

I was used to proper naval ships, can I say, not an aircraft hangar on floats. I was very unimpressed with the sort of accommodation in her, I mean

04:30 she was an old ship to start with and hadn't been well looked after by the navy, she wasn't in terribly good condition, the accommodation was frugal to say the least, I mean coming from the Australia which had good accommodation. I was singularly unimpressed with, I mean we had to share cabins which

05:00 was senior lieutenant and junior lieutenant commander was a bit off putting. The captain said to me when I joined and he said, "I don't suppose you are very pleased to come here." and I said, "No Sir, but I've got a job to do, I'll do it."

How many people on the ship?

1285 was the ships complement. Including Sea Furies

05:30 and the aircraft, can't remember the number of aircraft which there were but, I mean it was an

interesting job because I was the senior watch keeping officer there which meant I had always had night watches, and when we were flying I was always the officer of the watch at flying stations when [UNCLEAR]. So I saw everything that went on with the flying and I learnt

06:00 a lot from it, I mean I know how a carrier operates and can I say to you it's a very complex interesting activity, but there was a big gap between the fliers and the ship's officers, the ordinary seaman officers, they called us 'fish heads' of course. We called them 'fly boys', fly by night,

06:30 they weren't naval officers, they were good naval aviators but they weren't, for the most part they weren't naval officers in the sense that you know naval officers, I mean they flew aircraft and that's what they did well.

What's it like going from a small community on the Koala say or a ship's company of 45 to 1200 people?

07:00 Very interesting, I mean your role was quite different I was responsible for the mess decks and I was cable officer for anchoring and things like that so I had a domestic role on the ship, really, ship's husband

07:30 and it was a very mixed group, there wasn't the close knitness I found in the mixed crew of the Kanimbla, there was much more us and them, the fly boys because when you went into port, came back to Sydney they all flew off to Albatross [naval base] and you didn't see them any longer. So

08:00 there were two groups, the ship's officers and the fly boys, and they didn't mix terribly well, it was like oil and water.

Is it apt to talk about Sydney as a happy ship?

I don't know that she was a happy ship,

08:30 she was an efficient ship, she was too big to be happy, I think is the way I would express it, it didn't have the close knitness that some ships have, and there was a difference of identity, the air crew, the flight deck sort of component, the people who were involved with aviation and then there were engineers

09:00 who drove the machinery, and then there were seaman who drove the ship. And they were sort of almost poles apart, I mean there was a, it worked well together, they operated successfully as an aircraft carrier.

What's it like heading out to sea in a ship this big with so much fire power on board?

09:30 You can see the end of the flight deck but you can't see the aircraft drop over as they catapulted off, sort of drop below the visible and then you see them again. Well you are way up high, they are absolutely....

10:00 there are so many components you never really get to know the ship completely, that was one of the problems, there were so many different components in it, the direction officers and they had their little world in the operations room, direction officers, and then you've got the fleet navigator and the navigation team and you've got the met team, you've got the flight deck crews with their machinery and

10:30 tractors and things that drive around on the deck, and of course you've got the ceremonial which is quite different cause here you've got this great big parade ground in the middle of the ocean, I mean you parked your aircraft, you could use the flight deck for ceremonial divisions, and they do, the ceremonial bull dust that went on was incredible. And of course Al Charrington [?] when he was

11:00 the fleet commander he inspected the Sydney and he looked at a sailor that had the same sort of bum freezers under his eyes here, and he looked him up and down and said, "Shave them off, on me they look distinguished, on you they look bloody ridiculous!" and he was that sort of person.

He is the skipper?

No he was the admiral.

Suddenly Australia has this large strategic weapon

11:30 **there was a period of Australian aircraft carriers and you were at the start of it, how did you feel about Australia having a strategic weapon?**

Can I say to you I thought it was very important, I think the tragedy of our navy today is that we haven't got any aircraft carriers, and it really is a tragedy because if you look at all the amphibious landings, the reason we never got

12:00 sunk in Kanimbla is because we always had a carrier air group protecting us. And that's the only reason we didn't get sunk, that carrier group, if we had tried to operate the same way in the Mediterranean we wouldn't have survived. I mean the reality is that in amphibious warfare you must have forward air cover to protect your amphibious force and the Australian Navy hasn't got any, any longer.

- 12:30 We've got Kanimbla and Manoora, we've got two so called amphibious ships now but we haven't got the air cover to allow them to operate in a hostile environment. And that's in modern warfare. I think that is frightening, I mean I know it's cost, I know it's successive chiefs of staff, I mean the conflict of fighting in the three services is partly the cause of this
- 13:00 at defence headquarters and they lost the war. I mean they lost, they were to get a replacement for the Melbourne and the chiefs of staff decided it was all too expensive, and really has made the Australian Navy a minor force. I mean sure we do interdiction in the [Persian] Gulf with our ships and we can do some of these things, and the Kanimbla did a marvellous job in the Gulf this time, but under the cover of American carriers.
- 13:30 **You're heading towards Korea in an Australian aircraft carrier, what did you pack?**
- Well ourselves, well we were all issued with cold weather clothing of course.
- How cold did you think it would be?**
- Well we knew that the chill factor could be minus 10 Centigrade,
- 14:00 and that can be pretty miserable on a carrier which is the heating to say the least wasn't extraordinarily adequate, in fact it was terribly cold. And you also embarked a large quantity of sardines, and we all got issued with a tin of sardines a day to keep the cold away, one of the more humorous sides of it. They were very nice as sardines but whether they kept the cold away is anyone's guess.
- 14:30 I mean Korea is hot and wet in summer, and it's cold and wet and miserable in winter, and the winds and the chill come across from Siberia and there is nothing to stop it. So the seas are rough, the winds are high, the chill factor is high, and frequently you can't fly.
- How do you set an aircraft carrier up for taking off?**
- 15:00 Well the aircraft's got to go into the wind, I mean they are catapulted off anyway, but they've got to, to get enough, apart from the catapult you also need sufficient speed. So the aircraft doesn't drop in the sea when it is catapulted off, so you've got to head into the wind, so you've got to have a lot of sea room depending on where the wind is coming from and you put your aircraft, as soon as you go to flying stations and you are
- 15:30 going to fly off, you head into the wind so you've got a cross deck speed of about, the equivalent with the catapult, about 180 knots I think it is, that's catapult speed plus wind speed. If there is no wind at all it's very difficult to fly, Sydney's engines were a bit old, I mean she wasn't a new ship so to get up to
- 16:00 speed it took a bit of effort and she'd shake all over, she'd get there, but see she didn't have an angled deck either, we had all the problem of, and no mirror landing, so the batman used to have to bring them back in again and the ship was moving a lot, that was very difficult, we had a number of prangs on landing.
- What's a prang on landing like?**
- Well they if they don't pick up the....
- 16:30 they have a hook and they've got to pick up the wire across the deck, that hook picks it up to rest a while to stop them going straight across into a parked aircraft at the flight deck. As soon as they land they park up towards the bow of the flight deck, and you've got two barriers, so that if they miss a hook they can go into a barrier, if they bump the first barrier it's called a grand national and they go into the sea. That occasionally happened, not too frequently
- 17:00 but it happened. That was not good flying, but with the ship moving a lot the batman actually controlled them without mirror landing, controlling the aircraft coming in, we had quite a number of wave offs
- What is the batman doing?**
- He's actually telling the aircraft whether they are too high or too low or if they have got the right angle, he is actually looking
- 17:30 at the wings of the aircraft and saying you're too high or too low, come down a bit, up a bit, bank a bit to the left, bank a bit to the right, so his bats are moving right and left, up and down, two bats. Mirror landing took over from that but in Sydney we didn't have mirror landing at that time, we had batmen, and in bad weather the things happened.
- 18:00 **Once you got in station in Korea, what was your role?**
- My role was twofold, one was to prevent North Korean sea infiltration and there was reconnaissance patrols for that, and b), to support the army.
- What aircraft were you flying?**
- Fireflies and Sea Furies, Sea Furies were the reconnaissance planes.

- 18:30 Sea Fury was a very, very good piston, it was the fastest piston driven aircraft there was of course, it was a magnificent aeroplane, but then of course the Migs [Mikoyan-Gurevich, Soviet aircraft manufacturer], no even a Mig didn't agree with each other, when the North Koreans started using Migs the aircraft carriers were pushed into a ground support role and reconnaissance role and certainly not an air combat role.
- 19:00 **Are there any particular actions that you were involved in supporting?**
- No, it was really quite uneventful.
- I think that anything to do with an aircraft carrier can't be uneventful. Were there any instances of planes not being able to find you?**
- Yes, well actually curiously enough after the work ups we had a problem, we lost one in Korea
- 19:30 with fuel loss. I think from memory, I can't remember if it was during work up or -I think it was in Korea, It was always a very tight sort of period when that was happening, where are they going to ditch, can we recover them
- Can you describe that incident?**
- Just trying to think about it.
- 20:00 He said he was in difficulty was going to have to ditch, we picked him up on his transponder of course, turned towards him and went like a bat out of hell, and the chopper went off, cause we had a sea helicopter for sea rescue and it went off and we plucked him out of the water, we got him back, he came back all right. Didn't get the aeroplane back
- 20:30 but there were tense moments like that, but it was really very ordinary for a carrier. That's what everyone said anyway, it was just boring, long watches, cold weather, bitter weather, unpleasant weather.
- How cold was it?**
- I think the chill factor was minus 10 C at night.
- How is that affecting you and how cold does it feel?**
- 21:00 Bitterly cold, it really is cold, cold and miserable, and you couldn't even get warm when you got back to your cabin, cause the heating wasn't adequate so everyone felt cold.
- Ice? On the deck?**
- We never suffered from ice on the deck, we had sleet and snow
- 21:30 a couple of times but it didn't stay on the deck, I'm just trying to think why, I think we steamed it off, can't remember quite frankly.
- How were you enjoying your time on the Sydney when you were up there?**
- Well I was newly married with a new son, not really, I'd have much rather have been home. But can I say the compensation was when I got back I was given command of my own, so...
- 22:00 **Can you tell us more about the ground support role of Sydney?**
- It was mostly along cross to the DMZ, the Demilitarised Zone was the area as it became known, it was the 38th parallel, most of our flying was along the 38th parallel,
- 22:30 ocean wise but particularly for North Korean movement of vessels, so it was really somewhat a dull time. The first time Sydney was up there it was much more exciting. Because she was actually, the Migs weren't in presence as she was actively supporting the army, doing bombing and strafing of convoys and things but
- 23:00 because of the Migs in the second tour of duty, the Migs had made sure we couldn't do that, if our aircraft had come across a Mig it would have been shot down
- And so how did that affect how you operated the carrier?**
- Very passive role the second Korean, it was really a police role, not terrible exciting.
- What was the feeling of ship's company on what they were doing there?**
- "Let's go, lets go home."
- 23:30 **Why is that?**
- I mean the Korean War came to a sort of stumbling end and it was quite clear that there was going to be no resolution of it. And you can't be terribly enthusiastic about being away from your family and away from home, with Sydney of course there were a lot more married people in the

24:00 ship's company, older ship,s company in age group than in Kanimbla, so there was much more the feeling that "Where is our mail, why aren't we going home, what are we doing here?"

You are professional naval personnel, how important beyond orders, that there be a purpose to what you are doing?

24:30 I think it is important, I think one of the problems with the present Gulf War is the fact that our leaders didn't give a clear, on both sides of politics, didn't give clear support. I think is very difficult to send people off to war when you haven't got a clear objective.

25:00 **You are not supposed to think about these things as a fighting professional are you?**

Probably you're not supposed to think about them but people do, I mean we are ordinary human beings. One of the things I keep saying to people, the people most dedicated to peace are the people who have served or are serving, there is no one more dedicated to peace in my view. The politicians

25:30 might be delighted to go to war but I don't think any member of the defence forces ever is. It's just a fact of life

You lost some aircraft up there, how does this affect the operations of the carrier?

There is a worry that, I think people,

26:00 air crew in particular, it hits very hard, but everyone feels it, I mean you lose something that belongs to you, it does, they may have been fly boys and they may have been fish heads, but they still belonged to us. So there is a feeling of loss and a feeling of frustration in a loss and always

26:30 "How can we avoid it happening again?" The question you always ask is, "How can we avoid it happening again?"

There is quite a well known radio broadcast during the Falklands War where the announcer says, "I counted them out and I counted them all back in." Was it like that?

Yes a bit, after a sortie you would say, yes, and the direction officer in particular, they were talking the whole time and they

27:00 circle the carrier, and in the Sydney it was always, are they going to safely land, you've got the six aircraft up in a sortie, and number one comes in ok, number two comes in ok, you think, "Oh things are going well." and then suddenly there is a barrier crash and that stops all landings, so you've got three people still in the air, and you're saying, "Oh God how long is this going to take, are they going to run out of fuel, how long can they stay up there?"

27:30 Yeah, you do count.

Can you take us through one of these from departure to arriving back? What you're doing on a watch?

Well I mean the aircraft take off for a sortie, the direction officers are controlling them, they have got them in radar contact on the radars,

28:00 and they're plotting them and you've got destroyer escorts, escorting you as a carrier, so you've got the problem of station keeping, keeping in station, keeping your position of where you need to be and knowing you have got to be back in a certain spot at a certain time, if we land on again, or they've got to know where you going to be when you get back, so the ordinary ship navigation with your ship consorts and your escorts goes on, and you might even get a submarine alarm,

28:30 we did a couple of times, they were false alarms but you know there is always that possibility, so the ordinary matters of seamanship and navigation are there and then commander of flying comes on bridge and says, "We'll be going to flying stations in five minutes." you go to special sea duty man, which is special, highly skilled helmsmen and officer of the watch and

29:00 all the sort of designated people for the fly on, fly off, come back and on the bridge take over, you go to full flying stations, the battens are on the stern of the aircraft carrier, all the deck crew are on the flight deck, already prepared, got their colour masks and your fire fighting equipment and everything else is all ready alert so if there is a fire crash you can put it out quickly.

29:30 And then the captain comes on the bridge and he says, well course so and so, the navigator says, course flying station ,so you go into that particular course which is braced for the wind landing, the wind is just as important for flying off. So you've still got exactly the same circumstances into the wind, steady course, and you may have to go slightly off the wind if the carrier's pitching a lot.

30:00 You might say, "Well we'll try going a quarter that sea to reduce the pitching." so they make the flight deck as stable as possible for the fly on, and then you've got all these special people there as they come in, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and all crossing your fingers that they all come in safely, and you do cross your fingers.

And can you take us through what you are doing?

I'm doing officer of the watch so, a) I've got the position of keeping the speed, keeping the course, watching the helmsman

30:30 at the time to make sure he doesn't steer badly, and also I've got the seas boats' crew in case one crashes off the carrier to land, so I'm in the position where I need to stop engines if there is a accident of any sort, and you might have to turn away quickly with crash on, and with

31:00 flames in the aircraft you might have to turn quickly out of wind so that the wind is sweeping the flames away from the bridge structure which is on the side of the carrier, as you know the on the side of the flight deck is pretty high, the flames are coming back the way the wind's blowing, you have to turn the ship away quickly so that the wind blows the flames away to sea rather than towards the bridge.

Did that ever happen to you?

No, again luck, it

31:30 has happened though, I know cases where it's happened, not many.

Are you able to watch the aircraft landing?

No, as an officer of the watch you can't see them landing, because you are watching, a) your escorts and that's one of the things you got to watch very carefully because you know the accidents with aircraft carrier and the Voyager disaster is a classic example when the destroyer crosses the bow of the carrier, it can very easily happen, it's nearly happened

32:00 a couple of times before, nearly happened in Korea a couple of times, you've got to say to your escorts, steer so and so you get up on the TBS on the talk back radio system and say to them, "Well what is your course the Greystoke" - or whatever it is - "You are coming too close." and so you have got to keep alert. But all the time you know that a contingency can happen what you are saying

32:30 to yourself all the time is what if this happens, what is my job to do. And it varies according to the circumstance,

Were there any particular close calls in Korea that you recall?

No, not really. The closest call we had was actually transiting Shimonoseki Straits, a very narrow passage in the Japanese islands going to

33:00 Osaka, and the traffic control there is that if a ship's going east bound, all west bound traffic stopped, and it's the other way around, so it's one way through the Straits at a time and we were going through, and we had been cleared to go through, and I was actually on the foc'sle, and the little catwalk right into the bow of the ship because for that particular one we might have had to anchor.

33:30 I was up there ready for anchor, let go of the anchors, do the anchoring side on, if I'd been told by the bridge to do it, and an American LST [Landing Ship Tank] came the other way and it missed our bridge and the sponsons by about that. It shot past me, I was on the little catwalk out on the bow, God, and it's just appeared around the bend and came out

34:00 and it shouldn't have been there, that's the closest call we've had. Very nearly collided with us.

How manoeuvrable was the Sydney?

Not terribly manoeuvrable, like any ship it takes a long time to stop, a long time to turn. It's not like a motor car, you can't put your foot on the break and stop.

How long were you on active duty in Korea?

Six months.

34:30 **And what stage was the war?**

Just at the end of the war.

Was that the last deployment of Sydney to Korea?

Yes.

Had Sydney been damaged by the hurricane when it came back the first time?

Yes it had.

35:00 The peripheral damage with aircraft badly damaged in the hangar, one lost off the flight deck I think, yeah she'd been damaged.

And was that damage in evidence on the second tour?

No, no, it had all been repaired, in fact the nearest we came to damage on the second tour was coming come via Fremantle and coming across the Great Australian Bight we got some very, very rough seas and we got a couple of aircraft on the flight deck damaged.

35:30 **I believe the Sydney was not a good place to be in very rough seas, can you talk about that?**

Well it wasn't exactly comfortable, what is not generally appreciated, they were built on the hulls of passenger liners, they were going to be passenger liners, originally, so the hull was that of a passenger liner, converted with a huge flight deck built on top

36:00 of it so they had more top hamper and top weight you would normally get in an ordinary construction. So they rolled on wet grass, for want of a better word for it, and they could pitch violently, they weren't good sea keeping qualities really.

They can't have been very easy to land an aircraft on either?

No, in bad weather it was very, very difficult

36:30 and the pilots were very skilled, the fact that we didn't have more accidents I think goes very much to the merit of the batsmen who really controlled them coming back in again, and the pilots themselves.

Can you tell us about the flight you took in a Firefly off the Sydney?

Rather not really, it was my fault actually, I had said to the captain on one occasion when I was talking to him, "I wouldn't fly in one of those things for all the tea in China."

37:00 He just smiled at me and said nothing, and he wanted an officer to go into Seoul about three weeks later, and he said to me, "Jim, I want you to go into Seoul." I said, "Hmm, yes." he said, "In the back seat of a Firefly." He "That'll teach you won't it?" it did. I won't mention the pilot's name but he had somewhat of a reputation for being

37:30 not a very good pilot.

Was this arranged by the captain also?

I suspect so, he was a great captain, George Oldham, he became an admiral afterwards, in fact he became my boss again when I was in command and he was also my boss when I was apprentice training supervisor in Narooma. Very good seaman, tough captain, very fair

38:00 Well that's what he wanted me to do, obviously I mean, good training, I don't really quarrel with it, can I say to you I am not exactly comfortable in the back seat of a Firefly.

Can you tell us about being launched off the back of an aircraft carrier?

Well, you leave your stomach behind, that sort of feeling, you grip everything that you can grip because

38:30 you know your stomach is going to be left behind, it's a funny sort of feeling, it's sort of yuck, then the relief you know you are safely in the air, that's marvellous, and landing in an ordinary military airfield that's no problem, but when you are faced with going back and your pilot's reputation is somewhat known for his grand nationals, one tends to be a little bit anxious shall we say.

Can you take us through the landing?

39:00 The jolt of landing is very sudden, when you pick up the hooks. I might say that on this particular occasion he did an absolutely perfect landing, but I wouldn't want to be a pilot of an aircraft. not a fleet air umpire, not my scene.

Air sickness?

39:30 No, I think the hazards of naval aviation flying in those days were too high for my book, I mean these days with mirror landings, and angled decks they are much safer than they were then, and they were very good professional fliers really, I mean the fact is they can fly those very skilled at flying those machines, but can I say to you if you have got to

40:00 fly you'd be much better to operate the machine yourself, than rely on someone else.

Tape 10

00:34 **Before we come to your post career, there were a couple of aircraft lost in training from the Sydney?**

They were lost in Hervey Bay, they were just ditched. Why, I really can't remember, but we lost two aircraft and two pilots in flying accidents that in those days was

01:00 considered fairly normal. It wasn't regarded as anything out of the ordinary.

Were they the only aircraft lost during the time you were on the Sydney?

Yeah.

When you came back what was your new role in the navy?

I was given command of HMAS Wagga which was a modernised fleet mine sweeper, one of two that were modernised

- 01:30 and the argument was I was due for a shore posting because to have time with my family and wife, and they said, "Well it's a Sydney training ship, you've got no problems you'll be home every night, you'll be doing daily running, training mine sweeping personnel from HMAS Rushcutter, you'll be home every night, so there was no problems, it's as good as if not better than a shore job because you've got command as well." Well that was fine for the first three months, and then they suddenly said well, "Oh, we urgently need someone to relieve the Hawkesbury."
- 02:00 which was in New Guinea doing fishing protection against the Japanese poachers and we departed. So instead of being home for Christmas as I had expected to be, and our first house in Sydney with a young son and my wife on her own in Sydney, we departed and we were away for 6 months, fishery protection in New Guinea
- 02:30 and naval recruiting and a variety of funny jobs, I unveiled the coast watchers' memorial in Boon, we went recruiting for the first Papuans for the first Papua New Guinea division of the navy. I went checking on the coast watching stations and met the King of Katava who offered me afternoon tea which is considered one third hypor [?], one third rum, and one third
- 03:00 cold tea, a very distinct, but those are the sort of funny things that happened. It was an odd period we were having a lot of trouble with poaching, Christmas in Port Moresby, we were very well looked after by the people in Port Moresby on Christmas day and then we went off and one Japanese had been caught, poaching and got fined \$500 for long line fishing
- 03:30 in Videus Straits [?]. Next we went back to patrol that area, and I must confess that it didn't seem, a) the Japanese poachers were faster than I was at full speed so that if they saw me they could get away, so we darkened ship and sat in Videus Straits and I picked one of them up on radar, and he was dropping his long lines with glass balls all down the Videus Strait so I let him do that
- 04:00 then I turned my navigation lights on and zig zagged up where I reckoned he laid them and there were balls and bits of nylon going in all direction, the Japanese never went fishing there again. They got the message, it would have cost then a lot more than \$500 if they'd have got caught.

How did you adapt to being in command of a ship?

- 04:30 It's very lonely; it's very interesting, I was a good ship handler because I had learned handling landing craft and difficult landing craft so if I say so myself I was good. We had a very interesting job, we went up the Rockhampton for Centenary celebrations, we went down to fleet regatta and beat the, we won cock of the fleet
- 05:00 with me as the stroke oar and the officers gig racers, I might say we were allowed, the fleets, we don't mind a little mine sweeper coming in the regatta, they weren't so pleased when we asked for the trophies for the fleet regatta but we got them

How many crew on the little mine sweeper?

72, sometimes 65, sometimes 72.

Did you have any trouble being in charge of 72 men?

No

- 05:30 In fact the Wagga association is another very strong association which I belong to which is still very active. Good ship's company, good crew, good officers, by and large

Where these officers who'd seen service?

Yeah, most of them, my first lieutenant had seen a lot of service, he was very good

- 06:00 I had one young officer which I think I said was a chronic seasick case I had to get rid of, and in New Guinea I was loaned two additional officers for watch keeping duties, one who was a naval aviator who was not much use to me, but very nice person, you couldn't leave him on the bridge on his own. It was an interesting, it was a very rewarding period really, and we'd undertook
- 06:30 a number of jobs that normally one wouldn't have expected to be doing so yeah, it was.

How did you feel about the navy being used for fishery patrols?

I can't see anything wrong with it, it's a role that's undertaken by other navies, the Royal Navy, the Danish Navy, the Norwegian Navy all do it. It seems a logical peacetime role to be....

- 07:00 I don't believe a country of our size can afford a coast guard, as well as a navy and because of that I think that it is a good role for the navy to undertake. I think a coastguard just duplicates a country as

big as America and if you have as much money as America then coastguards are fine, but we've got limited resources and if you can use naval ships for some of these roles I think you should.

07:30 I know a lot of people don't agree with me over it, but I think from a taxpayer's dollar point of view it's just common sense.

You were posted to Malaya, can you explain the circumstances of that posting?

Well first of all I went to school of languages to learn Malay and then I was posted to Malaya, at the time I was director of operations division, and I suddenly got

08:00 sent for by the second naval man and he said, "Oh, I hear you are off to Malaya." And I said, "What?" and he said, "Yes, you are loaned to the Royal Malaysian Navy for two and a half years." And I said, "Well alright, what does that mean?" and he said, "Well you'll be paying Malaysian tax, you'll be wearing Malaysian uniform." and I said, "Hold on, what do you mean I'm going to wear Malaysian uniform?" "Yes you will." he said. I said, "What's the legal position? Malaysia is at war with Indonesia

08:30 at the moment, where do I stand legally if I am wearing a foreign uniform which I'm not commissioned to do?" and he said, "Oh don't worry about that, that's no problem, we've agreed with Malaysia that's what you'll do." And I sort of opened my mouth to say well I'm not very happy about this and he said, "Jim you do what you are told. You are going to Malaysia." and I went to Malaysia. I had a very interesting command

09:00 I might say, it was a big command, over three and a half thousand personnel, there were the base was on Singapore Island which had just separated from Malaysia so there was a major political problem which was solved because I'm at the Australian High Commission for the Australia Day function, a Chinese lady, I don't know who she was, but she looked terribly lost and I said, "Can we help you?"

09:30 And she said, "I am looking for my car." I sent my driver off to find her car, and she asked who I was and thanked me very much. The next day [Prime Minister] Lee Kuan Yew rang me up and said, "Thank you very much for looking after my mother, if you have any problems at all, please let me know." And from that day on I had a wonderful relationship with the Singaporeans as well as with Tunku Abdul Rahman, [first Prime Minister of Malaysia] who was had access to if I had any problems.

10:00 It really was - although our youngest daughter became very ill while we were there - it really in many ways was a very rewarding posting.

What was your role exactly while you were there?

I was captain of KD Malaya which was the main Royal Malaysian Navy's training base. So we were training people for an emerging navy, it was just beginning to emerge at that time

10:30 and the reason they had asked this was we weren't very happy with the quality of the officers they were getting from the Royal Navy

What sort of training was undertaken there?

All type of training, electrical, mechanical, engineering, seamanship, the lot. It was from basic entry training through to advanced training.

11:00 **Did this emerging navy have any role in the conflict after?**

Yes it did, patrolling the straits, the patrol boats were very active in patrolling, largely in anti infiltration patrols, also we were using Australian ships, the Australian Navy was doing all the ships, Australian Malaysian, British, and Singaporean were all involved in actual patrols

11:30 anti infiltration patrols.

There were riots around that time can you tell us what you saw of those?

Well we were up in Penang and one of the them really blew up, it was unpleasant but really we felt very safe, they weren't near, the Malaysia or Chinese were interested in Europeans or

12:00 'Matsale' as they called us. But it was a difficult period for the Malaysian Navy because we had a very multicultural mix in the Malaysian Navy and many of the important tasks were not Malay, they were Chinese or Indian, because technically the Indians and Chinese were much better skilled at the more difficult tasks

12:30 so there was a major worry within the navy that there might be friction over this and it was probably a very good thing that a Malaysian wasn't in command at that time. But there were interesting, you know people sort of talk against Islam all these days, well that was a multicultural society where the Malaysians, the Muslims came and sang Christmas carols outside our house for us on Christmas Eve, I mean there is an

13:00 understanding of the various differences in culture which I think is very lacking today. But I think it was very good then.

How different was the situation you had left in Malaya than when you had arrived?

I think a lot, I think they had greatly advanced, I think they got to the stage where they could have their own officers in command and I think they benefited greatly from the exchanges.

- 13:30 Certainly Tunku Abdul Rahman thought so and said so. So yes there was, it was, well the tragedy of course is that the present Prime Minister of Malaysia can't abide Australia at all but Tunku Abdul Rahman held us all in very high regard.

Australia had a very important role in nation building of Malaya.

- 14:00 **You then had a posting some time later to Korea, can you tell us about that?**

Well it was, I was three years there, and I went as the defence attaché as a primary role but in actual fact I was also the Australian representative of the arms commission, I was chief of the Australia liaison group to the

- 14:30 United Nations Command, I was the president of the United Nations Command mess, and I was deputy commander of British Commonwealth Forces Korea, so I had a number of hats in it. I'd say the average time I would spend, I worked about 80 hours a week the whole time I was there, it was very, very demanding, I had a very good relationship with the
- 15:00 Americans. I was also at the Arms Commission at Pan Muijon. Got on well with the United Nations Group, the Czechs and Poles on the north side, and the Swiss and Swedes on south side were the neutral nations there I had a good working relationship with them, and a reasonably good working relationship with the Chinese on the other side, the North Koreans couldn't stand it.
- 15:30 They used to get really uptight when I would look over my glasses at them. I was very useful to the Americans there because I could tell the other side things that our side felt that the Americans didn't want to voice that opinion, so I was used quite a lot as an intermediary to ease the path, you might say, to particular proposals
- 16:00 and in fact the Czechs and Poles from the north side I actually brought down to Seoul on one occasion and that was quite funny because the Korean CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] were all over the place with cameras and thinking what on earth is going to happen next. But it all helped build the good relations during that period which was a very difficult period because we had one of our guards beaten to death while I was there.
- 16:30 From the meetings and a couple of times we had to evacuate the meetings, things were very uncomfortable, and it was very, again it was terribly demanding on my wife. All these social events and cocktail parties and parties and things I had to go to, and because I was in so many positions, so many hats, I was on the diplomatic list, I was on the military list, the naval list, the neutral nations lists.
- 17:00 I seemed to be forever having to attend functions, so it was very demanding, very demanding on my wife as well. We originally had three of our children with us and then my youngest son who was with us asked to come home to board at home. He was very unhappy with the schooling there, I think rightly so., The other thing I think is perhaps interesting - just flipping back to a moment to Malaysia - I sent all my children to Malaysian schools because I was on loan
- 17:30 to the Malaysian Government I thought it was appropriate for them there. The British down the road at Singapore weren't at all happy about this, they called me, in fact to my face, called me a 'nigger lover' and I said, "Well look, I'm working for the Malaysians, they have a marvellous education." in fact the education was better, by and large in Malaysian schools than it was in British military school, and certainly there wasn't the snob-ocracy that there was. And my eldest son became very fluent in Malay
- 18:00 and to this day has stood him in very good stead, language wise.
- But he didn't fair so well in Korea?**
- No that was my youngest son, no he wasn't, the American school there, a lot of drugs a lot of problems, and he wasn't happy and he wasn't learning anything there and he wanted to come home, and fortunately I was able to get him in as a boarder.
- 18:30 **As defence attaché, or one of your other roles, what was your interaction with the South Koreans?**
- Quite a lot, one of the things was, because I was a member of the Armistice Commission as well, I had free access to go anywhere in South Korea, which most defence attachés didn't have. The Korean Army weren't very keen on this, they were very hostile on occasions but they got used to me floating around, and they used to have a little funny black chief following me, the Korean CIA people, but
- 19:00 by and large I got on well with them because, they are a very outspoken people, blunt speaking, and I found that dealing with them you had to be blunt, and they understood it, unlike the Malays where the culture of South East Asia is quite the opposite where, you really 'softly softly
- 19:30 catchee monkey' you might say for want of a better way of putting it. The Koreans, you can't deal with them that way, it's the direct opposite. And their food is awful, Korean food is not attractive at all, but Malaysian food is marvellous, so it was a very tough three years there, I was the full three years there

which was unusual, previously it had only been a two year posting

20:00 and I think I was kept there because they particularly wanted me there, the Americans wanted me there.

How did that intense workload affect you personally?

Well I had to keep fit which meant working out fairly regularly, it was exhausting, really exhausting and

20:30 I developed high blood pressure while I was there, I'd had enough after three years in Korea I had had enough, I quit. There was too much time away from the family, they were growing up and getting to university age and the future postings that I saw were going to be largely

21:00 the same sort of diplomatic postings and that's not what I wanted so I quit. But I owe a hell of a lot to my wife. Wives of naval officers are very long suffering people and a tremendous amount of running the home, and every thing else is dependent upon them, and the enormous amount of socialising, they

21:30 are part of it and I've got an uncomplaining wife who put up with it all.

When you were in Korea the Australian role there was mediated through the UN in relation to the Americans, and, as originally British, how do you relate to the changes in Australia's over the years, in its position in the world?

22:00 Well I think we, what's the right word, we believe we are much more important than we really are, we are still very small fish in reality and I think a lot of our politicians

22:30 really don't realise how unimportant we are to the rest of the world. In Korea for instance many of the Americans said I spoke good English because they thought Australia was Austria, they thought German was my language and these were educated American officers, quite senior ones

23:00 they'd compliment you, "Oh you speak awfully good English!" they had no idea about Australia and even worse than that they were patronising in that they thought everyone wanted to immigrate to America, and they were absolutely horrified when I said, oh no I have no intention of immigrating to America, lovely place to visit but I wouldn't want to live there, and I'd tell them bluntly that, and they would look at me in absolute horror. I've had some of them come out and visit me since

23:30 and they all said I can see what you mean now. But I don't think we are terribly important to America I don't think ANZUS [Australia New Zealand and United States - security agreement] I think we kid ourselves over the ANZUS agreement, I don't think unless it was in America's interest they wouldn't come to our aid if we got attacked. I mean you've really got to be realistic about this and I don't think our polities are.

What about your own relationship with Australia, obviously you have come to call it home?

24:00 Yes, I have.

Are you a proud Australian?

Yes I am.

And what is behind that pride?

My service to Australia and the fact that over 60 years of my life has been spend in Australia. Let's be realistic about this, I am an Australian citizen.

I'm not suggesting you shouldn't be

24:30 **I'm just wondering what has Australia got to be proud of?**

Egalitarianism I think is the most important thing. Lack of class consciousness, awful class consciousness that the English suffer from, 'fair go', I know people say that that has been eroding but I don't think it really is, we haven't got so many of the

25:00 filthy rich that so many countries have, including America, the appalling poverty, sure there is poverty in Australia but it's not poverty in the sense of the rest of the world knows poverty. They might not own a car but they have still got a roof over their head and they eat three meals a day, real poverty you don't have any of those things, you look at America and people are starving in America, there is real poverty there and there is obscene wealth,

25:30 we don't have that. And I think it's true of England too, they have obscene wealth and class distinctions and real poverty, we don't have that, my Scots upbringing and Scots ancestry, Scotland's more like a Australia in character, you are much more at home in Australia than you would be in England.

We both dislike the English equally?

Yeah that would be right

26:00 it's one of those sort of the realities, it's a different culture, a different world.

How do you feel looking back at your naval service, do you think your service in these wars has been worth it?

- 26:30 Yes I do because I think the emergence of fascism was even worse, in racial intolerance, religious intolerance, I think that the Nazi party and the
- 27:00 genocide of Jews and other people was dreadful and someone had to stop them, the cost was huge. I think the biggest problem we've got today is the fact that Russia has collapsed, I think when it was a second power it kept the brakes on the United States and what I fear today is that the United States is becoming too 'Rambo'.
- 27:30 I know that's not popular to say but I think it's true, and what may change that is that I think China will emerge as a tiger and a very powerful one, and you've got to remember that China has two thirds of the population of the world [?] and if they do emerge it will be a very different world.

Where do you think Australia should sit with that?

- 28:00 Where we're put, I don't think we will have any option, the Chinese are, it's very interesting, the Chinese are more pragmatic about people than many people are, the Koreans and Japanese are terribly xenophobic but the Chinese are not
- 28:30 and I think that they would be happy, if they were the world power, they would be happy to let other people live their lives, they have got enough internal problems and they will always have internal problems not to deny they may want to expand in terms of trade and wealth, but I don't see them as wanting to expand territorially
- 29:00 **You have served in a number of conflicts, how do you feel about war looking back at your own experience?**
- Well I've said this before to people, there are no greater exponents of peace than those who've served in war. We see the follies of politicians, I mean politicians create war, not necessarily politicians, industry
- 29:30 and politicians between them create wars. There should be a better way I think the great danger we are now facing is that the authority of the United Nations has been very marginalised by activities in Iraq, unilateral action there, I think and it reminds me very much as a child of the League of Nations
- 30:00 so I mean the fact that America pulled out and wouldn't support the League of Nations destroyed the League of Nations, and if the League of Nations had worked, it may well have been there wouldn't have been a Second World War.

How do you feel about your own experience in the Second World War?

I did my job. If it was asked of me, if it was a major contribution

- 30:30made any difference but then

Do you think about it very much these days?

I have occasional nightmares still, but no, I try not to think about it, and the advice I would give to anyone else is, don't think about it.

Why haven't you talked so much to your own family about your experience of war?

I think like most people who have fought in war

- 31:00 you don't want to talk about it, you don't want to remind yourself of it, you don't want to say to your kids what a futile thing war really is. Because it is, I think it's a mix of those things, but medical advice I have had when I was in Heidelberg, bury it, I think I am right.

- 31:30 **A lot of people would take issue with that approach, especially the modern counselling approach?**

Absolute loonies, that's why the Vietnam veterans are in such trouble because they've had counselling by people who wouldn't know about wars anyway, how can you get psychiatrists or counsellors to counsel a person about war when they haven't experienced war themselves, there is an absurdity about it and they have created it in veterans. I mean World War I, World War II and Korean War, we had no counselling for this nonsense and we've got

- 32:00 nowhere near the post-traumatic stress disorder young people are now suffering from and the people who have caused that are counsellors. The advice I had I think was sound, forget about it, bury it, and you know it's a new industry in Australia, it's the biggest growth industry there is and they've probably put more people in mental hospitals than it saves them

- 32:30 **If you are right for your own mental health it may be better to keep it in but do we, the younger generations need to know about these things today?**

You need to be told about the futility of war I think and it's a thing I think [General] Monash preached

and he was undoubtedly

33:00 Australia's greatest general, people talk about Blamey and not Monash because the problem with Monash was he wasn't a regular soldier, he was an engineer, child of immigrant Russian Jews, that's a dirty word if you go to the War Memorial, if you didn't go to Duntroon [Royal Military College] you didn't get a cap, or not get a cap, but the fact remains that Monash preached the futility and horror

33:30 of war, and I often quote him to the kids, school kids.

Is there a particular quote from Monash you could use to illustrate your point?

Yes, but I haven't got it with me,

Thinking of war and what you have learned from it, and knowing that this Archive will be around for the future, is there any comment you would like to make?

34:00 I think yes there is, that the tragic loss of life of a lot of young people, and probably the best in the country, I mean let's be realistic about this, the people that dodged service after they had conscription in Australia but the huge volunteer force we had in both wars took the cream of the country

34:30 and the tragedy is that is loss to any nation and it's a loss to the German nation too, it's a loss to Britain, it's a loss to Norway, it's a loss to any nation involved in war. But in many cases the absolute cream of youth is killed, and that is a real tragedy, and that is the tragedy of war I guess.

How do you feel about the future?

35:00 Not very optimistic, can I say I think Australia has had its best days, I think that the Menzies era was the greatest period of Australian contentment and indeed a quality, I think we are drifting away from it.

35:30 **There is a current Kanimbla in active service, you were a part of the original crew, how do you feel about those young people today?**

I think they are absolutely first class, can I say to you that the engineer commander

36:00 was trained by me as a naval apprentice and I've been communicating with him while they have been in the Gulf, the quality of the young sailors today, male and female, are still outstanding and they are all, one of the reasons is they are all well trained, and they are all volunteers, and Kanimbla in the Gulf this time did an outstanding job, much the same as her predecessor, who is now a merchant cruiser, did in capturing 22 ships at Bandar Shapur.

36:30 so they have both made their names - both Kanimblas have made their names in the Gulf. And the praise of the allied command in the present conflict was very, very high, in that praise of Kanimbla and the operations she carried out. And I think the quality of the young Australians is as every bit as good as it's always been. They are probably better educated than we were, I think is a fair comment, warfare is much more electronically

37:00 orientated. Cyber-centric is the word they love to use today, but it's the truth, you need fairly intelligent people to become involved in cyber-centric warfare and Kanimbla I think, proved it.

Thank you very much.

INTERVIEW ENDS