

Australians at War Film Archive

Robert Taylor (Roy or Buck) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:42 **Righto Roy.**

I thought I'd start off with a...I was born in London in Brixton and when I was fourteen months old

01:00 Mum and Dad, my Dad had served in the British army and he decided to come to Australia because he had a brother here in Geebung [Qld]. So we all came out here. I was fourteen months old and we came out on the old Diogenes. And coming to Australia of course it was all new to us. I wouldn't know much about it at fourteen months but I grew up here in Geebung.

01:30 In 1927 we built a little house down the back there and lived in that for a while and then we headed off down to Kingston then. And my Dad, he decided to go and work up in the Morris Wool Mills and he used to sleep under somebody's house during the week and then come home on the weekends

02:00 and we would get an old horse and cart and go round selling vegetables to get a few extra bucks. But in the meantime it was just my Mum and my sister and myself and we used to live at Kingston there and she used to scrub the floor out of the Kingston Butter Factory and it was, you know, a few bucks coming in, a few bob.

02:30 But some very strange things happened there. Another uncle of mine came out from England and he was a real Pom. He threw me into the dam, he thought I could swim and I couldn't. So Dad jumped in and got me out and then clobbered his brother and said, "Get out and don't come back". We didn't see him again for a long time.

03:00 We used to have the brumbies. They used to come of a nighttime and rub their shoulders up against the stumps under the house. And it was...for the first time it was very frightening but we got used to it after a while. Of a night time my job was to go and get the chickens, the fowls and mesmerize them.

03:30 Put their head under their wing, turn them round and round and put them on a post. A high post so that the foxes wouldn't get them of a night time. And of course as soon as the sun rose they'd come to again. And it was quite a big feat and that was my job. And we used to go to

04:00 little functions down there at Kingston and I got made up as Sir Walter Raleigh and won a contest down there. And then we shifted off back to Brisbane and my Dad joined the Colonial Mutual Life Insurance Company and they sent him up to Townsville so we shifted up to Townsville.

04:30 And my various schools, I think I had about eight or nine in all. And from Townsville we came back to Rockhampton and then to Bundaberg and then back to Brisbane again and then that was just as the Depression was finishing, nearly over. Money was pretty tight and

05:00 jobs were tight so he took a job as a warden up at the old Boggo Road Gaol and I'll never forget that because I used to take his lunch up to him and I'd go and ring this great big bell up there and the great big doors would open up and I used to take his lunch into him and you'd see all the prisoners there. It was quite interesting. I was going to Dutton Park School in those days.

05:30 They had Webster's Biscuit Factory was right across the road and we used to go up and get a halfpenny's worth of broken biscuits for lunch. I'll never forget those broken biscuits and a great big packet you'd get for a halfpenny. And then we shifted off to, where did we go? Glamorganvale then

06:00 and my Mum and Dad went into a hotel at Glamorganvale. My sister and I both had horses. We used to ride to school, to the old Glamorganvale School and it was great fun. We'd race with the horses and at lunchtime you'd go out and groom them down and you were more interested in the horses than in our schoolwork then. And then we shifted up to

06:30 the Marburg Hotel then and when we were at Marburg that was quite a busy little centre in those days and everybody was very busy and all the farmers around the place, mostly German cockies and we used

to operate from there and I went to the Marburg School and did some dreadful things there.

- 07:00 As I was saying before when my Mum and Dad used to go to Brisbane on buying, I'd come home at lunchtime from school and my sister would be in the bar looking after it and I used to get a couple of rums and take the truck back, the utility back to school and promptly fall asleep in the second half of the afternoon. And Murray Dews
- 07:30 was one of our teachers and he was a local council member here many, many years ago and he said to my Dad, "Oh Ron, young Roy is coming up here and he's had something to drink because he goes to sleep". Anyway we...I got stopped at that but I still like rum. And we
- 08:00 had a great big vegetable patch up there and we used to grow things and after we left Marburg we came to Brisbane and it was getting on towards 1938,'39 and I went to the Royal Queensland Aero Club and started work there. I used to start work at half past four in the morning, ride the bike out from Yeronga or catch onto the back of a truck that was going out
- 08:30 and get pulled all the way out to Rocklea by the truck - you don't do that these days. And I'd start the planes up, I'd wheel them out and put them all on the tarmac and have them started up ready for all the budding fliers coming in. Young Diamond from Diamond Dry Cleaners, he was one
- 09:00 of our very good customers. And Aussie Diamond went on to become a war ace during the war. They'd come out and do their flying and I'd check them out and check them back in again and I used to cheat a bit too with some of them....Instead of them taxiing all the way out I wouldn't mark them out until they were air borne
- 09:30 and I used to get a few favours for that, a bit of free dry cleaning and such things. That's cheating I suppose. I was the star witness to a very bad air crash there. That's when Miss Lestrangle and Urmsta Tully crashed. I started Miss Lestrangle up and
- 10:00 and she taxied round and did the full circuit of the airport, which you had to and then Tully, he was running a bit late or she was running a bit late and she took off and instead of doing a full circuit she cut straight across and she met Lestrangle. Her propeller cut Lestrangle straight out of the cockpit and down she came
- 10:30 and I was driving the super Plume [petroleum company] truck too. I was filling the planes up out there. I was sixteen but still that didn't make any difference, you don't require a licence when you are up on a property. We went looking for them. They weren't too wrapped about me taking a petrol tanker over where this great fire was and we went looking for her and we found her. She had come down and landed on her legs, her legs were only about
- 11:00 six inches long, they had gone right up inside her. We got the other lady, Tully, and she was burned. I was a major witness to that and I've still got the report. That was a very disconcerting thing for me. It upset me and it upset a lot of us because they were great people
- 11:30 the two of them. And of course we had a few others that when they were landing they didn't see the fence and the undercarriage caught in the fence and down they went. I got to ride in the Stinson [passenger airline company] just before, two days before she crashed up at O'Reilly's [Guesthouse, Lamington National Park, Qld]. I had a ride in that and then I used to go with Jerry Pentland. He was a wartime ace, a one-legged fellow. He used to take me out to
- 12:00 Crakow in a de Havilland Rapide and I was ballast to go out there to pick up gold and I'd be sitting there with these big nuggets of gold coming back. Then he and Charlie Matheson decided to take their Moths up and have a dogfight. Jerry came screaming down
- 12:30 and ran his wheels over the top of the aero club shed. "Holy Sailor", I thought, "Oh my God". Anyway they were having a proper dogfight, the two of them. Then when the Red Cross had a big day at Redcliffe they wanted a shark patrol so Jerry would take me down and we went down in a little Taylor Cub [plane]. It was a little thing and we used to sit behind each other .
- 13:00 It was like a little motor mower engine in it but on the way back we just got over Rocklea and the windscreen was covered with oil. Jerry said, "Down we go". So he side slipped her and landed in the Rocklea Pub yard and said, "You said there Bob. I'm going for a run". So anyway he went and rang up Archerfield and told them where he was.
- 13:30 Then another time he took me up after B-H-U-I-E, the [plane] that Miss Lestrangle was in was crashed, it was restored and he said, "Come on Bob. I'll take you for a trip" so we went up. But we had no instruments, no bat and ball, nothing. And we just got up there and down came the fog and we didn't know where we were. Jerry said, "Keep an eye out. We've got
- 14:00 to come down now because we haven't got that much petrol". We came down at the Ipswich Racetrack and landed there. Some funny things happened to me out there. He taught me to fly the Moths. What he used to do, he'd put me in there and he'd say, "Righto Bob, you've got it." And he'd have two joysticks. He'd take one, the spare one and he'd say, "There Bob."
- 14:30 And he'd throw it. And he'd say, "You've got it. You're on your own." But he had it there all the time. And

that's how he taught me to take off and land and it was a great experience. And from there I was going to be articled to aircraft engineering but I don't know, I somehow got

- 15:00 waylaid a bit and I finished up going to Taubman's paint people because they were advertising for someone to drive their new little Dynamol van. It was a beautiful little car, a new Vauxhall it was and it was all coloured paints and it was the first time these little pots of paint were put out for house
- 15:30 work and that sort of thing. And I had this and the fellow got sacked for putting his age down to get the job. I put my age up and got the job and I got my licence after about three months after driving. They didn't ask me for a licence when I applied. Anyway that was a great job and then there was four of us there and
- 16:00 we all decided to join the navy. So we all marched down to the depot and then we had to go down and sort the mother and father out to see whether they would sign our papers. And my Dad said, "Definitely yes." He said, "It will be a good thing." So we got, we put our name down
- 16:30 and in February and in May '41 we were called up. We were the first lot of civvies to leave Brisbane and go down to Flinders naval depot for training. We all went down with our civilian clothes on and got kitted up down there. We had a RAN [Royal Australian Navy] armband put on and everybody was saying, "You'll be sorry" and
- 17:00 they were all screaming at us and we are marching across the Victoria Bridge to the South Brisbane Station. "You'll be sorry." Yeah, we'd be sorry alright. We got to Flinders and it was a great eye opener to me. Cold, terrifically cold. But it was something I envisaged I would do was join one of the forces, the navy,
- 17:30 or the air force. Thank God it was the navy. I particularly liked gunnery and I persevered with that and came out with pretty good marks on gunnery and then they drafted me and I went up to Lonsdale, my first draft, that was a depot and then
- 18:00 from there I went to Sydney and then I did quite a lot of time in Sydney waiting for a draft. I did a short draft to a minelayer. That was only for about four or five weeks and then one of the new frigates I got a draft to it and then for some reason I was drafted back
- 18:30 to Penguin and then I got a draft to the HMAS Perth. And I was on my way up to pick her up - she was somewhere up in North Queensland - and I got chickenpox and they stuck me in the infectious ward at Brisbane Hospital. I was in there for quite some weeks. So I missed the Perth fortunately for me because she got sunk
- 19:00 in the Sunda Straits and then I went back to Penguin and was there at Penguin for quite some time and then got a draft to the HMAS Australia. When you say crash draft, it was a draft that you don't get down there or don't get told a day or two days before or a week before, you get told one hour. "You're on draft Taylor, go".
- 19:30 They raced me down to the Man o' War steps and the Aussie was at number one buoy but she slipped and she was underway. I thought, "Oh well, we've done it" and there were three other fellows there; Tim Coffey from Western Australia and Harry Turnbull and I can't think of the other fellow's name. They put us into a pinnace and took
- 20:00 us out and she was underway doing about eight knots and they slowed her down a bit and we were trying to clamber up this ladder to get aboard. You've got your hammock and anyway the old Commander [Wilfred Hastings] Harrington looked over the side and he said, "Back in the pinnace" because it was too dangerous so he lowered the port ladder. He got that lowered and we got aboard. He said after
- 20:30 had we fallen we would have gone under the screws and they would have got us, you know. Anyway we were onboard the Aussie, my first big ship and I was only an ordinary seaman and we got outside and they told us we were going up to the Coral Sea. "That's alright. It'll be a nice trip". It wasn't as nice as I expected it to be, we went up there and on the way up, just north of Brisbane
- 21:00 we refuelled and went out to meet Task Force 11. That was the USS Lexington and quite a lot but we never met them. We didn't, we possibly could see them on the horizon but we never got close to them. We were then detailed off with the USS Chicago,
- 21:30 the Perkins and the USS Walke and the USS Farragut destroyers and the Hobart and ourselves. We were told that the Japanese force were coming down from Rabaul [New Guinea] and they were making to Port Moresby and we were there to intercept them. We thought, "This is great." Anyway they came down but we didn't
- 22:00 have to do, we never got near them, we never sighted them. All we got was air attacks. We got nineteen eye-level bombers and they dropped a pattern right around us which completely engulfed the ship. Even officers on the bridge were brought to their knees with the water, that's how much water we had. Everybody on the upper deck was
- 22:30 wet through. I was lucky, I was down in the shell handling room. Being a new addition to the ship I was

sent to the shell handling room which was far better than the cordite room which was a mad place because they would flood that if anything happened. Anyway all we heard was the banging on the ship's side of the

- 23:00 shells falling and the violent swerving of the ship. The skipper, Captain [Frank] Farncombe, he was a wonderful captain, he avoided all the torpedoes; they came up each side of us. The old Hobart when they saw us get this pattern all round us they thought, "That's the end of the Aussie". But it wasn't, we sailed out of it and they called us the
- 23:30 Ghost Ship from then on. It was a pretty demanding sort of a thing and it was my baptism of fire and I was over awed, I didn't know what was going on. You don't realize what goes on up top when you're down below, five or six decks below getting the shells out and hoisting them up to the, putting them
- 24:00 on the hoist and taking them up to the turrets. So I was determined after the Coral Sea Battle, I was determined to get out of there so I put in for a gunnery course. A QR3, that's a quarters rating third class and that enabled me to get up into the turret. So we were in Brisbane and I was doing my course and on the way to
- 24:30 ...I think it was July, around about the 16th of July we left Brisbane in company with some Yankee ships and we headed to New Zealand and we got to, what's the name of the place, not
- 25:00 Auckland, the next one down, big place. Wellington, windy Wellington. And we got down there and there were thousands of American troops there and ships. And we thought, "Oh right, what's going on here?" So we left there and we were told that we were going to bombard and invade Guadalcanal [Solomon Islands].
- 25:30 I didn't feel so bad about it being up top this time. Anyway we did a couple of shoots on the way up and one little island...we attacked it, poor thing. We really rained everything. We all shot at it just for an exercise. But then
- 26:00 about the 4th or 5th of August we got up right near Guadalcanal and then we went in and bombarded. And those poor Japs ashore wondered what the hell hit them because we were up five hundred and down five hundred, we were bombarding, we were using our eight inch and the battlers [battleships] were there, they were shooting at it
- 26:30 and the destroyers in close. It was only the Hobart and us from the Australians and the Canberra and on the 8th of August we'd had so many air attacks and torpedo bombers than the admiral in charge of the transports, he decided
- 27:00 to get out. He said, "I'm not going to subject my ships here, this day and the following days to these air attacks. I'm going". So Rear Admiral [Victor] Crutchley... He was in charge of the transport, he said, "Right. We'll have a meeting." So midnight he went over to the...He was going to go over in the barge but our skipper said, "You can't,
- 27:30 it's teeming with rain. There's no lights you'll get lost. The sea is big". So he said, "I'll take you over." So we went over. Eighteen mile we went over to Tulagi. They had their meeting, they all went aboard the ship. The carriers were going to pull out too. They reckoned they were too close with the bombers coming
- 28:00 home. And about one o'clock our admiral got aback and we heard this terrific booming of guns and we looked over and saw all these flashes and it was the Japs had come in and poor old Canberra, she had taken our position, and she and the USS Boise and the USS Chicago
- 28:30 and they snuck past these destroyers. The Yankee destroyers were there on guard and they went within about seventeen hundred yards and the Yank destroyer didn't see them. They just cruised around Savo Island and run into our mob. Anyway one of those destroyers got a heavy battering and she just
- 29:00 stopped in the water, she had finished. They got the men off it. I think there was eighty-six killed and many wounded. The skipper later on died, Getting, he died later on. But then they sunk...The Japs went around and sunk the USS Vincennes heavy cruiser, the USS Astoria and the Quincy. They sunk all those
- 29:30 and there was a lot of loss of life there. And next morning early in the morning Godfrey said, "If the Canberra can't make way then we'll have to get rid of her". So anyway the USS Bagley and some other Yankee destroyer put some torpedoes in her and finally sunk her. But she withstood all that marvellous amount of
- 30:00 shell she took, it was terrific [The preceding is generally known as the Battle of Savo, August 1942]. Anyway we had to then make our way out of Guadalcanal and there were three or four submarines waiting for us outside and skipper told us, he said "Every man on the upper decks is to be on the alert". And we went out at twenty-eight knots, the Hobart and the Aussie and who was the first to see the torpedoes?
- 30:30 The skipper and he went up in between them. They were fantastic. They fired them at us and he could see them coming and he just lay her over, like a destroyer the way he handled a cruiser and he went up in between them. After that we went patrolling through the Coral Sea. Oh we went to Noumea and

31:00 had some big meetings there with our Admiral and their Admirals. But that was the first encounter the American and the Australian navy had been together. There was a lot of trouble because they had never had night encounters before and it was just a holocaust. The Yanks lost a lot of ships. And

31:30 we patrolled up there for a long while and joined the [US] 7th Fleet, which was a marvellous fleet because they looked after us. They used to give us big cartons of cigarettes, Lucky Strikes and pipe tobacco and God knows what. And then we were heading back to Espiretu Santo. That was a place up there that the Yanks have a big

32:00 depot where they used to repair all the ships. The SeaBees [US Naval Construction Force] were the technical men and the Hobart and us and two Yankee destroyers and this submarine decided that he had us in his sights. He let go and missed us. He under estimated our speed and hit the

32:30 Hobart right in the stern and made a hell of a mess of her. We circled around her and then we left and left the two destroyers with her to try to get back to Espiritu Santo [New Hebrides, now Vanuatu]. But I read in a book later on after the war that this commander of the submarine that it was his last torpedo

33:00 and he definitely underestimated the speed otherwise the Australia would have copped it. But there is a belief and some still say it that one did hit us and didn't explode. Some of the officers said they heard it and when we went to Espiritu

33:30 Santo they went down and there was a big dint in there but anyway it didn't explode but as we were leaving the Hobart we got a signal from them. They weren't too happy about us tearing off but it said, "Thank you for showing us a nice clean pair of heels". And we went for our life. Well we were a heavy

34:00 cruiser. We didn't have the depth charges that the destroyers had but we weren't to know that that was his last torpedo. Anyway the Hobart, they got her back to Sydney and she was about eighteen months in dock there. Amid many strikes, the ship builders' strikes and dockers'. They held her up

34:30 a long time but all that time we went on and then England decided to give Australia the HMS Shropshire and most of the fellows from the Canberra who survived were able to pick her up and they brought her back to Australia and we met her in October 1943 in Moreton Bay. And

35:00 there was much chiaccking, all yelling out to each other, "Do some sea time. Why don't you do some sea time?" Anyway the Shroppie joined us then and we became a taskforce and it was very good. From there on we went through Milne Bay, used to go in there of a day time and get out of a nighttime and the Japs

35:30 would come in of a night time and we'd play hide and seek with them. After a while we decided that Cape Gloucester [New Britain] was the go so we went up and bombarded Cape Gloucester and sent the men ashore there. The invasion...It was terrific the way they used to bombard. They had the battle ships far out and the cruisers in closer then the destroyers in closer.

36:00 We just flattened the joint and those poor Japs, they would have to go right back inland and then when the invasion force went ashore they had very little trouble. From there we went to various bombardments and Wakde [Island, Dutch New Guinea] and

36:30 Noemfoor, Biak, Mios Wundi [island anchorage for Fairmiles and other small ships, near Morotai] Morotai, they all were time consuming. It took up quite some time. Between those times we used to shoot back to Sydney and do repairs or a refit, a small refit. And that's the only time we ever got a leave. One time there we were five and a half months at sea

37:00 and we didn't stop the screws. We ammunitioned, we provisioned and we oiled at sea. It was terrific. Even your best mate looked like Marilyn Munro after a while. We had eleven hundred men on that ship and she was only thirteen thousand ton. But she was a fighting ship the Australia, a real

37:30 fighting ship. And we had the best captain, Captain Frank Farncombe and Wilfred Hastings Hamilton the commander. He looked after the men and the captain looked after the ship. They didn't like each other. They were at variance all the time. Still it was pretty bad if you got a commander's report and he sent you to the captain's report.

38:00 You expected something good because they just couldn't get on together. Round that ship and the gunnery officer and the admiral, Admiral Crutchley, a six foot four man - a massive fellow and he was a VC [Victoria Cross] winner

38:30 in the Battle of Jutland [1916]. He was captured by the Germans a couple of times and the second time they tattooed a German eagle on his cheek. He grew a great big beard to cover that but on a cold day you could see the blue underneath. But he was a gentleman that fellow.

39:00 He conducted that ship and all the task force that he commanded and he was well liked by the Yanks. They thought he was a great man. And of course we used to have all the meetings of all the officers of the Americans onboard the Aussie because we were known at the Hotel Australia.

39:30 The Yanks didn't have any drinks on their ships and when they came aboard our ships they would go aft

and they'd have everything. They had a good time here. They would all stagger over the side afterwards anyway and back to their ships. But I think if it wasn't for Frank

40:00 Farncombe we wouldn't be here today because I always owed my life to his expertise. Then we came back to Manus Island...

Tape 2

00:31 We all congregated at Manus Island there and built up a fantastic fleet there. Just prior to going there or just as we entered there there was an American ammunition ship blew up. It was just terrific the amount of stuff they had on board. No one knows why or what happened or anything but a lot of ships around

01:00 the place were hit with flying bits of shrapnel and stuff but it was a really big blow to the Yanks because it was one that was going to support us in the Philippines. Anyway knowing the Americans, they got stuck into it and they got supplies sent down. That Manus Island,

01:30 that had a terrific harbour, Seeadler Harbour. It was a terrific harbour. You'd put two or three hundred ships in there and you wouldn't see them. But we built up quite a big fleet there and prior to going up there there was a Royal Navy minelayer called the Ariadne.

02:00 She was a startling ship and could do...well it was supposed to be classified but she could do about forty-eight knots and she went up and laid mines in the area of Leyte [Philippines] and came back and we were out doing manoeuvres. And she came in sight and

02:30 she said to the commander of that particular fleet, "Can I join your fleet?" They said, "If you can make thirty-two knots you may." And so they came in and were cruising along with them and just as we got near Seeadler Harbour she sent a signal, "Thank you for your company.

03:00 I'll leave you now" and she sped off and the Yanks I believe were absolutely amazed. She just tore off at about forty-five or forty-six knots. It was unreal and a beautiful ship. Anyway we gathered everything up there and all got together and we had been rehearsing a lot and doing a lot of fleet exercises.

03:30 And then we headed to Hollandia [now Jayapura], I think it was in Irian Jaya [it was in Dutch New Guinea, later renamed Irian Jaya, now West Papua Province of Indonesia] now or something. And when we got to Hollandia we picked up some more ships there and it was about the 8th and 9th of October, we all congregated and moved off. And then our skipper, Captain [E.F.V.] Dechaineux,

04:00 cleared lower decks and he explained to us what exactly we were going to do. He had a big map up there on the quarterdeck and there was six hundred and fifty ships, I think it was six hundred and fifty ships in that fleet. And if you put a stick in the water at the speed we were going

04:30 it would take two days for all those ships to pass that stick. That is how many ships there were. It was fantastic. Big ones and small ones and all the transports. But we got in there on the twentieth of October we got into Leyte and started to bombard. And we were bombarding, the Shropshire and the Aussie,

05:00 We were really in close and we did a good job because we had to flatten the whole lot before the troops went ashore. And that night we retired a little bit out to sea and the next morning at about six o'clock in the morning a Val dive-bomber came in [Val is code for a Japanese Navy Aichi D3A dive bomber, many of which were converted to kamikaze planes] and crossed behind the Shropshire, came up

05:30 around us. I saw him going down the port side and he came round the bows and straight up and bang, straight into the bridge and the mast, the tripod mast [HMAS Australia was hit in the bridge by a Japanese suicide plane, 21 October 1944, at Leyte during the invasion of the Philippines. Heavy casualties resulted.] And when he hit he had extra fuel tanks onboard

06:00 which ignited straight away and they had something in there. I don't know whether it was acid or some sort of thing but when the fellows got burnt they all went white. We found out afterwards that they had this acid in the petrol. As the fellows were burning they'd fall to the deck and they deck was so hot they'd gel to the deck, you know,

06:30 it was just shocking. We got up and we hosed the director out because there was about four or five blokes in the director, eight-inch director above the bridge. They were incinerated and that smell of flesh still haunts me. I can still get that whiff of flesh burning all the time. It was shocking. Then

07:00 they carried the skipper down to the sickbay but he didn't last too long, he died, Captain Dechaineux. And there was Commander [J.F.] Rayment, the navigator, he was killed and there was thirty officers killed, sixty-nine badly wounded. But the fires were terrible

07:30 and putting the fires out was one of the main things that the damage control fellows had been skilfully trained in by our skipper, by our previous skipper Captain Farncombe and Harrington. We didn't have

Farncombe or Harrington as our skipper then. Dechaineux was our skipper and Harley "Shiner" Wright was our commander.

- 08:00 The exercises that they made us do which we thought were ridiculous but boy did it pay off when it came to the crunch. Damage control were fantastic. They had the fires out and we didn't require other ships to come alongside
- 08:30 and hose us down although they offered. But we didn't require, we did it all. Of course old [US General Douglas] MacArthur, he went ashore, he was on the Nashville and he went ashore and spoke his piece, "I have returned". We were made a crock division then. There was another Yankee cruiser got hit
- 09:00 so we headed off to the Palau Islands and back to Espiritu Santo and there the SeaBees, they were just fantastic. They got stuck into us and ripped off the tripod and they sent a new tripod up from Sydney on one of the destroyers. I just can't
- 09:30 remember the destroyer's name but she came up and brought her up to us and these SeaBees had us up and away in about six to eight weeks. Unreal. When you come to think that the Hobart took eighteen months to do anything with down there and these SeaBees had to do everything. They had to re
- 10:00 wire every part of it because it was all burnt, everything was burnt, the director and everything. It was just fantastic what they did. In the mean time it was good for us because we used to go ashore and join the ice cream queue and have a feed of ice cream, which we never had on the Aussie. They used to have these big tankers come alongside the ships and put these big sweetened hoses over the side and pump ice cream into them and
- 10:30 they did it to us...They came alongside us one time and we said, "We've got nothing to put it in", so we all went up with our dixies and anything you could carry and put it under this big hose but it would melt that quick and some of the sailors were sick afterwards, eating all this half frozen ice cream but it was terrific. A lot of the sailors were falling all over the place,
- 11:00 vomiting up this ice cream that had melted. But they never came back to us again because we had no refrigeration as such onboard for that, like the Yanks did. So their ice cream tankers never came near us again. When we left Espiritu Santo
- 11:30 we went to various places over there. Our band, we had a terrific band and they had a battle of the bands. Three battleships, the West Virginia was one and the New Jersey was one and they all sent their bands and they had a
- 12:00 ...there was a hill and a bit of a gully and they had these bands and all these thousands Americans and we all went and watched the battle of the bands and the Aussie came third which was terrific. Out of all those ships and it was a great compliment to our bandmaster. These bandsman, they used to take up various actions stations onboard.
- 12:30 Most of them were in the TS, that's the transmitting station. It was right down in the bowels of the ship and all the information from the director used to come down to them. The director used to sight whatever they wanted and they would send all the information down to the TS and the bandsmen would be there, like a big computer table it was. The bandsman used to put on the enemy ship's speed,
- 13:00 own ship's speed and wind speed and then send it back to the guns at true range and that was all done in seconds. They sent it back to the eight inch guns and you have a layer and a trainer and they've got a big clock in front of them and
- 13:30 they just follow the pointer. The pointer is controlled from the TS up to the gunnery, the gun house and all the layer does is he just follows that round and when he's on he'll say, "Layer's on" and then he trainer is the same. He trains and gets on and gets his two needles together and then on by director and
- 14:00 the fellow in charge he'll call ready and then the gunnery officer, he'll give the order fire and ding ding and boom...away she goes and that's when you're real busy in the turret because you've got to slide lock and bring the guns back to a loading angle
- 14:30 then put the air through them and blow all the debris out from the cordite and get ready to reload the next. They all come out in a big lift, the big shells. The shells weighed two hundred and fifty pounds and when they are rammed in, a big rammer comes across and rams it in and they put the big bags of cordite in behind, the cordite
- 15:00 comes up last and that's the time you've got to worry about, whether you get a spark from anywhere. And then they close the breech with big Archimedean threads on those breeches and then they say... Then they put a little fuse in and that's all ready to fire as soon as you got the layer and trainer on and the gunnery officer's right
- 15:30 and it goes bang. And if you misfire you can't open that breech because if you do the slow burning cordite gets fanned by the oxygen and 'oomph' and she'll blow the whole place to smithereens. Even go down through the shoot, down there and blow the magazine, so
- 16:00 misfires, you know, you'd always wait. One gun would go out of action for at least half an hour to allow

that cordite to burn out because there is no oxygen. Eight inch gunnery is really interesting, I used to love it. I thought it was a wonderful thing. Of course today they don't have that sort of thing, don't have manned now.

- 16:30 It's all done with computers. They had eight-inch guns, they called them rifles and they were supposed to be the most accurate of any gunnery. We could fire at thirty-two thousand yards we could send a shell. Our
- 17:00 danger or destroying range was about twenty-eight thousand yards and we could destroy a ship with that and we used to. In daytime we would load our eight-inch guns with semi armour piercing shells so if we came across a ship that we had to engage
- 17:30 those semi-armour piercing shells would go through the steel. But night time we used to have to unload the semi-armour piercing and put HE in, that's Hight Explosive. And we used to use those fir aircraft, high explosives. But it was really terrific. Every morning at dawn action you'd be up and all shells, all guns would be loaded
- 18:00 and trained round to see what was about. And the gunnery drill, we'd say, "Oh no, not another one of these gunnery drills" but it saved our ship. The amount of gunnery drills that we had was terrific but if it wasn't for that we wouldn't be here. And then we made up again and all collected
- 18:30 at Leyte. That was after Leyte had been taken and we thought, "We didn't know what was going to happen". And anyway they cleared lower decks and told us that we were going up to Lingayen Gulf. Lingayen Gulf is up in the north west side of the Philippines and it was a very hot spot
- 19:00 at the time because it enabled the Japanese aircraft to get to us easily. And on the way up just off our starboard quarter the Omni Bay aircraft carrier was not far away form us and there was one aircraft high up and he comes screaming down straight into her and hit the upper deck and blew her up.
- 19:30 They had planes on the upper deck already for take-off and she lasted about five minutes and she was gone, finished and under the water. Terrific it was. And we were standing there watching it. It wasn't long after that that we copped our first one when we came into Lingayen Gulf. We got our
- 20:00 first suicide plane hit us, killed a few and hit the P2 gun's crew and I think there was one man left alive on P2. But poor old Peggy O'Neil he was captain of the left gun on P2 and when I got there he was standing there with no head. He was just standing holding the ban lever,
- 20:30 he had been beheaded. And it was only the night before that he came to me and said, "Oh Buck, would you take this letter?" "Why? What do you want me to take it for?" "Oh I won't be here tomorrow." I said, "Why is that?" He said, "My time's up." So he gave me a letter to take back as did another fellow Chick Avery on S2. He said the same thing.
- 21:00 I delivered it to his wife after, when he got back. But poor old Chicker, when the plane hit, it hit the funnel and came down and the motor skidded across the deck and most of the crew ran aft, he ran forward and rammed straight into it and killed him straight away. He got to me the night before and asked me if I'd
- 21:30 take a letter home because his time was up he reckoned, he wouldn't see the day out. They have a premonition somehow. I did a QOs course on there, a qualified ordnance - that's maintenance on gunnery. And Chicker was a QO and we were great mates and we used to work on the guns, on four inch
- 22:00 which had a lot of work from anti-aircraft. We used to have to ship new barrels and he was a great man in the ring too, he was a real pugilist and he and Sandy Monday, Billy Burgess they were all terrific fellows and they used to knock the golden glove blokes off, you know that came to our ship.
- 22:30 When we were in different places and in Seeadler Harbour and that, we used to have a fighting ring on board. They were fantastic and these big golden gloved blokes would come and hang their gloves on the corner post and our blokes would just annihilate them, it was good to see. We got a few hidings too but still they did a wonderful job for the Aussies.
- 23:00 Whilst in Lingayen we got five Kamikazes there. And one each day and the last one put a decent sized hole in the ship's side. She had a big list and they had to put a collusion mat over it.
- 23:30 There weren't any killed on the last day thank goodness but the moral on the ship was that low. We couldn't understand why we were being singled out but it was reported on the radio from Tokyo Rose [Japanese radio propagandist] that they were out to get the Australia. She'd been a source of annoyance to her
- 24:00 from Guadalcanal all the way up and the Japs were going to get her. But the Shropshire and the Aussie did a marvellous job up there with bombarding. We finished our bombardment and the Shropshire finished their bombardment but fortunately for them they weren't attacked, they were attacked but they weren't hit. We put a lot

- 24:30 down to being a flagship too. Having our flag flying up there and some of the sailors used to yell out, "Pull the flag down and that will keep them away from us". Some old three bad seamen who had been in the navy for twenty years would be crying, the morale had gone, the nerves had gone because you didn't know where to turn. As soon as you heard these
- 25:00 planes coming in, we had twenty-three come at us one time, torpedo bombers. We opened fire with our eight-inch guns, A and B turret opened fire. We set the range to four thousand yards and these high explosive shells just exploded then and just filled the air with shrapnel and we shot down eleven of those planes out of twenty three which was pretty good.
- 25:30 But they were shocking fellows these Japs, they just didn't care. You could see them grinning at you as they were strafing the ship's side as they were going up and down. But what tormented me mostly were the fellows that got burnt. Some would only be slightly burned but die of shock. But others were badly burned, you know, it was shocking.
- 26:00 And a lot of them, we had a lot of friendly fire kills too. Other ships were firing out and their bullets were hitting our ship and a couple of our fellows on pompoms were killed from friendly fire but that's something you can't avoid I suppose. But the Yanks cleared out of our way when we used our eight-inch guns. They sent us various signals, you know,
- 26:30 "We'd like to be with you but you attract too many flies" and all that sort of thing. These were the signals they used to send us. "You've shown us a stout heart and we think you've done a wonderful job and we'd like to give you more cover" and all this sort of thing but all these signals were flying backwards and forwards between ships. I've got a report of them all.
- 27:00 It didn't make much difference to the sailors, they didn't care. They used to put them over the over what one ship sent us and what a battle ship sent us a signal but the sailors didn't care. Actually they were in another world after being in those suicide planes, attacks. You weren't game to go anywhere. You'd be looking all the time. You wouldn't know where to go, where to run.
- 27:30 And you know they'd fly up the ships side and they'd be machine-gunning you, they'd just drop a wing and fly straight in, they didn't muck about. They knew they couldn't go home and they knew they had to get a ship but they were cause of, in all about forty-five percent of the ships sunk,
- 28:00 American ships sunk were caused by Kamikazes so they really had a toll especially up at Okinawa. It was a hundred times worse than the Philippines but we did our job up there at Lingayen. We lost a lot of men and they
- 28:30 said, "Righto, the Australia retire". Because she had no guns left, our directors were out, our four-inch were out, our anti-aircraft, some of our pompoms were hit, one of our pompoms and the Oerlikons had had it. So they retired us and we went back to Leyte and
- 29:00 joined a crotch division there of other ships that had been hit pretty bad and then we decided to head off to Sydney and it was a terrific thing because the poor old girl, she had a broken funnel and she was black from stem to stern and there was nobody...you couldn't clean the ship at all, she was just a filthy looking ship
- 29:30 from all the fires and the sailors were just mesmerized. They couldn't do anything and it was just a different life all together coming home. And as we sailed in through Sydney Harbour, nobody knew we were coming in and I think it was the Manly ferry was the one that gave us the first toot.
- 30:00 But to see the poor old girl come in, all the fellows up at HMAS Watson on south heads saw her come in and it wasn't long before a few of the small boats got about and we tied up at a buoy and they all came around us and had a look at the poor old thing and she looked a pitiful sight. But
- 30:30 when we went ashore it was terrific because we had our Australia tallies up on our caps. You couldn't buy a beer. Nobody would let you buy a beer. They would take you to lunch and fill you up with grog and, "No, you're not buying beer". They were fantastic the Sydney people, but yeah that was my lot.
- 31:00 I joined her in '42 and left her in April '45 so I had a fair time on her and she was a beautiful ship. Great company and we still meet, a lot of our fellows still meet today. I am the president of the HMA ex-cruisers association which is the seven cruisers.
- 31:30 That's the Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Canberra, Hobart, Shropshire, Australia and the three AMCs [Armed Merchant Cruisers] that's the Manoora, Kanimbla, and Westralia. We meet every two months and at present we've got two hundred and eighty members and we're off to Mildura
- 32:00 next March for an Aussie reunion which should be very good but I think it will be getting near the last one because most of us are eighty. I've turned eighty and most of the fellows I now have turned eighty. It's just a bit too far to travel, you know, with all that and
- 32:30 a few of us have got a few ailments. I got wounded in the right arm at Leyte and it plays up with me, the old iron arm. And back, I got knocked off the top of B turret when I was fixing a jam on the Oerlikon, it was jammed and when the plane hit the bridge

33:00 and I flew over the side and landed on B deck and rolled onto the upper deck and if it wasn't for a damage control boat I reckon would have gone over the side because we lowered all the guardrails in action stations. But anyway they couldn't do much with me because they had dying and dead blokes everyone that they couldn't do much with so they patched me up

33:30 and my arm was right down here and they got it back up again. Holy God, did they get it back! And they just put it in a sling and I went back to my action station as do a lot of the other fellows that were wounded. They had to go back to their action stations because they were needed on the guns. But still we were lucky to survive I'd say

34:00 after those suicide planes because I don't think there was anything... like ordinary dive-bombers, they were bad but when they land on your ship and they carry anti-personnel bombs and extra petrol tanks you've got no chance against them, not a bit and they are devastating. I still get a few

34:30 dreams about them, I get a nightmare now and then. When I got out of the navy I just didn't know. Quite a few of us got together and we went down the coast and played up and really let our hair down. I thought, "Well this is no good, we're not going to do any good doing this" so I decided to go into a hotel.

35:00 I scraped enough money together from my deferred pay and other money I had that I sent home and my Mum had kept it for me, she didn't use it. I went into the Englewood Hotel and what an experience. Big tough fellows out there. And I stayed there for about eighteen months

35:30 and because beer was short in those days and if you got a couple of five gallon kegs extra it was a real bonus. One time these fellows came in hell bent on doing the town over and they went to the Commercial Hotel just up the road and they smashed the glass

36:00 and they smashed the glasses and Mrs Tolmon rang me up and said, "Oh quick Roy, close your doors. The mob has gone berserk." And of course she had rung the sergeant but he said he had just left for Warwick. "I'm not staying here. I can't control them". He was no use to us. I thought, "Well there's nothing I can do. They could break my door down" so I grabbed a five-gallon keg, put a tap in

36:30 it, shoved it on the bar and turned the tap out towards them and in they came and they got stuck in and they drank the five-gallon keg in no time. They used to like McWilliams Royal Reserve Port, they loved it and Royal Reserve sweet sherry. So they took all I had of that, no money

37:00 and away they went. Once a fortnight they used to come in. The following week this truck pulls up and he came in. He said, "How much for the keg?" I told him. "And the wine?" He paid me for the lot and those fellows came back the following week and never put a foot out of step. They were terrific and they used to buy all their wine off me. They'd load it up and dozens and dozens

37:30 of it and they'd load it up in their truck and take it out to where they were cutting timber and I was lucky, very lucky because they were tough men. Some of the best action in Australia used to be out there. But I left there then and sold out to a fellow named Rabbit. He wasn't a rabbit though, he

38:00 was a good fellow. He took a pub down in Redcliffe somewhere later on in life. I came back and I took on a job selling cable, introducing electric cable - PVC cable into Queensland. It was all rubber previously and these Nylex people,

38:30 they put out this Nylex covered cable and three of us were selected. We went and had an interview and we became their rep. I used to go out to all the big firms, all the big engineering places and the contractors and talked to them. "You can't use plastic on, that's no good". We had an uphill battle to get rid of it but

39:00 when we told them how it didn't support combustion like rubber did and how houses would be much safer and the rats wouldn't eat it and the ants, the white ants, they wouldn't touch it and then we started getting them around then. And then we got the government buying the Nylex cable and it turned out

39:30 quite good. It became very lucrative position. I bought myself a nice car out of it and we had trips to Melbourne to the factory and it was quite good. But I thought, "Oh blow this". My father in law was in the hotel business and he wasn't going too good. He was a manager

40:00 at Brett's Ply Mill and he wasn't feeling the best so I went in as manager for him and I managed that place right up until he died. I negotiated and bought the...Oh in the meantime I married his daughter, Maureen who by the way was fantastic.

40:30 She understood what I had been through and we...She was very very good with me and sobered me down a hell of a lot. She sort of made a different fellow out of me. We had three children later on but when Perc died I took over the hotel and

41:00 and Maureen and I ran it then for twenty-two years at Newmarket and it was a lot of ex-sailors, a lot of ex-metalos used to come in there. A terrific lot. Of course that was bad for me, having a few extra beers. We used to tell a few lies and shoot down a few planes and you know, carry on. But

- 41:30 yeah we had three kids, we had two girls and one boy and Perry our eldest boy liked flying. When he finished at grammar school he decided to go surfing and I didn't like that so I grabbed hold of him and I said, "Look, you got on to a mate of mine, Jo Flaherty, who was an ex-naval sailor
- 42:00 and he's got a big trawler...

Tape 3

- 00:31 I got him on the Yugilbar with my mate Ron Flaherty. Ron had been commissioned to teach the Indonesians how to trawl for prawns up at Banjo Marsterson. So away they went. I got them two big cases of 303 shells, bullets,
- 01:00 and luckily some of them were those ones that... what you call them? They've got a flame in them..I can't think of the name of it. Anyway, they went up there and they got up about twenty miles off Bangka Island [Indonesia] and the pirates came at them.
- 01:30 So Perry and Jo got down on the upper deck with their rifles and fired at them and the next thing a gunboat came out and accused them of causing trouble by firing. Of course Jo got on the blower straight away to them and told them, "We're up here to teach you blokes how to trawl and we meet pirates and then you come out here and accuse us." He said, "To hell with you.'
- 02:00 So he turned around and went back and they went back and got to Dili in East Timor and they went ashore there and Jo was a welterweight champion in the navy, by the way, he was a terrific fighter. And this mob picked on them in the bar so he grabbed my bloke and sat him on the bar and Jo did the four of them over. Then the police came and said, "Righto back to your ship.
- 02:30 Get going". So they put them back. When they got out into the Arafura Sea they hit a cyclone and lost steerage way and they had to get down the back, two hours on and two hours off and steer by hand right down in the aft and anyway they finally fixed it after about three days floating around the Arafura the finally got it fixed and landed at Gove [Northern Territory].
- 03:00 From Gove they got repairs and went down to Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria and they were going to do some fishing, some prawning and they were working away and they had all their sorting pads out and the next thing this great monster shark came charging at them and he went
- 03:30 into the aperture, that's where the propeller swings, the aperture and he got his nose caught in there, jammed the prop, bent the shaft and Jo said to Perry. "There is only one way to get him outmate. We'll have to go over and cut him out". He said, "You go first." Because Jo was an experienced diver. He was one of the navy's top divers and
- 04:00 he stood by with a 303 and Perry went over for a while and cut away and then Jo went over and Perry stood guard. Of course there was a lot of blood about and anyway they finally got it off and they limped back into Groote Eylandt at two knots because the old shaft was bent and Perry said, "This is no good for me. I'm not going to cop this." There was a plane leaving
- 04:30 for Mount Isa, a four-engine Heron so Perry got on that. And the captain said, "Would you mind sitting up alongside me? My co-pilot has been on the grog and he's a bit sick." And he said, "If I land with only one in front he said I'll be in trouble." So Perry said, "Alright. I'll do that."
- 05:00 So he let him fly that on the way home and when he got to Brisbane he didn't come home. He went straight to Archerfield and started to learn to fly. He got his first day in flying and then he came home and told us what he had done. He went on and on and got his restricted licence and then his unrestricted. So we sent him down to NASA [Nationwide Aviation Space Academy, a private flying school] then, down to Cessnock to do flying school
- 05:30 and he passed there. He got cadet of the year and he got his instructors licence and he excelled in everything done there so when he came back he went to New Guinea, he flew up there for eighteen months. It was shocking. All the time we were thinking of him up there, "For God's strike, it's shocking, a dreadful place". But
- 06:00 he had some very hair raising experiences up there I tell you. He was flying a Polartis Porter, one of those single engine things. Anyway he had a couple of flames outside and he was coming back from the Trobriand Islands and he had two pigs and two empty forty-four gallon drums and two natives on board. Anyway he lost the flame,
- 06:30 she flamed out and he was at fifteen thousand feet luckily and so he motioned to him to get rid of the barrels and the pigs. So they threw them out and then he tried to start it again and it wouldn't start so he turned to this native and he said, "Out". He said, "Have you ever seen a nigger turn white? He did. He turned white". Anyway
- 07:00 he stuck it down and got down to five thousand feet in a dive and managed to get it going again and he

just got in over Lae and she cut out again so he did a stick landing over there. But he said the two natives jumped out and went, he never saw them again. They just flew, ran for their life. But when he came home from there I hired an aircraft, a Beech Baron and he took

- 07:30 Maureen and I and the two girls and flew all around New Guinea with us and it was a great experience. Old Samarai, I had a swim with him in the pool at Lae. Petrol was hard to get and Samarai was very good to us. He made sure we had the petrol and we went to Mount Hagen and all those places. Then when we got back, we got to Horn Island [Torres Strait] and there was a message there for him to contact Ansett [Airlines]
- 08:00 because he had an application in so he joined Anset and he was with them for twenty-one years. Became a check captain with them and he did extra good. When the big strike was on that's why he left them and then he went back with East West [Airlines] after the strike. He left there and he said, "Oh blow this. I'm going to get on my feet." So he bought the Café La Monde up at Noosa.
- 08:30 And his wife, he got married and his wife is a doctor and she's got a surgery up there. And I thought, "That's good. He's out of the air. He's not going to fly again". And then eighteen months ago, low and behold he said he is going to be an aircraft broker so he's been buying planes and selling them. He's just
- 09:00 been to Florida and bought an amphibious plane over there. A beautiful thing. He took Maureen and I for a ride in it. He bought it back to Australia here and it is the only one, Seawind. And it's got the propeller right on the tail. How it holds her up I don't know, but beautiful. You lift the great big snout up on it and you sit in there
- 09:30 and have a great view and no noise and he's been offered, everybody wants to buy it but he likes it so much that he's been flying. He took us up to Hervey Bay and landed in the water up there. Just recently he took it to Port Moresby and he is now, at this moment on the Kokoda Trail. He and his wife are doing the Kokoda Trail.
- 10:00 So that was his life and we are hoping he'll be back next week but the girls, the girls were very good. Kay, she was the eldest of the daughters and she helped me in the hotel no end, she was terrific and she met and married Nigel and that's
- 10:30 when we got out in '78, we put them into Walloon and since then when they sold Walloon they now have a franchise for Ray White [real estate] at Bing Lee [furniture store] and he is doing extra well. He has done all his auction course and he is an auctioneer and he has done financial planning and all of that.
- 11:00 They have got a lovely home at Redland Bay. Then Anne up here at the back here, she's got five kids and her husband is with IBM, he is the South East Asia Manager. He is never home, he is always down south all the week but three of the kids have gone through grammar school and they are at university. The other two are at grammar school.
- 11:30 So they've done a big job putting all those kids through uni. But the eldest boy he's got his own band now, 'Platform Six'. He has just won a world title out of a hundred and eighty bands on the internet and they all participated and he won it, which was good.
- 12:00 'Platform Six' they call it. That was the platform he used to catch the train from grammar school, platform six. He does...Right up, he goes to Gove, Groote Eylandt, and Hamilton Island. He goes to Melbourne, Sydney. He has just won a ten thousand dollar photo shoot in Sydney with his band. So he is going extra well. That's my kids.
- 12:30 **Roy you said your dad was in the army. Did he often tell you about stuff that he did in the army?**
- Yeah, he was in India with the British army and he was wounded there and they sent him back to Blighty in England and then he went to France. But in India he was in the
- 13:00 bicycle brigade. They used to ride with their rifles on their backs and bicycles; it was the only way they could get through the terrain. He got caught up in a whole heap of renegade Indians. They were opposing the British and
- 13:30 anyway there was a few shots fired and he got hit and so he got out of India. "Thank God," he said. And then he got back to England and they sent him back to France and he finished the war off in France. He gave me his medals before he passed on and I wear them on Anzac Day on the right hand side, which is good because it's nice to have his medals there.
- 14:00 And he finished up Lance Corporal in the British Army and then he met Mum and they got married and in 1923 they had me. They had my sister eighteen months beforehand then they had me at
- 14:30 Brixton in London. We went back there Maureen and I to London, and I said to the Cabby, "Could you take us out to Brixton". He said, "Yes, as long as you don't get out. You stay in the cab." I said, "Why?" "Oh it's a bad place." So we went and had a look at the old home where I was born and he said, "Yeah, it's all the West Indian people there and

- 15:00 they are pretty tough". So he took us around. And when they decided to come to Australia they thought milk and honey job in Australia and they built down the road here and his brother, his eldest brother, he was in the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] and he was wounded too. He got wounded in France, no Gallipoli he got wounded.
- 15:30 And he went to England and then back to France and I think he and Ron teed up together in France. And they...He always talked about Australia so Ron thought it was a good place. So he came out in the old Diogenes. It was an old ship. Oh gee. I don't remember anything about it but Mum said it was a shocking voyage. We landed in Brisbane.
- 16:00 And what did Ron do? I don't know what Ron did. Oh yes, he gave Bill a hand. Bill was a painter and he was an offsider for Bill until he got on his feet and got a few jobs. In 1927, 1928 we left Geebung and went down Kingston way.
- 16:30 So I'm not really a pommy at all at fourteen months but a lots of fellows say, "Oh gee, you're a kipper". Because you know what a kipper is don't you? A kipper is a two-faced gutless bastard. You know, those flat things? We used to call the pommies that during the war, kippers and they didn't like it, there would be a blue every time.
- 17:00 But I think the name's gone out now, they don't call them that. We just call them pommy bastards now, poor things. So that's how I started my life off. Travelling around, as I said eight schools and all through there and
- 17:30 some really good experiences up in those places, especially Bundaberg. We had a whale of a time there. I used to go out with this fellow and his wife fishing, they were my age. Gee we had some rough traps but it was great, Bundaberg.

Would you say that it was common to hear

18:00 the old war stories when you were a young lad and did that affect you?

No. That's one thing I can say. Only listening to Ron and Bill that I knew anything about what happened in the '14 -'18 War [First World War]. I didn't have much to do at all with anybody who...And I knew nothing of it and joining the navy was a great experience for me.

- 18:30 I thought, "Gee, It was terrific to travel all over the world. No worries". Huh, what a disastrous trip it turned out a couple of times. I think that out of all the services I was pleased I picked the navy. I can't imagine laying in those fox holes and

- 19:00 trenches. They did it hard the army blokes, bloody hard.

You must have thought at one stage about joining the air force?

The air force. Yes, I was all lined up at the air force. Bunkhurst, the manager of the Queensland Aero Club, he had me set for the air force. He said, "I'll make sure." He was

- 19:30 a reserve officer in the air force and he said, "I'll make sure that you get treated right if you join up." But it must have been just fate that I decided to leave there and go to Taubmans. I liked the idea of driving that little Vauxhalls around, beautiful little thing, a panel van. I had good mates in there. Dudley Hocking,
- 20:00 he came to our ship, in 1943 I think he came to our ship. He was one I joined up with and then the two fellows that joined the army, they didn't come back but the four of us that were in the navy all returned. And they were good days there too at Taubmans,
- 20:30 1939, 1940, they were very good days. But after I came back they offered me my job back, of course. "No thanks. I don't want to do that sort of thing." After we had gone down the coast and I had had two or three months down there. Gee what a time we had down there.
- 21:00 Quite a few of us, there was about six of us got down there. Gee. We joined the lifesavers club down there and boy were we having a ball. But I was out swimming one time and my arm went out and I'm out there and I'm yelling out to my mate, Pat Hocking, I said, "Pat come and get me, quick Pat." And he thought I was joking. He said, "Drown ya bastard".
- 21:30 I thought, "Oh gee, I can't move my arm". So he dragged me in and the lifesaver there he put his arm underneath there again and he got it back in again. So those days were good. We used to camp there and I thought, "Well this is not going to get me far being here".
- 22:00 So that's when I decided to get out and get into something on my own. Which I'm pleased because the experience has been good and meeting people. I think meeting people is a wonderful thing. You meet so many in that game, the pub game and I've got lots of the fellows. They still send me cards and I send them cards.
- 22:30 All the fellows from the breweries and the winery stores, travellers and even the delivery drivers I still get cards from them. They are really terrific. They've all gone in different ways, some in Caloundra,

Southport, all over the place they are now.

23:00 But it's really good to meet up.

When you talked about the Diogenes ship, was that the name of the ship or the type of ship?

Diogenes, she was an ordinary steamer and she's big, well decks, big high sides. My Dad told me all about it. They

23:30 dressed me up in a sailor's suit, I've got a photo of it still of me in my sailor suit and I won first prize. She was carrying fertilizer or some bloody thing but she was an old tub, a real old tub.

Besides that very, very early

24:00 **naval journey what other association did you have with the sea before joining up with the navy?**

None. I didn't have anything to do with it. I doubt whether I went to sea, no, I didn't go to sea any time before I went in there and joining the navy. I wouldn't know one ship from another.

24:30 So it was quite different when I decided to join the navy but once I got into it, I loved gunnery. It was just part of me, I liked it. And I used to do everything I possibly could to excel at that. And I think it's

25:00 something that...if you go for a stoker or if you go for wireless, telecommunications it's all these people, they like their job. A lot of my mates were in telecommunication and they seemed to think there was no other job like it. Well for me with the gunnery, I think there's no other game like it.

25:30 That's all gone by the board now, there's none of that. They've got a barrel of the Aussie in Canberra, an eight-inch barrel, took out of her before she went back to England. She went back in '54 and decommissioned and she was to Portsmouth and they sold her for scrap over there. We wanted to keep her here. As a matter of fact there was a fellow in Sydney

26:00 who owned quite a bit of land at Kirribilli and he offered the government a place to put the Aussie in, I forget what they call those, it's not a dock. But it was within range for ex-sailors to come in and look after it on our holidays, to come down and work on it. But the government said, "No, we don't want it". It's a shame.

26:30 Just last week I got an email from England to say they've got the HMAS Glasgow, which is a sister ship to the Australia and they've got her in there for people to come and see and she's the old eight-inch cruiser. You know...I think it would be wonderful to have an old ship like that. The same at that Diamantina

27:00 here in South Brisbane. They've got her there and it's good to have a wander over her. But young people never see those things again or young people don't realize what sixty or fifty nine years ago what went on. You ask them and they don't know anything about

27:30 MacArthur going back to the Philippines or Guadalcanal or the Coral Sea or any of those battles, they don't know. They probably don't want to know either.

Speaking of the barrels do you know what sort of life the barrels had?

Yeah, I can't tell you the exact amount of shell they were allowed to put out but we shipped two new ones

28:00 in the time that I was there when I came back to Sydney. A big job taking those barrels out. They have rifling through them and on the back of the shell there was a copper band, that's the driving band and when you put the shell in the rammer comes in and rams it and it rams it right into the

28:30 muzzle and the copper bites in and forms a seal so that when the cordite comes in and you close the breech and your little fuse sets the cordite burning it can't escape up the barrel because of this copper bit in

29:00 and it has got nowhere to go and there is this great monstrous explosion and so it shoots the shell out. And the rifling turns the projectile so that she is spinning. If it went straight it wouldn't go far but when she spins you get the extra...Eight-inch guns had a marvellous range,

29:30 marvellous range. Quite a few times the ships were fourteen or fifteen miles apart and that's a fair way to be throwing shells. Around about seven or eight thousand yards is the normal one. I think the Battle of

30:00 the River Plate [Argentina, 13 December 1939] and [German pocket battleship] Graf Spee and HMS Exeter and HMNZS Achilles, they were only six or seven thousand yards away and they were going around diverting the fire and they did a really good job on her and they were six inch cruisers and they did a marvellous job against

30:30 the battle ship. But that's a good story about the Graf Spee. It is one of a lot of human sacrifice and

courage, a lot of courage, especially the poor old Achilles. She copped a bit of a battering. But the navy in general I think is

- 31:00 all together different today. If an officer spoke to you, a lieutenant, or lieutenant commander or commander or captain you'd tremble. Discipline was so good, fantastic. We had a lot of WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s on our ship and they called it the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK ship in the navy. Chooks being, some of the blokes who had done something wrong elsewhere
- 31:30 and they'd sent you to the Aussie because we had Farncombe and Harrington and they could control anybody. These WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s reckon they're going to do this, they're going to do... not long. They'd get the commander's report or a captain's report and they'd be in the lockhouse or in the cells. We had one bloke there, Rex Jones,
- 32:00 he did two hundred and sixty-five days cells in one year on the Aussie. He was a state boy, he was a ward of the state and they couldn't put him out. We were coming into Moreton Bay one time, coming around Caloundra past the Point War signal station and you come right in close to Bribie Island and get into the Pearl Channel and go across to Moreton and this Rex Jones,
- 32:30 he jumped over the side and swam ashore amongst that shark infested area there and he swam ashore. And they sent a signal to Point War about rating over the side and they sent a pinnace, a cutter to Bribie and picked him up and when we got into Newstead, which was a good while later because it takes a long while to get round there,
- 33:00 here he is lined up on the wharf with two armed guards either side of him and they weighed him off on the quarter deck. And all the people, you know, came down to see the Aussie and they cleared lower deck and weighted him off. And the gunnery officer said, "Have you anything to say Able Seaman Jones?" He said,
- 33:30 "Yes sir. You can all go and..." and that's where I'll stop and they bundled him straight off into the cells. And when you get into cells they give you a little piece of rope like that and that's your task and you've got to unravel it. That's oakum they used for wedging in the deck and they put that oakum in and they get the tar
- 34:00 and they use an oakum hammer and wedge it down in between the deck and that's your task. You've got to do so much of that in a day. It was my job one time to take him up his task and the bosun was in there talking to him while I was there, that's the old chaplain and he said, "Well Able Seaman Jones,
- 34:30 I'll have to leave you now. Here comes your task." And old Jones says, "You know what you can do with that don't you." And the old sin bosun, he got upset. He got a further report because he told him what to do with this okem. Then we had a Maltese canteen manager on board
- 35:00 and he was a civilian and his name was Jesus. We all called him Jesus and he was a good old fellow. He was pretty backward in his speaking of English but he ran the canteen and he used to have well same as me, eleven hundred blokes spend a few bucks.
- 35:30 And goffers [any non-alcoholic drink], that's ordinary soda water made out of carbonated soda water and juice and I didn't have to pay for that because I was a QO and when his goffer machine broke down I used to take it down to the QOs workshop and fix it up so he never ever charged me for a drink. When there was an action, repel aircraft, he used to wrap his money belt around him, great big money belt,
- 36:00 and if you were near him he'd say, "Hey boy. What's this like? Is this going to be bad?" "Yeah Jesus, I think this is the end mate." "Jesus Christ," he'd say and poor old Jesus, he used to get worried every time there was an action but he served about thirty-two years in the Australian navy. Jesus. He is a legend.
- 36:30 And his son wrote a book called, wrote quite a lot on him and it was really interesting to read about his exploits in the navy. And then he had an Australian offsider and he's still about. I see him every time we have a reunion,
- 37:00 but he was a civilian. They were the only two civilians on the ship but it doesn't happen today I don't think. But it was a good canteen. He used to have all Mackas Chocolates that he used to get off the Yanks, cigarettes. When you came into port if you were short of a quid
- 37:30 you'd go and say to Jesus, "Could you loan me a quid or two quid." "Here boy, here boy, here boy. You give it back soon." And no interest. But he'd only give it to blokes who he knew were on the ship for a while and could be trusted. Poor old Jesus, he was a terrific bloke.

You said Ceero...Was that a nickname for

- 38:00 **for the gunners was it? You said you took it down to the Ceero?**

QO, Qualified Ordnance. It's qualified in ordnance. We didn't fall in for partnership or do anything. All we did was maintenance on guns. Pull the Oerlikons to bits an oil them and grease them and the four inch

- 38:30 we used to make up our own gippers and put it in the blocks and everything. We just hucked them back and cleaned the whole lot and made them nice and easy because the salt water used to give them hell. Yeah, that was a good. I went into QO because I got sick and tired of falling in partnership and
- 39:00 cleaning up around the place so I decided that it furthered my interest in gunnery. I worked from eight-inch on bofers, on pompoms – those pompoms we used to call Chicago Planos, and there was eight. And they used to boom, boom, boom. Terrific they were and you'd train them around
- 39:30 and they accounted for many a plane. Jeez they were good and we had some good operators on those. But quite a few of the fellows got killed on there, you know, strafed and...but from QO, when the ship sailed to England I think in April or May, April I think it was,
- 40:00 she went back to England to be refitted in 1946. Two days before she sailed I got called up and the Chief QO said, "You've finished." And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You're not going to England. You've got a draft to Melbourne." And Neil Belbin the other fellow there that you people are going to see,
- 40:30 he was a QO and he got the same. We had our passage paid, blokes came with twenty five quid in a matchbox and gave it to the drafting officer and they got on and we got off. Black Jack Armstrong the skipper shook my hand as I was going over the side and said, "I'm sorry Buck." He called me Buck, that was me nickname.
- 41:00 He said, "I'm sorry Buck. There's nothing I can do about it. I'm going to have to let you go but it is a shame." So I went to Melbourne then and did a...They sent me to a little flat opposite the Melbourne Tech, Carlton Tech and I did a turning and fitting course there for about six months, beautiful. I had my own life and my own flat.
- 41:30 And Neil got a draft to Lonsdale and he got out of there and come up and lived with us, four of us in this unit, in this flat. What a time. It was a great relief after being at sea, you know. And then they said, "Well we've spent all this money on you, putting you through, you'll have to stay here for twelve years". I said, "Oh
- 42:00 I suppose I'll have to" but then...

Tape 4

- 00:33 **So you were just about to tell us about having to stay on for another twelve years.**
- Yes they thought they had spent that much money putting me through a fitting and turning course and promoting me as a mechanic that I should stay there for twelve years but when my Dad lost his leg, they had a restaurant café down in Nundah here
- 01:00 and he needed me there - he really didn't I don't think but anyway I got out on compassionate ground. They weren't too happy about it, the navy. They did everything they could to stop me being demobbed but it came through and they sent me to Moreton and I got demobbed
- 01:30 in '46 so anyway five years was enough in the navy and I only had another seven years to do. But a lot of my mates stayed on and some of them did pretty good. Some of them became dockyard policeman and got good jobs out of it and got good money and
- 02:00 had good super when they got out, you know. But I was pleased I got out.
- Was there anything about the life that you missed?**
- Yeah, amongst my mates, I missed them a lot. We had a good team of fellows and that's the only thing. And I did miss
- 02:30 navy life, that's the freedom side of it. When I say freedom, I didn't have to worry about looking for money or clothes or anything like that, everything was there. And you enjoyed yourself when you went ashore, you enjoyed yourself. Won a
- 03:00 few hearts and had a good booze up at times and all these things but you can understand why sailors do go ashore and play up a bit because when they go back they don't know whether they are going to go back again. They don't know where they are going to finish up. So you grab it while you can and
- 03:30 they say 'all work and no play makes jack a dull boy'. That's true too. I think that the only time we came into port was mainly Sydney just to have repairs done, which was necessary, and sometimes to get the hull scraped because if you get a build-up on that it drops your speed back. It's essential they...and the boiler cleans.
- 04:00 They've got to clean those boilers out and have them pretty tip top so that she could make the speeds she wanted. She could do thirty-two knots the Aussie. Commissioned 1928 and for a ship that size

thirty-two knots is pretty good. The Yanks couldn't believe it. We landed

- 04:30 at Biak [Indonesia], we landed and bombarded there and we went away and we got an urgent message at about midnight they were being attacked. So we swung round and were racing back and then there was about five Japanese destroyers towing barges full of soldiers to invade. Well our destroyers, the Warramunga, the Arunta and a couple of Yankee ones, they just got stuck in amongst them.
- 05:00 Raced in, cut the barges and sunk the barges and then these destroyers, they went for their life. We chased them. There was the USS Boise, the USS Phoenix and ourselves and we were out in front. They couldn't catch us but we couldn't fire because
- 05:30 these Japanese destroyers, they had a nickname for them. They had very little armament and their speed was fantastic. We calculated their speed by the amount of range that our guns had to elevate to get them and we worked that out and they were doing about forty-three knots,
- 06:00 so they were going. We got a few shells away but we didn't get near them. We ran into the Japanese air cover so we had to call off the chase and come back but they were fast. The Tokyo Express I think they called them. They used them down at Guadalcanal in the slot. They used to come out from behind an island and torpedo
- 06:30 a ship and then go for their life. bad. But they had the uncanny knack, Jap destroyers, of being so fast that they just eluded us every time. But we left it to our aircraft then, they used to bomb them. But very, very fast.
- 07:00 Their cruisers, they were also very fast. See the Aussie before the war, plans were given to the Japs of the Kent class, County class cruisers. They were being built in Britain and the Japs had the plans. That's why the American bombers bombed us in the Coral Sea, they thought we were Japanese
- 07:30 because the Japs had a three funnel ship. But actually when they put the plans into operation and built the ship and they slid her down she tipped over. Somebody had interfered with the plans before they got it and they discarded it then. They didn't try to build any more ships on those
- 08:00 lines. But it was a good bit of sabotage from somewhere. I don't know who but that's the story that goes and Japan did have the plans of our ships but they had the plans of lots of things too. All around our coastline...and terrific. Because it's a known fact that the subs used to go into North Queensland to get
- 08:30 fresh water. They would come up into the estuaries and get fresh water and go out to sea again. And I think down in Broken Bay, down there too they came in there, they were sighted. But when the sub came into Sydney Harbour we were in Brisbane that night. We missed all that one.
- 09:00 It was chaotic I believe. We weren't there but the poor old Kuttabul, she got sunk. A few of our fellows were on there. Two of our blokes went down with her. One of them got off and he lives here in Brisbane now but it was just...They were going for the Chicago actually but they ran the torpedo too deep
- 09:30 and passed under her and hit the poor old Kuttabul which was tied up alongside GI, Garden Island. Yes, it was quite a shemozzle that night with the guns firing everywhere. They even hit poor old Fort Denison. I think the Chicago smacked there a couple of times with their shells.
- 10:00 So we were lucky somebody wasn't killed even ashore, it was a big night.

Do you recall when the men on the Aussie heard about all this, what impact that had on the ship?

Yes, all the Sydney natives were very worried because they heard they shelled

- 10:30 Rose Bay and some of them had their families living at Rose Bay. They wanted to get more info and everything and, "Why can't we go to Sydney" and bla bla. We eventually did go down well after but there was nobody connected with our ship that their parents were injured in any way. But we didn't like the idea of the Japs shelling Sydney.
- 11:00 It wasn't taken too well by our fellows. And there were that many merchant ships sunk off the Queensland Coast, the Eastern seaboard, we had to be very careful how we went down. We had to zigzag all the time. We were running at about twenty-seven, twenty-eight knots, you are
- 11:30 zigzagging and that throws them off, they can't get a bead on you then. But zigzagging at night time is very dangerous. If everybody is not keeping a good watch when you're zigging someone might be zagging and you might come across them so you've got to be very careful what you do.
- 12:00 It's a very good execution, they do it marvellously well when before they sail they work out a zig zag pattern and pass it to all ships. And it is quite good and you feel a lot safer too. There is nothing worse than going along on a steady course and you are looking out and you're thinking, "You never know what's out there".
- 12:30 You are waiting for someone to whack you. Because we didn't always travel at a fast rate of knots. We had to conserve our fuel. It might be round about eighteen or twenty knots. That's just a nice speed for

some subs, they can pick you up so it's a bit frightening. Especially a

- 13:00 black night. There's nothing about and you look out and think, "What the hell's out there?" But they took an enormous toll on the merchant ships. Our little corvettes did a good job, they did all the convoy work, some destroyers did a good job of picking them up. If it wasn't for that USS Mugford when she left here in
- 13:30 Brisbane and she went outside and she saw all the debris in the water and knew a ship had gone down and when they rummaged around they found the AHS Centaur, the hospital ship [the Centaur was sunk 14 May 1943]. A terrible thing and she was all lit up and displayed all the signs. But then you get all different stories about it. People think she was carrying arms and all that sort of thing.
- 14:00 Then we had a fifth column bloke [enemy spy, infiltrator] on North Head in Sydney and he used to see all the ships go out and see how they were loaded, what they were carrying and I think one was a retired radio announcer. He was one that was caught after the war
- 14:30 and gaoled. Why they wanted to become fifth columnists is a dreadful thing. To think that the Centaur could go up there with all those people onboard and get sunk when she was a hospital ship. Talking about hospital ships when we left Leyte we had a lot of
- 15:00 injured onboard and the Yanks said, "Right. We have a hospital ship standing by. Would you like to transfer your men?" and our skipper said, Harley Wright, he was the commander and took over Captain when our Captain Dechaineux was killed. He said, "No, we'll carry our own" and we took them to Manus Island and Hollandia. But
- 15:30 that hospital ship, two days later was hit badly, it was a suicide plane. So they had no regard for the international convention of what, you know, with a ship all lit up with a great big cross and all lights on that and lights on the upper deck,
- 16:00 they knew damn well. And in that book that the commander wrote... no, something happened to him but somebody else took up - they didn't explain at all about why they sunk it. But it was said that she was carrying arms but that's only a story.
- 16:30 You can't believe everything you hear can you? Is there anything we can talk about, about life in general in Brisbane?

Well actually I was wanting to know a little bit more about the Aussie. It sounds like she was quite a legendary ship.

Yeah, terrific.

What sort of things did people say about the Aussie?

- 17:00 Well they said she was a fighting ship. She travelled a million miles in the time when she was commissioned. And she fought from the North Atlantic right down the west coast of Africa, Dakar, she was fired on there by the Richeleu, the big [Vichy] French battleship and she fought all the way
- 17:30 down there. She sunk a light cruiser or a heavy destroyer, the [Vichy French ship] Audacious, I think it was, she sank it when it came out from Dakar and she fought in all those theatres there. When the Japs came into it they recalled her straight back to Australia, luckily. And
- 18:00 as with the other ships too, not so much the destroyers, the Napier, Nizam and the Nepal, they all stayed over there but the cruisers came back. Of course the poor old Sydney came back and she didn't last too long, she got hit over there. Then the Perth, she came back and she was doing a fine job. She was up in Singapore and coming back when she ran into the
- 18:30 night encounter and the Houston was with her and they both got sunk, prisoners of war. The Adelaide, of course the old Adelaide, we used to call her, 'over one under six'. Over one way but under six. Poor old girl. She was commissioned in 1922. She originally had four stacks but they took one off and made her a three stacker but she did convoy work.
- 19:00 A really good job she did, fantastic. She scared many a ship off and she used to take them right round, right up the Indian ocean. Then the Hobart of course, she got back to Australia straight away as with the Aussie because we had a fight on our hands in the Pacific and although
- 19:30 it was often said that Australia wasn't a primary target I think it was. They got to Port Moresby, they wanted to get to Port Moresby but only for the Coral Sea and they bombed Darwin as you know. They had ideas of getting to Australia. Once they'd have got in here it would have been chaos, we never would have stopped them.
- 20:00 And even....I can remember in the Coral Sea we thought things were pretty bad and some of the sailors suggested that we take the Aussie and put her ashore and use her as a fort just in case. That was some of the blokes put the idea forward. They thought we were going mad with the Japs coming down.
- 20:30 But fate was on our side and we climbed out of it but it wasn't a good...I don't know whether you'd call

it a battle, the Coral Sea, they refer to it as such. There was no surface engagement, it was all aircraft. It was

- 21:00 a strategic win for the Japs but a tactical win for us. It gave us a bit of integration with how to work American ships and Australian ships together. They hadn't been doing it
- 21:30 before and you know, Admiral [Jack] Crace had different ideas to what the Yanks had but he did a wonderful job. He's a fellow that got very little recognition, Admiral Crace, it's a shame he went back, he was an RN [Royal Navy] sailor but born in Australia and when he went back to England everyone forgot about him. He just died peacefully over there
- 22:00 and nobody acknowledged him at all. It was a shame because he was a good sailor and a good leader. He got on very well with Frank Farncombe and if you can get on well with Frank Farncombe you must be a good man because he was a source to himself. What he said, that was it.
- 22:30 He was a very strong determined man, Frank. I remember in 1956 I was down in Sydney and I walked up into the bar in the Cross where he used to drink, he used to drink there. And I walked into the bar and there was only a few in the bar and I was up one end and I could see him down there having his usual scotch and
- 23:00 he beckoned me. He said, "How are you Taylor?" I thought, "Well that's fantastic". He knew me after all that time, it was 1956. I said, "Good Sir." He said, "I'm not sir, I'm Frank. I'm out of the navy" and we had a few wets together and we had a talk but I thought it was marvellous that he remembered my name and
- 23:30 we had a good old yarn. He was just becoming a judge advocate then, he was a very cluey man. He was a lawyer and he was in charge of the ship when we had our murder onboard. I wasn't on the ship then, that was just before I joined it but these two stokers were both homosexuals and
- 24:00 this young stoker, O'Riley, he blackmailed them and he said, "I know what's going on. Blab bla." He wanted some money and that. But one night they got him on the upper deck and he was by a P2 gun and they stabbed him quite a few times in the stomach and he hung on to the guard rails and they tried to cut his wrists to get him to go over. They couldn't get him over.
- 24:30 And the blokes on P2 gun crew, they heard the screams and they ran up and grabbed them and they got put in the cells straight away and then Captain Farncombe, he wanted to string them up by the yard arm in the olden days but to do so sailors had to pull them up, not the officers. You had to get the sailors to hang them and they wouldn't do it.
- 25:00 So the ship headed back to Sydney and enlisted the aid of Lieutenant Commander Trevor Rapke who was a lawyer and he did the case for the navy and these two blokes got sentenced, I think nine or ten years and so
- 25:30 that was all over then. But I've got a full account of the whole proceedings, the court case, the lot and it is very interesting reading. That was our murder. Old Frank Farncombe, he was quite adamant what he wanted to do. But then they had to go to the King because the Australian navy never belonged to the Australian government, it belonged to the King,
- 26:00 it belonged to Britain. We were under the direct command of the King so they had to apply to the King to commit these fellows to death and he said, "No. They go to trial". So that's how that all came about and all our
- 26:30 rules and regulations are the King's rules and regulations, KRAR. That comes under the Royal Navy so we couldn't do much. The Australian Naval Board couldn't tell us what to do, it had to be referred to the Royal Navy but that soon changed
- 27:00 after the war I think.

Were there any other conflicts around the area of homosexuality that you saw while in the navy?

There were a few on board. The British Navy with three months at sea it's legal but not in the Australian Navy but we did have a few. We had

- 27:30 a few, what were referred to as a daisy chain. That's where they all get around together, all in a circle. But there was quite a few fellows. I knew a few. Then we used to have blokes onboard that were nicknamed sea daddies because
- 28:00 they used to watch new recruits come onboard the ship and eye them off, old three badgeman and two badgeman had been to sea a long while and had homosexual tendencies. They used to try and run them as a son. You know, and show them where to get their locker and what mess they would be in and take them there and show them the bathroom. The bathroom by the way was a funny old
- 28:30 system; a row of metal sinks up against the ship's side and a bucket thing to slosh yourself with. You had to be careful with the water because they couldn't make that much water all the time

29:00 and you couldn't be bathing in salt water. And these sea daddies used to take their sons down there and eye them all up and down and see how they stacked up and that was pretty rife on a lot of ships. Not only on the Australia but on a lot of ships had this. But fortunately they were in the minority and

29:30 I think we've...most of the fellows onboard would just laugh at them or brush them aside and have nothing to do with them. If it had been like today and you've got all these gays around now, it would have been a different ship all together. I don't know whether it would have been a fighting ship or what.

30:00 You know, make love not war. But that's the extent of the homosexuality. We had a few very effeminate fellows onboard too. They had designs on the fellows, not so much homosexual but just wanted to be with blokes and gave them the occasional kiss or something. But

30:30 but there weren't many of them and you could steer clear of those blokes.

Did they try and stay to themselves?

Yeah, once they knew that you've wiped your hands of them and that you'd have nothing to do with them they wouldn't come near you. They'd brush you aside.

So how does that work when you're in battle together and there's those conflicts?

Well that's a different thing. All in,

31:00 all hands in. You don't worry about things like that. Like quite a few of the old fellows, they had responsible jobs in directors of guns, and that was a different thing all together. They were as good as the next man. After various actions,

31:30 the only thing is they used to race back and see if their son's alright, if he's hurt or something or missing or been killed. That's the way it goes. But I suppose when you've got eleven hundred men living on a ship together, looking at today's effort we didn't do too bad. It was pretty good. And I don't think that the navy

32:00 were ever embarrassed by anything that went on on wartime ships, not like they are at the present. Still that's the way it goes I suppose.

Can you tell me what it was about the gunnery that you loved?

I liked the machinery.

32:30 I liked the fact that you could destroy. I know it was the wrong thing to think but you could destroy things. It gave me great delight to see a plane shot down, also a ship being hit. It's something that I just enjoyed and I thought that the workings of those guns

33:00 being the eight-inch right down to the Oerlikons were just fantastic. And the men who used them and their sightings through the directors and through the ordinary sights on the anti-aircraft guns, and the way that they were drilled. To see a four-inch gun,

33:30 a twin four-inch gun at maximum speed, it's just fantastic. They work like clockwork those fellows. They're punching shells up and you punch them in. Especially high angle when the gun is, you are right down

34:00 below punching them up. And it's just fantastic and you've got out of the way quick because the shell casing comes hurtling out as soon as the gun fires and you have to get out of the way. One fellow got in the way and he got a smashed nose out of it. But the mechanism on them,

34:30 they could train so fast and with the eight-inch, those big barbets with the turrets, all they did was sit on big trunnions. They were just sitting there, if the ship turned upside down they would fall out. They weren't anchored at all, they just sat on these big trunnions and they'd train around on these trunnions and they were terrific.

35:00 The Dorsetshire, the HMAS Dorsetshire in the Indian Ocean had a misfire in B turret and they didn't do the drill properly and they blew it and she exploded and went down into the magazine. The magazine was open and the right gun was just under to traverse a shell up and the cordite was coming up

35:30 and she blew and tipped completely over all the eight-inch guns fell out and she come up and righted herself again and then she got hit and a torpedo got her after that. But she blew up. And just the weight of those things, I don't know what tonnage they would be those eight-inch turrets. Because they had

36:00 it would be two inch steel right round them but right at the rear of each gun was a panel of very light metal. That was in case she blew back through misfire and blew that panel out rather than detonate the whole gun house.

36:30 I don't think it ever happened. I think it was bad luck that the flash went down to the cordite room and boom, away she goes. That's what happened to that big Yankee ship off New York that time. That was a misfire and blew everything up.

Are they very common?

No. Not common, no. Cordite...We only had,

- 37:00 all the time I was in the turret we only had one misfire and I was on the BM [rocket launcher] lever at the time and that BM lever you control everything. You control the breech opening, you control the ramming and you control the hoist and you are supposed to leave it half an hour. I didn't touch it for an hour.
- 37:30 I left it there and just the right gun...I was on the left gun and right gun continued on firing but I wasn't going to open the bloody thing. Just in case. Because once it has no oxygen...See the shell is rammed in and there is no oxygen getting into that chamber. It just dies out and
- 38:00 doesn't explode but it's powerful stuff that cordite. And handling it too you get cordite burns on you when you are handling it. But I'd hate to ever be down in the cordite room in the magazine. If anything happens to the ship
- 38:30 the first thing they do is flood the cordite room and there is an officer or a petty officer and his job it to flood. He just pushes a button and floods completely the cordite room. And whoever is down there it is just bad luck. The shell handling room you've got a chance of getting out because they haven't got the explosives there. But the magazine has got to be flooded and it's
- 39:00 an eerie job. Especially when they are dropping bombs around you and they are hitting the ship's side and it reverberates. You know, you can hear boom, crack. And then you go this side and then you go that side when the ship's manoeuvring. It is a very eerie sensation. I spent one action in the shell handling room and that was enough for me, I was out.
- 39:30 I went and did this course and got out of it. But they were game men. They used to put bandsmen down there and fellows who didn't have any physical job at action stations. They used to put them down there and I felt sorry for them.

Why were they putting them down there?

- 40:00 To work down there during action stations. That was their action station. They had to work down there and get the cordite up to the guns. And they used to, you'd sniff it up through your nose and you could feel it. It would burn your nostrils that cordite. And then you had all that asbestos overhead.
- 40:30 And all your pipes and everything all covered with asbestos. Every time the guns would fire you'd get covered in asbestos, it would shower you and your hair would be white from asbestos. It would just trickle down on top of you. And when at action stations there are no fans below deck and it is terrifically hot. Those ships weren't built for the tropics, they were built for colder climates.
- 41:00 And the fans would be whirring all the time and then when the action stations start bam, off goes all the fans. Oh Jesus I tell you what, it was hot down there, very hot. But we used to wear just a pair of shorts and that until action stations you'd have to put your anti-flash gear on and your gloves. We were suppose to wear long strides
- 41:30 but we didn't. We'd just have no shirt and the...because it was unreal the heat in those turrets. You'd get around with a good figure in those days. We used to lose a lot of weight.

Do you know how hot it got in there?

Oh I reckon it would be up around forty, forty-five degrees. It would be

- 42:00 sometimes a hundred and ten or a hundred and twenty degrees in there.

Tape 5

00:31 How much marine life did you see in the ocean?

Quite a lot Peter [interviewer] but one particular time at Espiritu Santo we were allowed to swim over the side. They put the booms out, about four booms out from the ship's side and if you couldn't climb a rope there was no use you going in. You had to climb the rope to get on the boom to go in board

- 01:00 and we were swimming away and a sleepy old stoker on the starboard side got a heaving line, that's the line we use to take a heavier line ashore, with a big hook on it, a big butcher's hook, and a big hunk of meat on it. He heaved it out, took a turn around the guard rail and dozed off. The next minute the rail went boom. It just pulled it down like that, a big staunch, you know

- 01:30 a steel staunch and just flattened it. And there's this great monster shark out there and they sounded off a bugle call, "All hands inboard". I never heard it before but anyway they all knew what it was. Well

you should have seen those booms, they were bent down like that, everyone's climbing over everyone's back to get inboard. Anyway we all got inboard and this big shark, he almost drowned himself because he

- 02:00 had no chance of getting away. So they lowered a cutter and went out and shot him. And they brought him inboard and between P1 and P2 gun screw is twenty foot and it just fitted. They got the crane out, trained the crane out and brought him inboard. They piped for the butcher and he came up and cut his jaws out and his jaws are in Canberra now.
- 02:30 And young Bugs Fisher from Tasmania, only a short bloke, he stood up in the jaws. It would probably take one or two blokes in one gulp. Jeez it was a big fish. And that stopped the swimming over the side because they saw that bloke and he was immense.
- 03:00 Then later on when we came in there...After the Hobart got hit we went into Espiritu Santo and they piped, "No swimming over the side" because of the current and the piranhas are there too. A Yankee destroyer came up and tied alongside of us and one of the sailors went down on the fantail. You've got a big thing over
- 03:30 their props at the back, and he stood on it and jumped in. All you could see was blood. He must have dived straight into a shark's mouth or something. He got out to mid stream and by the time they lowered the cutter and got out there was only bone left, the piranhas got him. They ripped all the flesh off him. The quickest thing I've ever seen. So nobody went swimming.
- 04:00 We just gave that idea away. But we got a lot of flying fish on the fo'c's'le. They used to come up, flying. They were fairly good sized fish too. Of course they are bony damn things, they were no good to anybody. We used to heave them over the side but a stack of them came inboard, these flying fish. And a lot of dolphins.
- 04:30 At, just south of New Guinea we saw this great monstrous mess in the water and it was a giant squid. It come to the surface but oh boy he was big and some of the blokes wanted to have a pot shot at it but they said, "No, leave it". It must have been sick but
- 05:00 we never saw one come to the surface before but boy it was a bit one. And just various sharks, a lot of sharks we saw all the time. Especially after we had an air attack and bombs, fish used to come to the surface, stacks of them and sharks too.
- 05:30 The Japs did some good. They killed all the sharks around the place. But a lot of the ships that were sunk up there the sharks made mincemeat out of the poor old crews. It was just horrific the way they used to just eat them up. In the battle of Surigao Straits [Philippines], there was a couple of small aircraft carriers, converted ones and
- 06:00 they were sunk. Before the destroyers had time to pick them up a lot of them were mauled by sharks and it was terrible. But luckily we weren't in that. The Shropshire was in that. We were back going to Espiritu Santo to get repaired. But that's, as far as marine life goes,
- 06:30 the most you saw was after a bomb attack. They'd be floating everywhere. But I don't think the cook would have been too excited about getting them inboard to cook them. I don't think he'd be in that. We were pretty fortunate with food. It was all dehydrated; potatoes and eggs and things like that.
- 07:00 And one Christmas they gave us turkey, well the Yanks gave us turkeys and we had hams. But the silly looking cooks, the hams were green. What do they do? They cut the green off and served it out. Well there was about a hundred or even two hundred sailors on the upper deck going both ends to poison. Oh jeez it was a mess.
- 07:30 It was shocking. We all got poison from that ham but otherwise that's the only time that I ever got poisoned. But the food was good, dehydrated eggs for breakfast. Then at action stations we used to get 'tiddyoggies'. They were like a pastie and they
- 08:00 used to make them by the hundreds and they detailed someone to go round and give some to everyone at action stations. They tasted good too when you were closed up. We might be closed up tight for eight hours and you couldn't move and you welcomed those tiddyoggies. Then they'd come round with this great big dixie
- 08:30 full of kye, like a cocoa thing and they'd make the kye and you could drink that. That pepped you up a bit. A bit of bromide in it to stop any nasty thoughts and they used to feed you pretty well. And of course when we got with the Yanks, when we were ashore at Espiritu Santo, unreal,
- 09:00 bacon and eggs and you name it. The fellows used to dine out on it. And I was lucky in the gunnery party we used to go ashore and work on our guns and the Oerlikons were taken off and we had to strip them and clean them all out and we used to dine out on beautiful meals. The old Yanks knew how to look after their men.
- 09:30 All in all we couldn't complain and nobody came home emaciated, they all seemed to look pretty well. They had a, if you go on watch you had the first in the morning, the first is from eight to twelve, and then you get your head down from twelve

- 10:00 till four and at four you go on watch again and you watch from four till eight. But four till dawn everybody's there because your action station's at dawn but they used to come around with this kye and jeez it was great, just drinking this kye, although it is not as good as cocoa or anything like that but it was nice and wet and I enjoyed it.
- 10:30 But I had a good mate who was a cook. As a matter of fact, after the war I had him working for me at the hotel at Newmarket. He used to make everybody cry with his Madras curry. One bloke in particular, he was a butcher, he used to have tears pouring down and he'd say, "Jesus that's good stuff." And old Bill, Bill Brown the cook, he made this Madras curry
- 11:00 and it was hot but they drank beer. They loved it. And Bill, when he was on the Aussie, I used to slip round and he'd give me...They had a few fresh eggs around for the officers, we used to call them pigs, and he used to fry me up a couple and slip them to me.
- 11:30 We had a party onboard too for the whacks of course the sailors weren't allowed. All the sailors had to do was go and throw that stuff to make the floors...on the quarterdeck. The sailors were scrubbing the quarterdeck and then they put the pops all over it and then they had
- 12:00 ...I never heard the pipe in my life before and probably never will, "Hands to prance and dance on the quarterdeck". You wouldn't credit that would you? But that was their job, just to work the pops, they had to skate around in and work the pops in to get it nice for the party. This was in Espiritu Santo when we were being repaired. And then they put big hessian around
- 12:30 past x turret so that the silly sailors couldn't see them. Then all the sailors cooks had to go down to the officers cooks and do all these beautiful little savouries and things like that. There was a big wind schute goes down to their galley and they had control of the grog in there and everything that used to go out.
- 13:00 About five of us were there on x-deck and we used to lower a line down and Bill the cook, my mate, he used to put savouries in the bag and a bottle of gin because that's all they drank mostly the gin and we pulled it up and we were having a great time until
- 13:30 one of the sentries came along, the aft deck century was down there and he had to stop any sailors and the bugged put us in. He came up and grabbed us and we all got commander's report for eating the officer's chow...But oh gee it was terrific. All the beautiful hors d'oeuvres and
- 14:00 stuff. Anyway I don't know what happened, whether Bill got...well they couldn't blame anybody down below I suppose. But we got, we all got seven days jankers [punishment, stoppage of leave], that's running around the ship with a rifle over your head and stoppage your leave, you can't go on leave for seven days but that didn't seem to worry the boys too much. Then when we did get
- 14:30 ashore we went to their canteens and we used to be able to have a couple of beers, buys stuff. We were only allowed to buy so many, there were Schlitz and one of the other Yankee ones. But you couldn't get enough to make you full. You couldn't destroy yourself, just a few wets. I think it was two cans you were allowed and it was great.
- 15:00 And a feed of ice cream. Some of the boys really enjoyed themselves over here but they all came to a sticky end when we had to get back into it. But the meals were very good, I thought. For eleven hundred men on a ship like that and the cooks were making their own bread and doing all these things and we had
- 15:30 a COT room. The only refrigeration onboard was a big COT room down near the transmitting station, right down in the bowels and they used to keep their meat and all that sort of stuff in there. And then when the Merkur....The old Merkur used to come up, she used to bring supplies to us and we'd get our Richmond Tiger
- 16:00 with a tiger in every bottle and they used to give us one bottle per day. And there was a story that they used to have arsenic in it to make it have lasting qualities in the tropics. But I'm sure it did because Christ it used to make, some of the blokes used to save it. They'd hide it and save it and then they'd have a binge and you'd see some sick boys walking around hurling over the side.
- 16:30 But yeah the old Merkur, she was our supply ship and she was a sister ship to the German... what was he..., the Kaiser. She was a sister ship to his ship, his personal ship. She had all beautiful timber inside
- 17:00 and she was a lovely looking ship. White and we used to see her coming and everybody would cram for mail and goodies, fresh vegetables. They used to always bring fresh us vegetables and it was... And all those going on draft would go on draft on her and back to Australia.
- 17:30 And then the other tanker, the Bishopdale, she was our personal tanker and she used to follow us everywhere. We had been tied up with her sort of thing and we got an air attack and panic. Lines off and great big hoses and they had all had to be manhandled back onboard.
- 18:00 And one of them one day, the fellow undid it before they had finished pumping and there was oil everywhere, all over the starboard side. Bloody oil everywhere and then she let go and we'd have an air

attack and she got hit on the stern but no bad damage.

- 18:30 She had a terrific capacity. She was a British tanker and she was sent and given to us. It was always good to see, and then the Yunnan, The Yunnan and the Poyang, they were ammunition ships and we hated them. They had to come along side and they would be ammunition ship and we'd be watching them and oh gee.
- 19:00 Like I've never seen the fellows work so fast when the ammunition ship, we used to get rid of them. But those blokes who sailed in that, they were game. One stick of bombs and they were gone. And that's how they let those merchant seaman, they were good. And we had those DEMS blokes on there. That's Defence
- 19:30 of the Equipped Merchant Seaman. They used to be on there and take charge of the gunnery on the stern. And I was sent to the damn thing one time. They had trouble, it wasn't recoiling so much so and OAand myself had to go over and it was the worst twenty-four hours I ever put on a ship, being on the rotten thing. We had to cover it all for night time we had to work and
- 20:00 we had to have light so we'd cover it all over and oh gee, I was glad to get back to the Aussie. The bloke on there, the gunnery bloke on there said, "Why don't you stay with us and come with us?" I said, "Go to hell. I don't want to go on your rotten ship." Anyway we took it out for a shoot and she worked okay so we left her and got back onboard. Glad to be back.
- 20:30 But no they were terrific times. The navy was a good life. I've got no regrets. Bad times and good times but as far as people say, "You must have had a bad time with eating" but we always had a good food,
- 21:00 nicely presented and we had a mess deck. The Shropshire had a canteen arrangement where everybody lined up, and went passed and grabbed like the Yanks do but in the mess deck you got to know your mates better because the cook of the mess would go up and get the vitals and bring them back and you'd all sit down and
- 21:30 the mess cook would dish it all out to you and you got to know your fellows better. And then we got a lot of HOs sent to us, that's Hostilities Only, come from England, they were RN blokes. Chatter they were. They used to sleep in whatever clothes they wore and we wouldn't let them on the mess deck. They used to try and
- 22:00 crash on the mess deck and we'd scrub our mess decks and keep them nice and white and clean and you'd come down and you'd see some pommy bloke lying on it with his greasy ruddy overalls and we used to kick them off. We detailed a party, regulating petty officer, detailed a party to go down and hose them and wash them because they never washed.
- 22:30 And if they did it was only a seaman gunners wash, around the wrists and the plimsoll mark around here. But after about a month they turned round to our way of living and they became good blokes. But when they first came on they were hopeless.

Can you just explain to me who these bloke are, what they were doing?

Well they were like our volunteer...We were Royal Australian

- 23:00 Navy Volunteer Reserve. In England they were called Hostilities Only Service. They were only in for the time of war and out straight away and they called them HOs. I think we got about thirty or forty sent to our ship. Some of them were pretty cluey, they had been through a few scraps over there and quite good.
- 23:30 There was two blokes on S1 gun and they were very good. Terrific loading numbers, by jeez they were good to watch, pretty strong and they could punch those podgies in. I don't know what ever happened to them. Gradually they got drafted back and I think when the war finished in Europe they were allowed to go and
- 24:00 they sent them off then.

Can you tell me about the different piping onboard?

Yes. It all starts when an officer or the captain or anyone of any importance comes in, he is piped aboard and the quartermaster, he pipes him aboard and then

- 24:30 from there on you've got, you are piped hands for diner or sometimes you get the bugle call. But mainly in port they'd sound off bugles, it sounds better but at sea you'd get a pipe. Port Watch, or starboard watch close up and they'd have different ways of making that signal with the
- 25:00 pipe and the fellows who were doing it were good, they used to trill it. They'd triple it with their tongue. Especially hands to dinner. That was hard one to pipe. But then sometimes we had bugle calls and they were good because they don't have them now in the navy. The worst one is action stations and
- 25:30 repel aircraft. That's how it used to be. But then they found that we were getting more aircraft than we were surface craft so they put, rather than confuse everyone with going to action stations they put repel aircraft first, "Duddle duddle duddle da" then those fellows would race to the anti-aircraft guns. Then

afterwards, "Da da duddle duddle da dar" action stations

26:00 and that's when you used to freeze, I used to freeze anyway. My stomach used to tighten up and you think, "What's going on now?" Pipes are good and if someone wants to summons you from part of the ship somewhere they'd pipe, 'Able Seaman Peter lay aft' or 'Report to the bridge' or something.

26:30 And all these pipes, we all knew what the pipes were but I loved the bugle calls. They were good. You said you had a fellow play the bugle for one of your interviews? That would be good.

When it came to action stations, can you tell me why you lowered the guard rails?

Yeah well it makes it easier if you've

27:00 got to abandon ship, no one gets caught. So they just lower the staunchens down, they have pins in them and you lower them down and that saves any confusion if you're shoving Carlie floats or anything over the side you don't get hooked up because they'd be about that high.

And also what happened to the

27:30 **people who were in the lockup during action stations?**

Oh they stayed there. There would be only one or two but they stayed there. But there was a sentry there on the nearest action station and if anything happens to the ship he is to let them out straight away. That was worked out for them. There was somebody there to let them out.

28:00 But actually it doesn't matter how important they were on a gun they weren't allowed out if they were bad ones but they do make exception in some cases where it might not have been such a bad conviction so they may let them out on their action station because if

28:30 if they are good at their work that's what they want.

Was there anything like hazing or any sort of, what do you call it... traditions that were done to sailors back in those days?

What do you mean, like crossing the line things?

Yeah, things like that.

29:00 Yes. At Christmas time the youngest OD [ordinary seaman] on the ship becomes the captain and vice versa and they all...The band gets dressed up in outlandish gear, they have saucers up here for breasts and they've got things around them and very scantily clad and they march around the quarterdeck.

29:30 Only in non operational areas of course. But they used to carry out that tradition which was a long time. Sometimes it gets a bit out of hand. A young OD gets a bit carried away and might say the wrong thing to some of the officers but it's taken in good part. But come twelve o'clock and that's it,

30:00 back to tours. But one time the Arunta came alongside and we were given extra bottles of beer and we went over onto their ship and some of their blokes came over to us and we were all drinking and it got out of hand, things were getting real bad so what did the skipper do?

30:30 The old bugle, 'repel aircraft'...I'll tell you what, you should see those blokes sober up. They went back to their ships and the Arunta cast off and there was no aircraft of course. He told them later but he said, "I had to bring you round." The fellows went mad and they were fighting. They just went mad and it was just one turn.

31:00 But that brings them back to their senses quick, 'repel aircraft'. That comes before anything. It sobers them up too. Strange isn't it?

Were there any other initiation ceremonies or things like that?

No. We didn't have any other initiations

31:30 or anything. We were in operational waters most of the time Peter and they wouldn't subject the ship to anything like that. Only in a place where it's non operational, especially at Christmas if we are having our Christmas dinner which was a good dinner. The Merkur always made sure that she was there

32:00 sometime in December and we used to get turkey and chicken and god knows what, ham, green ham and plum pudding. These cooks, right from when you joined the navy the big thing on a Sunday was the plum pudding they made. It was terrific and as soon as you whoof it down

32:30 you'd race back and get some gash, that's you'd get some more. Beautiful puddings they were. And it must have been a way they were all taught because the same thing applied on the Aussie, the same type of pudding, beautiful.

You've talked about the quality of the food that the Americans had. Was there also a difference in the quality in general of the ships they had?

- 33:00 Like what, in relation to ours? Yes well their ships were better equipped gunnery wise. For conveniences, you know with water fountains, coke and things like that. We had one big
- 33:30 container down near the sickbay, a great big container. It was wooden on the outside and this contain was full of water because we could only make so much water on that ship and you couldn't drink anything only from there because they used to stick the bromide in that too. That quietened you down a bit and
- 34:00 it was fairly cold because it was insulated and it was a godsend. You'd see sailors there by the dozen lining up for a drink. The Yanks, they had little refrigerated outlets here and there and they had coke, plenty of it, and ice cream. They could
- 34:30 get ice cream at their canteen. We didn't have that luxury. Goffers we had, carbonated water with a juice. But that was good.

Can you tell me about the bromide?

Well some people say it was a myth but it wasn't because

- 35:00 I happened to know the fellow who used to put some in and the reason that they put it in was to stop any amorous ideas of the sailors, you know, quieten them down a bit. The tropics, mostly the stokers used to get very worked up with the heat. It used to work them up sexually,
- 35:30 just the heat and they put the bromide in to quieten them down. They said it had no effect on you or anything like that but I don't think so. I had three kids afterwards so, it didn't affect me. They also told me the first time I ever climbed a mast to get to the crows nest, I went up
- 36:00 before we had the tripods - this was early in the piece we had a single mast, a wooden mast, and you had to switch the radar off before you went up because if you passed by the radar you became infertile. Anyway my first go up there I got up into the crows nest alright and I got up land laid myself down
- 36:30 and did my lookout watch and when I came to go I froze, I couldn't move, I stuck there. They couldn't touch me from the bridge and they said, "What's up?" I said, "I can't." And they sent the bosun up with a bosun chair and they hauled him up the mast. He had to help me out of the crows nest, get me in the chair,
- 37:00 and I was frozen, I couldn't move because the ship goes like that and you are way up there on the top of the mast so I was excused from there on from going up the mast. And that's another reason why I wanted to get myself out of the ship's company and get myself into gunnery. But that was the most terrifying experience I had
- 37:30 in the navy was going up that mast. But a lot of fellows did. One fellow was up there during an air attack, Oh strike. He was in a mess too when they brought him down. But anyway they gave that away because our radar...when we came back we got those big tripods on in Sydney and it was a much better radar and we didn't require a masthead lookout.
- 38:00 It is only traditional anyway. You used to see twenty-five mile further than the men on the bridge when you are in the crows nest. As they used to say, "Where's the crows nest? Under the poop deck".
- 38:30 But they used to send blokes up there regularly but boy, it was a shocking experience. I can't stand heights, not like that. They used to have a trick of two hours on, four hours off and if you did your two hours that was it.
- 39:00 You wouldn't go up for quite some time after that. But soon as you came down you had four hours completely off, you didn't have to fall in or be part of ship or anything. Another trick up there and you deserved it too. They weren't real impressed with me when they got me down. The officer of the watch called me all sorts of things.
- 39:30 I said, "I can't help it mate". I was thinking of telling him to go up there himself but I wasn't game. They would these days. Talking about these days, some years ago the HMAS Brisbane called in on Brisbane here. Ted Trapper from the Canberra-Shropshire Association and myself were elected
- 40:00 to go out on a police boat to meet the Brisbane out in the bay and come in with her and we were on the bridge and the skipper is there and as we get in, right into Bulimba there a bloke comes running up, a young leading seaman comes running up and he says...I forget the skippers first name...
- 40:30 Anyway, say it's Frank....I can't remember his name. He said, "What side are we going alongside? Is it port side or starboard side?" And he said, "Oh what do you reckon navigator?" "Oh we'll go in on port side". He said, "Righto, thanks Frank". He was the leading seaman and this was a three ring captain, three ring commander and I said, "How come he can call you that?" He said, "We don't worry about it these days."
- 41:22 I said, "Jeez, if I did that to my commander, especially Harrington, I'd be up forward in the cells" and he said, "Oh yes the Navy has changed". And I thought that was strange. Liken that to the way we were. We used to tremble if they'd talk to you but you used to admire them a lot. I

41:30 admired their officers. They were trained to the hilt and they didn't worry us too much unless you did the wrong thing.

Tape 6

00:32 **Do you think you could...**

See how my whistle is. Work my whistle.....whistle is not too good..... "Did you hear there?"

01:00 That's to bring the people to attention, that pipe. Then... that's to dinner. And

01:30 they don't pipe action stations or repel aircraft, only for messages or bringing in somebody over the side. That's a long drawn out one, you've got to have a good breath on that. And then if you've got a good piper he can treble it and he rolls his tongue

02:00 and it sounds really good. I've got a pipe in there.

How do you learn these? Is it just something you do on the job?

Yes, you do a course on it. It doesn't take long, three or four days and you're quite good then but if you are going to be quartermaster it's essential that you have it.

02:30 And then instead of the bugle calls they just pipe it. 'All hands to dinner' or a message coming through and then our lights piped down, they do that with the pipe. But

03:00 when you go to sea you'd be walking around the ship and you don't know what's happening and all of a sudden you hear, "Da da....." and that's

03:30 a special sea duty man fall in, cable party muster on the fo'c'sle and hands fall in for leaving harbour. It is quite a nice bugle call that. It gets you and you know you say, "Right, we are heading, we are going to sea" and that's the only time. You know something is going on because they've shortened the lines and you've only got probably two

04:00 lines tying it up and you know and all of a sudden you hear that, " Da da....." so that's it, we're off to sea. Anyway it is quite good, I liked all the bugle calls. The only two I didn't like were action stations and repel aircraft, they used to upset my stomach. You'd freeze a bit then but

04:30 it was a good life I think in the navy and you met such a good lot of blokes and we still meet together, most of us, a lot of us. And I never had a blue in the navy. All those times there was no animosity or anything like that. You'd get a few disgruntled fellows

05:00 but you'd never see any fighting or anything because they'd realize the importance of togetherness on the ship and if you don't get togetherness well you've got a bad ship's company. But the Aussie had a great ship's company and she was a terrific ship, a happy ship, a fighting ship. She started the war in '39

05:30 and she finished in '45 and as I say she sailed over a million miles during her commission and she fought from the North Atlantic down right down to the Pacific and s no other cruiser that done that in the Australian Navy so she was quite remarkable. And there are some very nice poems written about her

06:00 which are very true and very good. A couple of fellows off the Kanimbla wrote on particular one and it was terrific about Leyte and in it he referred to, "Things were bad and everything was crook and who came in view? The Australia and we felt better because they knocked them down for us". And gee it was a good poem.

06:30 And we get the Manoora and Kanimbla and the Westralia fellows along to our meetings. And they did a wonderful job those fellows. They were salt ships and a lot of men were bosuns and took the troops ashore in their barges. Thousands of troops they had on board and they took those ashore

07:00 not knowing whether they were going to get back because the guns ashore were firing at them and they were credited with being the fastest ships of all the transport ships, American, of getting their troops ashore and returning. They were the fastest recorded and the Manoora, she had a great record.

07:30 She did a wonderful job and they were AMCs, Armed Merchant Cruisers in the early part of the war and then they were bought to Australia and did a few jobs around and then they sent them all and became assault ships, landing craft for infantry and they were with us a lot.

08:00 We used to look after them and make sure they were right. During the attacks we'd make sure that the old Manoora and Kanimbla and Westralia were right. They were well-met fellows when you get ashore. They'd come up to you and say, "It's good to have you around when we're about." It is nice to hear,

08:30 they were good blokes. Did you have anything else you'd like to say with regard to ship life?

I just wondered if there was any special pipe to tell you you were going home.

Oh well they would pipe. See in the navy a buzz is something that's...

09:00 no one knows who started it but there's be a buzz round the ship that we are going south. And then after about a week or so nothing happens you'd think, "Oh phooey". I had a mate who was with the admiral staff and he said to me one day, "Get your number ones out and iron them." Ones

09:30 are your good suit. Your twos were the ones that were supplied by the navy but your ones were the ones that you stepped ashore, nice fine serge, low dick front and nice collar and nice thirty-six bottoms and this bloke used to say to me, "You'd better iron up your gear". He knew

10:00 and in no time within a day or so she got right round the ship and there'd be sailors out ironing their suits. Very clean fellows sailors and they'd be making sure they'd get their dicky fronts all nice and clean with the crease inwards, crease in, and all the creases in the seven creases or five, whichever they liked.

10:30 And that was part of the, that was good. They'd be whistling away and ironing their gear and it was good to see because they knew they were heading south, we were having a refit or repairs or something. But these HOs, if we were ashore in Sydney or we were in dry dock, they'd be over the side painting and they used to wear overalls over their

11:00 go ashore so that they caught the first liberty boat ashore. They got liberty men to clean and liberty men to fall in, they'd be first in while all us fellas are still grooming ourselves and they'd just do the seaman gunners wash, you know, and take their overalls off and go. Well a couple of girls that we knew down there, they wouldn't dance

11:30 with them at the Trop because they used to get their dress dirty because they were chatting. They would go for the Aussies rather than the HOs, the poor old HOS. They were smelly and they'd been over the side painting and they'd go like this and race ashore first boat they'd go. They used

12:00 to, what was it.... "Da da dut..... Liberty men fall in port side aft". And then you'd all line up and you'd be inspected. But they wouldn't worry about inspection the HOs, they'd just let them go. But we used to get regularly

12:30 inspected and you are not supposed to wear tiddly gear ashore and they'd look at you and say, "Don't wear that again." Or your shoes, instead of wearing pusser's shoes, pussers was the name called in the navy. Pussers, it is an old long time traditional name. We used to wear our own nicely made shoes with a bit of good polish on them, nice and shiny.

13:00 And they'd look down, or pumps, we used to wear the old pumps and they'd say, "Back you go, change your shoes." The buggers. You think you are all ready to go ashore and you'd get sent back or your collar was wrong or your dicky front was down too long. Some officers were good, they'd

13:30 know what you had been through and they'd let you go. And you go ashore fresh and come back, "Ugh". Your uniform's a bit dirty and some blokes have been rolling in something. We all went into the Sydney Harbour Bridge one night and it was about five or six o'clock and we'd been to the First and Last pub and got all the beer we could possibly

14:00 carry...bottles of beer and we are sitting under there and the next thing there's a recall for the Aussie, 'All hands back to the ship'. We were drinking the beer and we didn't care about it. Anyway we ran short of beers so Nugget and Matie Hughes and myself, we went back to the First and Last for grog

14:30 and the naval police were there and they grabbed us and took us back to the man of war steps and then they carried on up to the bridge to get to the others. We got onto the pinnacle and got aboard the Aussie and she took off. She went, and all these fellows, they were all there so they all got charged with jumping ship and

15:00 not returning to the ship, desertion. A mate of mine, he was a three badgeman and he got dipped. They took his good conduct badges off him. It made a difference to him too because when he left the navy his rate of pay which was higher, finished when they took those badges off.

15:30 He reverted back to ordinary able seaman and they docked him for it all the way for years, a big difference in pay. They got them anyway. We only got as far as just past Garden Island and they bundled all these fellows in. Some of them were rotten too, they were drunk, and loaded them onto the Aussie and

16:00 they were up before the commander and all got desertion and yeah that was a pretty torrid times. I got out of it because Matie Hughes and Nugget and myself, we went back just to get beer and they nabbed us and they took us aboard. We got out of it.

So how would they recall all the men if you were ashore? Would you hear something or

16:30 **how did they do that?**

Well a recall went out but we were out in isolation. They had a recall all over Sydney, all the picture shows and everywhere and police were going around, especially up in the Cross. They were up there going past all the houses saying, "HMAS Australia is on recall". Sailors were coming out of houses and police cars were driving them back down again and

17:00 I forget what the urgency of that was. I think that was something to do with the submarines outside... I just can't remember but it was a good recall. We had one in Brisbane too. My Mum had the shop down here at Nundah...The Castle Milk Bar. I was serving behind there and in comes this copper and he said,

17:30 "You're on the Australia? I said, "Yeah". "Get in the car." I said, "Why." He said, "You're on recall." They had it all, was it Queen something was the recall and they had it on the screen. Sailors were going from everywhere trying to get back to the ship. That was when we headed off to New Zealand, 14th of July I think we left here

18:00 in '42 and they recalled...We were supposed to leave the 16th but we got this recall. And oh you should have seen the sailors coming from everywhere but they got me and I didn't have time to get dressed. I just picked me clobber up and the civvies I had on and that's how I arrived back at the ship,

18:30 with me civvies on. But they didn't muck about when that recall went out. Oh boy. You had to put down, when you went ashore if you were on sailing orders, you'd have to put down where you would be or what address they can contact you. This copper didn't muck around, he got me quick. He grabbed two of us, a chap named Lorrie Sleep and another fellow who all lived

19:00 at Nundah and rounded us all up and back and we, within three hours we were underway and out, gone. I think we left about ten sailors behind but that didn't matter, they fixed that up somehow and we headed to Wellington, Windy Wellington.

19:30 What a place. But I think that if I ever had to join a force again, like if I was young enough, it would be the navy. I wouldn't touch the army or the air force, I'd pick the Navy.

What is it about the navy?

Oh I don't know. They're

20:00 cleaner. The army...poor things, they used to lie around in mud and Christ knows what and I used to feel sorry for them. But we were all together and we had a job and we knew what we had to do. No skulking or hiding behind anyone. You got into it and that's it.

20:30 And it was a personal effort. I think in the armed forces personal effort is one of the biggest things. You can defeat your enemy with a good personal effort.

21:00 **You've talked about how you got word that you were heading south or going home or whatever. What was it like the last time when you were coming home and the Aussie was all beaten up?**

Oh it was a different ship. Nobody laughed and nobody said any jokes .We were very despondent and

21:30 we had lost so many of our mates and just the general condition of the ship used to make us feel shocking. You know, you didn't want to do anything. And luckily enough the officers didn't press it either. They didn't say, "Clean ship". I reckon if Harrington had been there he would have said, "I want the ship shipshape." But we

22:00 come home with Shiner Wright. He was our commander and he became our captain when Dechaineux was killed and then Black Jack bought us home from Lingayen and he was a good skipper and he didn't trouble us, rouse us up or anything. He was really terrific.

22:30 He did enforce just a general clean of the ship but none of this trying to clean off the burn marks all over it, just left it. But they were a very subdued crew, very subdued. All the life had gone out of them. I don't know if anybody can realize what it is like to have

23:00 planes crashing in on top of you and all the dead bodies and burnt bodies. It is just stupendous it is, it's horrific. And it plays a lot on you. What we should have done when we got home is been counselled like the latter wars. As soon as the boys come in you counsel them. We didn't. We wanted to get out

23:30 and go and live our life and become civilians. Therefore a lot of fellows went out of the navy without a disability pension and they should have had one. I got a pension before I left, they gave me a pension, a small one, which grew and grew afterwards. A lot of fellows should have been TPI [Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension]

24:00 that went through that holocaust up there and they just lived their life and didn't worry about it. But what a difference after Vietnam and whatever. As soon as they got out they got counselled and most of those fellows finished up with TPIs. I'm EDA now and it's Extremely Disablement Adjustment. But

- 24:30 I would never make TPI because that's out. I would only get EDA. If they'd have sent us off to counselling I think they'd have done a lot better. It was mainly our fault because, "Hell we want to go. The war is over, finished. Let's go home", and that was
- 25:00 the bad part of it. A lot of these fellows are suffering now, they are suffering pretty bad some of them. To get a disability pension you've got to prove that it is war caused and that's not an easy job to do. If you become EDA you've got to be,
- 25:30 make sure it's war caused. You've got to go through a board of reviews, tribunals and you can't shake them off. You've got to have some note in the medical history. But on our ship we had no x-ray machine
- 26:00 and we had all the records on the sailors were destroyed in a fire which went down through into the administration and there was no record of a lot of our. and your medical. The only medical ones that I got were tropical ear and
- 26:30 ptomaine poisoning and this arm but all the others, there was nothing on that, my back and all that. But through a good advocate, he helped me through and we went through the board of review and the tribunal and proved it. I had to get support from other fellows who
- 27:00 knew my case and I helped them too. Old Bill Egerton, you possibly may see him, he was on P1 when the plane hit the bridge and all the bodies fell down, all burnt and fell on top of him and there was eight of his gun crew killed and he was under the lot of them. And they thought he was gone, dead.
- 27:30 And Billy Gummow was laying alongside of him and he said, "Bill, are you alright Bill?" And he said, "Yeah, there's nothing wrong with me." And he said, "But there's something wrong with my back." Bill turned him over and he had a big hole right through his back. And he said, "Jesus Bill, what am I going to do?" And Bill said, "I don't know. I'll get you to the sick bay somehow." He died, just like that while he was talking to him.
- 28:00 Yeah, poor old Bill, it upset him. Still it has affected him pretty badly Bill. All his body has come down all white from this stuff they put in the petrol. All burnt and that all fell down on the gun's crew and they stuck to...One fellow, there is a big fore and aft bridge that goes from the bridge to the aft bridge and
- 28:30 this sublieutenant was on fire. He was covered with flames from head to foot and he ran along there. A couple of blokes tried to grab him. Anyway when he got to the end somebody hooked him and dropped him but as soon as he hit the deck he gelled and he was dead, he just stuck there to the deck, everything burnt off him. It was a shocking thing. That smell.
- 29:00 I get it every so often, I get a whiff of it, it's nauseating. You are vomiting all the time you are hosing the bloody director out, you are vomiting all the time from all these poor buggers laying in there all burnt to a cinder because when they hit the petrol shot in there and just incinerated everybody inside the director.
- 29:30 And all the blokes laying on the bridge, all dead. Shockers, terrible but you learn to live with that and get over that. It takes a while, it took me a while. I used to have awful dreams, couldn't sleep but it's getting better now.
- 30:00 **Did you have any kind of...When you lose so many men like that, any kind of service afterwards?**
- No. We just sewed them up in hammocks, we used to get the hammocks and sew them up. The poor old sail-maker, A.R. Maunsell, he couldn't go any further, he was sewing and sewing. And then you put a
- 30:30 projectile, a four-inch projectile, which is about that long. You put that in there and sew it all up and we carted them all down to the quarterdeck and when there was a lull in the air attacks we used to have a quick service and tip them over the side. And the old sin bosun used to say a few things and you'd get half a dozen or a dozen of them over and
- 31:00 and the next thing 'repel aircraft' and you'd just leave everything and go. You'd leave the poor buggers laying there. But we ran out of putting good podgies shells in there. We had to put training podgies in there because it was too crucial to use our good ammunition, running low and then we ran out of our hammocks and
- 31:30 and they wrapped them up in a cloth or a canvass and sewed them up. They had different blokes going there sewing all the time. The poor old sail maker, he had had it. He did about fifty or sixty and he had had it. They were on the nose, they weren't too good. They were pretty ripe by this time
- 32:00 lying on the upper deck in the hot sun and you couldn't do much about that. They decomposed very quick and the stench was terrific. But we'd have a special platform and we'd have the union jack and we used to put them on the platform and it used to axis on the guardrail and you'd just lift them up and they'd slide down and away. But we lost a lot
- 32:30 in the bomb blast and they just disappeared over the side and we never got them. There was quite a few buried up there in Lingayen Gulf and Leyte. We took them out about fifty miles out to sea and then had a ceremony and got rid of them.

- 33:00 Because oh jeez, it's hard to forget the smell. When they go off you don't anywhere to put them. You've got to get them and you just grab any hammock and...I never slept in a hammock all the time I was on the ship. I never ever slept in a hammock. I used to sleep on the upper deck under the back of B turret. I used to use my shoes as me
- 33:30 pillow, a pair of old shoes that I had and that's where I used to be. When it rained you'd just get in closer to the part of the barbet and get away from it until some silly bugger came round hosing the decks early morning and that would get you up. They'd be hosing the decks. But I
- 34:00 I couldn't sleep below. Not many of us slept on hammocks. There was no room anyway. The peacetime complement was six hundred and seventy-two and we had eleven hundred and fifty so that's nearly twice as much. There was no room to swing a cat. You'd share your locker with your mate or maybe three of you in the one locker because there was no other locker available.
- 34:30 We had some characters there, a chap named Sharpo Jackson. He was our official razor sharpener. He used to sharpen all the razors and when you come to pick it up he'd say how much it cost you and
- 35:00 he'd say, "Righto give us your ((UNCLEAR) - whatnarn) and he'd reach inside your strides and he stropped his razor in it and he'd say, "Yeah. She's right, away you go." He was a character that bloke, Sharpo Jackson. And he used to drag his stomach up into his chest and
- 35:30 you could see his backbone there. And he used to go white and this is a trick that he had. And he went down to sickbay one day and we had a new doctor on board and he walked in because he's got to hold his breath too most of the time. All his stomach goes up there and you've got just that breastbone and you can see his spine. "Here Phil. Look"
- 36:00 And the doctor looked at him and fair dinkum, the poor old doc didn't know what to do. He had never seen that in his life before and old Sharpo used to put this on. "I'm feeling crook doctor". That was the funny side of things. We had another fellow onboard, he was a musician,
- 36:30 he used to play the clarinet, Johnny Gleeson. Similar name to that film actor. And poor Johnny used to get up there and place this saxophone and Stormy Stower who gave me that bugle, he used to play saxophone. They were up on the fo'c'sle the two of them and they'd play this beautiful music and they'd swing it.
- 37:00 it's is a wonder the old Aussie didn't go down nose first because everyone would come to the fo'c'sle; they would be up in A turret and B turret and Harrington didn't like it at first. He tried to stop it but Farncombe overrode it and said, "No, let them. This is in a non operational area." Maybe when we were in Palm Island. We used to operate from Palm Island,
- 37:30 go up to New Guinea and go back and a terrific jazz session. Then this other fellow, he had a clarinet too and he came in and he joined in then. He used to sit quietly right up in the nose of the ship below, near the cells, and he used to play on his own
- 38:00 and he wouldn't let anybody hear him. We thought, "Oh well, he mustn't be much good", but when he got up there with Jackie Stower and Johnny Gleeson he was terrific and what a terrific time we used to have when they used to swing it and play all the old Glenn Miller stuff. Gee they were good and wouldn't let them go. We'd just listen to them all
- 38:30 for a couple of hours. But they were the nice times.

Where did that music take you when you use to hear it?

Where did it take me? Back home or mainly to Sydney and some of the dances back there, to some of the dances and some of the nice girls that you met. They used to come as,

- 39:00 be there as partners. You couldn't take them home or anything. They were there just to escort you at the dance. You'd always get a dance from them because they wouldn't dance with the kippers or the HOs. And it was good because they used to play all that music, all the good stuff. That's why I listen to 94.1, that's
- 39:30 Sanctuary Cove down at FM. They play all that, they are fantastic, all day long. And I've got stacks of videos and audio tapes with all that music on. And you get a flashback to being onboard when some of that music comes on.
- 40:00 Especially 'Blue Orchids' and 'Stardust' and all them. They used to play those and 'Sweet Lorraine'. It is just terrific how you can flash back to those days. Sometimes I sit in my chloroform chair there and listen to the music and I just drift away,
- 40:30 I'm not here, I'm away. And it's good. It helps you, it's good for you. It takes any stress or anything about, you just relax. I think it's good for the soul. Good music, I love it. Better than those boxes, TVs. I can't stand them.
- 41:00 I only watch two shows; Neighbours and Home and Away and that's it, finished. Music is my caper. And we find, well lots of fellows have, well Vince Cuthbert, his son is the chief man at Channel Nine on

- 41:30 all recordings and the whole lot, filming and everyting. He's been with them twenty-seven years and he sent some terrific stuff down to Vince and Vince dubs it straight away and sends it over to me. It's terrific. But our band used to play and they used to get up on B turret, the whole band,
- 42:00 and then we'd have...

Tape 7

- 00:31 Well they all assembled up on B turret and we had to up anchor by hand. Now an anchor on the Aussie was eight ton eight hundred weight and we had to put all your spars in the capsten and there is fifty, sixty or even a hundred sailors get round it and you've got to run round and round
- 01:00 and wind the capsten, which is usually activated by steam but all done by hand and the band used to go, "Da da dun....." and they'd have this quick music and all the sailors would be running round and round. I didn't do it luckily but they were running round to up anchor. It's an evolution, if something goes wrong with the capsten
- 01:30 and the steam and they can't activate the capsten we'd have to...Anyway when it was all over the commander was there, Wellford Hastings Harrington and he said, "It is very well done ship's company. Can you tell me why we have to do this?". And this Rex Jones, who
- 02:00 used to do a lot of cells said, "Bugger if I can see. Why don't you just slip the anchor and let the anchor go and we'll get another one." He said, "We've got one down aft, a spare." Oh the old commander he nearly blew his top. He said, "I'll see you tomorrow on my report." Poor Rex. He said, "Why up anchor by hand. Why don't you knock the slip and let the damn thing go."
- 02:30 Which is right too. But that's an evolution which we had early in '43 up in Palm Island or somewhere but we never did it again. That was enough, but anyway the band were good. The band used to do a recital for us on a Sunday afternoon. The band would do a recital and by god they could play and
- 03:00 Jackie Gleeson and Stormy Stower used to join in with them, they were invited in and it was good to see. But this Jacky Stower, one time we were in Garden Island and everybody had gone on leave and I had done something wrong, I've forgotten what it was, and I had seven days stoppage of leave, I couldn't go home on leave.
- 03:30 There was only a skeleton of the crew on board and we went ashore and played up that night, come back on the wagon and the next morning old Stormy gets up and he's pretty groggy and he get the bugle and opens the tannoy [public address system] and 'wakey wakey', he swings it and he really swung it and
- 04:00 the old Admiral he was on Garden Island, "Get that rating." Anyway poor old Stormy, he got celled over that. He got seven days cells for swinging 'wakie wakie' and boy didn't he swing it and it went all over Garden Island. With that bugle too. But some of the funny little things that happened,
- 04:30 when we were doing a refit there, when we were over the side, they used to put you on a plank then you had two men attending your lifeline and you had two men attending your stage lowering line. And what you'd do is
- 05:00 you slacken off your lifeline first. Otherwise if you let the other one go, you go. There was this fellow, he was a bit of a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK but anyway they were tending this stage and these two blokes were painting the ship's side and it was all cement underneath in dry dock, long way.
- 05:30 We heard this terrific screaming out and yelling out. What they did, they lowered the stage down first, not too good, it was a good ten foot down and they were just about ready to unravel the line to let the lifeline go and these bloke realized hanging over the side that if they did that they'd come hurtling down, they'd never hold them. They were screaming out.
- 06:00 One of the officers that happened to be on the upper deck, a divisional officer and, "Blow all that" and anyway they bought the stage up to them again and they grabbed these four blokes and they were all put on captain's report because they could have killed those fellows and they all got captain's report for that and they got drafted ashore. We didn't see them again, thank god
- 06:30 but it was close. So after that it was decided that there was no more over the side painting in dry dock, too dangerous. Terrifying it is. She's thirty foot from the water line to the upper deck on the Aussie and you had to paint all that and that's a hell of a drop. And then there's the keel, which is another twenty feet
- 07:00 underneath that and you've got a long way to fall. So when the commander came back he suspended all the over the side painting in dry dock which was good. Luckily I never had to do it but I think I would have reneged. I would have rather done a bit of cell time, I would have reneged.

Did blokes ever

07:30 do stuff to be drafted to shore on purpose?

Yes. We had a few fellows that did the wrong thing to get a draft, quite a few. You couldn't smoke below decks. They used to continually smoke and they were weighted off, they got jankers, they

08:00 got punishment and they kept on doing it so they said, "Right, go". And we had another couple of fellows who were pretty bad homosexually and when the Merkur can along side one time they shoved them on it and they went ashore. And another bloke went

08:30 berserk with a paint pot out of the paint store and he painted, slashed paint everywhere. What a mess cleaning it up. But he got a draft too, they choofed him off. But if anyone plays up they think, "He's after a draft," and they accommodate him. They say, "You can go."

09:00 When you mentioned that bloke who spent time in the crows nest during an air raid and when he came back he was a bit troppo, what happened to him?

He eventually...I can't think of his name but he eventually left the Aussie and he went to the, I don't know whether it was the Warramunga or the Arunta but they drafted him off the ship but he was definitely crook. He

09:30 was real psycho in the end. But what ever happened to him I don't know after he went to the destroyers. One of the destroyers, the Warramunga she raced back to Sydney because she had trouble - I don't know if it was the Arunta or the Warramunga - with her tail shaft, the baring and whether they took him back,

10:00 got rid of him. But he was definitely no good to us. Action stations would go and he would sit there, he wouldn't move.

So when you talk about burials at sea, was there ever any request by sailors not to be buried at sea?

No. They couldn't do anything about it, they had to get rid of the bodies. We didn't have anywhere to store them. We didn't have a cold room or anything.

10:30 They had to go over and be buried at sea.

Can you tell me about what sort of news of the war you would receive?

We used to get a bulletin come through on our, and they used to put it through the tannoy. But mainly Tokyo Rose, she used to sprout to us all the time. "We know where you are. We're going to get you." All this sort of thing and

11:00 we got BBC, we managed to get that a couple of time. That told us how the war was going over on the other side, especially when peace was declared. It was a very good thing. But very little from Australia. They didn't, I don't know why they didn't tune in

11:30 to Australia but we got very little from them. The Yanks at Pearl Harbour had a very strong station and they used to give us a lot of news. We used to pick up Pearl Harbour quite easily and I think that well there must be some reason why we never brought Australia in. I don't know.

12:00 Can you tell us about hearing that news about the end of the war?

Yes. It was a godsend and we were all thinking, "What was going to happen to us?" VP day but they were excited, very excited. I think we were given a bottle of beer that day, all hands were given a bottle of beer that day. I forget where we were.

12:30 They thought it was terrific the fellas, because a lot of our fellas were over there, a lot of the blokes on destroyers; Nizam, Napier, the Quiberon and Quickmatch. They could appreciate because a lot of them were in London and Portsmouth and

13:00 they could appreciate what it was, what it meant to the people over there. So they were quite exited about it and we thought, "Well it won't be long before this one's over". And whoever devised that bomb it was the greatest thing in the world because we would have lost millions of men if we'd attacked Japan. They were ready for us there. They had planes I believe stowed away that

13:30 they never used and they had aircraft and guns and they had people, even young kids all tooled up ready to resist an invasion. We would have lost millions of men and that bomb saved us, well it didn't save us because we finished at Lingayen. We were burnt out, finished and

14:00 we went back to Sydney. The poor old Aussie she finished her days then, poor old girl, she had done her thing. But if she had been welded like the American ships I doubt whether she would have stayed afloat. But being riveted she was sturdy, it was terrific the battering she took. But the Yank ships, they

14:30 used to tear when they got hit and especially on the upper deck. It says a lot for the old riveting in the olden days although today all the ships are welded.

Could you tell me about hearing about the atom bomb?

Yes well I wasn't on the Aussie then, I was

- 15:00 in Melbourne when that came and there was a lot of people going crook about it and we had terrific arguments on that. We considered that it was the best thing that ever happened to save a lot of lives and it finished it quickly because they were going from
- 15:30 Okinawa and then they were going to leave from there and head up to Japan and have a big invasion force, all teed up ready to go and the Japs were ready for them, they would have lost a lot of men. They had a lot of ships because the suicide planes were all ready too. They kept about five hundred of those back after Okinawa and there was a lot of good
- 16:00 planes that had been specially built all ready and they had a job on their hands because our lines of communication were so stretched there and they were there, they had everything. Young people were taught how to hold a rifle and that was it. We thought it was a godsend,
- 16:30 I still do. I know it's a dreadful thing for all those people who were killed but have a look what they did to Berlin. How many thousands, hundreds of thousands were killed there? They didn't drop an atom bomb but they dropped big five thousand and ten thousand pounders and they annihilated that place. So
- 17:00 unfortunately a lot of our fellows went up there after the signing, the peace signing and they went ashore and a lot of them got infected and came back with cancer of the prostate. It's still happening. Quite a lot of fellows that I know who have passed on with prostate cancer, it was all due to them going ashore
- 17:30 and still getting that residue that was floating around. Not very nice but as I say it saved millions and bought the war to the end quickly. Otherwise it would have gone on for another twelve months or maybe less. It was a result of a lot of
- 18:00 heartbreaks and a lot of blokes gone, so I'm all for it. And anyone who says it I don't argue with them anymore but I'm against what they say. I think it's the best thing that ever happened. They should have dropped it sooner.

Can you remember hearing about victory in the Pacific?

Yes. I was in Sydney at the time

- 18:30 and I'd come up for the weekend. What a weekend, people went mad, they were mad. And all night they just kept racing up and down blowing horns and jumping on trams and stopping the trams and laying down in front of the trams so the trams couldn't move and
- 19:00 gee, it was really terrific. People just went mad and if you were a sailor the girls would grab you or the airforce or the army, they would grab you and kiss you and blokes were shaking your hand. It was rather a momentous occasion that VP Day [Victory in the Pacific day]. Best part I believe was to...
- 19:30 And so they should be because it was a pretty traumatic war. The final part of it was all bets off, there was no courtesy among them. Like the German sailor and commander fellow, the Prussian, not the Nazi,
- 20:00 he used to be a bit mindful of ships when they were firing and they would call off and that sort of thing and they would pick up survivors but not the Japs. They would just shoot them in the water and they had very unscrupulous ideas of, they were maniacs. Poor prisoners
- 20:30 they, the way they treated them was just barbaric and some say, "You've got to forget these things" I say, "Yeah, you've got to forget" but I will never forget. That's why I stick to a Holden car and don't buy a Jap car. But still I suppose you've got to realize that it's sixty years on.
- 21:00 But you get a flashback every so often of your mates and that and you think, "By jeez that's crook. How can you say hello to them". I went back to Japan in 1970 and I went back with a chip on my shoulder, a real chip and I came away not so disillusioned. I met some nice people over there and
- 21:30 they befriended us and drove us from Tokyo right down to Kobe and put us in homes. But instead of going to hotels they put us in ordinary workingmen's homes, and we lived their life and we found a lot about them and they were just as much bewildered as we were. Because they thought that
- 22:00 we were bad, we were barbarians, we killed off a lot of theirs. Anyway I come back a little bit better off for it. One time we went to Norway and we caught one of those inter ferry boats that go right up to the Russian border. On board that
- 22:30 we went through all the fjords, where the Bismarck was and on it were about fifteen ex U-boat [German submarine] commanders and I had a big beard and a big duffle coat and a Russian hat, one of those Russian

23:00 kind of hats and they all thought I was Russian. They'd nod to me and I'd say, "Ja." I wouldn't let on who I was. Anyway later on I put the kangaroo on and they said, "Are you Australian?" "Yes." "We thought you were Russian." Of course they hate the Russians and we became pally and

23:30 they told us all about the fjords, all about how Hitler, the Bismarck, the other big fella, what's the name... How they went in there to be repaired and how the submarines used to hide in there and jeez they were interesting and we used to hop around all these islands all the way up. It was a fantastic trip. But those submarine commanders, not many of them

24:00 got out of the war, a lot of them were killed but gee they were terrific fellows. A couple of them still write to me. They're good to talk to and they speak beautiful English. It's a little bit guttural but you can understand it quite good. And we palled up with them and they used to get down there and have all the

24:30 sills for breakfast, all the fish sills.

I wanted to ask you about mail on the ships.

Well we got mail as much as we can, they were very good. They used to bring it in on the Merkur or the Yunnan or the Poyang whenever they came up and also they flew it into Manus and that was, we used to go back to Seeadler Harbour

25:00 quite a lot and there would always be mail there for us and at Espiritu Santo they kept a continual flow while we were being repaired and gee they were good. They had a big airmail bag and you could write your letter, put it in at the police office and they would censor it and cut what

25:30 they didn't want out and then they'd put it in the air bag and give it to the Yanks and the Yanks would fly it through to Moresby and somebody else would pick it up and it would go straight to Townsville, Townsville to Sydney and my Mum got mail in about six days from Espiritu Santo, which I think was pretty good. She used to write to me.

26:00 I had a bundle of letters she had written and Dad had written and it takes some time to sit down and read them but it knocks you about a bit when read all about it and you think of all the things that happened at home. But that's it, that's what you joined up for.

26:30 You've got two nicknames, Buck and Horse. Can you tell me how you got those?

My mate, his name was Bull, I called him Bull and I was Horse. I don't know why, it wasn't because of any physical arrangement but after each action Bull was in a different action station and

27:00 another turret and somebody would say, "Hey Horse, Bull's looking for you." Or "Bill, Horse is looking for you." We used to check on each other to see if we were okay but Buck or Squizzy, but Buck mainly I was called, Buck Taylor but Squizzy was another nickname but it was mostly Buck or Horse. As a matter of fact quite a few of them still call me Horse.

27:30 Bill Edgecomb and Neil up at Coolum who you'll see or someone will see, he still calls me Horse and I call him Bull. Bill Egerton, we call him Bootnose because he was a loader on a four inch and the case come out and whacked him and broke his nose and his nose went like that so we called him Bootnose

28:00 and it stuck to him, we still call him Bootnose. No matter where you go, at reunions, "G'day Bootnose, how ya going?" It's strange and I go down to a reunion and they call me Horse or Buck and it makes you feel like you are amongst them all again and they are terrific blokes. There's quite a few of them dying off

28:30 unfortunately. We have lost quite a lot this year but I suppose that's to be expected.

You mentioned that you called the officers pigs. What other sort of names, nicknames were given to different sections of the ship?

Oh well pigs to the trough, that's when they go do dinner.

29:00 They always got that nickname but most of the fellows were called Wingsy, why I don't know. 'Wingsy', 'Wingsy Bash'. 'Hey Wings'. And it's strange how you get that name but the fellow who used to look after the water supply in this big thing we had for water, we used to call him

29:30 Tankie, he was Tankie. He looked after our water supply. And the electricians were Sparks and the stokers; well you couldn't call them anything else but stokers, poor fellows. They seemed to be a different part to the seaman but they were alright, they were all together good.

30:00 But they'd come up on deck after they had done a watch to get some fresh air after they had been there, and the sailors would say, "Don't you bludgers ever do anything for work? You're always up here looking over the side?" The poor buggers had been down there doing their trick down below. There was all the nicknames

30:30 they used to get. The bloke that used to sharpen your razor, he was Sharpo and one of our ((UNCLEAR) - As), Tony Moore, we used to call him pony. Oh it's just amazing how many nicknames they get. And I suppose it's the same in the army and the air force, I don't know.

Can you tell me about the pressure

31:00 that was put on you to re-sign up?

Yes. I was called in to the administration office in Flinders and they said, "Some papers here for you to sign." I said, "What's that?" "Well you've got to sign on for twelve years. You're only signed on for the duration of war and six months after". I think that's what I signed on for.

31:30 I said "What's that?" He said, "We've spent all that money on you at the Melbourne Tech. You've got a great life, you've never had to report to anybody and you've passed your exams. You'd be main ord's mechanic and you are most essential to us on our ships."

32:00 He said, "Well you'll have to sign this." I said, "Can I think it over?" They paid a lot of money out in those days. So they said, "Will you sign on for twelve years?" and I said, "I'll have to think it over." And they said, "Well you've got forty-eight hours." But then I rang my Mum

32:30 and she said, "Your Dad's in Hospital." I said, "What's wrong?" "He's got osteomyelitis in his foot and all the bones have been eaten out and they have amputated his leg." I said, "Right." I went back and saw them and said, "My Dad's having his leg off and they require me home." "Yes well we'll have to put it to the board". I said, "Alright."

33:00 But we want verification from the doctor". So I rang Mum again and said, "Can you get a letter from the doctor and send it down", which she did. And after the board met they approved with reluctance they approved it. Because there were six of us that did OM's course

33:30 and one bloke, he was full time and he was due to get out and he went, Howard Manoll. The others were getting close to their points of getting out and so they wanted me because I was the youngest one. And they were most upset and they let me know it too. They sent me back to Moreton here and gave me some shocking jobs. And

34:00 we used to be right next to the morgue down there at Moreton and they made me skipper the boat that used to go up and down the river and pick up different ships. Then they made me truck driver and gave me awful jobs so finally my demob came through and I got out

34:30 and much to their disgust, they didn't like it at all. They said, "With extreme reluctance we acknowledge your request for demobilisation". So that was that.

How much pressure could they have brought to bear on you?

Oh they could have stopped me because somewhere along the line when

35:00 I went down to Flinders they said, "We want you to do Ord's Mechanics Course" and I signed the docket. I don't remember what it was all about but I did sign it and I think in that there that I agreed to stay twelve years. Because it cost them fifteen hundred pound to put me through Melbourne Tech and that was a lot of money in those

35:30 days and the old navy didn't like that. Well there was six of us, nine thousand bucks and they said, "Nine thousand quid" and they didn't like the idea but anyway I was lucky I got out. But my mate, one of my mates, they made him stay in and he went the full twelve years

36:00 and did well too. He went on the Vengeance, he went over to England, picked the Vengeance up and bought the Vengeance back.

I'll get you to talk more about that.

I could feel the tension. I wanted to go up to the Line for the weekend and they wouldn't let me go. They stopped my leave on some pretence. I don't know what it was but

36:30 it was very small but they wouldn't let me go up to the line to Melbourne for the weekend. They gave me guard duties, night time guard duties, never in the daytime, always at night time. I became, I went to watch keepers mess and

37:00 your sleep was any time. You had to do, I used to do from nine o'clock to midnight and then have two hours off and I'd go at two o'clock and go on till four o'clock down at the police station. They really rubbed it in. But I put up with it because, I squealed a bit first but it did me

37:30 no good, they just wiped me. Some of the chief POs [petty officers], they knew about it and oh boy, they gave me buggery especially if my hammock wasn't tidy, if my kit wasn't... and they gave me kit inspections more than you should ever get them and you had to lay it all out, you had to lie everything out perfectly and have a kit inspection. If there was anything missing

38:00 you'd get a rattle, get into trouble. So they really got up me but I weathered the storm and after a while they said, "Righto, you're on draft to Brisbane, back to Moreton." I said, "How do I go?" "By troop train." Oh Jesus what a trip from Melbourne, shocking it was.

- 38:30 They didn't give me any cards to go anywhere for meals or anything like that, I just had to pay my own way for meals going up. I ate many pies and soft drinks, few beers and that's how I got back to Brisbane.
- 39:00 It took me three days or four days to get back but they weren't going to help. I spoke about going out to the air fields, the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] and getting a flight up and they said, "No way in the world". They put a damper on that straight away. When I made application they said, "No. We can't take you." I was getting punished.
- 39:30 But they just put a dampener on my naval career but I was glad to get out after that because I met a lot of mongrels the last month down there, they really stuck it into me. I thought, "Well that's it". So when I got to Brisbane
- 40:00 I made the best of it and when my demob came through I couldn't get out of there quick enough and I never ever went back to see them. Some of the fellows down there were alright but I never ever went back to see them. I just gave it away. And we kept on with our mates from the Aussie that had been
- 40:30 discharged long before me and we used to meet and tell a few lies and shoot down a few things and sink a few ships. But they were good old days when we were getting ourselves together again. But as I say we should have been counselled. It was a shame.

Tape 8

- 00:32 **I'm just wondering if you can tell me about the boxing matches that happened on ship?**
- Oh yes, they were very good. We had those in the starboard waste. All the officers used to have their special seats and we used to crowd up onto the pompom deck and all around the whole arena and
- 01:00 we used to have some great shows there. We had some good pugs on board, as I said Billy Bergers and Sandy Mundy, Chick Avery and they used to put on some good fights. We used to get the Yanks onboard and they used to do us over, some of those big, buck negros; they were frightening when they got in the ring, they glistened.
- 01:30 They had big muscles but our blokes came out alright. We had one officer, he was good, he was a good fighter. He used to get in there and mix it up with them. Of course you can imagine the roar from the boys when he got a decent whack. They'd all be barracking for the sailor. No, we had
- 02:00 wonderful boxing bouts there and on the port side in the waste was where we had our picture show and we had movies there. The Yanks were very good, they used to give us pretty good. I can always remember one show, Mrs Minerva. All the fellows, we saw it a dozen times, terrific.
- 02:30 But they had some good shows on that too. We had a concert onboard and it was a good concert too. Some Yanks came over, fantastic singers and their band and really good. When we were at Espiritu Santo we had Bob Hope, Arty Shaw
- 03:00 ...who was the other one? Frankie, he came but he could only stay for a short time because something happened somewhere and he was supposed to be there so he only did about two or three items and went. But gee it was fantastic seeing him and listening to him. And Artie Shaw, as I say, he was good.
- 03:30 There was the Andrews Sisters. So you know the Yanks brought them all out and they did a wonderful job. They really lifted everybody. Then we had various Yank comedians and I was never too wrapped
- 04:00 in American comedians but these were good, fantastic. But the concert we had aboard we had the band from the Phoenix or the Boicy, I can't remember which but they came aboard and they had a singer there. I've never heard anything as good as since. He was fantastic.
- 04:30 He was a bit like the fellow that sings Begin the Beguine...What was his name? English bloke, he was in the navy too. But they got sunk and he got killed and I can't think of his name but oh gee this bloke could sing and they wouldn't let him go. The sailors all clapped him and clapped him
- 05:00 and whooped and carried on. They wouldn't let him go, it was well past midnight before the band left us and we were fortunate enough that the officers let their hair down and gave them all a drink, a hard drink. Because they can't get that on their own ship, there was no grog. So the band was very happy when they left and they had had a few wets
- 05:30 and we were happy. But it brought the ships together. Like the Phoenix, remember her? She was given to...When the British had a go at [Argentina]...She was at General Belgrano
- 06:00 and they gave her to, what's the name of the place where they attacked? Falkland Islands. They bought that from the Yanks and she became the General Belgrano but they sunk her, one of the British subs sunk her. The Phoenix, the USS Phoenix and then there was the

- 06:30 Boicy. They had a fantastic band the Boicy. But we made as much fun and frivolity as we could amongst the different ships. Our band used to go over to their ships, they liked our band. They thought they were fantastic because they were playing all the latest stuff too. How they got the music I don't know but they certainly improved
- 07:00 while they were on our ship and we enjoyed it. Especially Sunday afternoon on the quarterdeck when they would play, it was good and a couple of good singers. And we had one singer amongst the crew, he got up and sang and he was pretty spot on. He enjoyed it. And those little
- 07:30 things helped to keep them all together and the fellows were all quite happy, they enjoyed that. But as I say that was in a non-operational area. We couldn't have that when we go up the top. We had to be very careful to keep our eyes skyward. The old radar, she'd pick them up.
- 08:00 It would give us a bit of timely warning. And that's when all your trouble started to arise again. I could never get over that action station, repel aircraft and how it used to effect me. I used to freeze, my stomach used to churn and
- 08:30 you never get accustomed to it. Still it's a lot of years back now. It's fifty-nine years this year that we got smacked first in Leyte. It's a long time isn't it? It's nearly three quarters of a lifetime. But we still enjoy going down and having our memorial.
- 09:00 We hope that when we are not there on this land, in this life, that those ceremonials will be never forgotten and they'll be there and somebody may carry them on, we hope. But it's good to have the fellows there. We got all the Shropshire blokes there, the Arunta and the Warramunga,
- 09:30 The Manoora, The Kanimbla, not so much the Westralia, we haven't got many here but they all congregate here. It's a really good service and then we all go up and have lunch upstairs and have a few wets and start telling a few tales. Our wives are with us, we take them everywhere because they are the main part of our life.
- 10:00 And I think that having this ex-cruisers association has bonded us together. I don't know about the army, they probably do the same and the air force but the naval family are very strong, the naval association, which we all belong to,
- 10:30 very strong indeed. And on Anzac Day we have a special service at Newstead Park down there by the river. It's a terrific service. Then we got up and do the march and they all meet and slap each other on the back and enjoy the day. But
- 11:00 that's what life's all about isn't it? Mateship. If you can keep your mates and I don't think, if I hadn't been in the navy I would have had mates around me like I've got today. They would be acquaintances but these are mates. They'll do anything for you. As a bloke once said, he said, "There's nothing he
- 11:30 he wouldn't do for me and there's nothing I wouldn't do for him" and if we go through our lives doing nothing for each other so much the better. But all in all I was very pleased with my naval career, I enjoyed it.

You spoke earlier about two of the fellas giving you letters because they had a premonition. Did you

12:00 every feel that maybe your luck had run out at all?

Never. No I never experienced that, But Chicka Avery, I went and saw his wife and she was very upset and I gave her the letter and Peg O'Neil's wife, she lives up in Mooloolaba now.

12:30 It's funny how they get a premonition like that, isn't it? It was so real. Chicka sought me out and said, "Here take that and give it to my wife when you get home." I said, "Well where are you going?" He said, "Well I won't be here tomorrow." I said, "Oh you're bloody stupid." "No," he said. "I know. My time's up." And the next day

13:00 in the second attack we had he copped it and it was so strange how a bloke could have a premonition like that. But they're all very strong. Most of the fellows, it was a different ship then. Everybody went about their business but they didn't talk much and

13:30 there was no frivolity and no jokes or anything, it was just sombre. Like six suicide planes is a lot to hit you and it really bought them to their knees. A lot of our officers too. There was Lieutenant Commander Hamer,

14:00 he just passed away not so long ago. He was a terrific fellow and he was in the Victorian Parliament, Hamer, David Hamer. He used to get with us and he'd talk to you man to man, he wasn't an officer. He would just talk to you. But gee the whole ship's company changed

14:30 after all those suicide planes. They just changed all together. Nobody seemed to be any better than anybody else and they just all clubbed together. I've never seen a more sorry looking bunch of blokes. Especially on the way back to Sydney, they'd just sit around and look and

- 15:00 think. They really had their tails down. But I suppose that is to be expected when you go through a hazardous time like that, all January '45 was bad, it was shocking and October '44. The other places,
- 15:30 all the other bombardments that we did there wasn't...Well we never knew about Kamikazes there and we just had attacks there, air attacks and high levels, torpedo bombers, dive bombers but it didn't worry us that much, you know. We didn't have any casualties. But when they started killing a hundred and eighty-six blokes it knocks the stuffing out of you when
- 16:00 you've got eleven hundred men. And the officers going home, were as I said before, they were terrific. They didn't endure us with any unnecessary work or anything. They just let us be and nobody said much to each other and you are sitting, just sitting thinking,
- 16:30 reflect. Thank goodness that is all behind us but it's an experience I'd never want to go through again. But you don't mind ordinary service fighting or ordinary dive-bombers, high level bombers but not the suicide bombers,
- 17:00 he is a morale breaker, he just knocks you right out. I never seen fellows emotionally upset, crying and absolutely at the end of their tether. That's the upper deck fellows. It was alright below decks; they didn't know what was going on so much.
- 17:30 They knew we were being attacked and everything but the upper deck blokes, they copped it. And those fellows on the four-inch, twin four-inch, they all should have had a medal for what they did, every one of them for the work they did. But it wasn't to be, the officers got the medals. But not that you are looking for them but
- 18:00 they did some tremendous work. To see those fellows in action with barrage, barrage, which is quick firing as fast and you can load the gun, it just makes you think, "Well how a man can endure all they can do shoving all those shells in and punching them up into the breech".
- 18:30 Christ, I don't know how they did it. I did four months of it but not in the Philippines. I was on a four-inch for six months and we used to do training all the time and everything but it used to kill me punching those shells in, especially at high angle. You get down and punch it up and you just wear a glove.
- 19:00 And when you punch it right up the breech block comes up and knocks your hand away luckily...That has always worried me. I think I'll get my hand caught but as you punch up the breech block comes up and knocks your hand away and she closes the breech. It had me worried. I thought, "Jesus, I'll lose my bloody hand here".
- 19:30 But I soon got off them and go into the eight-inch.

Can you tell me a little bit more about the psychological impact of Tokyo Rose saying that they were out to get the Aussie and with all those Kamikaze planes coming one after the other?

Yes she had a big effect on us. The fellows used to, they'd turn the tannoy up and we'd hear, "You big fine Australians," she used to say. "We know where you are. We know

- 20:00 you are on the Australia and we're going to get you. We have followed you for a long way and you are a source of annoyance." She said that several times. "We are going to get you." But she spoke beautiful English and she used to come over quite regularly and she used to tell us what was in store for us and about our people back home. She said, "We'll have our troops down there
- 20:30 and they will have to succumb to our way of life and when you come home you'll have to live as we do in Japan." She used to say this and all the blokes used to scream and roar and tell her what to do. But yeah, old Tokyo Rose, she was a very
- 21:00 deafening effect on the men. They'd go around and say, "Do you think she's right?" They'd say, "Oh no, Christ no. They couldn't." She said, "We've got a big surprise for you shortly, a big surprise." And now we know what the big surprise was, it was the suicide planes. We didn't comprehend what
- 21:30 the big surprise could be but we found out and they had that all planned. We were the first ship to be hit, the first allied ship to be hit by Kamikazes and she didn't miss it either. She came in and told us that there was more to follow. But
- 22:00 they knew all our movements. They knew when we were at Hollandia. "Oh you're safe and sound in Seeadler Harbour. You are safe and sound but not for long." She used to go on with all that junk. It was entertaining to listen to. I would love to have had a recorder if we'd had something like that in those days, which
- 22:30 they didn't have, but it would have been good to record all of her messages and broadcasts. And I don't know what ever happened to her. Something happened to her didn't they? They got hold of her didn't they, the Tokyo Rose?

I think she was still active during the Korean War.

Was she? Yeah. She'd

23:00 make a mess there too and those poor fellows. That was a shocking war.

Was there any thought to censoring the broadcasting from Tokyo Rose because of the effect it was having on the men?

Well they did do this. They kept it amongst just a circle of a few officers I think originally until a request was made from the sailors that they wanted to listen to Tokyo Rose because

23:30 we got so many messages from the Yanks. They used to listen to it quite a lot and they used to broadcast it, you could hear it on the ship and we put in a request to have it put over and they did. I think we picked it up from just before we got to Hollandia, she gave us our first message but I think she knew where we were going.

24:00 And I don't know where she got her information from but it must have been good.

Was it more disconcerting because she spoke such good English?

Yes. We considered her a blatant traitor. Nobody ever thought she could be Japanese, which possibly she was, and

24:30 had learned English in America as a lot of the Jap commanders and that all went to school over in America. And we always thought that she was an English person and that made the boys pretty mad. "Why should that bitch be doing this?" But I'm sure she was

25:00 a Japanese girl who spoke perfect English. She got good coverage. She reached right through Malaya and all over there. The blokes on the M boats, they used to cop it too. And she knew exactly what they were doing. So she was well informed.

Did you ever have a visual picture in your head

25:30 **of what she looked like to you?**

Yeah, I did. I always pictured her as having a big crop of hair, plenty of make up on and deep blue eyes or blue eyes. That was always my picture of her and I never ever saw a photo of her but

26:00 that's what I imagine her to be and God knows if I was anywhere near it. She might have been an ugly looking thing. But I imagined her to be quite an attractive woman and who's to know, somebody must know. It never came to light really. I've never seen any books or

26:30 any literature about Tokyo Rose as to what happened to her or what she looked like or where she originated from. We had one of our own blokes down here in Sydney, he was a radio announcer and he was a fifth columnist and he used to do a lot of announcing too against the nation. I won't

27:00 mention his name because it might be detrimental to air if I did. But yeah his trial came after the war, you probably know who he was and he was found guilty. And as I say I think he was the one that rattled on the Centaur

27:30 carrying arms. But then all the stories go round and you only believe what you hear and whether it's authentic or not God knows. But one day I would like to find out about Tokyo Rose, somebody must know.

So when the fellows all sat around and talked about her what sort of things did

28:00 **they say?**

Oh terrible things, terrible things. They used to shout out things that she should do and what they should do to her and oh yeah they really used to blaspheme pretty heavily about her, poor old Tokyo Rose. If she ever got to hear it she might have

28:30 been a bit upset because they were pretty bad words. And rightly so because she was a real bitch apparently, the way she did this. She upset the morale. She had a great habit of upsetting morale and I think we could have done without her. Used to break in over,

29:00 they'd be playing some music and she'd break in, "Where are you fellows now? We know where you are". And then she'd go, she'd tell you all about it. And then she'd talk about the American ships. She didn't like Admiral [W.F.] Halsey [Pacific carrier fleet commander]. She didn't like him. She was very adamant about Halsey

29:30 and she didn't like the Australia's participation in this: "If you've have been good people and stayed at home we possibly wouldn't have come near you but we are coming down." The boys didn't like that. They used to get very upset about that. They had visions

30:00 of having an invasion force and when they bombed Darwin they thought that was just a preview to what was going to happen. It wouldn't have taken many men to land on Australia and infiltrate, it wouldn't

have taken them long. But they didn't, thank God.

- 30:30 I think the Coral Sea battle gave them ideas not to travel any further than Port Moresby, which they wanted to get to. That admiral, by the way, was sent straight back to Japan and severely reprimanded and was reduced in rank and was kept over there and never went to sea again.
- 31:00 He turned back, he thought we were an aircraft carrier and the weather was shocking, reconnaissance was hard, heavy weather, cloud, and when they saw our fleet, the three of us, they thought we were an aircraft carrier from the distance they were and they told him and he said, "Right well we'll turn back". Had they
- 31:30 come down we would have been annihilated. They had more ships than we did. That was the Jomard Passage. And well it was fortunate for us that he peeked it. The same as the fellow in Guadalcanal. If he'd come on and got stuck into us and Hobart
- 32:00 whilst we were looking after the transports he would have annihilated the lot of us but he peeked it. He said that there were too many aircraft carriers standing out to sea and the next morning they would bomb them and they wanted to get out of it so they turned and went. God. We wouldn't have been here I don't reckon if they would have stayed there because their firepower was fantastic.
- 32:30 And that's all gone by the board but we were fortunate in two cases where they turned back and each admiral was severely reprimanded for doing what they did. Because they could have saved Tulagi and the landings by wiping out that whole transport and all those soldiers that hadn't gone ashore.
- 33:00 They were still there cooped up in the boats and they could have wiped them out. So we've got to be thankful that they went about and gave it away. And that about pulls me up I think. I
- 33:30 don't think there is too much more I can say in relation to my association with the navy which I enjoyed very much and didn't enjoy but overall meeting all the mates and a lot of the fellows I lost and left behind, I still think of them
- 34:00 and we do every Anzac Day and every memorial day we think of them and it is very sombre and solemn to us. Fifty-nine years on it's not bad to get the fellows together. And when we travel down to Mildura next march it's going to be quite good again because we'll
- 34:30 all be back slapping and talking and wondering whether we'll see each other again and two years after that. But I think this reunion at Mildura will pull it up I think, it will be the last. We've got to coach it down from here and it should be good. We've got a whole heap of videos to show on the way down,
- 35:00 R rated and God knows what.

When the Aussie came into Sydney Harbour for the last time and all the men were on deck were you dressed in your number one's that time?

We were dressed for entering harbour, yes. We all lined the upper deck but there was no one to say g'day, only the Manly ferry. Nobody saw us come in and we went right up to

- 35:30 the Number One Buoy up near where the opera house is now, right up to the man of steps there, right up there before they twigged who we were because we had all fallen in with our ordinary gear on. As we went past GI [Garden Island] they gave three rousing
- 36:00 cheers and HMAS Watson did too, up on the south head, they gave us a cheer. But that was the only welcome we had because nothing was said. Nothing came out in the papers about us being hit so many times. They said in the paper about
- 36:30 the Captain Dechaineux being killed at Leyte when we took MacArthur back but nothing more was said, they kept quiet. Like when the Lexington was sunk in the Coral Sea. All the survivors - I only found out when they came out here six months ago, the survivors came to Brisbane for the
- 37:00 Coral Sea day - I said to Eugene, "Where the hell did you fellas go to, all you survivors?" He said, "We went to New Caledonia, to Noumea, we got put on a great big transport ship and we got hustled off to Santiago and locked up so that nobody could tell anybody that the Lexington had been sunk". She was there
- 37:30 and then as far as the Japs were concerned she hadn't gone because they didn't sink her, she blew up from internal trouble. Some silly bugger started a generator up when there was petrol everywhere and the spark went and boom, up she went. So they took them to Santiago and it was something like
- 38:00 two or three weeks after they got there that they allowed them to go out and they made the press statement. But they didn't want the Yanks to know because [the Battle of] Midway was coming up and they didn't want the Japs to know that we had lost one of our biggest carriers, which would make it pretty bad at Midway. But fortunately
- 38:30 the Japs lost all their carriers at Midway. They got a hiding, a big hiding. It was the turning point of the

war. And they all came from Pearl Harbor, patched up ships and God knows what from Guadalcanal and they didn't know about the Lexington and nor did I. I thought they had just

39:00 shuffled the survivors back to Pearl Harbor and then just get them on another ship or send them back home, but no they locked them up so they couldn't tell the world or tell anybody, even their own kin, they couldn't tell them that they had been destroyed and sunk. And it was a smart move on the Yanks part I thought

39:30 because the Japs had no idea that the Lexington had gone and they were surprised.

Tape 9

00:31 **Earlier you spoke about the ship builders and dockers on strike. Can you tell us about that?**

Yes, unfortunately there was a lot of strikes when the Hobart was being refitted, repaired. We were down there one time having a refit and they all walked out on a strike.

01:00 We got out, we got underway - they came back to work, and we still had them onboard when we set sail. We got out through the heads and they were screaming and carrying on and we were heading north. We let them off, a tug came out of Brisbane and picked them up and they went on strike after that. We were heading up north and we brought them up with us, all these

01:30 workman. Jesus, talk about whinging, holy sailor. Of course the blokes were putting all the fear up them and saying, "Keep your life jacket close to you. The subs will get us on the way up for sure." And they were terrified but this tug came out and got them and took them back to Sydney. As soon as they got back, down tools because we shouldn't have

02:00 sailed out with them but our skipper said, "We can't stop, we're going". He didn't muck about. He gave them good quarters onboard and good food and everything but they just...I felt sorry for the Hobart because she was eighteen months nearly out of commission and she was a terrific ship the Hobart and had a good history over in the Med.

02:30 It was a shame to see them hold her up like that. But twice we were down there getting repaired or something and twice we had strikes, they just walked off the job and left us. The second time, the big one, they cleared Garden Island, just walked out and they said it was caused by the fifth column. They

03:00 were in with the strikers and they caused the strike. But gee our blokes were mad. Holy sailor, they were mad. If they had got to them but I reckoned they'd have gone mad if they'd gone back to Australia and got into them.

How did it make you feel?

Well very downhearted

03:30 to think that we weren't getting the backing from those fellows down there. And the painters and dockers and ship builders had no regard whatsoever for any of us up there, they just waked off the job. Some shocking letters were sent back but I think most of them got censored before they arrived back there. Some wrote to the

04:00 radio stations but I think they were censored.

You've spoken very passionately about the Australia, your relationship with the Australia. Can you tell me about that relationship with a sailor and the ship they are on?

Yes, a ship becomes part of you. It's rather strange that you hear people saying, "I love that ship." But

04:30 it just becomes part of you and that's your home. You are honed into that ship and it's from the training, severe training, that you become completely engrossed in everything that you do in that ship. You want the ship to survive and nobody can say a word about it.

05:00 If they run it down like you'd fight them forever if they ran it down, which sometimes happened. We were back in Sydney one time and we went up to the NAAFI [Navy Army Air Force Institute] Club where the Pommies were and, "That bloody old crate." Well that was it. There was two hundred and fifty people in that brawl and they cleared opposite Town Hall there and they rolled cars over and it was a terrific blue there, we all got stuck into these Pommies. I will never forget it.

05:30 Quite a lot of us were taken in the paddy wagon, taken back. That's because they ran our ship down and the boys wouldn't cop it. You do get a love for a ship because you know every part of it, you know what it can do, and you know that it's your home and

06:00 you've got to look after it, you've got to keep it clean and you've got to have it at fighting efficiency. And she was one of the most efficient fighting ships in the RAN. I know a lot of people say something against that but she was. She was one of the most proficient fighting ships in the RAN and she proved it, she

06:30 never shirked on a job even though she was hit.

Can you tell me about any superstitions that might have been common amongst sailors?

Yes. Superstitions of flying an admirals flag, they weren't real wrapped in that, they wanted that down. They wanted our battle flag to fly

07:00 there. We used to fly the battle flag when we went into action. We had the ensign and then the battle flag was the Australian flag. We wanted that flying rather than...Because they were superstitious about it and we finally proved that up at Lingayen and they singled us out. They wanted the three stackers, that's

07:30 what they wanted, The Shropshire and us. But they missed her and got us. Another superstition was joining up with Yankee cruisers and they thought that if we...A lot of sailors thought that we

08:00 always should lead. They were a bit one eyed there. They thought that the Aussie having the flag, should lead the ships and if we ever getting behind three or four cruisers or in amongst the fleet some of the sailors were very superstitious and said,

08:30 "Well this is a bad omen, this can be trouble". That's the only time they used to go crook about the Yanks. They didn't like us being pushed back into the ranks a bit. But I suppose their fleet knew what they were doing. But they thought our admiral was the best thing that ever happened to them.

09:00 He was terrific and when [Rear-Admiral] Crutchley left us Farncombe came back. He went over to England and did the big landing over there on a big cruiser and he came back. He became commodore on our ship and took over the flag. The boys were happy. He was back.

09:30 Although he didn't have that overpowering power that he had when he was captain of the ship but he was overseer of the lot. But everybody what happy that Farncombe was back. And then we had John Collins who came off the Sydney. He was wounded at Leyte

10:00 and we always thought it wasn't a bad wound but he was taken down to his cabin and they brought along a glass of orange juice or something and he told them to take that away, he'd never drink that and he wanted something else. Then his brother who was a journalist on the Women's Weekly, he came on board and wrote John Collins up something terrific. So from there on

10:30 he wasn't Commodore Collins, he was Women's Weekly Collins. That's what they used to call him. But they carried him off onto another ship. He wasn't severely wounded but he was wounded. He was lucky to make it the way he was up on the bridge.

Going back can you recall the

11:00 **announcement of war breaking out?**

With Japan?

With Germany?

With Germany. Yes, I can recall that. I was in the Queensland Aero Club, I was just about to knock off work and Brunkhurst called me in. He said, "Come and listen to this Bob." And the mechanics, everybody we all went in.

11:30 They said, "War has been declared" and the whole place just went like that, you know? A feeling just went over the whole place. Some of them said, "Well it's the army for me". Another bloke said, "I'll join the air force." Anyway we all went home that night with all sombre moods that

12:00 war had been declared and it just made us a little bit different. Our lives were different, we could feel it. I think that was on my mind from then on that I wanted to get in. But I was too young then, they wouldn't take me.

What about Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war with Japan?

'41, December.

12:30 I was in the navy then and I was down in Melbourne at Flinders [naval base] training and they announced it and we were having divisions and they announced it. They said that America is now at war with Japan and the murmur that went

13:00 through the troops and they thought, "This is it." And then the drafts came then. There was blokes getting drafted everywhere as soon as that appeared because they had to step up surveillance on the east coast and the west coast, convoys to be run and then it was some time

13:30 in '41 or early '42 when the Chicago came into Brisbane. It was the first warship and they all cheered her all up the river. I was home on leave that week and they cheered her as she came up. It was spontaneous the way they welcomed her. And

14:00 she came in and all the Yanks went ashore and all the girls were happy and so it went on but I can remember that, that was just after Pearl Harbor. But it put a whole different attitude on all the soldiers down in Flinders when the Yanks came in. As much as to say, "This is it". But we did expect the Japanese to do something

14:30 in Australia and quickly.

Can you recall hearing about the attacks on Darwin?

Yes. We got first hand knowledge of that. We were up near Cape York just cruising around up there when we heard about that and we were sent to action stations straight away because they

15:00 expected that aircraft carrier to come to through the Arafura Sea and up into the top of Australia. They fully expected it. In fact our commander told us that that was quite on the cards that the Australia would be attacked in Darwin and Cape York. But luckily they didn't come up there. They just showed their prowess there after they sank a few,

15:30 The Hermes, the aircraft carrier, they sank her in the Indian Ocean and they cleaned up a few. But they were devastating, those.

Can you tell us about the old saying, "A girl in every port?"

Well it's an age-old tradition. I think it's one that

16:00 went back into the Royal Navy where it originated from. You did have a certain one wherever you went; Fremantle, Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane. You always had someone to get in touch with or someone you would ring you up or come down and meet you and I suppose it gets its name from that but...

16:30 oh they were a funny bunch of sailors. They go ashore and they want a square straight away, a few beers and a square. And as I say they don't know how long they are going to be afloat so they think a good time is a good time. A girl in every port well it's just

17:00 synonymous with the navy. I think it originated from the British navy. I think they were pretty good.

What was the language like on the ship?

Not foul, it wasn't foul. The language was quite good. Not much swearing at all. You hear more swearing today

17:30 than you would then. They didn't get around upsetting people and calling them this and calling them that. It just didn't happen. There wasn't the blues on the ship that one would expect. All different blokes, lawyers, professional men and God knows what all living together but

18:00 it didn't eventuate. They just toned in with each other and the language was nil.

What could you actually see from some of the different guns when you were in action on the boat during an air raid?

What could you see? I couldn't see much in the eight-inch turret but when I was up on top of the turret, on the Oerlikon, I could see a lot then.

18:30 You could see all the planes buzzing around you, all our four-inch going flat to the chat, pompoms, Oerlikons, Bofors [guns] all chattering away going for their life and ack ack all over the place. Just a continual stream of tracers.

19:00 It was frightening to look at. You shouldn't look at it. I was there looking after the gun, I wasn't the captain of the gun. Another bloke was in the harness, Kenny Bucklaw was in the harness. They had a loading number but she was having a bit of trouble, every so often she would jam. That was my job, to find out why, which we found out. It was

19:30 only a little... what do you call it? I can't think of the name of the damn thing now but it was worn, like a little lever, but it was worn and replaced that and it was alright after that. But frightening. When I was back in the turret I was much happier, I couldn't

20:00 see what was going on. But those fellows on the four inch, it must have been frightening for them. Because once they fire their last shell and it's fit to explode at two thousand or three thousand yards, it will explode and the planes will come in within that area, they can't fire again because they couldn't hit them directly.

20:30 And they just have to back off and get out of the way and hope to God that the plane didn't hit them, which it did on P2. It came right on top of them and killed everybody bar one or two I think. Their lives on the four inch twins were in jeopardy all the time and so the

21:00 and so the smaller arms but the four-inch mainly.

Earlier you spoke about the HMAS Perth sinking [sunk 1 March 1942].

Yes, in the Sunda Straits. She was with the USS Houston. They were making a dash, I can't think of the place they had just left and they were making a dash and they came across these...I think they were destroyers first

21:30 and then the cruisers over in the view and that became a night action and they really pelted them. I think the Perth had a few good hits on cruisers and destroyers but it was overwhelming. They just couldn't hold it and they finished up putting the fish into her and torpedoes and she copped that much shell that

22:00 it was abandon ship and the Houston, she lasted a little bit longer and then she went too and they were all in the water and they got picked up and taken ashore and prisoner of war.

What sort of influence has your experience in the navy and the war had on the rest of your life?

Well it's had a big influence in my

22:30 life because before the war I had a 'devil may care' and 'I don't care much about this and that' but since the war I've always strived to keep a level head and not do anything stupid. Try and get on with my life and with the family and bring them up in a decent way.

23:00 And always remembering that but for the grace of God there go I. A lot of my mates departed and finished and I thought, "Well I'm lucky and I'm going to make something of my life". And I thought, "Well I can't do any better than just to tow the line and don't

23:30 do anything stupid or rash and get yourself into trouble with anybody or the police or the law in general". I got made a JP [Justice of the Peace] and I was a JP for a long long while and I'm still on the books. I don't know why, I thought I'd be off by now. I've had a good

24:00 life. I've never had anything against me. I've held two licences in a hotel which you've got to be fairly clean to hold and you've got to be clean. They take you right before the lot, you know. And that's always been my aim, is to do the right thing. And

24:30 I think it's the influence of the navy that helped me to do this. Discipline being one of the big sources. I think if we had more discipline now we wouldn't have all this trouble we are having. But still.

When your son took you up flying in New Guinea did you happen to fly over any of the old wrecks?

Yeah.

25:00 He took us up to one mountain near Mount Hagen and there was a DC3 up there still with the people in it. Up sitting right on top of this mountain and it wasn't negotiable to go up. And he flew us around there and showed us the mountain. It was pretty high up. We didn't get right up to it but he showed us where the plane

25:30 was, you could just see it. But there was a couple of others... What's the name of the other place? Wewak. We flew over that and he showed us an airfield there that had all the planes strewn on it that crash landed.

26:00 But it was quite interesting. He showed us a lot of places in the Markham Valley and all through there. He took us through the slot. That's going from the southern side of New Guinea and you can go through the slot and you can't pass another plane. You've got to find if anybody's in there because you can't turn round.

26:30 All you can do is go up and go down. And he kept calling to see whether anybody is there. It brings you straight out over the Markham Valley and you can go straight and land in Lae.

When you were a young fellow you said you went up in the plane - I can't remember what sort of aircraft it was - to look out for sharks. What was the method given if you had of seen a shark back then?

You wagged your wings

27:00 to draw their attention and you'd go down low over the shark. That was in a Taylor Cub. It was a little high winged monoplane with just a small motor, twin cylinders sticking out of it. You sit there and Jerry the pilot, he sits behind you and that's all that fits in there. It was a terrific little thing.

27:30 It only did about eighty five knots and we used to go down and look for sharks on the Red Cross day when they were all down swimming at Redcliffe in those days. They didn't travel to the coast, they went there.

You said you went to quite a few schools, six or seven schools. How hard was that for you changing schools all the time?

Very hard. Yeah, very hard.

- 28:00 I went to two schools in Rockhampton, the one at Bersica. The school I went to in Bersica we had a teacher O'Sullivan, a big red headed Irishman, vicious bloke and he hit me with this duster and knocked all my eye, blackened my eye. I got home that night and Dad wanted to know
- 28:30 what happened and I told him. The next morning he was up there and he got to the principal and he said, "My son's out of the school but before I go Mr O'Sullivan, I want you." He called him over the the principal's office and bang and he clobbered him and down the stairs he went. Oh dear, it was close. Anyway you couldn't do that today.
- 29:00 So he took me and I went to the Park Avenue School after that and then up in Townsville, I went to two schools there. One right on the water's edge, I can't think of the name of that one. And then we came back to Bundaberg and I
- 29:30 went to one school there and back to Brisbane and we went to Greenslopes State School, Dutton Park State School, South Brisbane Intermediate, then we choofed up to Glamorganvale, went to that one then to Marburg and went to that one and it was pretty full on like
- 30:00 different teachings. Marburg I liked because we used to do a lot of woodwork there, which was good, and a lot of farming work. We used to get out and do a lot of farming. Yeah, it was pretty grim. I came back to Brisbane and finished up at South Brisbane Intermediate and high school down there and that's when I gave it away when I was sixteen.
- 30:30 And I finished up working at the aero club, which I enjoyed. It was a fantastic job. I really enjoyed that. It was something different every day. You get to know the aircraft, you get them out and VHURL was my favourite one, she was a big Gypsy Major engine.
- 31:00 She was a beautiful aircraft and she'd kick every time. First start and boom and she'd go. The others were a bit sluggish but I enjoyed that job.

Was there ever any thought when you got out of the navy of going back into aviation?

No. I had no qualms what so ever of going back to the aero. I felt that

- 31:30 going into a Hotel was my best job because I liked the hotel work and when I went out to Englewood it just became second nature to me, I enjoyed it. We had three pubs there.
- 32:00 One was the station pub but it supported us. We had the tobacco growers there, they were good. I used to go out into the Italians houses and have big feasts. The vino, it was very good. They used to put on fantastic food. A great big table with all these Italians and I used to take my McWilliams wines along.
- 32:30 Oh dear, and they'd have their own vino. But they were great people and the tobacco growing industry was very good then. It's died out since. I meet some of them now and then, occasionally I run across a few. They were growing tobacco up there just
- 33:00 on the sunshine coast. And one of the blokes is still up there, he is a bit ancient now but his family are up there and they grow tobacco. So that was my life. I didn't feel that I wanted to go into the air force or go into flying. I never got my restricted licence or unrestricted but I used to
- 33:30 fly them and I used to get a ride in all the decent aircraft. The air force, they had...what was the name of it? It was a fantastic aircraft, a big silver motor on it... I can't think of the name of it. Anyway I had a few trips in that. They took
- 34:00 me up in it and it didn't tempt me at all. I wasn't wrapped in the air force but I suppose if I had been apprenticed to aeronautical engineering I probably would have changed my mind and I would have finished up in the air force and been a ...
- 34:30 what do they call the air force blokes? It used to be the Prime Minister's home... They called them somebody's fairies, I forget who it was. That's what they used to call the air force blokes.

Back when you were a child and it's the depression in Brisbane, were you aware of the Depression and

and it's effects on people?

Well we were aware of it because we didn't have a lot to put on our plate and no toys or anything like that. I couldn't join the cubs because they couldn't afford to deck me out for the cubs. So yeah,

- 35:30 it did have an effect on us. I know I used to try and sell papers on the corner as young as I was to get a few pence together to try and get a bike. And I used to do some gardening for the elderly people next door and it was pretty grim for my Dad and my Mum.
- 36:00 They were flat out making ends meet. And we were renting of course, we didn't own a home. And that's when we choofed off down to Kingston, living amongst the blackfellows. They had a big camp not far from us. And Mrs O'Donohue, she lived in between us and she used to feed the black fellows and

- 36:30 they did work for her and all that sort of thing. But Kingston was a real eye opener to us because we had a natural living there. We had our own beehives, we used to grow vegetables and we used to get the butter from the butter board on the house because my Mum used to scrub the kitchen out every
- 37:00 morning and the meat, Mrs O'Donohue, her son was about two miles away and he had cattle and sheep and he used to kill and we get meat so we got by in those days. It wasn't easy but we didn't miss it because it was natural, everybody seemed to be in the same boat.
- 37:30 Oh I was just saying to Maureen, I bought some plum jam and we are having plum jam and it reminds me of the big tins of plum jam that my Mum used to get and that would last us for months. There was no used by dates in things in those days. You didn't look at it and say, "That's out of date." We had plenty of milk , we had plenty of eggs and that made the difference. It made
- 38:00 good living for us, we enjoyed it. Then old Deleaper, an old Indian bloke, he found gold down there and so my Dad went to work for him on the weekends, digging and looking for gold. They found a little bit but I don't think it was much. It was
- 38:30 not long after that that the one he was working in caved in and took him with it. He got buried. It caved in so I was glad the old man wasn't there. But he used to work up in the woollen mills all the week and come home on a weekend. He had the old horse and the cart and he went around selling vegetables. Good old days
- 39:00 but hard days. And no fridges or anything like that. You had a meat safe and put your meat in there. You had a butter cooler and you'd keep those things and milk, well we had worries about that because we had two cows and Mum used to milk them but they were good days.
- 39:30 We didn't look for things like people do today. You've got to have two of everything; two fridges, two cars, you know, you've got to have everything and they put things on the never never. We never did. My Dad never did. He never entered the never never. If he couldn't afford it we never had it. And he instilled that in me too. I've never borrowed money and paid anything off.
- 40:00 If I couldn't pay for it I wouldn't have it. We owned this place. We don't have to pay any mortgage or anything. We are completely unencumbered and that's the way I wanted it to be.

Excellent.

INTERVIEW ENDS