Australians at War Film Archive

Douglas Warth (Doug) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:37 My name is Douglas Warth. I was born in Lincolnshire in the UK [United Kingdom] in a little coastal town called Wainfleet [300km north-east of London]. And I remember very clearly how very cold it was always, and I was always hungry.

01:00 The reason it was so cold was the easterly wind that used to come in from Siberia [Russia] and there was no trees or hedges to stop the cold coming through. And I was always shivering and always very cold and always hungry. I was not very happy with the situation at home because we were a big family of eight of us, and mother and father made 10.

01:30 We lived in one of grandmother's houses, because father, before the Great War [World War I], he was into corn, coal and sugar beet merchants. And we used to cart this all over the railways to the Midlands and so forth. This didn't appeal to me somehow. I was never very happy being there. The people were hard and a bit callous and, no doubt, due to

02:00 the hard and cold weather. And in any case a lot of us were known to have originated from the Vikings. And the Vikings are a rather, enough said, I think, about the Vikings. However, I wondered what I was going to do with my life, because it didn't seem that there was much going on except for farm labouring and I got very despondent wondering what the heck I could do, until I got a job

02:30 on a boating lake about five miles [away], which I used to cycle every day [to] and back again. And I got this job and I found that I was attracted to the water. It was a very big boating lake and I used to be able to manoeuvre these little eight-foot dinghies with no trouble at all. And got on very well and was told very early on the, if I wished, this would be the job for life. And it was a council job. The thing was that in the

03:00 winter, I would have to cycle along these glassy roads, on a bicycle, and it was, I knew it wasn't going to work. It would be all right in the summer, but not in the winter. And the boating lake was open all the year round. Eventually, I was desperate to know what to do and then I saw a big sign, and this would be in the early part of 1938, and it said 'Join the navy and see the

03:30 world'. And I thought to myself, "That's it. That's what I want to do, I wanna see the world." And so I wondered, "How can I get into the navy?" And so, [I] had a beautiful grandmother, she was an angel to me, and very wise and took [away] all my worries and concerns. And I went to see her and after

04:00 a little conversation I said to grandmother, "Grandmother, what would you think if I was to join the navy?" And she looked at me straight in the eye and she said, "I think it would be a very fine thing." And so I said, "Will you speak to father about it?" And she said, "Yes, I will." So nothing happened for about three weeks and then, we were always taught to stand behind our chairs at meal times,

04:30 and then when mother and father sat down, we could sit down, after grace, and, having sat down, he looked straight at me, "Now, what's all this silliness about you wanting to join the navy?" And I said, "Well, I do." He said, "You're a skinny little kid. You wouldn't survive the navy routine. You can forget about it." And so, I was really upset, went back to grandmother

05:00 and she said, "Leave it to me. I'll speak to my son again." And so, she did. And he still said, "I want you to forget about joining the navy. Because you wouldn't get in anyhow. Your education isn't up to it and you're physically not up to it. And you're always hungry." And so after that I thought, "I don't know how I'm gonna get round

05:30 this." And then one night, after the main meal, he said to me, "Come into my room." Cause he had his own private room. "Come into my room, I want to speak to you. Now, about this navy thing, do you know that you'll have to sign on for 15 years and if you don't like the navy, we can't get you out and it's gonna be rigorous training. But I don't think you'll pass. But, if

06:00 you really want to go ahead, we'll see what we can do. I happen to know the recruiting officer." And so

he saw the recruiting officer. He said, “What we need to do is give him an examination.” So they gave me an examination and I made silly mistakes, I wasn’t very well schooled. Our school was awful and cold. And I didn’t do very well at all. And I heard him say to my

06:30 father, “I can't understand your son. He’s missed out little words and then when the difficult ones, like foreign, he spells foreign quite easily. I think he’s a bit nervous. So I’m gonna pass him.” I was elated. I wondered what the next move was. And I waited and waited and people said, “I thought you was going into the navy? Won’t they have you now?” And that kind of jibing [teasing]. And [I] desperately

07:00 wanted to go. And the main thing then was to have a medical in the Midlands in a place called Derbyshire. And what we had to do was to meet the, I remember mother being on the platform waving me goodbye and crying. I was all alone in this compartment and [the] realisation seemed to hit me and I thought to myself, “I wonder if father’s right?” Because he said, “If things don’t go right, don’t come

07:30 crying to me. I’ve told you now. You’ll have to grin and bear it.” And, so, finally got to where they told me. I’d never left Wainfleet before. And as a little kid I used to stand on the railway bridge where the trains went under and I’d watch the trains go by and I used to wonder where that line went to. And I thought, “I must walk that line one day to find out where it is.” However, going for my final medical

08:00 examination I discovered where it was. And I couldn’t understand how the rail lines closed in the further they were away. And all these things were happening in my mind and, finally, I had to report to the chief (UNCLEAR) [recruiting] officer under the big clock in Derbyshire city. And having met other boys that were waiting too, we all then went

08:30 and had a meal and then we went to have this medical examination. And we were taken in by our surnames. And since mine was Warth, I was one of the few of the last to go in. So they were coming out weeping and this was desperate for me, so I went in and he said, “What’s your name, boy?” And I said, “It’s Jean Warth.”

09:00 He said, “Jean? You can't have a name like that in the navy. What other names have you got?” I said, “Douglas.” He said, “Your name is Douglas, all right? Now get on those scales.” I stood on the scales. I weighed not very much at all. I was underweight. And then he brought down a slide on the top of my head, and he said, “Stand up, boy. Stand up.” So I stood up as much as I could and he looked at me

09:30 in the eyes and said, “You’re under-sized, you’ve got to be five-feet tall. You’re only four-feet eleven [inches].” And I looked at him and said, “Oh sir, oh please, sir.” And he smacked me across the face and said, “Go on. You’ll grow.” And so I thought, “That’s marvellous, I’m in. I’ve done all I’ve wanted to do. Now I’m in the navy.” And from there we went straight on to this training ship. It was known as HMS Ganges [a shore-based training establishment at Falmouth].

10:00 At any one given time, there was 2000 boys, all from (UNCLEAR), broken homes, romantics and people wanting adventure. And they were tough. Way above me. I was quite small compared to most of them. However, we joined the Ganges and we were immediately pounced upon. And when I say pounced, everything was done

10:30 immediate. No questions asked. And their voice, they kind of, with their voice they seemed to, that authority you would jump to it straight away. And this was done in an annex which was separate from the main ship. And after about a month there, being knocked into shape, I remember, you can imagine me joining the navy in the winter of February 1939,

11:00 in the morning at 6 o'clock we all had to strip off in the fog. You could hardly see the guys around you because of the fog. And I though, “Taking my shirt off? We will catch our death of cold.” And all this now was to make you strong and fit. And then after that we had to climb this mast, which was about 143 feet high. And that, to the first rung of ladders, the marine used to

11:30 bang a drum. And on every beat of the drum you got hold of the rigging with your left arm and your right leg, and that was two for yourself and you had two for the navy. So on the next step it was the opposite. And then as the beat of the drum went faster, we had to climb faster. And then we got to what we called the ‘Devil’s Elbow’, and this was up the rigging and then the rigging went like this onto a big shelf and we had to climb backwards.

12:00 And some of us were hanging with our legs and, in fear of dropping, we just held on, because there was a big wire net and it was the big joke that if you did fall you’d finish up like pineapple chunks. And so we hung on like grim death and, finally, got our elbows onto the shelf and got on, and the next step was to go up to the half-moon. And it was a platform like a half-moon. That was about, let’s see, the Devil’s Elbow was about 80

12:30 feet and then the half-moon would be another 45 feet, and then after that there was just an ordinary pole with a big button on the top. And you got to swarm up that. And on top of that was a lightning conductor shaped like a question mark. And having got hold of that, pulled yourself up, you then had to stand on the button, put your legs around the conductor, put your arms out sideways and call out

13:00 your name and official number. And invariably the officer down below said, “Can’t hear you!” Well, he could, of course. Shout out louder. And we were all shaking like this. And the thing, you could feel it swaying and I thought, “Oh my God. And my father said ‘don’t come crying to me’.” It all came back.

However, I got quite proficient at this. I was very, very active, always very active. And then the next thing we had to do was

13:30 we had to have a haircut.

Did you ever see any lads fall off?

Yes, we did. In fear. And their heart wasn't in it. They did it deliberately to try and get out of the navy. And because we weren't allowed to wear rings watches, knives of any sort. And not allowed to smoke, which we did. Anyhow, after that,

14:00 the hairdresser. And straight from the back, straight over the top. And I remember one guy was fair headed with wrinkles and he had beautiful hair and he said, "I'll have a little bit off the sides and a little bit off the back, please." And the marine, he was an ex-marine, he said, "Oh, will you?" Grabbing his head at the top and straight over the top he went. And we daren't say a word. Silence had to remain there, because he was a big bluff fellow who said, "Shut up" and that was,

14:30 we had to shut up. Couldn't talk. The next thing was the dentist. I remember, I had some big back teeth which needed filling. And no anaesthesia, whatsoever, and I remember going down in the chair as he was drilling and it was really awful. And he kept saying, "Put your hands down, boy. Open your mouth wider, boy." And he was an absolute terror. And I managed to have four sessions with him and I thought, "Oh my God."

15:00 And then we were injected for various things. I don't know what, but it made us very sick. And the only place we could get warm was in a drying room. It would be about twice the size of this lounge and it had blasting air coming in, warm. And we used to go in there to get warm. And I then broke down and cried. And my father said, "Don't come crying to me. I've told you what it's gonna be like. Now you get on with it."

15:30 And so I resigned myself and said, "Right. No more of this silliness. I'm not gonna break down any more." But I realised later that it was the injections that made us very low. And finally the instructor said, "Tomorrow morning, 7 o'clock, gym followed by the mast." We went into the gym and, immediately, I was so impressed with the physical training instructors.

16:00 They had beautiful physiques, they were clipped in the short haircut and I looked at these guys and their ability on ground work: back somersaults, front somersaults, high boxes somersaults. And I watched these characters and I thought, "Oh, my God." And it sounds incredible but I said, "That's what I wanna be." And so I thought, "How does one go about this?" I got down at the gym and I was excelling in certain ground works

16:30 and coming croppers, and coming down and having another go. And the instructors seemed different to the other instructors, they smiled and laughed and joked with you. At the same time you respected them and you stood your distance. But they were beautiful specimens and I thought, "How can a little tick [small parasite] like me become one of these? Well, I'm gonna try." And so I did. And got well-known down there. And then I was called in to do

17:00 some boxing and I was shown how to move, how to get in and out of distance, how to hit. And this was done by numbers with an opponent and then you changed over. And then you went through it in full time. And I became very good, so I was selected for the boys boxing team, and as a bantam weight. And I met some very tough young kid opponents.

17:30 They really were tough. And they hammered me and I hammered them and this is how it was. And as a break from this the instructors used to say, "All right, we'll now have some mill-boxing." And what they did, they blindfolded you, they put you in the ring with several others and the instructors had a boxing glove and they'd push it in your face, you'd think it was someone else so you started lashing

18:00 out, and he'd hit you at the back of the neck and you'd turn around and sometimes you connected with others that connected with you. It was slaughter.

Was there method to the madness or was he just toying with you?

It was to toughen you up. Because at that stage of time, this is a notorious place, it was a concentration camp, really. They concentrated on you, but in no time at all they knocked us into shape. And I remember the

18:30 rifles they gave us. After walking and walking slow time, walking in ceremonial time, and then they gave us a rifle and an 18-inch bayonet. The rifle weighed eight pounds, 10 and a half ounces and it stood as big as me. And I was at the order of the arms, and we had several moves we had to do while walking. We'd have to bring it to the slope, and then across here as we walked. Then we had to turn directions.

19:00 And it was parade ground, parade ground, parade ground, followed by the mast, followed by the gym, followed by swimming. The swimming was very important, because what they taught you to do was the jump with your knees up from a 13-foot board into the water, and you were clad in a duck-suit. And this duck-suit was made with heavy canvas. Invariably the length of the legs was so long that the waist went down and got around your legs, and

19:30 you went under the water. And if you did, the swimming instructor had a long pole and he'd give it to you and pull it away, give it to you and there you was, taking in water, and, finally, he'd give you a punch in your stomach with this and then he'd say, "All right, you'll do it all again." So this encouraged you to quickly tie yourself up properly, turn your things up if you could, and then having dived, jumped off this board, you then had to swim

20:00 six lengths of the bath [pool], up and down. And it was a very long bath. And some collapsed in the middle of it, others wanted to get out of the navy, so they tried not becoming passed. Because before you went to sea, you had to be a swimmer. And, yes, that was pretty traumatic. And then finally things went on and I began to get confident and we then was going to get another instructor. And they

20:30 heard about this instructor, he was the youngest instructor in the British navy and he was a gunnery instructor. And these gunnery instructors were real severe disciplinarians and they would really put you through it. And they, in turn, went through it at a place called Whale Island, which is the gunnery school [HMS Excellent Gunnery School at Portsmouth]. And their training there was absolutely brutal. And

21:00 because of their training, we got it in the neck later on. But it certainly did the trick and we were...

The lads that wanted to get thrown out of the navy, were they successful in their attempts?

No, no, no. What they did to show them up; they made them wear a special round floppy hat. And they were always known as 'skates'. If you was a bad lad, you was a 'bloody skate'. And

21:30 these poor devils had to wear this hat. And I'll tell you how desperate it was, in our boots, the metal tab on the laces, they used to hammer it out and cut their wrists and cut their throat with it to try and get out. And some used to try putting the chain from the toilets round their neck and they'd hang there with it. There was no actual suicides as such, but it was an attempt on suicide, how

22:00 desperate they were. And they were so ill-suited, but they were so ill-suited, if you can imagine, and when I look back now, that as a young 15 year old they had the cream, the absolute cream. Because when, you see my division was about 700. That was just one division and there was 2000. And you can imagine this big parade ground behind the Royal Marines Band marching with bayonets and rifles.

22:30 And this used to give me a thrill up the spine, to think there I was in the navy. And the marine bands were always, it seemed to do something for you, it seemed to give you a spring in your step and feeling proud. And I was doing okay, and I was growing. And then we did seamanship [knots, ship's husbandry, berthing, anchoring, etc], we did damage control [practising techniques for fighting fires, repairing leaks, etc], and we did all kinds of intervening things on what the ship

23:00 did, like on the forestall on the quarterdeck, on the compliment of the ship and the captain right downwards. So we knew all of what the routine was when we went to sea. And the commander used to insist upon us that we, navy boys, that you'll be very much in demand. Because when you go to sea, you will be fully trained in every aspect of a seagoing ship. And with you will be hostilities only,

23:30 men, men called up for the war who don't want to be in the war but were called up, you'll be showing them exactly. In fact, it's amazing to understand that I was captain of a gun at 17 years of age. An ack-ack gun [anti-aircraft gun]. And so it was that we were trained in every aspect. And one thing that I remember that I came unstuck with, this petty officer, the youngest in the navy,

24:00 only 27, had got his gunnery rating on his arm, very, very smart, very good looking, but severe, absolutely severe, and he wasn't very happy with our division. And when he came in, he said, "All right, all on the parade ground." And he ran us and ran us and ran us around the parade ground. And then he said, "You're not fit, so get your rifles, and every time you run you push it up and every time that rifle

24:30 hits the floor you bring it down. And you keep running up and down like this." And when we'd finished that he said, "All squat down, put your arms up, now bounce." And we had to bounce on our...and it was a bit brutal, but it made you so fit. Made you really fit. However, he then was the gunnery instructor to teach us 6-inch gunnery. And 6-inch is the secondary weapon in the navy. Normally, the big guns, the

25:00 15-inch and the 9.7s [9.7-inch], and then you come down to the anti-aircraft guns, the 4-inch and the smallest are pom-poms [automatic rapid-firing, small-calibre cannon]. And because I was a seaman, you had no choice of what your career was, you was a seaman for the rest of your days. You could either turn over to torpedo man, but if you did you had to be pretty good at maths because there was a lot of intricate things to learn about magnetism and about electricity. And so,

25:30 really, all I finished up with was being an ack-ack gunner. However, going back to the 6-inch gun drill, it was a huge battery, it must have been 150 yards long. It was one story. And they had these 6-inch guns pointing out to the sea and we're on steel-plate decks and each instructor was advising the class of nine men, which formed the gun's crew,

26:00 of their duties. And each one [person] had to go round the gun on every position in order that if anybody was killed, that you replaced it. And we had two spare numbers, so if anybody was killed that spare number became number one until he went right the way around the nine positions. And because all the instructors were shouting out orders, it was so difficult to hear what this instructor was on about. Anyhow,

26:30 he got us all outside afterwards, after three-quarters of an hour, and he said, “You’re a lot of bloody rubbish. If you don’t buck up and come out with good marks on this one you’ll be back-classed.” That was the fear, that they put you back and you started all over again from scratch and you went right through what you’d done before. And nobody wanted this, we wanted to get to sea. And, eventually,

27:00 a little swimmer called Renny Emmett, and he had big ears, very short, and he was a champion swimmer. And we all used to have a fag [cigarette], which we wasn’t allowed. We used to go in the toilets and they had slits in the toilets and we’d have lookouts called ‘lobbers’ that would watch out for ‘Creeping Jesus’, he was a marine that used to come around and into the toilets and he’d go like this all at the end and collect you all at the end and say, “You’ve all been smoking. Show me

27:30 your fingers, breathe into my face.” And he’d go on like this and he’d say, “All right, officer’s report.” And whether you were smoking or not. But what we used to do, we used to have little tab ends [filter-end of a cigarette], get a piece of brown hard toilet paper, make a sling and smoke it like this. And you’d have it small in case anybody rushed in, so you could quickly ditch it, you see? Anyhow, Renny Emmett had a better idea, he said to me, “Doug, want a

28:00 puff?” I said, “Oh yeah.” He said, “Follow me.” And we went under this staging. And it was under one of the messes. It was like a staging and then the mess and it was up stumps and we got underneath and we struck up and how beautiful it was, and the smell of it, I was always taken to tobacco I was. And suddenly we heard the instructor talking to one of the boys and he was ticking him off [scolding] and we could see his boots

28:30 and his gaiters [covering for the leg/ankle buttoned on one side and strapped under the boot] and everything. And I went, “Shhhhh” like this. But the smoke had trickled underneath and was coming out, and he happened to turn around and he looked under and he said, “All right, come on out. Out you come.” And we had to get out. And he looked at us and he said, “Smoking. Up to my cabin.” So this was within our mess and he had his own office. We went to the office and he said, “You like to smoke?”

29:00 He [Renny] said, “Not very often, sir.” He said, “What about you, Warth?” I said, “No, I don’t smoke very often, sir.” He said, “But you smoke. Burning your lungs out smoking. Contrary to the commander’s orders. Now what do you want? Do you want my punishment or do you want the commander’s?” And we thought, “We don’t want the commander’s,” because this went down in your papers [official record]. So we said, “Yours, sir.” He said, “All right, Warth

29:30 go and get two glasses of water.” So I said, “Yes, sir.” He said, “Not yes, sir. Aye aye, sir.” “Aye aye, sir.” I went and got two glasses of water. And in the navy they had tins of tobacco called ‘tickler’ and it was made by Tickler’s and you used to roll it with a paper, a Rizla paper. So there he was, rolling this paper, put one down like that with that glass

30:00 and then he said, “Now you’re allowed to smoke.” I said, “Not very often sir.” He said, “But you do smoke.” “Yes sir, we do smoke.” “Right, pick up your cigarette. Pick up your cigarette. Now put it in your mouth and chew it. Put it in your mouth and chew it and then wash it down with the water.” And we were violently coughing and spluttering and it was burning and we were at the toilet three or four times that day trying

30:30 to get rid of all this tobacco that was in our system. And from then on he had it down on both of us. And we went to the gun battery and he made me so nervous. He used to walk around with a rope with a big Turk’s-head [ornamental knot], it was a special way of making a round ball, and he’d walk around like this and hit you with it as you went around the gun. If you didn’t move quick enough, he walloped you with this. And as soon as he started

31:00 the procedure of the gun’s drill, “Nine men will form the gun’s crew. Remainder will be spare numbers. Spare numbers, three paces to the left, march. One-two, one-tow, one-two.” Everything was indoctrinated into you. And after each go I was so nervous and got mixed up where I had to go, he would say, “Number eight’s been decapitated.” I didn’t even know what decapitated meant. And number eight was drawn out and one of

31:30 the spare numbers went in and the next moved up and we all had to do this. And then he said, “Fall in outside the gun battery.” And we fell in [formed up in a squad at attention awaiting orders] outside the gun battery and he said, “‘Boy’ Warth to the front.” I went to the front. He said, “This boy is not only wet in the head, he’s stupid, he doesn’t know where he is and he’ll never make anything of himself but a three-badged able seaman [meaning he will serve at least 12 years (one ‘badge’/chevron is awarded for good conduct every four years) without being promoted to leading seaman or beyond]. If he’s lucky. He’s definitely going to be back-classed, because

32:00 he’s not up to it.” This shook me rigid. In front of the whole class. And this, by the way, the class then downed on you. And this came to ‘fisticuffs’. And so anything that said, “You, skate, let the class down.” And so this is how it was. And he made my life an absolute misery. And not only did he denigrate me in front of the whole class, he then made me run

32:30 up and down these steps, which was, every boy that went through the navy on Ganges knew what these steps was all about, they was an angle of 60 degrees and you had to run up and down them until he said otherwise. And I can remember all the steps that were greasy, the ones that had growth on the, how slippery they were and which side to, because they were broad, which side to run up and down. And you daren’t stop

33:00 because he'd be watching you. And you daren't stop. And so I was puffing and blowing and when I got to the top I tried to get a couple of breaths and a bit of a rest as I turned round to go down again. And going down obviously was a little bit easier and so I slowed up trying to get my breath back, but what he did do, was he made me so very fit. I was as fit as a…and my breathing was good. When I went down to the gym, the instructor said, "Now you're

33:30 going to be good at this. You're going to be good at gymnastics. You seem to do it, having been shown." And I was growing like crazy, I really was growing. Then it came for leave. The first leave. And my brother to me was an absolute swine, he was very clever at school and I wasn't, and he would always try and put me down. And he was favoured by my father because he was the

34:00 oldest. And he was a very good boxer and he made my life pretty miserable and I was determined that when I got home I was going to knock his head off. And so, when I got home and made my sentiments to mother and the others, I said to my mother, "What time does…," Bill had got an apprentice job as a carpenter and I said, "What time does Bill come home, mother?" She said, "Oh, he comes home

34:30 about 5 o'clock." I said, "Which way does he come? Around the back or round the front?" She said, "Always round the back." I said, "Oh, thanks." So I waited and waited and waited and finally... Mother had said, "Gosh how you've grown and put on weight. Oh, my word." I had jumped up from about four-foot 11 to about five-foot five in a few months. And so, he finally came around the corner and he was so stunned at seeing me,

35:00 he said, "Good God, haven't you grown?" I said, "Yeah, put your bike down." He said, "What for?" I said, "I'm gonna knock your head off the way you've been knocking my head off when I was home." "Oh," he said, "we're not gonna fight are we?" And I said, "Yes, we are. Come one, put your dukes [fists] up." And he wouldn't, he said, "I don't wanna fight you. You'd probably knock my block off, anyhow." But that out, the way we became much more agreeable to one another. Although, I still resented him

35:30 because he was so clever in everything, in sports, in boxing and everything. And I was just the opposite. And when I got onto Ganges I thought I got to do something about my education, it's terrible. And, luckily, I saw on the noticeboard it said, "Voluntary schooling from a certain time to a certain time." About a couple of hours. So I went and saw the schoolmaster who was a

36:00 lieutenant and I said, "Sir, I'm very backward in a lot of subjects. Can I have voluntary schooling?" He said, "Yes, my son. Yes, you can." And he then said, "Come back tomorrow night about, after evening quarters," that would be about sunset. And then I'd go on right through to 7 or 8 o'clock at night in the school room with others. And he said,

36:30 "Now, what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna set you a task and when you've had this task I'll be able to assess how you are going." So he did, [and after that] he said, "You're not so bad at all. The way they've been teaching you at school, they haven't given you sufficient time." The school was awful. It had one fire in it where the schoolmaster used to stand and block the heat, heating his backside there. And it was draughty and the doors,

37:00 under the doors you could hear "weeee" [the wind blowing inside], and it was a most miserable place to be, it really was. It didn't suit me at all. Where did I get to?

You just asked to do the extra teaching.

That's right. Yes, and he said to me, "You know this can be easily taught. Very easily. It's a sequence of events. Especially with maths. There's no worries. You're not that bad.

37:30 Now what I'm gonna do, I'm going to tell you to forget all about what you knew and we'll start from scratch." And I said, "How many subjects, sir?" He said, "Do you want all the subjects?" I said, " Oh, yes." And so he was very, very good. And thank God I did it, because I would never have been promoted without these. Each time promotion came along you had to sit an examination and, mostly, it was including maths.

38:00 And so I was doing great guns [progressing well]. Everything was a blaze of glory until I was caught smoking. And he [Colby] was at me every time. Every time. And I broke down again on my own in this drying room. I broke down and something said to me, "There you go, I told you so." And father was always in there. And I thought, "I've gotta be strong. I'm strong. I'm gonna be strong." And so I

38:30 defeated him by doing it and learning in the process. And I thought, "If I ever see you when I leave this ship, Christ I'll shoot you, you B [bastard]." And that was an awful thing to have to think about your instructor, but that's how it was. It was the toughest training ship in the world. And you can imagine that as so many boys left to join ships, another group would come. So it's

39:00 like a sausage machine. And all these boys were so well trained and so fit that when they went to another ship they were lost, because everything was so easy [by comparison]. You could smoke, you could wear a ring and a watch and got shore leave, only for a few hours, but everything was great. And I was doing great guns until that. And then the final, I asked a couple of my mates in the mess and said, "Would

39:30 you go through the gun drill with me? Now, if number six is knocked out, he goes to seven and then…"

He said, “That’s right, you just follow like clockwork.” But with the noise I couldn’t seem to get this, anyhow, the time went by and we all passed. I must tell you this, this was strange, because on the final examination he [Colby] warned us, he said, “If there’s anybody that drops

40:00 below a certain percentage, I’m not telling you what it is, you’re back-classed, and so you’ll do all this nine months again.” And so we did the exam and I’d got ticked off to go through it and he said to the class, “When you get to that gun, I want you to move and when I want you to move, I want you to move like greased lightning [very fast].” I remember those words and I did, I moved like greased lightning. And

40:30 at the end of it all we’re all like this…and he [Colby] said, “‘Boy’ Warth to the front.” And I thought, “Oh, no, not again.” And so I went to the front. And he put his arm around my shoulder and he said, “This was the only boy that moved with speed. He knew what he was doing, he knew where he was going and he was loading that gun and he was waiting for the ammunition to be pushed up the spout. He was brilliant. He’s come top of the class, 85 per cent.” I couldn’t

41:00 believe it. And he tried to get close to me and I wouldn’t allow him, I thought “No, I don’t trust you.” And I still meant that if ever I see him again, and lo and behold two years later I was the leading seaman [corporal equivalent], one of the youngest in the navy, and I was taking a boat of about 50 men ashore on about a 32-foot cutter into Freetown, Sierra Leone [western Africa], and there you came alongside the wooden

41:30 stage, because the rise and fall of the tide was so great, and you went alongside up this ladder onto a platform and there was the officer that you saluted and said, “HMS so and so liberty men ready for shore.”

Tape 2

00:32 And I got my liberty men to go up to the ladder and then on to the platform. And I went to report to this officer and who was this officer but now Lieutenant Colby [previously a petty officer]. And I thought, “At last, I’ve got him.” And so after the liberty men carried on to shore I went back, saluted him and said,

01:00 “Excuse me, sir, do you remember me?” And he said, “You’re a Ganges boy?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Ward, Ward.” I said, “No, sir, not quite.” He said, “Worth.” I said, “Warth, sir.” “Oh, ‘Boy’ Warth, yes.” I said, “ Do you know that you nearly broke my spirit on the training ship?” He said, “Did I?” I said, “Yes, sir,

01:30 you did. You told me that I’d never be any more than an able seaman. I was thick in the head. I’m only 18 years of age, look what I’ve got up here.” And he said, “Well I expected that of a Ganges boy.” I said, “But you told me I’d never make it, sir. You hurt me desperately. I’m very sensitive and you hurt me.” And

02:00 when he turned his head, half of his face was blackened and his eye had gone. And it’s obvious he was in some explosion and this I thought, “How terrible.” This side of his face was perfect. He was a good looking man, too. And I said, “I’m terribly sorry, sir. I think we should shake hands on this matter.” And he said, “I think so,

02:30 too.” And we shook hands and he said, “By the way. Do you remember your seamanship instructor?” I said, “I did. I do very well.” He said, “I’m sorry to have to tell you, he went down on the [HMS] Bonaventure [she was sunk by the Italian submarine Ambra on 31 March 1941 south-east of Crete]. They were torpedoed.” And it was a very sad story on both parts. And he said, “I’m sorry about all this, but I now stand corrected.” I said, “I’m happy about that, sir.” He said, “Good luck.” Saluted

03:00 and off he went. And all the anger and everything then dispersed. And I thought, “That’s terrible.” Going back in time, when we left HMS Ganges, there’s no doubt about it, we could take any position on any gun. We could do any job on the (UNCLEAR) quarterdeck and general seamanship. And we

03:30 really were fantastic. However, my first ship that I was drafted to, from HMS Ganges, was HMS Frobisher, [she] was pretty idle in Portsmouth Harbour, until one day, very early on, there was very bad news about the [HMS] Royal Oak

04:00 having been torpedoed in Scapa Flow [a near-landlocked natural harbour in the middle of the Orkney Islands]. Scapa Flow is a position where the fleet can lie safely at anchor because they’ve got a big boom gate [to prevent enemy shipping and submarines from entering]. And it’s in the north-west part of Scotland. And the ship called the Royal Oak was torpedoed [on 14 October 1939] and they said this can’t be, no submarine can get in here,

04:30 but this submarine [German U-boat U-47] did get in there and it followed one of the ships in as the boom was opened. And they lay on the bottom, apparently for some time and then they picked out the biggest target, this was a battleship, the Royal Oak. And they fired several torpedoes an up she went [the first three missed, however, the next three hit HMS Royal Oak]. And the loss of, terrible loss of life

[833 died], including a lot of boys from HMS Ganges. And that was the first

05:00 bringing home of how terrible this was. And on the training ship, the instructor used to, this was Colby again, used to tell us about what was happening, “There’s gonna be a war, there’s no doubt about it, because if Germany goes into Poland, then we shall declare war. There’s no doubt about it. So you boys are fully trained and straight to seagoing ships,

05:30 you’ll be very much in demand.” And he was so right. We didn’t understand, coming from a determined structure on the training ship to being so free and people coming for advice. The guys that were brought into the navy for war only, hostilities only, their knowledge was

06:00 nil, and they were anxious to learn and they used to come to us boys, because they were so embarrassed to go to anybody more senior. And we would direct them and help the, and it became a well-known fact of how very well trained we were. And it’s said that once a Ganges boy, always a Ganges boy. However, my first ship was the Frobisher.

06:30 I wasn’t on it for very long, because the survivors had to come onboard the Frobisher because the barracks was absolutely topped up with sailors and no space. So we were then drafted [posted] on to another ship called HMS Coventry. And Coventry had been bombed and a pattern of bombs had pushed inside of the ship and buckled the

07:00 plates and she had to come into dock. And so, after that we were supposed to go to sea on her, but then there was another ship that was commissioning, a brand new ship, absolutely beautiful ship, and she was of special design. All her compartments were reduced in size so if a bomb hit the decks or if a torpedo hit the side it would only flood

07:30 part of the compartments of the ship. And if you had bigger spaces, of course, that would be a danger, because the water would just come in and sink the ship. And so this ship was called HMS Fiji and she came straight out from John Brown’s yard in Glasgow [John Brown Shipbuilding & Engineering Company Limited, Clydebank, Scotland]. And we were all in the barracks and the complete ship’s company was put aboard a train with all our equipment and all our gear and

08:00 throughout the night we travelled by train right through to Scotland, to the Clyde [river]. And there we saw this beautiful, magnificent ship and she was just getting ready for sea, and I always remember purple smoke was coming out the funnels and she looked magnificent. Very well armed with 6-inch guns and turrets. And we then had to do sea trials and this meant going out into

08:30 the Irish Sea, going at about 20-odd knots into big deep crevices and huge waves and to see that the superstructure [part of the ship above the main deck] would stand up to it. And, of course, it was a really rough journey. And they lay the boat over, hard to starboard and hard to port, and you could feel the ship as she was straining and groaning as she was taking all this punishment. And by the time it had finished,

09:00 she passed. Because all the dock officials were on board and they passed her to be then entered into the navy. And as we joined her, we then, after the working-up program [series of drills, usually conducted over several weeks, to train the ship’s company for any emergency], when everybody knowing their positions on the guns and their part of the ship and their duties on part of the ship. We then set sail for the West Indies. And it came about

09:30 that I remembered the sign that I first saw, ‘Join the navy and see the world’. I thought, “It’s happening. It’s gonna happen.” And the older sailors were saying this is great, this is one of the best runs ashore you can get, in the West Indies. Which took in Barbados, Trinidad, the Leeward Islands and all those Windward Islands that it took in. It was a magnificent showing. And then,

10:00 after we went into the various ports to show the flag, it was as though no war was on at all. So then we returned and the captain [Captain W. G. Bean] then ‘cleared the lower deck’ [the entire ship’s company was told to form-up to listen to the captain speak]. And these captains were a very fine race of men, they seemed to be very concerned about

10:30 their men and, furthermore, that they would keep us informed as much as they could. And when we set sail, we had to get about 12 miles out [from land; over the horizon] and the captain, he said over the Tannoy [ship’s public address system],“This is the captain speaking. I now tell you that we’re having to join a large convoy. I can’t disclose the destination.” And this was on the

11:00 1st April 1940. And he said, “I want you all to keep on your toes, because the submarines are now operating in groups and the worst time is just before dark and first thing in the morning. Be on you toes, because anything can happen and we

11:30 got a very large convoy to join with.” So when we joined the convoy, we found that there were six destroyers way ahead, about six miles up. All spread out, about 1000 or more yards. And, presumably, they were taking anything that they could listen to, like submarines, and watching for periscopes, because the bridge was loaded with lookouts.

12:00 And we was always astern of a big ship called the Empire Star, which was loaded with troops. And we were about four or five days out and we were steaming in an out, zigzagging, coming to the stern of this

great big ship. And I couldn't understand why they'd allow the name of Empress of Japan to still be shown on the stern. I thought, "Well, if anything happens, they'll know that the

12:30 Empress of Japan. Why can't they obliterate the name?" We was never allowed to use our name. We was 'HMS' and that was it. And I couldn't understand this [the name of Empress of Japan was changed in October 1942 to Empress of Scotland]. However, at about nine minutes passed five on a Sunday evening, suddenly there was one terrible big explosion. And we were hit with a torpedo [from German U-boat U-32] absolutely bang smack in the middle

13:00 on the port side. The ship laid right over. I remember sliding across the deck in the recreation space, because I had just come off watch, and I hit my head on this stanchion and I was absolutely dazed and I couldn't think. Lights was out, there was the terrible smell of cordite [explosives]. And I then worked my way to where I thought a ladder was,

13:30 and on these ladders on the top was like a hatch and you can only get one man going through at a time. And then he was supposed, that [was] when he got through, he'd have to put the hatch down and put the clips on, because they're watertight compartments, you see? And I found this ladder and I was going up when people were over the top of me, walking on top of me and standing on my neck and

14:00 I thought, "I don't know whether I'm on the right ladder," I thought. And I was so confused with this as well and I finally managed to get out up this ladder and I came on the deck and I held on, I remember, to the superstructure to stop me sliding across the deck again. People were blown overboard, apparently. And oil was over the

14:30 decks and people were sliding on this oil and the ship was making a terrible noise with our siren. Our siren was blowing. And she was laid right over, and she was still doing about eight knots going round in this semi-circle. Two of the outer destroyers peeled off and came back to us and stood by us. And the demolition party went down below and

15:00 with big, before trusses, they trussed up the deck head here to stop the superstructure crumbling in. And the seawater was still coming in. And reliefs [new personnel] had to go down every half an hour, because the smell of the oil was overcoming some of the sailors. And so I was picked out to go down as well. And when I got down there, we

15:30 were in, up to our waist in water. It was almost pitch black, even the emergency lighting had gone off. And there was a couple of torches, but were not very helpful. However, we had to push these big four [inch] by fours [inches], about eight, nine, 10-feet long [pieces of wood] some of them, and they'd wedge them up against the bulkhead, that's like walls [on a ship], and put chocks in and then chocks at the bottom

16:00 and this would support to some extent [the wood is to brace material held against a hole or leaking door to stop water breaching those compartments not flooded; the process is called 'damage control' or, simply, 'DC']. But the groaning of the ship was awful. As she went down, she groaned. As she came up, she groaned as if she was in pain. At night you couldn't sleep because of it. However, we kept bailing out and bailing out and the two destroyers was watching to see that we were okay. We managed to steam at about seven knots. And, all in all, we managed to get

16:30 the boat back into a governed dock. And we commissioned this ship [on] the 1st April 1940 and we was torpedoed on the 1st September 1940. Lost a lot of good mates on the ship. And the stokers [engine-room mechanics] took the brunt of it because they were scalded to death, cause a boiler, apparently, either 'A' or 'B' boiler had blown as well.

17:00 And I thought to myself, "What a terrible thing for this beautiful ship." Because the convenience to the (UNCLEAR) was so superior to what we knew with the other ships. They had hard seats and tables that just swung down and clipped on, whereas all these was covered in a nice foam and all the crockery was put away in lockers that wouldn't open when guns fired. And it was really

17:30 a beautiful ship, to think, oh dear, oh dear. So when we finally got the ship back, after about five days of torture, because we didn't know whether we were going to get hit by another torpedo, the destroyers had to go back, because the convoy was so big that they thought, "If the convoy goes, then we must sacrifice your ship." So we had to go it alone. And this was very traumatic in so far that

18:00 you could feel her swaying and you could feel the water taking her over and you'd think, "Would she come back." And when we were down there trying to plug her up with these beams it was even worse, because the water then used to slop over our hands. There was more water coming in because I remember when I went down it was up to my waist and then it came up to my shoulders and it was splashing over my head. However, we got back and the captain cleared the lower deck and we all were to go out on the jetty, because the ship had to go in to

18:30 dry dock. And we went down the jetty, there wasn't many of us. And this man's name, the captain's name was [W. G. Bean], I've lost it... However, the captain said to us, "I don't want you to feel sorry for yourselves for what has happened. This will probably happen again and again. And we can't help losing the men that we've lost. This

19:00 is inevitable." I thought, "Well, this is a bit far fetched for a captain to say this. He's not very

compassionate." And some of the others said, "I don't think he should have said that." However, he was trying to be tough, I suppose. However, I was then sent on survivor's leave. And when I got home, the people round the town said, "Oh, you're back home on leave again, oh dear, oh dear, you're always on

19:30 leave." And I couldn't say anything. Wasn't allowed to say anything. And I thought, "Here we go again. Here we go. This is typical of, you know." And got on leave and didn't' really enjoy it very much. I had to be in uniform all the time and I was very much

20:00 noticed by the rest of the Wainfleet people. And, finally, I went back and I had to report to the barracks and, finally, I was then told… I am jumping ahead, I forgot to tell you that when I was home, this gash on my head was causing

20:30 problems. And so my mother said, "Well you must go to the doctor. Go see Doctor Wilson." The doctor that brought us into the world. And I went to see him and he put something on there that was very stinging, but it seemed to help the slashing I had but my neck was very stiff and I didn't feel at all well. He said to me, "Come and see

21:00 me in 10 days." So I went back in 10 days, by which time I'd got orders to go back to Portsmouth [southern England]. And went back to the doctor and he said to me, "Come and see me again in a week's time." I said, "I can't. I've been ordered to go back to barracks." He said, "You can't go back to duty like this." I said, "Is that so?" He said, "You're not fit to

21:30 go back. You need rest and quiet. I'll write to the Admiralty [Royal Navy headquarters in London] and send them your documents and you stay here." And, of course, my family was delighted with this. And I stayed for another 10 days and then he pronounced me fit and I had to take a medical note to prove. So I went back and found that all my mates off the Fiji had been drafted the [HMS] King George V, which was a battle cruiser [battleship].

22:00 And I said to the drafting office, "Can I catch it with my mates?" He said, "No, she's sailed. She's gone. You'll be drafted to another ship." Which I was. A few days later, I was told that I had to go to Liverpool, I was gonna catch an old steamer called the SS Narkunda.

22:30 And we had to travel, we didn't know where we were going but we knew we were going to the Far East. And so we set off in this old boat, it had no remedies for mines, magnetic mines or acoustic mines. The difference being that a magnetic mine, as the ship closes with the mine, the magnetism

23:00 of the steel of the ship allows the mine to come up to the ship and hit the bottom of the ship. And the acoustic one, is the noise of the engines, as it approaches the acoustic mine, then the noise sends the acoustic mine off. This was a bit of a worry. And I got on the ship, and in charge was a very old marine sergeant.

23:30 He was called back for the war. He had retired and then he was called back for the duration of the war. And he said to me that we would have to man the one gun on the ship and we'd have to do lookout jobs and we would have to be very aware that this was gonna be a bit of a job to get out there with no escort or no aircraft. So we got on with it and half-way through things started to settle down. Nothing

24:00 seemed to happen very much and then they decided we would organise some boxing. And so he said to me, "I've got you in for a boxing bout. You gotta be weighed in and everything." And I said, "But I've been concussed and I don't think it'd be wise to do any boxing." "Oh, you're yellow, aren't you?" I said, "No, I'm not yellow." He said,

24:30 "Well, then you'll box." I said, "I've got a gash on my head and I've been on sick leave. I don't think it'd be wise for me to be punched around the head. I need to be all with it. I don't want to be half-concocted." And so he said, "I'll have you sent to the medical officer." And this was a merchant navy medical officer, who pronounced me fit. I thought, "Well, what's gotta be, will have to be." So,

25:00 the next thing that I remember was that I was having to fight a bloke called Able Seaman Ripper. And the name alone frightened the hell out of me because I thought, "Oh I'm gonna get really walloped with this." And something said to me, "Now, look here. You're a Ganges boy. You've been taught how to box. You haven't got anything to worry about." And I thought, "No, I mustn't." Cause I had this

25:30 inner intellectual thing that tells you what to do in certain things. You've obviously experienced it yourself. You've come up against a problem and it sorted itself out by this inner-self talking to you. And something said to me, "Just get in there and do what you did in the boxing in Ganges." And my turn came. The two previous rounds, I thought were pretty terrible, they was hitting each other and they were like windmills. And something said, "Well,

26:00 you could do better than that, for God's sake." And I went in and this bloke came in like a windmill and I backed off and kept hitting him with my left hand and I was catching him all the time. And I felt I'll hit the sucker with a right-hand, too. And I just landed him and down he went. He got up and he whipped his gloves off and the ref [referee] said, "Box on," and I thought, "Well, I'll back off, because I'm sure he's hurt." And I backed off and he

26:30 came forward, because I backed off I drew him in and I just stopped him with a left and then hit him again with a right and then I started a series of left-left-lefts and his head was going back. I thought,

"Oh, this bloke, it's dead easy." And so I dropped him again. And the referee came in and said, "That's enough." And my esteem on my ship just went like that. They said it was absolutely fantastic. And the old collar sergeant came up

27:00 and said, "Where did you learn to box like that?" I said, "On the training ship. And you've contravened naval orders." And he said, "Why?" I said, "I'm only a boy. Boys are not allowed to fight able seamen. You contravened the orders." He said, "Oh, I didn't realise." I said, "Well, I did tell you I was also a bit concussed in the head." And he said, "Well, I'm sorry about

27:30 that. I didn't know that." I said, "But you was emphatic that I was gonna box." He said, "Well, we're very short of boxers." I said, "That's no excuse. You should listen." And he then tried to get round me for the rest of the trip. And then on the next boxing session, he didn't ask me and I said, "Well, I wanna box." And I felt a lot better. He said, "You do? No, better not. Because you're a boy." I said, "Well, you've let me box before."

28:00 He said, "No, be a judge." And I said, "All right, I'll be a judge." So I was a judge. Anyhow, after a long period of time, we slogged it through and slogged it through. And there were surface raiders within the area. However, we finally got into Singapore harbour and we all disembarked and several of the sailors went to different ships. And the

28:30 chief [petty officer; most senior sailor/enlisted rank] who I had met on the jetty said to me, "Your ship is still at sea, but it'll be coming in later this afternoon. What I want you to do is I want you to go up the canteen, the fleet shore canteen, get yourself a couple of nuggets or whatever, and a cuppa and be back here at about half-passed three. When your ship should be coming in." And so, I did this, went up to the canteen, had a bit of a drink, came back

29:00 and waited and waited on the ship. After about an hour of waiting she came through and I looked at her and she was a beautiful ship. Beautiful lines, raised bow, all the guns pointed, I looked at this ship and I thought, "Oh, beautiful." And I was the only one on the jetty. I had my hammock and all my gear there and he said to me, "Now, when the ship ties up alongside, you go

29:30 aboard and don't forget to salute the quarterdeck. And then you say who you are and for what reason you are here. You understand?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Aye aye, sir." I said, "Aye aye, sir." And so then, finally, the ship came and she was glorious. I could see all the officers on the bridge and the captain, he had an open bridge. And they were all saying, "Who's that sailor on the jetty? Probably, he's gonna join us. God's truth, he looks lonely, type of thing." And this was what I was

30:00 thinking they were thinking. Because I was exposed. And all eyes was on me, type of thing. Apart from the fact that there were ropes moving and the captain was looking over the bridge that the vessel was okay. And there I was exposed as I was. However, I picked up my hammock and something said, "Drop your hammock. You go aboard and you salute first of all and if you take your hammock with you, you can't do it." So I put the hammock back. The gangways were put down and I went across the gangway.

30:30 I did a very nice salute to the officer at watch [officer of the day] and I said, "'Boy' Warth, sir, joining this ship." He said, "Right. Where are you from?" I said, "Portsmouth, sir." And he said, "What ship?" I said, "HMS Fiji." He said, "Oh, yes, I've heard about this." Joined the ship and I happened to be one of the highlights of the ship. First the

31:00 navigator officer sent for me and he said, "Tell me about the bombing in Portsmouth. Was it very bad?" I said, "Oh, yeah." He said, "Was the guildhall [town hall] hit?" I said, "The guildhall was hit." He said, "And what about the barracks?" I said, "The barracks was a murderous place to be." He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, what the silly devils had done they'd dug out under the parade ground, air-raid shelters. We used to go down the air-raid shelters and

31:30 when the bombs started to drop at the road, all these bits and pieces was falling in on us because they were so thin. If they'd hit the parade ground the blast alone would have killed thousands. And why the hell did they put it under the parade ground? These beautiful big fat buildings would be more substantial if they were all congregated down below on the bottom rather than on the parade ground. It was exposed.

32:00 Sometimes when the bombs dropped probably half a mile away, the reverberations would allow all this water to come in and they were draughty, it was cold, and it was an absolute death trap." He said, "Yes, it is very strange isn't it?" So he lived in Portsmouth, he talked about how were the people standing up to it? I said, "Marvellously. It seems that

32:30 the planes come as regularly as clockwork. You can almost tell the time that they're gonna come." And he said, "What are the places being hit?" I said, "Well, South Hampton [London] is being hit very badly and then they'll divert to the Midlands, of where all the component part are made, like Coventry and Birmingham. Everything's all over the place. And London was really being [hit]."

33:00 Because at this time, this would be about September, it took us five days to get back and when we went through, yeah, we were there about September the 7th to the 10th, this was the height of the bombing by the Germans. They decided that they'd bomb the hell out of us and make us surrender. And I remember that when we had to get through

33:30 the station at, Waterloo station it was, I tried to get a taxi by queuing up for a taxi. I had to get across from Kings Cross station to Waterloo station and I queued up for a taxi, but there was no chance. There was such a big queue. I thought, “Well, I’ll go out in the street and hail a taxi, see if I can do that.” So I went out into the street to hail a taxi and they

34:00 wouldn’t stop. They were all full-up. And by which time the night was coming on and it was time for the bombing to resume. And so there I was, walking up the street and suddenly the bombs started to drop. And I took refuge in, it was like a church, it had big pillars and huge big doors and it was like an inlet of where there was some protection from the bombs.

34:30 And I could see all the firemen putting the fires out and I thought, “Good God, there’s a lot of bodies being pulled out of there, I’d better go and give them a hand.” And just as I was about to move to do so, another pack of bombs dropped exactly where they were pulling them out and when the smoke cleared there was nothing. They’d been obliterated, I thought, “Oh my God, I’ve let myself in, I should have stayed in the station.” And then I sat on these steps and I was watching these

35:00 searchlights picking out the planes and the shrapnel that was coming down and it was just hell let loose. And I thought, “I’d rather be at sea than this.” And, anyhow, I finally sat on these steps, it must have been an hour and a half, everything was going off, bombing like hell, and wave after wave. You could tell by the drone of the planes that they were German, seemed to have a different sound. And they were

35:30 dropping mines as well, and mines would knock streets out in one go. And suddenly a taxi came and he could see that all the rubble was blocking his way and he turned round and as he turned he silhouetted me and he shouted out through the window, “Where do you wanna go to, Jack?” Because all sailors were Jack. I said, “I want to get to Waterloo.” He said, “No chance.

36:00 You can’t get through. Come on, jump in, I’ll drop you back to the station.” Stopped at the station, thanked him, wanted to pay him, he didn’t want any money. And then we were told by the wardens, because they had wardens patrolling and the bombing was still going on, “Go down the shelters.” So we went down these shelters where the tubes [trains] used to run and all these people were

36:30 lined up with their beds and they were singing, and there was these accordions being played and people were singing and dancing. And the bombs were dropping. Suddenly, when it got very close, they’d stop again and then they’d be singing again and the kids would start crying. And it was just laid out. Laid out. And then when the bombing did

37:00 subside, some of them decided to go and see if their homes was okay. And they’d come back. And it was a terrible time getting across London. I was thankful I got the hell out of it, because they took such a hammering. And we now go forward to being delightfully happy where I was in Singapore. We used to

37:30 do patrols and show the flag. Nothing much was going on. And then about June or July, we started heavily convoying ships, picking up ships from South Africa, Durban [South Africa], Bombay [India], Fremantle [Australia] and we were bringing in reinforcements for the Far East.

38:00 We had a terrible incomplete air force. They were old biplanes [Vickers Vildebeest] that could do about 100 mph [miles per hour], they called them ‘flying coffins’. And so there was no air protection, and as time went on things got worse. And then on the 8th December [actually 7th], the Japs [Japanese] bombed Pearl Harbor [Hawaii], and sank one-third of their [United States] navy.

38:30 This was delightful news for [Prime Minister Winston] Churchill, to bring the Americans in. And he then sacrificed Singapore and all that was with it, in defence, by supplying Russia with tanks and aircraft, 700 tanks and 500 aircraft went on one go. Most of it went to the bottom [it was sunk]. And the

39:00 thing was that we would have thought that he would have taken a quarter of that and given it to the Far East, but his theory was that if the Americans come in, which they will now, having being bombed, that they will then take the brunt of the Far East. Well, it didn’t happen like that and we were pleading for more planes, more

39:30 reinforcements, and we were denied this on the strength of what Churchill, his idea was good, but it didn’t come off because the Americans then, they had to supply their own ships and aircraft. And what they were sending to Britain, then it made it difficult

40:00 for America because they were still supplying (UNCLEAR) to Britain. And as time went on things got really bad. Really, really bad. And then Churchill thought he would send out a couple of battleships to the Singapore area to boost the morale of the people. The actual people in charge of the dockyards were jumped up

40:30 officials that tried to make out they were equivalent to a lieutenant commander and a commander and us sailors were treated like rubbish. For instance, if we were walking along the road to go to the canteen these English people would cross the road and say, “We don’t want nothing to do with these sailors.” And it was terrible. And we vowed that if anything happened and we had to clear out of

41:00 Singapore we would never take these snobby sods, because they were jumped up nobodies. And because the Singapore base was being built up by the Brits [British] pre-war these charge hands in Portsmouth dockyard and Chatham dockyard were promoted and their wives were encouraged to go out

there, have maids, and live it up to keep the standard of

41:30 the Brits. There's all the snobbishness coming out, you know. And so, we were termed as 'common sailors'. However, Churchill then decided, because the morale was getting low, picked off by the Japanese or our planes were terrible, they were bombed on the ground, bombed in the air, shot down and they were only…

42:00 They were obsolete.

Tape 3

00:32 After the bombing of Pearl Harbor [7 December 1941], then the Japanese started to bomb Manila [Philippines], Hong Kong and Singapore. On the very same day. And so everything then looked very, very black because we had no air cover whatsoever to really call air cover. And HMS Durban, the ship that I was on

01:00 was flat-out bringing in reinforcements. And the thing about the reinforcements was that most of them was bombed on the jetty. They started sending in [Westland] Whirlwinds and other more superior aircraft in crates. And all these crates were dropped on the side of the, and the Japs seemed to know when they were coming in. How they got to know, we don't know. But the Malays used to leave the cranes

01:30 and run under the shelters. We sailors had to man the cranes. We didn't know how, by trial and error how to manoeuvre these great cranes but we got the hang of it. The thing was, that if you got the hang of it, was good at it, you kept on having to be put up there. And you couldn't come down for the bombing, you just had to stay put. So we used to call these the 'Meccano' [cranes]. And if you were on the Meccano, oh dear, you'd try and get out of it anyway you

02:00 could, but you couldn't and you had to do it. And most of this was all bombed, so things got really, really tough. However, it went on and our commanders, I can never understand how they can sit back and they're so weak, it makes me wonder how the hell we ever came through. Because I'm talking now of Percival, who was the

02:30 man in charge of Singapore [Lieutenant General Arthur Percival was the general officer commanding British forces in Malaya]. He didn't make any effort to dig into any great degree. Most of the area on certain parts was soft and filled with water when they dug in. There was a lack of barbed wire to kind of stop anything coming through. It was an absolute shambles. The

03:00 thing that got me, there was one particular officer by the name of Bennett [Major General Gordon Bennett commanded the Australian 8th Division] who always stayed about 15 kilometres back. Never up there at the front. This applied also to a lot of other regiments, too. But there seemed to be a break in the defences. And a lot of the Indian troops,

03:30 they deserted. In fact, one particular group, the whole lot of them deserted and they joined in with the Japanese. They became known as the [Indian] National Army [formed in 1942, the movement's aim was to mobilise Indians in Singapore to support India's independence movement from the British; it was openly courted by the Japanese to exploit anti-British sentiment]. And there was about 10,000 of them that joined the, and the Japanese said, "Now's your chance to get rid of the English. Come on our side and we'll get rid of the

04:00 English. You've been pulverised by the English all these years, now's your chance to be free." Leaflets were dropped by the Japanese telling them all this. And they just did this. There was lots of desertions in most of the ranks and with all nationalities. And it seemed to be an absolute shambles, Singapore. Nothing seemed to be directed. And how the hell, it's like a captain leaving his ship when you're being

04:30 bombed and overtaken. And I could never understand why they didn't get up there with the troops. The troops became demoralised. And, by the people we brought on with the evacuation of Singapore, was telling us, one of which was a Major [Angus] Rose, who was in charge of the [2nd Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, British Army regiment], and he was evacuated on our ship when we

05:00 took people on board, and he was telling us about the (UNCLEAR) that was happening. And the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, they really did fight. And so did the Australians. At Gemas [Australian Lieutenant Colonel Frederic 'Black Jack' Galleghan led the 2/30th Battalion in a successful ambush against a superior Japanese force near Gemas, Malaya, on 14–15 January 1942], they liked, especially, what's his name again? A major that sat 15 miles back. It'll come in a minute.

05:30 **Rose?**

No.

Bennett?

Bennett. Yes. You see, they were never up there with their troops and then he did a runner [he left].

Finally, he did a runner. And he told his troops to stand fast. I mean that wasn't a good thing to do. You don't just leave your troops. He got back to Australia and he

06:00 went back with the theory that he was going to tell them all about jungle warfare. And when they were so hard pressed, the Australians, when they were so hard pressed, somebody said to him, "Why didn't they retreat?" And he said, "I never taught them how to retreat. I didn't want them to retreat."

06:30 They were magnificent blokes. They were really big, fine, strong fellows and you can see why. Because their food was of the greatest, great big steaks they would eat, those young people, the sunshine, the environment, no tension, so they developed a big, fine wonderful-looking troops, and could fight when needed to. They didn't like to hang around, they liked to get stuck in. And

07:00 then, of course, if things didn't tie up, because each group was supposed to help the other, but the Japanese used to encircle them from behind. And whereas our boys had packs of 50 and 90 pound to carry and their rifles, the Japanese had bicycles. And they covered a lot of ground on bicycles. And they had slim shirts and, of course, the climate in that area

07:30 was terrible, because it was two degrees above the equator, and it just laid you flat. You couldn't operate. In fact, we used to sleep on the upper-deck because we had no air-conditioning as such. And when we woke up in the morning it was like you'd be wet through with condensation. And so the climate wasn't conducive [to doing much]. And what used to get me, I felt so terrible about, for instance, I think it was the last 10 days before Singapore

08:00 fell, we brought in, I think it was either the 8th or the 18th British Army [it was the 18th Division British Army]. And they'd been couped up, coming out from England, for a matter of nearly two months. Couped up like WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. They were landed, and when they landed, I looked at them, they were mostly Scottish guys. Their average height would be five-foot six [inches]. Their shorts came over their knees. They wore

08:30 white. They looked absolutely buggered [exhausted]. And there they had to go straight in and fight. Not having been trained in jungle warfare. It was an absolute, it was the worst defeat in the history, not only of Britain, but the world. It was the worst ever that it could be. And the Japs, we were told (UNCLEAR) the anti-aircraft

09:00 gunners, we were told not to worry about the Japs, they can't see very well, they can't fly above 15,000 feet. Their eyesight is so bad, they'll come in biplanes, you'll be able to shoot them out of the air no worries. And when they came, they came with Army 97s [there are several 'Army type 97' aircraft. The most likely is the Mitsubishi Ki-30 'Ann' light bomber] Zero fighters, faster than the [Supermarine] Spitfire, more superior in lots of degrees. And they

09:30 knocked the hell out of Singapore. They bombed it round the clock. And we evacuated the base of Singapore, and then, from the 8th [February] onwards, it was just absolute, almost everybody for himself. We had a wonderful captain [Captain Casulet] on our ship, HMS Durban, he was an ex-destroyer captain and thank God that he was seconded to our ship at the time that he was, because

10:00 he could bring a ship alongside just like a destroyer. And this cruiser [HMS Durban], it wasn't a big cruiser, but she was known as a light cruiser. Beautiful lines, more like a destroyer, big destroyer, and I loved that ship, I knew every part of her, every gunnery and I was so happy aboard that ship. And when the big crunch came, the bombing was

10:30 fantastic and terrible. And we couldn't hit back very well because our guns would only fire [down] to 70 degrees [above the horizon]. And after 70 degrees we just have to lay on the deck and the Japanese used to come in from all angles. They had a theory of spear-heading, like a V-formation coming east, north, west and south, and as they approached the target the front man would flash a light

11:00 and then they'd all drop together, blanket bombing. They'd sit at 20,000 feet, above our flak [out of the range of anti-aircraft guns]. The idea was that we should use all our flak as much as, you know, and then they'd be able to come in dive bombers. This procedure we got to know very well. And all our captain said, "Just keep firing." He used to see a pattern of bombs come and he'd lay the ship over to starboard and to port, and go full astern [backwards].

11:30 And we got some very, very, very bad, very bad near-misses, and we got hit three times very badly. And we were reduced to five knots in speed and we thought, "Well, this is it. We've had it." What did he come up with? He put a smokescreen down. And as the smoke wavered this way, he backed into it,

12:00 and we'd been bombed from five minutes to eight one morning until half-passed one in the afternoon when they broke off. And the captain said, "Don't you think that this is the end. It isn't. There's more gonna come." Which they did. We thought we'd gone, because we went really to the aid of a ship called the Empire Star. She had 2000 evacuees onboard.

12:30 We had quite a load ourselves. And she left Singapore just before we did. We left, I think it was on the 13th [February] and Singapore fell on the 15th. And it was known as 'bomb alley' [meaning bombs rained down in this area], we got to go through the Darien Straits, and that's where most of the ships, it was 40 ships, sank during the evacuation. And we

13:00 went to the aid of this Empire Star, who had brought down one plane, and concentrated fire. They were hit three times as well. They had fires on board like we did. And the captain, Captain [Selwyn N] Capon, he put up a wonderful show with manoeuvring this ship, as did our captain. And we went in aid and circled him and they

13:30 concentrated on the Empire Star first and then they concentrated on us. And it was just hell. I remember coming off pom-poms [small-calibre cannon], what we call 'Chicago pianos', they're "pom-pom-pom-pom" [the noise it makes when fired], and it was a shell of about that size and it was ruthless on dive bombers. And we'd all claim that we got that one and you'd see it go down and go, "I got that one." It was great fun to see these planes being shot down. And then

14:00 I went off the guns and a little while, just as I was leaving and coming down for a drink, a bomb hit near the torpedo tubes. And these triple torpedo tubes was laid over the side at a very dangerous angle and if any more bombs had dropped near it they would explode and probably blow the ship half-apart. So we had to try and defuse them. Whilst this was going on

14:30 a bomb hit and knocked these torpedoes over the side and a bomb went down three decks. Several sailors were killed and we were pulling them out on ropes. And one fellow we pulled out, as he looked at the top, he screamed and he started to run. And there was all these women and kids there, and the first lieutenant [most senior lieutenant onboard] said to me, "Warth, go get him. Bring him down." So I rushed after him. I had one

15:00 hell of a job getting him down, he was so strong, and I held on to him. And two more sailors came along, and the first lieutenant said, "Follow me." And we frog-marched this bloke who was screaming and frothing at the mouth and he opened this cabin door and I could see these bodies all on the deck, all wounded, I thought, "Oh, my God almighty." And he [first lieutenant] said to me, "Now this guy," Meredith his name was, "you stay with Meredith,

15:30 in this cabin and try and calm him down. We don't want him breaking out and causing panic amongst the civilian people. Just stay with him and see that he doesn't get out." Anyhow, all these four doubles was on the deck, some was groaning, some had their stomachs out, some were hit in the back. One in particular, a young boy, had his backbone broken out, and he was oozing. And

16:00 as the bombs started to drop again, and the ship going over one side, then the other, then full astern, and the vibration and everything down below was so confusing. We didn't know whether we were sinking or what we were doing. Until finally, he [Meredith] made a dash for the door. And this door in the cabin was a sliding door and it wouldn't open. And I thought, "My God, he's locked us in. Oh, God no." And I grabbed

16:30 him, pushed him back to the bulk-head, and he fought me off, so the next thing I hit him. And I knocked him out and I thought, he laid ever so quiet, he laid back and the froth was running out of his mouth, "I've killed him. Good God, I've killed him." And everything was just terrible and the noise, it's hard to describe, the bombs coming down and the near misses with ricochets and the Japanese were dropping what you call anti-personnel bombs.

17:00 What they do, whatever they hit, even the water, they fragmentate. And several of our lads got hit. I got hit as well, I, the back of the legs. And what I didn't know at the time was that these fragmentations hitting the skin, they wouldn't heal. And they used to say, "Well, it's the climate," but 50 years later on we found that the Japanese were putting something into the bombs

17:30 that stopped the flesh from healing, and it took all that time for us to know this. Anyhow, I stayed in this cabin and saw it through with this [Meredith], and he followed me everywhere, I couldn't get rid of him and I felt so sorry for him and he used to put his arms around me and hold onto me and then he'd shake. And I'd say, "You're all right. You're all right." [He'd say,] "Don't leave me, don't leave me." And he was just absolutely gone. And, of course, this was no good for the blokes on

18:00 the deck cause a couple had called out, "Oh, for Christ's sake shut up, you stupid 'P' [prick/pratt?]," you know. And it was traumatic. And finally another bomb hit and the cabins [on] the other side in the ship caught fire and the smoke started to penetrate into the cabin, everybody was coughing, even the poor blokes that was nearly dying, and I thought, "Oh,

18:30 my God." So I got to the door. I hammered, I kicked, I thrashed at the door with my fists, and it was a big, heavy slider. I kept trying to open it. I shouted, "Let us out. Let us out. Let us out." And the noise going on with the pumps being pumped and water being, dousing the fire and nobody seemed to hear us, and I kept bashing and kicking. And little Rutter on the ground where I stood, I was straddling him,

19:00 he looked up at me and said, "Are we gonna die?" And I couldn't answer him, I just,

19:30 I just rubbed his head. A little while later the door was opened, after I'd been kicking and screaming, and the smoke just poured out of the cabin, there was smoke everywhere and I said, "Why did you lock the door?" He said, "We didn't lock the door." I said, "The door was locked, why did you lock it?" He said, "We didn't,

20:00 we didn't." And the first lieutenant came on the scene, he said, "I'm sorry I had to lock the door." I said, "Why did you lock the door? You nearly killed us. We were coughing. And thank God the door opened

when it did, five minutes, we'd be gone." And he said, "Yeah, I'm sorry about that, but I was engaged elsewhere." And with that we got out on the upper deck and we got some fresh air. By which time, night time had come in

20:30 and the captain said, "Keep a lookout, we've got about another eight hours steaming to get to Batavia [Dutch East Indies; modern-day Jakarta, Indonesia]. When we get to Batavia we'll be able to assess the damage and see what can be done and we'll then decide what we're gonna do." And everybody was giving him such praise, the way he'd handled that ship, and there's no doubt that he saved us. He really did. Wonderful man. He later became an Admiral. His name was Captain

21:00 Casulet. And we didn't know him very well, but he was so unlike most captains. If he was coming down the steps and you were going up, he'd back off and say, "Come on, come on." Whereas the other captains you'd have to disperse and let him through, which was normal, see? And Paul Meredith stayed with me and walked around with me and

21:30 I couldn't do anything after this, I couldn't eat, I couldn't drink, I just kept walking up and down the deck and he was following me everywhere I went. I went down the mess deck and the food was all over the place, on trays and the wounded were on the deck. Those with back wounds were laid on their tummy. We brought off [from Singapore] the last of the Leicesters [1 Battalion, Royal Leicestershire Regiment, British Army], the last of the

22:00 Argylls. Five only, out [of] a complete regiment, and including Major Rose. He wrote an article about the experience of what we went through and he said that rather than suffer that again he'd rather go to the jungle and stay there for three years, rather than be trapped. His mate was hit with shrapnel in the back of the neck. And

22:30 he then wrote a book about it, including the Durban, describing what happened, and it was called Who Dies Fighting. He wrote that in 1944, I think it was [it was published by Jonathan Cape Limited, London, in 1944]. Yeah. And it described the action and he said how calm the sailors were, how they went about their business and the

23:00 bomb hits, they know exactly what to do. And it is true. Because it was a wonderful set-up on that ship. Very happy ship. And a very tough ship. Our ships were made with bolt [riveted, actually]. And most of the American ships were, how can I put it? Welded [in order to construct ships quickly, shipbuilders in the United States pioneered several innovative techniques, in addition to prefabrication and flow line production they also used submerged arc-welding to join plates; however, a significant number of ships were lost in heavy seas and low temperatures due to 'brittle fracture' where the weld fails]. And, finally,

23:30 we got to Tanjong Priok [port of Batavia] and, as we passed through all these ships, especially the Empire Star, who had gone ahead because our speed had been reduced, we managed to get in there late in the evening, about half-passed 8, 9 o'clock, and all the ships sang, "[For] he's a jolly good fellow" to our captain. And about 11 o'clock that night, I was turfed out of the mess,

24:00 said, "Go to the armoury and get yourself a rifle and 250 rounds of ammunition." I thought, "What the hell's all this about?" "Fall in on the jetty." About 30 of us. There was a lieutenant commander by the name of Bristow , who had been grounded from the fleet, our own pilot, he'd had all his fingers blown off, and he had a red flaming beard and we called him 'Red',

24:30 and he briefed us and said, "We have some deserters on board this ship, the Empire Star." Apparently Captain Capon, who was the master, had contacted our captain, Captain Casulet, and said, "I have about 150 or 200 deserters on this ship and they are aiming to tell me to take the ship to Australia. I would like

25:00 a battalion to be made available in Batavia." And we told him that the ship has got to top up with oil, otherwise, we can't sail to Australia. So at 11 o'clock that night, we were all told that we would be billeted behind this big warehouse and that captain, this man called Bristow, Lieutenant Commander Bristow, would

25:30 board the ship by stepladder and he would go and see the captain, Captain Capon, to see what the result was happening and then he said, "When I appear over the side of the ship, I'll say 'Acylic on six'." Acyclic, meaning [a] leading seaman and six others, "To go up and you will then be directed to that part of the ship where these deserters had separated into different parts of the key positions of the ship, including the bridge,

26:00 and taken the ship over." And so we waited, 11 o'clock at night, no refreshment whatsoever, it was cold, went right through to 8 o'clock in the morning when this ship decided to come alongside. And it came alongside and all these people that were onboard, especially the Australian nurses, who by the way, during the bombing, they did wonderful work,

26:30 several of the nurses laid over the men that had been shot and they were laid over them again to stop the bullets, rather than the soldiers, and they mended their wounds, they stayed up on deck while all this bombing was going on [this incident involved two Australian nurses, Sister Vera A. Torney and Margaret Anderson, who were both decorated for their actions]. There was about 70 nurses. Australian nurses they were, and New Zealanders. And they did one fantastic job, apparently. And

27:00 where am I? Yes, we finally went on board.

What's the name of this ship?

The Empire Star.

Oh, that was on the Empire Star?

Yeah, Empire Star. She had over 2500 to 3000 evacuees onboard, she was topped up to the gunwales [top of the side of a ship; meaning, she was full]. She was really a Bren-gun and carrier. Gun carrier, really,

27:30 and ammunition carrier. An ammunition carrier. So the deserters were told, in no mean terms that they had to surrender their guns and fall in at the gangway [entry/exit point to a ship]. And stop smoking. Our captain went aboard and saw Captain Capon and they discussed the system by

28:00 which they would get the deserters to return their weapons and go down and fall in on the gangway. And much to everyone's surprise…oh, incidentally, we had 40 marines on the top of this roof where these warehouses were, and they were just hiding in case anything happened they were in a very good position to do whatever they should have to do.

28:30 And so we felt a bit more confident knowing that they were on the roof. However, this Bristow man, he was a bit caustic, he said to these, some had then gone to the gangway and laid down their arms and he went to them and he said, "The men are on the gangway. You're the only ones that have not gone to the gangway. Put your weapons,

29:00 put your weapons down, stop smoking and go and fall in on the gangway." Cause he didn't want for them to have the weapons, but they wouldn't release the weapons, but they said, "No, we'll take our weapons with us." Tommy guns [Thompson sub-machine gun]. And so, finally, they all turned up at the gangway. The marines took over, took them ashore. Then the Dutch marines took over from them. I didn't know what happened about this but, apparently,

29:30 we were told, that one in five was shot. There was two British fellows, deserters there, they were shot, and the marks in this prison where they were shot, the marks [are] on the wall where it went through their bodies. And we don't know whether this is absolutely right or not. Others managed to break free from the prison. They were put in prison, they managed to break free and get into the

30:00 jungle. They finally had to give up to the Japanese and were sent back to Changi [prisoner of war camp] in Singapore. And we don't know what the outcome of that was either.

Do you know [what] the nationality break-down of the mutineers were?

Well, really, it was a lack of the commanders not being where they should be. You see, for instance, I'm talking again about Bennett, he did a runner. You see what he did,

30:30 he told his troops to stand fast, (UNCLEAR) saying, "Look, you're not going anywhere. You are to remain here." And then he goes and buggers off. I mean, it was disgraceful. And then the Punjabis mutineered and then the Indian Army mutineered and they said, "It's hopeless." There was nobody there to give them a lift. Nobody in front. I mean we all looked up to our captain. I mean, what he did,

31:00 we would still have looked up to him had he not done what he did. It was something to look up to. These guys had nothing. And, see, the Japs had everything. Air force, absolutely first class, I mean bloody ridiculous what we were told. And it was all a matter of lies. And including the climate and the, I felt so sorry, cause half of those guys of the 8th or the 18th

31:30 Battalion [18th Division British Army] that we brought in. And when I saw them on the journey, I thought, "Oh my God, they're gonna be massacred." And they were. They were. And I mean, how could these people put them into action. No training. Some didn't know how to load their rifles. It was, it beats me. And the so-called 'elite', I mean me as a boy, I could fathom out that this

32:00 was bloody crazy and, yet, the men that be, I mean, Percival sat in his ivory towers [meaning he was remote from the real problems] conducting, he didn't even conduct himself correctly either, in my view. I mean all this was spoken about and it passed through. And so, instead of you having a perimeter defending the island, I mean you had breaks and the Japs always attacked at night. They gave the, no boys rest, they were absolutely

32:30 worn out, they had no sleep to any extent, the food was hard to get, the drink was hard to get. They had to drink, dig holes and drink the muddy water. When they blew up the causeway, they only half did it. They also blew up the water supply to the island and so the water supply to the island was desperate. People were coming south from the north, thousands upon

33:00 thousands of evacuees were coming into Singapore. And at one time they reckoned that there was over a million [people] on the island and most of them had come from the north because the Japs were advancing so fast that they thought they'd be safe on Singapore Island. When they got there, of course, what the Japs did, they hated the Chinese, and you obviously know about Manchuria? Well further on to that, of course, the

33:30 Chinese were made targets of. They bombed the hell out of the Chinese and they bombed the hell out of Singapore, generally. The amount of black smoke when we were leaving, it got on your chest, it came down in droplets rather than in steam, it was absolutely, the fires were burning and flames were leaping up, it silhouetted, the guns were hammering away at us. You could hear the big

34:00 shots going over our heads, landing sometimes at the base, sometimes in the harbour, followed up by the bombing. It had gone mad. You couldn't think straight. All you wanted to do was to get the hell out of it, but at the same time you were steadied by the captain [who would] keep intervening and saying, "Look fellows," and this is what I'm talking about, is guidance. There seemed to be, these so-called educated people that were so

34:30 weak. Even to look at them they were so weak. They had no leadership in them and there they were all arguing against each other. One wanted to do one thing, one wanted to do another. Some suggestions were sound. See a lot of time, what's his name again, the Australian boy?

Bennett?

Bennett, you see, he had some good ideas. He, Gemas, he brought

35:00 up a brilliant move by setting his troops up, and the Japanese, as they came in, they slaughtered them and this was called a, what do they call it when?

Ambush?

Ambush. He was ambushed and these fine fellows, you see what had happened,

35:30 when the Australians first came in, and the New Zealanders, instead of putting them there way up to stop the Japs coming down, they didn't. For four or five minutes they were doing nothing, they got discontented, "What the hell is all this about? We want to get into the Japs," and there they were just doing bugger all, except digging a ditch here and there, but nothing, so they became lethargic, big, fine, strong fellows who would have really, like they did at Gemas, you see, they knocked the hell out of that.

36:00 Then you see the panic started with the air force. You had the Brits and the Australians that evacuated Alor Setar [north-western Malaya], which was an air base. As soon as they heard that the Japs were coming they off-piled a lot of the stuff from the planes, filled it with men and then flew to Singapore, long before any orders was given. They didn't worry about orders. They did it and, of course, the Japs came in, bombed the

36:30 airfields, that was out. It was, and a story went on about [HMS] Prince of Wales and [HMS] Repulse, which I believe has got some substance, and that was, there was an officer, an Irish officer, called Heenan [Captain Patrick Heenan of the 3/16th Punjab Regiment Indian Army] and he was known to be informing the Japanese of movements, and what he did, apparently, he organised

37:00 a few boats and a few Japanese to be in these boats and as to make an attack on the mainland, at Bhutan [Kota Bharu] I think it was, and in order that the Prince of Wales and Repulse would come, you see, and then attack them and then they would be drawn in and then the Japanese air force, which was just across the way, came in and did them in [HMS Prince of Wales and Repulse were sunk on 10 December 1941 while returning to Singapore having failed to attack the Japanese invading force on the north-east coast of peninsula Malaya].

37:30 Now this bloke Heenan was finally shot [on 13 February 1942]. He was told, they took him to the waterfront. They told him to look at the sun. He couldn't look at the sun cause it was all black smoke. They shot him in the back of the head and pushed him into the sea. Now that, I think, has been confirmed. There's no doubt about it, but he did the dirty on his own people and he was a captain in

38:00 the British Army [Indian Army], but of Irish origin, not that that's got anything to do with it, but there was certain parts of Ireland, of course, that was neutral [Eire or The Republic of Ireland was neutral throughout World War II; Northern Ireland, being part of the United Kingdom, was not neutral], as you know, but this is how the shambles was. Too much was made about the Singapore area being, what do they call it? Excuse this because I keep getting blanks.

38:30 I've lost it. I've lost the plot. There was too much of this, I've lost the plot.

Talking about when they used to consider Singapore the fortress?

This is right. The impregnable fortress, you see. Because they had these 15[-inch] and 9.7 [inch] southern guns facing seaward, the Japs couldn't possibly get through the jungle, but that's where they did. They came through the bloody jungle, see, and there was

39:00 these guns, although apparently they said later that they can go a 360 [degree] turn, but then they found they had the wrong shells [the guns had few high-explosive shells to use against an invading army]. They were armoured-piercing shells [meant to defend Singapore against shipping], which buries well into the ground and then explodes and does very little [against personnel] and everything like that was taken for granted, "Oh Japanese," you know, "Rubbish, don't worry about the Japanese," see, and they'd got their battle

39:30 experience by knocking into the Chinese before 1935, ’36, ’37. They were all seasoned fighters, especially with a bayonet, and a terrible thing was, it was told by several the survivors that came in, you know, the army boys, terrible thing was that they couldn’t bring their mates. If they were wounded, they had to leave them and the Japs bayoneted them to death and

40:00 the mind boggles and you’ve got to be in that to understand. It might seem a lot of, you know, it might seem as though you’re being dramatic about it, but you’ve got to be dramatic to explain how it went and the things they did, you know. The elite [leadership] of the country is suspect, very suspect. They’re supposed to go to all these beautiful colleges

40:30 and given a slip of paper [university degrees] and for the rest of their lives that’s it and very few people before the war ever got into the wardroom [naval equivalent of an officers mess]. They had a gunroom [for midshipman; a ‘trainee’ officer] so they were still separated from the main and all of it is wrong. Each man has his worth and as I went through the navy and certain parts of the, I began to learn and to listen

41:00 to myself of what should be and I still maintain, had there been somebody to look up to, like their officers. It’s alright having generals and that sitting in high places and directing orders and then you get the majors doing the dirty work, there’s nobody up there to look up to. If the major’s killed, the next bloke takes over. There’s nothing really to direct your focus, whereas we always looked

41:30 up to our captain. We looked to our captain. This was the guiding thing and the thing was, back the captain, you know, because there’s lots of, I saw lots of men lie down on the deck and couldn’t get up, had to be kicked up. I remember once when we were being bombed…

Tape 4

00:32 Talking about the people losing their initiative. I remember once where a chief had got down on the deck and he was told to go down into the after-steering position and to knock in these big wooden bungs that the bombs had made in the ship’s side. He wouldn’t get up.

01:00 He was crying. One of the officers kicked him in the ribs and he still wouldn’t get up. So me and another guy were detailed off to go down, and the noise was really bad, because the shafts of the engines are running down there, it’s quite an open area. You can understand that if, say, on the bridge the steering was knocked out, you could go

01:30 down aft and steer down in the after position, but this space was filling up with water because of the bomb holes and he wouldn’t go down so we had to go down and it was very dimly lit, our hands was being knocked more than the bungs, however, we did that. That illustrates one person that just can’t do any more. Another one was, I was told to go under the wardroom

02:00 table, which is a huge, big oak table in the wardroom. This is where a lot of the additional wounded had been laid. I was told to take this bottle and to give them sips of water and I did this. I came across a lady who was rolling about like this with her knees up, I supported her head and gave her drinks of water. The sick-berth man in charge, Phil

02:30 Sears, he shouted over to me, “Gunga Din [from the Rudyard Kipling poem and 1939 film of the same name about a loyal Indian servant to a British Army officer], bring the water over here,” which caused a bit of a chuckle. So I said, “I will in a minute.” So I was feeding this lady who was rolling. I said to Phil, “I can’t understand this lady. I can’t see any wounds or anything, but she’s rolling all over the place.” He said, “So would you.” I said, “Why?” He said, “She’s having a baby.” I said, “No.” She said, “Yes, I am having a baby.”

03:00 I said, “Tell me what I can do.” She’s still groaning and moaning. Jumping forward several years now, say 30 to 40, I don't know how many years, suddenly a lady came up to me in Malta when I was the assistant secretary of the naval club there, I used to lay on all the entertainment, get people out from England and entertain the troops, she came over and said, “Do you remember me?” I said, “Why should I remember you, madam?” She said, “Well,

03:30 this is the reason,” and she pointed to this boy. All my passed life rushed in front, “What have I done? What have I done?” She said, “This is the reason.” I said, “What reason?” So she said, “I was having that baby under the wardroom table and you came and gave me drinks.” I said, “Really. After all these years. You frightened the hell out of me.” So she laughed and I laughed ---

04:00 and we parted shaking hands and wishing each other the very best. Getting back to the scene at Singapore. We arrived from Batavia, Tanjong Priok harbour. We got underway in the early afternoon, I think it would be the 12th [February] or the 13th, probably the 12th. We got underway and the captain, when he got well offshore, announced that we were going into Singapore to

04:30 evacuate some very good men that were tied up and can’t get away. He said, “We’re gonna have one hell of a time so what you’ve got to do is you’ve really got to get down to it and see to things without

asking or telling anybody, do it. From now on, just keep alert." No sooner had he said that than we were attacked by a group of 45 Army 97s [I strongly suspect that he really means another aircraft type here. It is too far from established airfields for the Japanese to be operating the shore-based Army type 97s. Most likely he is confusing the Navy type 97 Nakajima Ki-34 'Kate' light bomber or Aichi D3A 'Val' dive bomber here because both these types operated off Admiral Nagumo's carrier group and the 'Ann' aircraft could not operate off aircraft carriers to get to Batavia]. They spun around the ship and all

05:00 our guns was trained on it. They then went to about 10,000 feet. We started hammering them, cos we could go to 17,000 [feet] with our guns. We clipped a few and we could see them curl off. We didn't actually see them go into the sea. We were all claiming we got it. Then, finally, after about 45 minutes they broke off and went back. We were doing

05:30 what we could do, a very small five knots. We thought that we'd never get there. However, we did and we got really into the. Getting back to Singapore, it's indescribably really insofar that there was a multitude of people. There was women with cases, there was little kids crying, they were all hemmed in together. It seemed that the Japanese were fighting 600

06:00 yards away from where the ship was. We were so inundated with these people that we had to line the side of the ship with sailors with .303 rifles threatening to shoot if they tried to get aboard. Some tried to get up the anchor rope to get onboard, some of the men. The women were pleading "please, please" like this, with their little children. The little children, it makes me feel

06:30 terrible when I think and see their faces and you can't help them. There was just literally thousands and I explained previously that there were over a million had come down. Some straight to the harbour to get away, hopefully trying to get on some ship, whatever. The unfortunate thing is, when they did get a ship they either got a hell of a bombing or they got sunk. You can

07:00 imagine 40 ships, that's not all there was, but there was 40 actually sunk leaving, just a few miles off Singapore, all around. It really was worse than Dunkirk [a port in northern France; scene of evacuation of British and Allied troops after the fall of France in 1940], cos Dunkirk was organised, they had boats going to fetch them off, whereas these people were trapped. The atrocities that the Japanese were known to have

07:30 completed in Hong Kong frightened the heck out of everybody because they were raping, they were everything. They went into one hospital, there was about 50 or 60 people in the hospital, some wounded very badly, the Japanese went in there and they bayoneted them, killed all that was in the hospital at the time, then the rest they put in another

08:00 housing area and then the next morning they bayoneted them to death. That was women and kids. You can't believe what they did, which brings me to the point of the, it was absolutely useless to try and bring about any sanity to the situation.

08:30 It was just every man for himself. When they got to the area where they thought they might have a chance to get on, they never realised the amount of people. Then there was a lot stopped by the Japanese, cos apparently, I don't know whether this is true, the Japanese were only 600 yards away at the main big iron gates, they had closed these gates to any more getting on. If they had got

09:00 onto the jetty they wouldn't have got anywhere because we were the last convoy to leave and I think we left on the 13th [February] or the 14th. We had onboard the remnants of some of the army and a lot of civilians. We had Japanese interpreters that had they been taken, they would have certainly been massacred. They were English.

09:30 The whole place, you just wanted to get the hell out of there because fires was going on, the oil wells were going up. We could see this happening 50 miles away. We got in, as I said, at about 1 or something in the morning and as we went alongside, nobody would take our bow and stern lines so the ship drifted out and the captain, Casulet, then came forward like that, put his bow in the jetty

10:00 and put one engine ahead and one astern, which turned the boat alongside, but he crunched the bow in in so doing and he was heard to remark, "That brings us 1000 miles nearer to Blighty [England]." So everybody had a chuckle over that. Then we started taking onboard remnants of those, one gangway was forward and one was aft, sailors were lined with guns, you had to make a menacing thing, but none of the guns was loaded, we didn't load,

10:30 we couldn't shoot them, we could not shoot them even if they had been hanging off the side of the ship, we couldn't have done that. There was too much going on. People were crying and screaming and the noise. Then as soon as the bombs started they all went down. Some was on top of each other, some couldn't breathe. Some were pushed over into the water. It was an absolute shambles. It's hard to describe it.

11:00 **How were people chosen to be allowed to come aboard?**

They were chosen by a white ticket. They were given a white ticket by, I think it was the governor who made out who should and shouldn't go. A lot of them were officers' wives. This was wrong, because it eliminated, as if to

11:30 say "The others are dispensable." The pleading that went on there, especially with the suitcase of the

little kids, the little kid's looking up and the mother, "Please, please let us come onboard. Please." Offering jewellery and money to get onboard. Of course, we had to remain steadfast and they didn't get any recompense at all. They were just left. We knew and they knew what the

12:00 thing was then. They were more concerned about the children. Everybody aboard, including those that were evacuated, they went down on their hands and knees and prayed to God and thanked God for their liberation. We were tops, we as sailors, because we were defending the ship when she was being bombed. That was a terrifying thing. Most of them were so quiet.

12:30 When the bombing started there seemed to be, apart from the noise that was going on, there was an intense feeling of, you knew it was going to happen, you can hear them flying and then it'd be a crescendo as they got the ship. Bearing in mind they were coming in from all angles. We didn't read them properly at first. We thought, "20,000 feet. Why don't they come down? If they do we've got them." They wouldn't come down

13:00 and we couldn't reach 20,000 feet. The idea was to expend most of our ammunition, cos we were still two days away from Batavia. Of course, it then kind of rung in what they were doing, to expend the lot and then they would come in. You see, our light guns, 4-inch, you can't deal with anything coming in on horizontal,

13:30 it's too shallow, you've [the aircraft have] got to be up in the air to knock them out. The only thing we had then was pom-poms and Lewis [machine] guns. The pom-poms were very efficient, they'd pump in, we used to let hem get close and then pump into them, you could see it disintegrating as they went. Everybody claimed they got it, which was quite a joke. It was an absolute shambles. I feel so sorry and yet we never achieved

14:00 what we said we would do about the pompous English that had treated us like shit that we wouldn't take them off. They were there. In fact, most of them had these white tickets to show.

Was there other nationalities or only British?

Everybody. It was amazing how many different nationalities there were onboard. There were some standing, I don't know what standing, but

14:30 to get a ticket they had to be of good standing. The miserable part about it was that the governor supplied the officers' wives. What we used to do, I'm gonna jump ahead a bit now because I'll carry on. The Durban, we then went to Colombo [Ceylon; modern-day Sri Lanka]. When we left Batavia, we left [for] Colombo, and the captain again warned us that because of our

15:00 slow speed anything could happen, we were lucky to have got this far. Keep bailing out and keep to the guns. He wouldn't allow them [the crew] off the guns. You've gotta be there straight away. Sometimes you'd see a plane way up, about 25,000 feet up, he'd be a reconnoitre, then he would stall the main stream to come in. So we more or less was looking like this and then here and the lookouts was round the bridge in a semicircle.

15:30 Luckily, nothing happened until that night, sorry, it was the following morning. We were about nine hours steaming from Batavia and, suddenly, I was on the bridge with the captain, I was lookout, the captain was there, I was there, and the lookouts was all round. I thought, "No!" and I saw these Army 97s coming in and I didn't report it properly, I said,

16:00 "Oh, no." The captain said, "What are you trying to report, Warth?" I said, "Same again, sir, they're coming in, Army 97s." He then presses the switch and it brings out the [maritime inter]national code, "Dit-dah" means action. "Dit-dah, dit-dah, dit-dah." Everybody runs and closes down portholes, everything's closed up. You can imagine the heat and the stench that was down there. Finally, we got

16:30 into Batavia, I'm thankful for it. The captain, everybody was going up to him saying, "You saved us, you saved us." Then the wounded started coming off and one poor fellow tried to protect his face when the bomb hit and he went like that [he brought his hands up to his face] and he took all his fingers off and half his face and his jaw. I remember him laying on this stretcher being taken on the hospital ship and the captain was there giving them good advice and saying, "I'll

17:00 see you in Blighty" and all that. He tried to smile and it's the funniest, nastiest thing I ever seen when a man with hardly any lower face smiling at the captain, because the captain had come across to him and said, "You'll be right. You're safe. Don't worry." So the hospital ship got underway. I do believe it was the very hospital ship that was bombed and sunk or torpedoed, which was an Australian

17:30 ship called the Centaur [Australian Hospital Ship Centaur was sunk off the Australian east coast by a Japanese submarine on 14 May 1943; 332 people died and only 64 survived]. I'm convinced, I haven't confirmed it, but I'm convinced it was the Centaur that brought a lot of wounded off in Batavia. So next morning we heard the Japanese had leapfrogged into Sumatra [large island south-west of Singapore in the Dutch East Indies; modern-day Indonesia], which was time to go. So we filled it with oil, took on provisions, took on water and we set sail for Colombo. We finally got into Colombo and nicely

18:00 settled down in Sri Lanka and off went the international code again. You can hear all the ships and upstairs was all these Japanese aircraft. They came in and they bombed and they bombed and they bombed. I thought, "Oh my God, are we never gonna get rid of this?" We were hitting back as hard as

we could with fire. They lost 42 or 40-something planes the Japanese [the number of Japanese aircraft lost in the raids on Ceylon is hotly contested; the Japanese claim to have lost only five aircraft over Colombo, indeed, only three aircraft wrecks were found, however, some claim the figure to be as high as 70]. So they got such a hammering that they turned and went.

18:30 They were right on the ball. As soon as you vacated anywhere they jumped in. You've gotta give it to them. They were disciplined, they would lay down their life, not that we would, for the [Japanese] emperor. They wouldn't in any way be taken prisoner. They'd commit hari-kari [Japanese ritual suicide] or ask to be shot. A lot was asked to be shot and our blokes obliged.

19:00 One less Jap. This is how it was. Then, having got out of Colombo, which took a while because a destroyer was sunk [the British destroyer HMS Tenedos was sunk on 5 April 1942] right in the mouth and we couldn't get out, so the divers went down and they blew her up and then we went out. Then, as we got about three or four hours steaming the captain filled us in on what was gonna happen.

19:30 He said, "I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that we're taking a lot of water and we've still got to keep pumping. The good news is we're going into New York [United States] for refit and bomb damage." Everybody threw their hats, "Hooray, we're going to New York." We finally got into New York harbour, I remember going passed the Statue of Liberty and I looked at this big statue and I thought, "God, isn't it

20:00 great to be safe and coming into this beautiful place?" All the ships were blowing their sirens because we had holes in us all over the place. We were laid over about that angle [listing to one side]. All the ships were waving and then there was a big article written about the pommy [English] ship that had come in all plastered and the funnels were pepper-potted and the experience they'd had in Singapore. All in the New York Times. So when we went ashore we couldn't buy a thing. We went

20:30 in the pubs and the beer was sliding over. We used to go into McInty's bar, which was a favourite with the sailors there. We of course had the pick of the women. They were so generous and so lovely and so kind. Then we had a nice time about four months refitting. Each day we'd go from the American barracks where

21:00 we were fed like fighting cocks, never seen ice-cream and there was ice-cream and everything, it was all on little separations in a big dish, they'd come and plonk it on. "Want more of this, Limey?" We were known as Limeys. The reason we were called Limeys was because in the old sailing days they used to give the sailors lime juice to stop the scurvy. So we were known as Limeys. In fact, a few of them used to accuse us and say, "These Limey bastards. They're taking our

21:30 women." But we were very popular with the ladies. My mate was a Scot, he was full of fun, always full of fun, he was a joy to be with, he said, "Dougie, you going ashore?" I said, "I've only got seven [shillings] and six [pence]." He said, "That's plenty. I've got nothing." So we both went ashore on seven and six, walking down 5th Avenue, there was a great big fluorescent light and it said,

22:00 'Roller skating, come to the roller rink. Come and enjoy yourself'. So Imlah said, and he took a lot of stick for his name because they spelled it I-M-L-A-H and Himmler [Heinrich, head of the German SS and Gestapo], the tyrant, of course was pronounced the same. So we got to this skating ring and immediately we drew attention because in the corner, diagonally like this, was a huge, big organ in a glass cage. The guy

22:30 was playing away and he had a mirror. He must have seen us walk in and he stopped playing and swivelled around and waved to us like this. All the girls were lining, there used to be a barrier before the skating rink. This barrier, we watched the exhibitions by the girls, and they had these little short frocks and they looked delightful. They were all skating away. They had their arms interlocked. I said, "This is great." So Imlah said, "Are you ready?" I said,

23:00 "Yeah, I'm ready." He said, "I was the junior Scottish champion." I said, "You was?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Really?" "Oh yeah," he said. So I believed him. So we all had to sit on a big settee, a lever was pulled and it then went to that angle [it reclined] and attendants came and took your shoes off and put skates on. So when the thing was put down again and we'd get off it I said to Imlah, "Go on them. You're the

23:30 Scottish champion." He stood up and fell in a great heap. I fell on top of him. So it was quite a laugh. Then it said, "Clear the rink, clear the rink." We cleared the rink and then a demonstration by five of these girls and they did marvellously. There was one there, one there, one there, one there. The did these swerves and missed each other and swung out at such speed. Of course, with their hair

24:00 flowing and me being, what age was I, 18? I couldn't get over this. I thought, "Oh God." I went there on my own. Imlah said, "I'm not bloody going there anymore. I'm gonna go on my own." So I went on my own and I went back to the rink. I was standing on the side of the rink on the fence and I noticed a girl kept looking at me. She kept turning her head like that.

24:30 I turned around and I said, "Aren't you skating?" She said, "I'm waiting for you." I said, "I can't skate." She said, "We'll soon get onto that." She said to a couple of her mates, "He can't skate." So they got up, got beside me, I think we crossed arms somehow like this and off we went. I did a couple of dives and they picked my up. Eventually, I got used to it. It was really good. This girl's

25:00 name was Vivian. She was a gorgeous woman. She really was. Beautiful dark hair and bright eyes and a lovely personality. We fell in love. She took me home and met papa [her father] and he'd done very well for himself. He'd come out from England after the Great War and they had tennis courts and a swimming pool and, oh, it was a dream. We promised each other that after the war I'd come out and

25:30 we'd get married. Having left America to come back to England in Durban, that would have been April 1st 1942, April, May, June, it'd be about June 42. I wasn't getting any letters from her. I was writing. I thought, "Oh, she's met somebody else." So I didn't bother. In 1947 I got a beautiful

26:00 photograph like this, where you open it up, and there she was in head and shoulders, "I haven't heard from you. I can't understand. I hope you're all right. Please contact me." By which time I'd met Rene. I couldn't let Rene down. So I never answered. I thought, "Just leave it." But it was still there. She'd been writing and this was

26:30 true of the mail. We'd wait in Singapore ages, even before the war really started, we were waiting ages for mail, the disappointments, like when the mailman came onboard with his big sacks, he'd empty it all on the deck and he'd read out the names and issued it out like this, some of them never got any, you could see their face drop. This was very sad. Then we pulled into Reykjavik in Iceland.

27:00 We wasn't very interested in Reykjavik. Didn't even go ashore actually. Then we set sail for Portsmouth. We got into Portsmouth and there was still more bomb damage to be seen to, which the Americans couldn't fix, so the ship had to go in dock again. The ship payed off [the crew were 'payed off' from service onboard], in other words all the lads were dispersed to other ships.

27:30 When I got back onboard the first lieutenant said, "You're staying onboard." I said, "Really, sir?" By which time I was a petty officer at 19. That was going some. I didn't realise that at the time. I was supposed to be one of the youngest petty officers in the navy. I thought of Colby at the time and I thought, "There we go, who says? Who says?" Anyway, everything had been okay with Colby when I left him and

28:00 I thought, even today I think about him when he turned his head like that and the side of his face had gone. We got back and the first lieutenant said, "You're staying on." I said, "I'm delighted, sir." He said, "You are? You don't know where you're going." I said, "No, I don't." He said, "You'll soon find out." I thought, "Oh, no." So one morning the first lieutenant sent for me. He said, "You'll be having a very important

28:30 visitor with some young officers. They want to be shown over the ship. I want you to describe to them the torpedoes, where the bomb hits were made, how many men were killed on the big gun," which was 14, all the lot gone with a bomb direct hit. He said, "Just generally look after them. Take them up in the spotting top and let them have a good look around and answer any questions." So I did this

29:00 and about 9 o'clock, up rolled this officer and all his cadets and I saluted and he saluted in return and he said, "You're going to show us around the ship, are you?" I thought he was a good looking character. When he went onboard I said, "Well, please tell the young officers when they walk aboard to salute not only the quarterdeck but the officer of the watch." "Oh really?" I could see that he was not very familiar with naval routines. So he did this

29:30 cos if you don't do it, my word. However, he did it. Then the AB [able seaman] that brought him in this naval car he came up and said, "Do you know who that is?" I said, "Why? Should I?" He said, "Not necessarily, sir, but that's God."

Was it Laurence Olivier?

How did you know that?

30:00 **I must be psychic.**

I reckon you know a bit about me. It was Laurence Olivier [British actor]. Very charming, very good looking in his uniform. I found out that he'd been kicked out of the Fleet Air Arm [flying branch of the Royal Navy] because he crashed two planes. So they gave him a cushy job. When he left he said, "Thank you very much. It's been very informative.

30:30 We've really enjoyed it and that's for you." It was a tin of 50 Craven A cigarettes. I don't know whether you've ever heard of these cigarettes, but, well, I used to smoke in those days. That was a very nice gesture. I said before he went, "What about a free ticket, sir, to one of your films?" He said, "I can fix that," but he never did. I never got it. We set sail and, finally,

31:00 the captain still was onboard. We got to know each other very intimately. Too intimate really, because it isn't done in the navy. You're at arm's length. They, to you, are arm's length. But he didn't. He'd come up and if you had a bit of dirt on your shirt he'd flinch it off. Very humane man. Very clever with his manoeuvrability.

31:30 He told me that I was going to Bombay [India]. I said, "Not again." He said, "Yeah. I don't know where you're going from there." Finally got to Bombay. The ship went off and I remember seeing the last of it and I thought "Oh no, what a ship." I joined her as a boy and left her as a petty officer, couldn't have gone any faster than that. I knew every part of that ship. I idolised that ship and all that she was. All

that she

32:00 was. She was more like a person to me. I'll always remember that having to bury the dead in the evening. One thing that used to upset me terribly was one of my mates called 'Boy' Samson. He had big feet. When we used to scrub and wash the upper deck, to annoy him, we used to have these very stiff brushes and brush his feet. "Au!"

32:30 Poor devil. He got hit in the neck with shrapnel. He was laid on a hatch way and every time his heart beat it bubbled out. I went down the sick bay, there was loading of people with terrible injuries. I said, "What about 'Boy' Samson? He's pumping blood out of his neck." They said, "We've given him morphine." I said, "Plug it, for God's sake."

33:00 They said, "No, he'll die." I said, "No, he won't die." They said, "He will die." I said, "Oh my God, no." That very evening. [He] lived three days like that and the hatchway, it was an iron hatch. I thought, "Fancy putting him on a bloody iron hatch. They ought to put him on the deck. He'll be better on the deck." There was like a gangway there and I suppose they just stuck him up there and forgot about him.

33:30 He was a lovely looking boy, beautiful blond hair, he stood about six-foot tall, dear, even to this day I think I didn't do enough. I felt I should go back and say, "Look, this man needs attention." But there was so much going on, you were either dashing to your gun or you was going for a cup of water, always something going on. You wasn't really stable. We were so

34:00 intense with everything going on. You couldn't unwind. You was all of a jitter. This went on like this. To this very day when evening quarters came, it's just getting dark and they tied a weight to his feet. He wasn't placed in any bag or anything or sewn up or anything, put on a stretcher, a few words, "And we commit this man to the deep"

34:30 and plonk. I thought, "Oh my God. If anybody…" he was an orphan boy. To think that he'd come to that, at this time of a night, in the cold, not the cold sea, but in the dark sea, to drop him off, he'd go so far down, he wouldn't hit bottom, he goes so far down and then he drifts with the currents, sharks would get him cos it was loaded with sharks. I used to cry over him and cry. Even

35:00 today. Then there was 'Boy' Harrison, he got both legs blown off. Died. As it went on, this 'Boy' Rutter, I don't know whether he ever died, but he had a terrible wound in his back. Then there was others that suffered the same fate very bravely. They used to lay there and make as little of it as possible. I'd go round with the water and say, "Have a drink of this."

35:30 You put it in one side and it'd fall out the other. Poor devils. I arrived in Bombay and I was met by a Commander Bell, who we named 'Ding-Dong'. We always had something like this to say. Ding-Dong sent for me and he was an ex-retired naval officer, brought back for the war. He said, "Well, now, you're in Bregansa Barracks, but we've got no room for you."

36:00 I said, "All right, don't worry about me, sir." He said, "No, but we've gotten a hotel for you." I said, "Oh, thank you very much." They commandeered some hotels on the waterfront. I went in and it was marvellous. It really was marvellous. Then he said, "Come and see me next morning." I went and saw him and he said, "You are gonna join combined operations." I said, "What the hell is that?" "Oh," he said, "There are these landing craft that have a door in the front and they slip it. You'll be taking troops up to North India

36:30 and then up the Irrawaddy [river] and then bring back casualties or whatever." Most people we brought back were with malaria. So I looked at these LCMs [landing craft minor; able to carry up to 35 troops] that were parked on the beach that night and the army was entrenched in a big wood. The place was called Marve. It was north of Bombay and it was spelled M-A-R-V-E. There was the river Marve that ran through it. Every night they used to do night

37:00 exercises with these big rubber rafts, full boated and spurred with a pack on their back. They had to guide this thing across the river, some were spading it, and sometimes they had to lay down and they used to cover the oars with cloth so they didn't make a noise and then they would land and then they would infiltrate into the jungle and try and get behind the Japs that way. Going up you wouldn't see a thing, but coming back all

37:30 hell let loose. All we had in those LCMs was a little slit, the rest was about that thick of iron all the way around you. You look through this slit to navigate the boat. When we started coming back, what we started to do was to zigzag. Because it was the shore guns mostly that was at us, not the aircraft too much. The shore craft. The aircraft

38:00 used to tell them where we were. The first thing you know, zoooom, you were not expecting it and there was the Japs coming, four or five would do that and then they'd come back again. These poor lads. Again, it's hard to describe. They cried, "Let's get out of this fucking place, this is not right. How can they do such things?

38:30 I'm not in the navy for a career, I'm only bloody in for the…" you know. They didn't take it at all well. Most of them were so badly wounded and not only in their flesh but in their minds as well. I used to say to them, "When the doors go down, fan out straight away and get cover. Get under cover for God's sake. Fan out."

39:00 I used to say that to them. It used to be deathly quiet. You could hear a pin drop before the door went down. When they knew they was gonna land there was that quietness that it wasn't real. There was no talking, no laughing, no joking. Coming up you could play cards and they did, but coming back. So this is how it was. Going back,

39:30 a directive came through and it said, "Wanted: fit, strong, young sailors to become clearance divers." I thought, "That's one way of getting back home." So I went to this office and they took my particulars and they examined me, passed. They said, "Well, we'll send

40:00 this to the UK and you'll probably be off back home." Not so. Two years later I was called in to do a diving course. I wasn't really [interested], I thought, "I volunteered, I'll have to do it." So I went down to the diving school, which was in Portsmouth at a place called Whale Island. This is the gunnery school where these young gunnery

40:30 instructors are really put through their paces. They are really hammered. They're made to look stupid if they make any silly mistakes. They're very strong in the mind people. They were very unpopular with the navy in general because they trained us at the guns. Their discipline was so exact that we had no good words for them. I hated it. I hated the sound

41:00 of the guns going off, too. The guns going off used to blow everything out of the shelves. The ship used to lift when they did a salvo. So I wasn't very enamoured. I thought, "What the hell am I doing at Whale Island for a diving course and yet it's a gunnery school?" So I had to report to the diving officer on the front of the jetty and the open

41:30 harbour was there. It was littered with submarines and ships that had been blasted and set on fire and they were all up on the mud like this. I looked at these ships and I thought, "My word, you could tell a tale. I wonder what happened to the men onboard those submarines. Am I gonna have to deal with all this? Am I gonna have to go down and…" it was exactly what I had to do. They used to lift

42:00 them and then…

Tape 5

00:37 And so you looked at these submarines and wondered about the stories that they could tell and what happened and I thought, "I don't know whether I can handle this." So the first day the officer in charge lectured on the possible things that can happen to a diver. And these diving suits were the old hard hat diving suits

01:00 and it took you all your time to walk across the deck, since you were dressed by the dressers, put your boots on and your corslet ['collar' the heavy helmet attaches to] and your helmet and everything like that, and then you had to walk across the deck and throw your leg over the gunwale to get on this iron ladder and then you went down this ladder. Before that, the attendants would smack you on the head like that, cause you were laid on the ladder like so, and then you'd lift your head and they'd have a bucket of water

01:30 with your face glass in and they'd washed it like that and then stuck it on and screwed it up, you see, and then you was in a world of your own. They you could hear the air going, "Psh pshoo, psh pshoo," and they had veins in the back of the helmet where the air was flushed back all round your face. It was lovely. It was really good. Anyhow, getting back to the theory of the diving, he talked about

02:00 blacking out, he talked about when you get puffed, stop, sit down, kneel down, do anything, don't go on because you'll pass out. He was talking about oxygen poisoning. He was talking about falling off the propellers when you're inspecting them, cause you'd sit astride the shaft in order to unscrew a large nut and put a poker gauge in and it'd tell you how much wear on the shafts,

02:30 but if you fell off, you was only being served with an air of say 35 feet and you fell into 50, 60, 70, 80, 100 feet, pssht, you were just crushed to pieces, you see, and all this was told to us about how we conduct ourself. And so, the lessons will start physically, and physically what they did, they just took the dive boat out and they put an iron ladder over the side and they'd send you down with

03:00 a piece of wood, four [inches] by four [inches], lashed to the ladder and at the bottom end you'd have an ordinary saw and you had to saw through this wood within so many minutes and if you didn't do it, you had to do it till you did it. Then if that didn't, was the only thing that was hard. Worse thing was a big chain link like this here and in the middle it was stopped so it was like that with that thing in the middle and you had to get this between your knees

03:30 with a hacksaw and hacksaw it through. And after that we had to then find things that they dropped over the side and you went down on a rope called a 'shot rope'. On the bottom was a big weight so it remained stationary and you'd go down this line. Having cleared yourself from the surface, what you used to do is to go from the ladder all underneath, put your head under the water and if you didn't feel

any leaks or anything, you'd just give the old sign

04:00 and then you'd go down and you'd go down on the shot rope. When you got to about four feet from the bottom of the shot rope there was a line, called a distance line, and to search for anything you would take this line and as you went away like this you extended the line till it got to the end of the line, then you'd work round in a circle like that. And then what you would do is to feel on the line where the knots were and that would tell you

04:30 that you've done a complete circle and then around again, and in order to, if you located anything, you couldn't do it standing up, you had to fall on your knees and crawl along the bottom. And this brought you to the stage where often, the air in your suit used to fill up at the back and you'd come up frontwards like this, if you didn't control your valve. Your valve was here and it was like a spindle that you pressed in and the air then flushed out and if you wanted more air, then you just held this

05:00 in and the air built up and built up and built up. Which brings me to the next exercise was blowing out of mud. They took you to the big dry dock. The deepest part of Portsmouth Harbour was 90 feet and when you dropped in you really went into this silt mud up to the chest and you had to get out by spindling up yourself. There was no shot rope, no nothing. You just had to spindle out of it, so you pressed in like that. You could feel yourself blowing up like that and then eventually

05:30 you'd start to move and as soon as you did that, you'd undo your, to let air out, so you wouldn't pshht like that, but invariably we did and so we laid spreadeagled on the surface like that, or like this, depending which way you came up, absolutely out of control. Nothing you could do, so the men on the dive boat used to get long poles, push your feet down to verticalise [make the diver vertical] you and then they'd pull you in, open up your valve, spill all the air out and

06:00 then pull you round on the ladder and tell you to get out and saying what a bloody fool you were to do that, you see, so on and so forth. Anyhow, then when we'd finished all these courses and having to search, in the dockyard the water was, couldn't see much more than that, it was so filthy and on the dock wall there used to be these fish and they were really nasty buggers. They used to have their head just outside the hole and you'd groping around until, bang,

06:30 cause we wasn't allowed to wear gloves. We used to have a thing, when this suit came down to there, we'd have a grey, what they called a grey, and it was a rubber thing that put over the cuff to stop water running down when you was working under the ship or anything, you see, but invariably it came in round the neck and invariably you came up with water up to here, see, so it wasn't very successful, but once in the water, okay, you know, all the weight was taken off you

07:00 because you see your boots weighed 20 pounds each. Your corslet here, the weight on your chest and one on your back was equally so and then, you see, the helmet and corslet were heavy and that's just how it was. This goes back to 1899, this suit, the standard suit, was used until about 1950-something before it was scrubbed, see, but

07:30 once you began to dive in it, you could stay down four, five, six hours, providing you wasn't in more than 40 feet of water and then if you was in more than 40 feet of water you had to do what you call 'stoppages'. Onboard, upstairs, they determined what depth you were at. They'd work out through a grade of stoppages.

08:00 When you should stop they'd give you a pull on the rope, I mean to say, "Stop," and you answer, to give a pull, "I've stopped," and then you've got to put your legs round the rope and you do exercises like this, you see, and then you hold on with your hands and you do it with your legs and this then is supposed to get all the nitrogen bubbles out of your air, you see, and this is what we did and we did and we did and we did. So when we qualified, we all passed, and there was some bloody good blokes

08:30 there too, you know, really, anyhow, what happened was that we were then turned clearance divers so we were sent out to blow up ships that had been wrecked and we had to go onto the Farlington Marshes [near Portsmouth] to do the explosive side of it. And I always remember one day we connected up with some gelignite [explosive] round a huge, great, big log that had

09:00 floated inshore and the instructor wanted to show us the devastation it could do to a big log. It was a huge, great thing and we put some gelignite strapping round it and way back, pumped, and it blew this log, you wouldn't believe, to smithereens. At the same time I saw something landing to the right of it and it didn't look like wood, so I said to the officer in charge, I said, "There's, it blew up something else." He said, "What?" I said, "I don't know what, can I go see?" He said, "Yeah, go see." It was a

09:30 big hare and I remember walking over the bridge at Whale Island and an officer stopped me. He said, "You've got a hare there." I said, "Yeah." He said, "How did you get that?" I said, "Oh, it was blown up when we were doing…," you know, see, and he said, "Want to sell it?" I said, "No way, no. I'm going to get the mess…," cause we're on rations, you see, not very good, and we had jugged hare [a stew of hare cooked in an earthenware pot or casserole] and it was beautiful, absolutely beautiful.

10:00 And then we started doing clearance jobs. The first one we did was an aircraft had ditched just off the Isle of Wight [off Portsmouth], in 90 feet, on a sandy bottom. And what you do, you have a map and you see all the markings of 90 feet. We didn't know the approximate position and then you work on those 90 feet, especially if there's 90 feet, 90 feet, 90 feet, and then it might go, you know, 30 feet, 90 feet,

10:30 20 feet, so you work on the 90 feet where it's supposed to be and you do a circle around that on your knees and, like this, and we came across it. Two of us dropped on top of it, no wings, and first thing I saw, it was a beautiful day, it was on a sandy bottom, I saw, was two furry boots sticking out, one more than the other, and the body was down like that, so I got hold of the boot and pulled and nearly fell backwards cause the boot came off.

11:00 So, anyhow, I managed to get hold of this bloke by the foot, pulled him up, and I remember his air all floating like this and his body was, see, and, yeah, and then I rang a bell, because you go by bells and pulls. For instance, like five bells, boom boom, boom boom, boom, means to say, "I have found my work and operated my work,"

11:30 and then individual of that you get, every one minute, you get a pull and that would say, "Are you alright?" You give a pull back, "That is alright, I am alright" and so on and so forth, you see, with various signals like that. And we got this guy, a rope round his midriff and they pulled him up and did the main things and about two weeks later I got a beautiful letter, or we did, got a beautiful letter from the parents saying, "How wonderful it was that you found the body

12:00 and we've laid him to rest in his home cemetery and we are delighted that this was possible under the circumstances," you see. And then we found, by touching bodies, we got a disease under the fingernails and we couldn't wear gloves and we had to keep our nails short and if we were to collect anybody, it had to be by their clothing more than touching their flesh, cause sometimes they'd been in the water,

12:30 you know, and they'd begin to disintegrate you see, so this was quite often. The next job was at the South Parade Pier, which juts right out into the Solent [the strait between the mainland and the Isle of Wight], which is a big inland waterway, and they, during the '14 [to] '18 war [World War I], they built a big, like a brick wall right across to stop the Germans getting

13:00 in and they only had a small opening in which the ships could come and go, like naval ships and aircraft carriers and everything, and they had to negotiate this particular, which was navigated [charted]. However, make jokes about the Irish, don't we? This Irish skipper, he was coming through and he was off-shot and he missed this opening and hit the wall and his boat sank and we were called out and we were told that the body is still aboard,

13:30 so when we went down, we couldn't find any body and we got the ship's cat. We got his brand new uniform up and then we discovered there was milk, there was peas, there was potatoes, all tinned, spaghetti. There was a wealth in these cardboard boxes, all about that size, and as we were tying up and roping them up, you know, I signalled to come up and you don't do that

14:00 normally unless you're running out of air, and the reason was I wanted my whack [share] to be put on one side because I knew what they were going to do, see. They were going to, sure enough, fiddle them, and so I went up and [they] said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I've got a leakage." [They] said, "Where." [I said] "In the suit." [They] said, "Oh it's nothing, go down again." I said, "Well before I do, will you put my packs over there?" He said, "Yeah alright, you crafty 'B' [bastard],

14:30 crafty sod." Anyhow we did and my mother, she was on these provisions for months, tea, you know, peas and beans and tomatoes, everything you could think of, and there was a load. There must have been four or five ton, all distributed amongst us, see, so finally the ship was lifted and brought back and probably used again, I don't know, was only a coastal trader.

15:00 But then we started to do all manner of jobs, you know, diffusing bombs and mines. And I was explaining about the acoustic bomb and the magnetic bomb, see the magnetic bomb was drawn up to hit the ship by the magnetism and the steel of the ship, and the acoustics was by noise of the ship, it's propellers, it brought the acoustic mine up and they were

15:30 terrible things because the Germans used to lay those in the navigation channels where you'd hit them and the noise of these. What they did, they put in the bow of the ship these 'knockers', we call them knockers, and they were things that went, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, see and they were going all the time in these navigation channels, which would then lift, and you'd sight them before you hit them. The other method was putting a ring, a degaussing ring [which neutralises the magnetic field of the ship's hull], all

16:00 round the ship, which would isolate them, you see. And then the other part was the paravanes [torpedo-shaped device towed from the bow of a vessel so that the cables cut the anchors of any moored mines]. We'd stream the paravanes. They were tied in at the bow of the ship low down and when you got underway they were like little semi-aircraft with wings and they would lay right out like that and as the mine chain caught onto this line, they then went into some big

16:30 teeth and it was clipped off, so that to some extent was fine, but the thing was that often you hit the mine head on, not that we ever did, but many did, you know, before the mine could be transferred onto the slide. But we covered all those aspects and then I was sent onboard, would you believe, the [HMS] Frobisher again,

17:00 I was sent onboard, asked to be the ship's diver. And I'd also qualified as a physical trainer and instructor just before that and I was mighty pleased that I got down to the PT [physical training] school and I qualified as a PT instructor second-class. I finally finished up

17:30 being, having passed the officers course, as a lieutenant commander, which I would have been had I not, through another incident, which I'll tell you about. And, yes, it served me pretty roughly because physical training instructor, you know, "He's tough, he'll do this and he'll do that," you see, and every morning got in the dive boat, they'd say, cause we were known as club

18:00 swingers [the rating badge for PTIs is a pair of crossed juggling clubs] and our abbreviation was 'clubs', and the chief instructor in the dive boat didn't like physical trainers so he used to say, "Alright Doug, get dressed." I said, "But I went down first yesterday, chief." He said, "Well you're going down first again today, mate, and…" he said, "If you complain, you'll go down tomorrow as well." So you had to shut up, so anyhow this was because I was a PTI, but I had qualified and

18:30 I was both, so I was drafted to this ship, Frobisher, as the physical training instructor and the diving instructor and we had a beast of a commander. He was a very fine seaman both practically and technically and there's not much you couldn't get by with him. He was a big man, but he obviously was a very self-centred man and fancied himself a lot.

19:00 It's a shame that he did that because he was a very brilliant seaman and he sent for me one day and he said, "I'm wanting you to organise that we put the young officers through in a dive suit and put them down 30-odd feet, what do you think about that?" I said, "Yes, sir, no problem." He said,

19:30 "We'll have to get permission from their parents first." And I thought, "Well this is going to be a long-winded time," but it was about three months before we got all permissions and these young fellows, they were nice young kids, you know, only 16, 17, and they'd been put through their paces at Dartmouth, where the officer training school is, you see, and, anyhow, this commander was trying to toughen them up and, you know, so we were out

20:00 in the West Indies again at the time and we were off Bermuda and I said to the commander, I said, "This would be a very good place to drop the divers over." He said, "Would it?" I said, "Yeah," I said, "But, first, let me go down and check the currents and the depth and the bottom." And he said, "Alright," so I went down one day and I was fine. I picked the tide times and everything and went quite distances to check the current

20:30 and I found that it was okay. So we got all the divers together and I had a gunnery instructor at the top sending them down to me, making sure their gear was all correct and I had adjusted their valve to the depth that we were working at. And I said, "Whatever you do, you mustn't touch that valve. You are set for that distance in the bottom. Don't fiddle with that at all, alright,"

21:00 so as they came down, I dropped on my knees, I said, you know, "You drop on your knees, follow me," type of thing, you know, and if you put your helmets together you could shout out and you could just hear each other, you see, but I didn't do that with these kids. I did it by gesture you see and like and then I'd say, "For crawling," and I'd keep looking around seeing if they were okay because often they've got a lot of air in the back and then up they'd go without you sometimes noticing, see, but I did it one at a time

21:30 and they were absolutely over the moon with this, you know. It was something quite daring to do and they wanted to do it, as young people do, you see, and all was going well until one young fellow, as usual, he came down and I noticed he was really white and I tapped on his helmet, I went, and he went like that, meaning okay, and I thought, "There's something

22:00 strange about this bloke." And I got behind him and suddenly he turned sideways and he started screaming and so I turned him over and I sat him down and I went like that, "You stay still, stay still, stay still, don't touch, don't touch," type of thing, you see. Anyhow, he did and blew the bloody thing up. He went, see, and it is frightening when the

22:30 pumps stop. You've got to stop the pumps to verticalise them with the poles but when the pump stops you think, "Oh my God the air's gone off," and, of course, he wouldn't know any difference and there he was spreadeagled, can't do a thing, you are absolutely immobilised, and so he did this, he spreadeagled and I could feel what he was going through, cause we'd done it practically. So, anyhow, they managed to verticalise him, pull him to the ladder, got him off, almost cut

23:00 his suit off him, sent him up to the sickbay, then the repercussions started, commander came to me and said, "You should have sent that boy up long before you did." I said, "No sir, not at all." He said, "I am saying yes, sir." I said, "No, sir, according to my diving manual and my instructions as a diver, that when people are in turmoil of this sort, they stay put,

23:30 they breathe more deliberately and they close their valve off to get more air." I said, "They'll be refreshed within no time," I said, "and then they'll be able to surface in a controllable manner." He said, "You prove that," so I went rummaging through to get the diving manual, still got it to this very day, and I showed him and this was official by the Admiralty and he couldn't get away from it and, of course,

24:00 he was very nasty because I'd proved that I knew what I was doing, cause he was trying to blame me for not sending him up. Send him up, he could have got bends [decompression sickness, caused by sudden and sustained decrease in air pressure], see. He was too long where he was and he was fighting like hell, you know, and you can't fight in those suits. Once you start wriggling and going on and he

panicked and went for his valve and so when he came out of the sickbay about four days later

24:30 his father, it was proven, to be an admiral. There were repercussions, “Why was my son subjected to…,” the long and short of it was, he treated me [badly] thereafter because he took a wrap for it [he was blamed], cause he instigated it, which he tried, “It was my idea,” wasn’t at all, and he just went for me. And in Bermuda, no, in, not Bermuda,

25:00 it was, anyhow, I thought I’d get off the ship. I went to see the medical officer and I said, “I want to be drafted off the ship.” He said, “How come?” I said, “I can’t get on with the commander.” I said, “The commander’s just making a beeline for me.” He said, “How?” I said, “Well, the other day I was called out to do a diving job,” I said, “and I started to put on my woollens,” cause we had big woollen socks and big woollen jerseys with a round in neck, see, to keep

25:30 you warm, I said, “and I was walking along the deck and the commander came along and said, ‘What are you doing out of the ‘rig of the day’ [uniform]?’ I said, “Sir, I’m doing a diving job.” He said, “You’re out of the rig of the day.” I said, “Sir, I’m going diving, now. The diving boat’s waiting for me.” He said, “See me when you come back,” put me in the rattle, I got 10 days stoppage of leave, so I told the officer this. He said, “PO [petty officer],” he said, “We’re all wanting to get off the ship,

26:00 not only you. We’d all like to get off the ship,” he said, “but we can’t.” He said, “And you, the PTI, the diving instructor, and the cadet instructor and you’re there for the ship’s company as well.” I said, “I still want to see the first lieutenant,” [I] said, “put the request in.” Making it hard for me, see, cause the first lieutenant and I were pretty good mates, so I put my request in to get off the ship and I went up before

26:30 the commander and he said, “There’s nobody to replace you. Divers are very scarce. We can’t get another diver. We need a diver onboard for various reasons.” Anything might come up, because if any big job came up, all these divers off the ships would all amalgamate and get on with it, you see. Anyhow, I thought this was terrible, he should run me in when I was, just before I went diving. I mean this is mentally not good,

27:00 you know. You’re thinking about, “What’s he on about?” and, “See me when I come back,” and so I went ahead. I said, “I want to get off this ship,” I said, “I’m to the stage where I could desert,” and I said, “I’m asking to get off the ship.” He said, “Well, I’ve got some good news for you.” He said, “Keep it quiet,” he said, “but when this ship gets back to Portsmouth,” he said, “We’re paying off. You’re all going to be dispersed.” I said, “Is that right?”

27:30 He said, “That is right, don’t say a word.” I said, “You’re not bullshitting [lying], sir?” I said, “Please don’t bullshit me.” He said, “No,” he said, “this is the truth.” He said, “I’m sticking my neck out telling you this.” He said, “So, in confidence.” I said, “Fine,” so we got home and he was dead right. They were to pay off, so I was in my dive stall and there was a pipe [announcement on ship’s public address system],

28:00 “Chief diver,” no, “Petty officer diver, report to the medical officer.” Went down to the medical officer. He said, “To justify getting you off the ship, we’re going to send you for a rest.” I said, “You are sir?” I said, “That’s great. Will I make 10 days extra leave?” “No, no” he said, “You’re going to a rest home.” I said, “Oh, great.” Now in Burma,

28:30 when we’d done so many trips, we would get 10 days rest and I was sent north to a parson’s house to stay with the parson for 10 days and this was a rest period to take your mind off all other things, you see. I thought, “Great, great, this is great,” so I said, “Well, where is this place?” He said, “Oh, it’s somewhere out in the country, I haven’t got a clue,” he said, “but

29:00 you’ll have a good rest there.” I said, “Oh, right,” so the time came and the ship paid off and I got my chit to report to this place. I had my own transport, fellow was taking me by lorry and it was a beautiful day and I thought, “Thank Christ for that, I’m off that bloody ship with that man,” and said to the driver, I said, “Where is this place I’m going to?” He said,

29:30 “Oh, it’s between Romsey and Fairham [Rownhams?],” and it would be about 45 to 50 miles away from Portsmouth. I said, “What’s it like there, then?” He said, “You’ll soon find out.” And I thought, “That’s a funny thing for him to say!” and I thought, “Well, probably you don’t want to converse,” so I started looking around and saw all the ducks dropping into these pools and the cows chewing their cud on the countryside and the beautiful green grass and I thought, “Oh, isn’t it heavenly,”

30:00 you know, to be away from it all and to forget about it all for a while, you know, and all this was a tonic to me and so, finally, we arrived at this place and it had bloody great gates, iron gates, and it had a fellow on the gate, the security guy, and he opened up the gates and we went in, all these beautiful flower beds I saw, and [a] beautiful

30:30 smell of flowers and I thought, “Mmmm.” Then I noticed this big wall, 18-foot high, it had all glass on the top and it was all sparkling with blues and browns and in the sunlight and it was a terrible looking wall, it looked angry and cold and black. And we then drove on and stopped and the fellow got my gear out

31:00 and I had to report inside to a chief sick-berth fellow and he said, “Well now,” he said, “What we first do,

we take your money off you, your keys, any valuables, anything like that and we put it in safekeeping," which seemed fair enough. He said, "And then tomorrow morning," he said, "you'll see the psychiatrist." I said, "See the psychiatrist, what for?"

31:30 He says, "He wants to see you, you're going to see the psychiatrist. Everybody who comes in here sees the psychiatrist." I said, "But I don't need a psychiatrist, all I need is rest, 10 days rest or something like that, I don't need a psychiatrist." He said, "Well, you'd better tell that to the psychiatrist then." So next morning, there was a line of us. Now what I'd noticed was these blokes were, they were frothing out the mouth, their heads were down.

32:00 I thought, "My God, poor bastards. I think they're bombed out of their brains." This is what's happened, froth at the mouth. And three days later I noticed a couple of sailors I'd been on a previous ship with and they were, "Aaaaaaagh," and I went across to them, "Hello, how are you going?," "Aaaaaaagh." I thought, "Oh my God, what have I got into

32:30 here?" And, anyhow, saw the psychiatrist and he said, "Now who have we here?" I said, "Petty officer," "Dut, dut, dut, dut, dut" he said, "Wasn't you told that when you're in hospital blues [colour of patients' pajamas/gown], you have no authority, you have no rank. You are here for a rest and I'm going to put you to sleep indefinitely."

33:00 He said, "And you'll wake up and you'll feel a new man." I said, "But I don't need any of that, sir. I'm very fit and I'm alright. I just need a break." He said, "You're not telling me," coming closer to me like this, "what your treatment's going to be. I'm telling you what your treatment is going to be, now do you understand that?" I said, "But sir, what is this you're going to do?" He said, "We're going to inject you and put you to sleep for an indefinite

33:30 period on what I am going to suggest." He said, "And then you'll wake up and you will feel a new man." "But," I said, "I sleep very well. I don't want to be put to sleep." That night in the big ward, beds down the side, beds in the middle, these poor characters, you've never seen anything like it. Whoever did this to them, they were mongrels, to say the least.

34:00 They were all, and I thought, "I'm going to finish up like this," and nobody would tell me anything and I thought, "I've got to do something positive about this," and at night they were crying out and these ruthless wardens came over, "What's up with you? If you don't pack it up, I'll put you away," meaning an injection, and people, sane people mostly,

34:30 be quiet for an hour and then they'd start and they'd get everybody else going. There'd be about 80 of us. I thought, "My God, what the hell is this, what's going on here?" And I was a fit man, I was really fit and alert, all I needed was a break, didn't need this bloody rubbish. Anyhow I thought, "Right, I'm going to have to do something drastic here," so next morning I hadn't to see him at all

35:00 until he told. I thought, "Next morning I'll be in front of that queue and I'll go in as soon as he arrives." Nine o'clock, dead on the knot, he came, went through the door, I counted about five or six seconds and in I went. I backed up to the door and I said, "Sir, you've got to get me out of here." I said, "I am a fit man. I don't need to be put

35:30 to sleep. I sleep very well, not that I have done," I said, "because people are crying out all night." I said, "I don't understand this set up. Why am I here?" I said, "If you don't release me, I'll climb over that 18-foot wall." He said, "How dare you speak to me like this. How dare you. Get out of my office, get out. You'll do as I ask," and I thought, "I've lost the initiative"

36:00 and I felt, "Now what do I do, what the hell do I do?" And then we got exercised and we had to walk anticlockwise around this big tree, a big oak tree, huge, great diameter and I thought, "Why have we got to walk round bloody anticlockwise, what's the point?" Normally, you walk clockwise. Started to walk round this bloody thing and they were all down, frothing at the mouth. I thought, "Oh my

36:30 God, how could they do this, who the hell's doing this? These bloody psychiatrists are mad," and they were all the same. One fellow sat by a big archway door, apparently he was a good footballer in his day, he was sitting cross-legged with his hands like this and he'd say, "Shoot, shoot, shoot, ah good one, good goal, good, hooray," and he'd bang the floor like this, and all the others were irrelevant to it, nobody, only me. I was watching this poor character and he sat

37:00 there hours doing the same thing, "Oh, that was a good goal, oh mate," and banging the floor and frothing at the mouth, couldn't even get up. He couldn't shave. They were all growth and they looked terrible in these bloody terrible hospital blues. You had slippers, all blue and these didn't seem very clean to me, all hospital, I was, dear oh dear, I was in such a turmoil,

37:30 so I went back to the chief and I said, "What is this system that you're doing?" he said, "You are very fortunate to be here." I said, "You've got to be joking." He said, "After you've had the treatment you will feel a new man." I said, "That's what the psych, I don't need to feel a, I am a new man. I am a physical training instructor and a diver. What the heck are you trying to do to me, am I going to finish up like those other guys?"

38:00 I was really wild and he said, "Don't come to me with your problem. You go and tell the psychiatrist that." I said, "He won't listen to me. Nobody will listen," so finally I was taken down and I was given the

old, and I woke up, and I was, I really was, and I was so

38:30 frightened. There was nobody I could turn to, so the wardens were bastards. You couldn't go to them for anything and I saw all these poor blokes, young men, not greater than 30. I thought, "I don't know, this can't be happening!" and there I was and I

39:00 remember coming out of the first session and I remember people smacking my face and sticking a tube in my mouth and it was running in one side and running out the other, so they turned me over and stuck it up my bottom and fed me that way and then I dropped off again and then I kept waking up and the same thing happened and I was frothing at the mouth. I couldn't shave and I was just like the others, so I went

39:30 to the chief and I said, "Can't we have a football or a cricket bat or something?" I said, "These men need stimulating. I need stimulating." He said, "You should have been stimulated with the treatment." I had words to speak to him, to think that he could agree with what was being done. We were right out in the country and this was an asylum of which the navy had just a few wards

40:00 of it and, apparently, this had been going on since the Great War. These guys that were traumatised in the trenches were sent there and it'd been ongoing ever since, with the naval wing they called it, the naval wing and the place where it was situated was called Knowles, spelt K N O W L E S. It was a most magnificent area country-wise and a lot of the admirals that had retired there

40:30 and I thought, "I wonder if they know what's going on in this hell of a place?" It was hell.

Tape 6

00:35 Yes, and I went to see the chief and I said, "Chief, these men want stimulating. Can't we have some cricket gear or footballs or something like that?" He said, "What a good idea." He said, "Make out a list and bring it to me," so I made out a list of two sets of cricket gear and

01:00 two or three footballs and I made it known that it would only apply to those men that wasn't quite so affected. They'd have to be selected to play these games. He said, "An excellent idea." He said, "Come back in two days and we'll see." I went back and he said, "Yes." I called for the cricket gear and the footballs cause I was a qualified physical training instructor, not only with gymnastics, but with games as well

01:30 and so he said, "Make out the list and then I'll put it through. Come back in two days," and I did that, went back and he said, "Oh." He said, "The list has been lost." He said, "Make out another list," so I made out another list and went, the same procedure, "Two days come and see me." I went and he said, "Oh the list has been lost." I said, "But the last one was lost." He said, "Yeah, they want this one lost."

02:00 He said, "Go make out another chit," so again I made out another chit, same thing, "It's been lost," and I said, "Well, thank you very much, thank you very much" and…

Can I just ask, after that first treatment, for you to be able to ask for sporting gear, how did it affect your thinking, that process, and were you, like were some people able to handle it more than others in terms of stopping?

I was determined. You see, when they walked around this oak

02:30 tree, I was determined I wasn't going to put my head down and I wasn't going to slobber and half the secretions from my mouth I kept swallowing. I had my head upright. I was determined that I wasn't going to finish up like them and I walk faster and passed them round, and when I suggested to them, I can remember that having come out of that treatment, my head was on fire. That was the first thing I noticed because what they do, they attach something to your

03:00 head and they have a rear station that they give you and unless, I found out later, unless your big toes curl up like that when the current's switched on, it's got to be, the big toes have got to kind of contract and if they didn't, they gave you more and I remember coming out of it with a head, it seemed as though my brain had been fried and I couldn't keep still. I could not keep still. I was shuffling

03:30 up in this huge great big place where you got your medicines from and things. It was a big lounge. We all had to meet in this big lounge and they used to have notices up and I was up and down and up and down and I couldn't keep still, I just could not, and I was frothing at the mouth and I'm going like that. I'm not going to be like this, I'm going to, and I have a very strong, you know, a very strong, I think the navy

04:00 brought me out in that respect and I couldn't believe it. You see what got me when I summarised, was that here I was in this place, having done six years of war and I finished up only at 22 years of age. I couldn't believe that I'd joined in good faith to serve my king and country and I could finish up like this. I was a career man in the navy

04:30 and just to show you how I was done down again, I'd passed for a physical training instructor officer, so that I would get my commission and I would have done my time, six years, to be promoted and then I'd have finished up as a lieutenant commander and they denied me that. What they did, when I finished at the PT school, they said, "What we're going to do,

05:00 going to send you out to Malta to be the assistant secretary of the Manoel Island Club and you've got the grounds to contend with, the welfare, the sports, and then after a year you'll be promoted to sub-lieutenant and thereon, you know. I thought, "Fine." About 10 months before the year was up, I was brought in by the captain. He was a really charming man and we got on

05:30 famously, cause I was a worker and got that club going and got everything organised and people were enjoying life and he was right behind me and he said, "How are you feeling this morning, chief?," by which time I was a chief. I said, "Oh, I'm very fine sir, thank you." He said, "Well, I've got some bad news," and I thought it was family. I said, "What's the news, sir?." He said, "The Admiralty. We've had a letter from

06:00 the Admiralty." He said, "And the Admiralty are taking you off the list for promotion." I said, "They're what?" He said, "Well, I want you to think what you want to do about this." He said, "You have the availability of my secretary who will type out anything you want typed. We'll put it through the commander in chief Mediterranean and try and get them, the Admiralty,

06:30 to change their mind. This is unjust." So we did this and I wrote a big foolscap [paper size], presented it, and it was all nicely done word-wise and everything, presented it and about a week later a reply came through, "That the Admiralty regret having to remove Chief Petty Officer Warth from the roster for commission but the Admiralty rule is final. Finish."

07:00 And I deducted from that, that if there was any repercussions then, I was to spill the beans about being put in a place like that, that it would be unbecoming of an officer to disclose such matters, which I was emphatic I was going to do and this is why I'm sitting here today, because this is what got me, I thought. I went through agony thinking,

07:30 "I wonder if I am a bit bonkers [crazy]? I wonder if I am. Am I causing," I was doubtful. I began to doubt myself. Someone kept saying, "No, you're not. Now come on, you know very well you're fit. You could run rings around all these poor devils," which I did somehow, and then I thought, "They'll invalid me out of the navy. What's going to happen to my sons? What am I going to do? I don't know anything but

08:00 diving and physical training, what am I going to do?" And I used to put the sheets over my head and cry and I had all these blokes screaming out in the night, going through tremendous agony from whatever reason and I thought, "I don't know what is going to happen." I was too ashamed to tell my parents. Nobody

08:30 knew of this, not even my wife or my boys. I kept this to myself for years and years and years and the only thing that brought it all out, you see once I was in the navy, if I had to make a complaint to the civil people [outside the navy system] then my promotions would have been stopped. They had the iron fist on me.

09:00 I couldn't tell the press, I wasn't allowed as a naval person to tell the press. I was due for promotion and I thought, "If I do it, they'll…," I wanted to turn it all in and finish with it and ask to be divorced [discharged] out of the navy, and my wife only held me together when she found out, and that was years later. I never, I couldn't tell anybody. I was so ashamed and to think

09:30 that they could do this to a young, fit man and then 50 years later we found out why. The reason was that the Russians had started what they called brain something,

10:00 indoctrination, brain indoctrination, and what they were doing, they were putting these people through this type of deep-sleep they called it, deep-sleep, and they were dictating to them while they were still semi[-conscious], what do they call it?

Semi-conscious?

Yes, and they then did exactly what

10:30 they were told. If, for instance, they were told to put a revolver to their head and shoot themselves, they would do it. They got them completely under control. The word went around and all countries started to do it, even Australia started to do it, to do this deep-sleep therapy and this is really why they were doing it, not for any war-related

11:00 reason, like we were supposed to be told, you know, "You've had a rough time." They never said this, "You've had a rough time and we're trying to get you on the right, and to bring you back to…," never mentioned a thing. In fact, when the time came and I was free to go, I was so surprised. The chief said to me, "We have a suggestion to make to you.

11:30 You are a physical training instructor and we would like you to work with us and take these men and give them some light introduction to exercises and breathing. They will be selected. They won't be traumatic patients. They will be coming out of their treatments and we want you to conduct some

physical training and also sports

12:00 and things like that, when you think it's ready. Work with us. We want you to work with us." And I couldn't believe my ears and I thought, "This is another one of the chief's make ups [lies]," and I said, "Do you consider I'm a fit person to conduct these poor men?" They said, "Well, there's nothing wrong with you." I said, "Well, why am I here, then?" And he slipped up there, you see, so he said, "Well, look,

12:30 please yourself." I said, "I couldn't do it. I couldn't be responsible to see these men as they are and me be part of trying to bring these men around again." I said, "After what you've done," I said, "how could you be in a position to do it?" I said, "I think it's most ghastly what you've done to these men." I said, "They've probably gone through traumatic experiences in the war, but not as traumatic as this." I said, "I don't consider

13:00 my past to be as dramatic as this." I said, "This has really knocked me for six [taken him by surprise]. I can't believe that you could do it to men," but of course 50 years later we found out why. They were indoctrinating them and telling them that, you know, "If you do this, do that," and they were seeing how, sometimes they would open up the scalp and place prongs inside to see how the brain was working. They did some terrible things until,

13:30 finally, I thought, "No, it's a joke." And I gave him a good tonguing [berated him], I said, "I hope you sleep well at night." I said, "Because you've got a long way to go get…." I said, "I hope you have nightmares. How can you be party to doing this to these men?" He said, "I'm only following orders." I said, "That's what the Germans said. That's what they said, 'We're only following orders'." I said, "How could you do it?" I said, "I'll never, ever forget what I've seen here. This is one

14:00 hellhole." I said, "Good naval strong men, gone through a bit of action, come in here and having to put up with this." I said, "It's disgusting what you've done and," I said, "and any opportunity I get to blow this, I'll blow it, I'll tell you." And yet I kept so quiet because I thought, "My kids, promotion," and they'd got me. When the final day came, the

14:30 psychiatrist didn't want to see me and I said, "Well, what am I going to do, what program?" I said, "I'm not fit to start full-time duty again." And so he said, "Well, that'll be up to where you go, but you're going to be released." I said, "Are you sure about this? Am I going to be released?" He said, "Absolutely sure, absolutely sure." I said, "Well I want to see the psychiatrist." I said, "Well, I want to discuss it

15:00 to see what the program has been and how he's considered me, whether I'm better or worse or whatever." He said, "He doesn't want to see you, he's letting you go." Now what I think was that because I made such a show and that he could see what he'd done and he knew I was right, he knew that I was a fit man, he knew what the program was being done for and how he could do it, the

15:30 swine, I don't know, and so I went out and I went into the barracks and they said, "You've on the move again." I said, "Where to?" They said, "You're going to a training ship. You're going to be a physical trainer in charge of new cadets." So I went to this place called HMS Vincent, [HMS] St Vincent and it was a training ship for young 17 year olds and I couldn't do it. I just was not, they'd

16:00 blown my mind and my demonstrations was nothing like they should have been. You see, what I used to do, I'd first say, "Watch this," and I'd do something, then I would describe how it's done, then I'd get them to do it in piecemeal, and all this had gone. I was trembling and at meetings, I had to cross my legs like this and my heels was always tapping on the floor like that, and I had to try and steady

16:30 myself and I'd sit right in the back row so the people, the officers in the front, wouldn't know what was, you know, and sometimes my heels would be tap, tap, tap, tap and he'd say, "Who's that tapping?" and all the instructors would laugh because they knew I'd come out of the nuthouse [hospital to treat mental illness], as they called it, and they said, "He's 'doolally tap'." Now, 'doolally tap' was a mental institution in India [in the town of Deolali, near Bombay] and where all the Indian guys and the

17:00 poms [English] all went in through war-related, so called, happenings and so because of this name that I was awarded with, which was quite derogatory really, but it was a joke and I took it all in good part, and, you know, the officer sent for me. He said, "Well, I'm sorry, but," he said, "you're not coming up to what I require. You're not the instructor that I can

17:30 put in charge of these men." I said, "I entirely agree, sir, I entirely agree." I said, "But where to now, where do I go now?" I said, "They've ruined me at that place." I said, "It'll take me probably years, if ever, to get over this." I said, "I don't know what's going to happen to me." He said, "Don't get too concerned." He said, "You'll

18:00 come good, you'll come good." And the next place was a similar place and I couldn't keep still, I couldn't just sit down and talk to you like I'm talking now, I couldn't keep still, I had to be on the move and I went to the next place and I was waiting for them to tell me what instructions I had to take and I was then going to say, "Well, I don't think I'm up to it, sir." And then I thought, "If I say that, they'll put me back in hospital.

18:30 I don't want that, so what do I do? Tell them I'm alright." And so what happened was that that evening, beautiful sunny afternoon, I couldn't keep still, so I thought, "I'll go on the 'quad' [quadrangle]," and the quad was where they were throwing discus and javelins and running around the track and, suddenly,

one of the fellows I knew, a PTI, he shouted out, “Dougie, come over here.” He said,

19:00 “How have you been? I haven’t seen you for years.” I said, “Oh, not too bad.” He said, “Have you had a diving accident?” I said, “No.” He said, “Well, you look different.” He said, “You used to look really robust and strong.” He said, “You don’t look as good as you used to, you know.” I said, “No, I’ve had a few incidents.” He said, “Like what?” I said, “Can’t tell you,” so I went on this quad and

19:30 talked to him and he said, “Come and have a run with me, tell me more.” I said, “There’s not much more to tell.” He said, “Come and have a run then,” so we went round and I went around about three or four times, a full 40 track, which wasn’t bad, and I had to break off because he was a champion runner and I wasn’t up to it and so I said, “I’m sorry.” He said, “No worries, Doug, any time I can help you mate, come along.”

20:00 He said, “Take care.” And off I went. I went straight in. I was sweating, so I had a shower and having had the shower it was just as though a veil was falling off me, you know. I became good and I thought, “I’ve got it. I’ll run a nice shower,” and I did this and it was working and I was coming good and the tapping wasn’t so noticeable

20:30 and my arms and my frothing and I did more running. I ran and ran everywhere and I began to get good with my class. I was able to do some slight gymnastics, nothing what I used to be able to do, but it was coming back. I thought, “I’ve got it, I’ve got it, I’m coming good,” and all those guys that used to call me ‘doolally tap’, they used to meet me, and by which time I was

21:00 a first-class gymnast and, although I say it myself, I had worked hard to do it, to get over my problem, and I eventually came good, but never could I ever stop walking and running. Even to this very day, I go down the forest, I’m like a zombie in the morning, I can’t think straight and I feel, unless I do something. Now, in the winter

21:30 I used to dive into this pool in the cold water, just to shake whatever it was, cause I felt lethargic and didn’t want to do this and yet I know I had to do, and I used to dive into this cold water and the whole thing used to set me up and so every morning I had to push myself. I’d stand on the deep end and I’d dive in and wait for it, then come out refreshed.

22:00 I’d first go for a run and I still do it, and the beauty of this is although I’m 80 years of age, turned, I’m still very fit because of all that running I’ve had to do and without it I’m sure I would slink back into a malaise and not feel full of vitality, like I normally am and…

Have you had any medical explanation as to why that

22:30 **helped?**

No, never anything. It was all hushed up.

But have you spoken to doctors like since then and do they know why this exercise has helped you?

Well, I’m under the psychiatrist still. See, I see a psychiatrist every month and I sometimes think to myself, “Why do I go and see him cause I help him more than he helps me,” because he’s fat and he’s too much, you know, he sits back in his chair and his thighs

23:00 are so big he can hardly cross his legs, but he takes on that body posture and he lays back in his chair and I feel more sorry for him and we talk about nothing but, never mentions my problem, and yet…

Was that hard for you to go to a psychiatrist after having been treated so terribly?

It was, but in order that I

23:30 keep my naval pension, they’d say if I didn’t go, they’d say, “Oh, he’s a rort [lying], now we’ll stop his pension.” That’s the only reason I go and he just does nothing. He’s a sick man himself, but he did help me to get a pension because I wrote to them and what I’ve told you I said in the letter and they thought, “We’d better keep this bloke’s mouth shut,” but what I’d have loved to have done, which I couldn’t do

24:00 because I was in the navy for 25 years. You see I was 22 years of age when all this happened and I’ll never forgive them. I will never, ever forgive them because, not only me, the other poor blokes, and I vowed and declared I’d get them all out, I’d blow the top and then I discussed it briefly when finally my wife told, but my boys found out first

24:30 because I had a short fuse with the boys, didn’t get on at all well and even more shorter fuse unless I did my running. And now what I do, I do cycling, I do running and I dive in the pool and I come good and then all day I’m quite happy and then I get a fair turn of sleep. I go to bed not later than 11 [pm] and

25:00 sleep very well, then get up like a zombie and then I’ve got to go through all that routine again. If I hadn’t have done that, God knows what would have happened. If I hadn’t discovered what was good for me because it was so noticeable and it was by accident that he said, “Come on Doug, have a run round with me,” and because of that running and then getting a sweat on and it was, honesty it was just as

though everything, all the strain and that just went down with the water,

25:30 down to my toes and out. And I thought, “That’s it, that’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to run,” and it did the trick and, as I say, I’ve been doing it ever since. I was doing it long before anybody ever knew. In fact, when I went home to England and stayed with my brother, I used to get up in the morning and straight out for a run, take the dog, take his dog and she said to me, my sister-in-law said, “You know, at your age you shouldn’t be

26:00 doing this. You’ll have a heart attack.” I said, “I never will.” She said, “Well, you know, at your age, you shouldn’t be running like this.” She didn’t know why. I couldn’t tell her. I didn’t like repeating it and it’s so traumatic to me, and yet now, when I told you and the reason why, I feel better in myself. I feel unloaded, but I know I’ll still have to do this to the day I die and that’s why

26:30 I want to keep fit in order so to do, because there’s nothing like exercise, if people only knew. I look at people in the street and I think, “You’re a goner, you’ll never take that off [weight], you’ll never take that,” cause they’re not disciplined enough and you’ve got to discipline yourself.

Does that frighten you, Doug, if you get to the point where you aren’t able to exercise?

Yes, when I’ve got to take my wife shopping, I can’t do it. We get straight off in the car and when I’m

27:00 in the supermarket, I’m lost. I don’t know where I am, so I say to Rene, “You do the shopping and I’ll go on the beach and have a run.” So what we do, I go down to Mooloolaba [Sunshine Coast, southern Queensland] and I always run into the wind. I find that so refreshing and the sea to me is such a tonic. I mean the air is so good, but down on that beach, if I go there feeling like a zombie, I’ll bet you after I’ve done about a couple of miles

27:30 up and down the beach, running on the edge of the water and then diving in, this is winter and summer, I come out and have a shower and I feel a new man. It’s unbelievable and I’ve often thought of writing a book about how to take stress off. The other great thing for me is music. I love my music and I love the ballads and things of this sort and the classics and sometimes I leave it on all night

28:00 and it’s still going in the morning. I fall asleep on the music and I find that so refreshing. And then I’m working all around the farm here and I never stop. I work to almost, I’m almost to the stage where I can’t do another thing, and if I don’t do that, I don’t feel justified in eating my meals. I think, “If I’ve worked hard,” which I do.

28:30 I mulch the trees and the branches for the fruit trees, I mow, I have nobody to help me, I whipper-snip and I plan it all before the nights so I know exactly what I’m doing tomorrow and in this way I keep myself active in the mind and body and I reckon I’m tops, I do really. It’s just now that as I get older, I just hope that I have no joint

29:00 problems like my wife, but I think, you know, running up and down those steps at [HMS] Ganges, little did he [Colby] know, but he did me a great favour because I could vault over three box horses [vaulting apparatus]. I had terrific spring in the gymnasium and we never had anything like trampettes [small exercise trampoline] that could, you know, bounce on and throw the body. This was off an ordinary springboard of wood and I could take three paces, hit the springboard and do somersaults and

29:30 leaps and fantastic, and now I find that by having slim legs, because my boys have got really good legs. Mine are skinny legs, so I say to them, “Well, a racehorse can’t have big, thick legs,” and now they know all about me, of course we’ve got a different set up now, I mean before it was all, it wasn’t good and I didn’t think much of them and they thought

30:00 very much less of me, because I was too authoritative. This was only due to partly the bringing up in the navy and the discipline of that ship, but looking overall, without that episode of being in that nuthouse, so-called, I really think the navy was the best thing I ever did, was getting away from my environment where it was. Made fantastic

30:30 improvement when I went to sea, was good at boxing and in any sports that you’re good at in the navy, you get promoted and this has been known throughout, especially if, you know, especially boxing. Boxing was the great go. We used to have a number of Irishmen aboard the [HMS] Durban and quite a few Scotsmen and they used to get at each others throats and the fights that used to

31:00 go on, bare-knuckle fights and then they’d shake hands and go and get drunk the next day and go and have another fight and I was brought up amongst that, you see, and there was one big heavyweight called Walter Noisla [?], an Irishman, and he was the big heavyweight champ and he used to say to me, there was one little fellow, my stamp, my colouring, and he had a flat nose

31:30 and he was a terrific boxer and could I beat him? I could never beat him and between four and eight o’clock in the dog watches [in the standard watch system on a ship the ‘first dog’ is from 4 pm to 6 pm; ‘last dog’ is from 6 pm to 8 pm; together these watches are known as the ‘dogs’] we used to go on the fo’c’stle and box and the PTI there would throw a pair of gloves at your feet and a pair of gloves there, whether you were six foot or two foot, and then you’d have to battle it, and a good hiding was a good thing for you. And the captain used to be watching, “Oh, very good,” over the bridge, and yes,

32:00 all this has accumulated over the years, to come from this horrible place, I’d have probably been a farm

labourer. I was too intelligent to be that, I really was, because I can't understand even now, when I summarise my life and I look back and I think, "At 14 years of age I knew what I wanted to do. I didn't know and then I find out what I wanted to do." And then as the years have gone by

32:30 and the upsets and the things that happened with the instructors and I came through and surmounted the problems and still maintained a fitness, I'm a very lucky bloke, I really am, in more ways than one, because, as I say, 40 ships were lost off Singapore and how the hell we got out of there, somebody was looking after us. It just seemed that our captain,

33:00 the way he, at the very last made a smoke screen and backed into it and then pushed forward and the people that was watching us from the Empire Star were saying, "She's gone, she's gone this time, she's gone." Apparently, the bombs would drop and then the bow would poke out from all this black smoke that he was making and then he'd back up again into the smoke and it was incredible what that man did. That ship, he lay that ship over. It's a wonder we didn't turn turtle [capsize]. He lay her over and the water was coming

33:30 over. We had ropes that we had to grab on, safety ropes, if we were walking along the deck we always had these safety ropes to grab hold of cause he'd lay the ship over. Sometimes an attack would come and you wouldn't know, you see, until you were attacked. That's how, on the flying side, the Japanese, they'd got the planes, they got the pilots and they would dive for their,

34:00 and we have never understood and I can't get over this, I can't get over these men [officers] that went to these wonderful places for their education, Cambridge and all those places, and that bit of paper [degrees] made for life and they're put into positions and they haven't got a clue. They are clueless. They have no leadership. They have their under commanders

34:30 telling them what they should do and they're at the front and in some cases 50 miles back and they should be at the front. They should be there to lead their men, like they used to do in the Roman days, in the gladiators. They would be up front. They would lead them into the battle. These guys sit in their perches, dictating, "I think we'll do that." They get a suggestion from somebody else, think, "Oh that's a good idea," and use it and not the initiative that should be. I can't emphasise this too much.

35:00 If we ever go to war again, there's got to be a change. They've got to look at people like me. I could have commanded better than some of those. I really could have and I knew it, and that's what I couldn't understand what they could rope people in for, as they did. I mean it was a sin to think that they could pass electric currents through your brain to wake you up. You see you were injected first with a narcotic drug,

35:30 you were gone and they'd have to slap around your face to wake you up to feed you and all this was, it was awful, you know. I'm a very personal person. I had people messing about with my body. I mean it's a terrible thing they were doing and getting away with it and these bloody hospital blues used to, I used to, they were slovenly, made you feel as though you was a

36:00 nut [mentally ill]. It did really. They could have used some other colours but this bloody hospital blue got me down and these bloody slippers. They used to fall off your feet and you'd slip into them and used to flop, you know, when you walked and I hated it and the hate was against the people that were doing it as well. They don't deserve to die happily,

36:30 I can tell you.

How many treatments were you subjected to?

I don't know. You don't know because they put you out and you don't know what's going on. I haven't got a clue and I've never delved into it because I was so ashamed to think that I'd finished up in a place like that. If my mother and father had found out, they'd be agonised, "You must be a weak man to have," you know, "to have got in that position. Well, what's he doing in?"

Would you be allowed to access your medical

37:00 **history or is that something that you can't do?**

Well, you see, what they did, play games with you. When I got out of the navy in '63, after a lifetime, I thought, "Right, now I'm going to blow the top." I wrote to the Admiralty and they put it through to the defence force and I said, "I want to know who authorised this treatment. Why did they do it?

37:30 A fit young man, how could they treat such a person, having joined as a boy seaman at 15, went right through the war, and was only 22 years of age when he came out of it, how could they do things like that?" I mean, it was such a shock. It really shook me, really. I thought, "I'm trapped."

38:00 You see even when I had to make out a list, I couldn't make the list out. I was, I used to get these, what do they call them, those guys that looked after you?

Like orderlies?

Orderlies, I used to get them and they used to drip all over me, "You don't keep coming in and doing this to me, have you?" I said, "Well, I can't write, look, I've got the shakes." He said, "Well, don't bloody well

38:30 come again," and I did have to, to make this [list] for the cricket gear and this is what they told me, and the food was disgusting. One time we had fish and it was rotten and I tasted it and it was rotten and I said to the orderly, "This fish is rotten." He said, "Yeah." I said, "But it's rotten, I can't eat it." And he said, "Oh yeah," as if you was, they made you feel as though you were a nutter

39:00 and this is what hurt me because I wanted to do well. I was so, you know, brought up so strictly and we were very Christian my family and my father, unfortunately, was traumatised because of the Great War and if anyone should have got the Victoria Cross, he should have. I've got a list of what he did. He brought in 13 men under fire,

39:30 through barbed-wire fences. Some he had on his back, some he had hanging onto his front and he was crawling in. Thirteen times he went out to bring in these wounded and poor man, when he got back home, I can now understand but I couldn't at the time, used to get drunk, used to fight in the pubs and before that he was a gentleman. He came from people with, business people, Corning coal merchants,

40:00 I mean doing very, very well prior to the war and, of course, when the war broke out he volunteered, like a lot of the young men did, and thought, "Great, we'll show those bloody Germans," you know, this, see, and he got cut to pieces, wounded so many times it wasn't true. He still went back and then when he came home, this is what I can't understand, that they never took them aside or tried to give them any treatment. There they were, one minute going over

40:30 the top bayoneting each other and the next thing they were, the war had finished and there they were, up in, keyed right up, ready to go over the top. There was nothing there to go over the top for now. The war had ended. What did they do? They started to fight amongst themselves in the pubs, coming out on the streets. It was regular. It wasn't just where I lived. It was all over the country. These men had gone crazy and no treatment, nothing. He used to come home drunk, abuse the kids,

41:00 abuse my wife, sorry, my mother, and spend the money, which was terrible. I'd see him come home to his dinner drunk, lay on the front of the table and I felt so sorry to see such a fine man that he was, yeah.

Tape 7

00:33 Yes, getting back to my father, who suffered through being wounded very badly during the war and gassed as well and then, as I've stated, that he comes home in an intense pitch and can't you understand this, that having been over the top several times

01:00 in all the big pushes in France, that he could come home a stable man. We couldn't understand why he was like this until years later and anybody that's been into any form of concentrated bombing and strafing, they build up a pitch of high intensity and for that pitch to be reduced, takes a lot of time

01:30 and people don't understand how to bring it down. I know with myself, I'm still having to exercise, almost to a state of exhaustion before I realise that it's any good. If it wasn't to near exhaustion, then I wouldn't have done what I should do, to free me of this intensity within me.

02:00 Getting back to my father not wanting me to join the navy, as we move forward in time, my father, I remember going on survivor's leave and I was surprising them and people were saying, "What, you're back home on leave again,

02:30 always on leave?" and yet we'd just been torpedoed and gone through a very bad patch not knowing whether we'd get back or whether the ship would sink with us in it, in the bowels of the ship, because boys was equivalent to full grown men, young boys, 15, 16, 17, there was no pulling punches. If they wanted you to do a thing, you did it and they'd say, "Go down there, do this." You did it,

03:00 didn't question it, you did it and I remember describing my going home and seeing the beautiful fields where I used to play as a kid and getting home and seeing my family and I remember walking through the town, having got off the train, on my survivor's leave and I felt all eyes was on me

03:30 but possibly not, but I remember the paper shop and I remember the grocer's shop, as the grocer's boy, and I remember where I used to have to crawl between the sugar beet plants and pick out the small ones and leave the big ones, having to wrap your legs in bags because your knees would get so cold and grubby and my toes used to be hanging out of

04:00 my shoes and I used to get frostbite. I recall all those days. I don't know why I recall those days, because they're not happy days, but I recall them and I also recall that I walked through the town thinking all eyes was upon me and remembering the certain shops and remembering incidents at my school and remembering the people, how caustic they seemed to be, to me. I'd be very sensitive, and finally

04:30 walking the two miles from Waverley to where we lived, just outside, and going round the back way and then knocking on the big, thick back door, hearing my father say, "May, somebody at the door." This was

my father telling my mother that there was somebody at the door and she opened the door and saw me there.

05:00 She said, “Oh my God, it’s our Jean, he’s here.” My father came up and he started to cry and he said, “Three, four days ago we got a telegram saying you was missing and presumed dead.” He said, “And here you are.”

05:30 and he said, “Now, you probably wonder why I didn’t want you to join the navy! I knew what it was up to in the ’30s and having been through some of it, I knew the navy was going to take the brunt of the pounding they would get to help keep the ships coming in with their cargoes, to keep the Brits fed

06:00 and we wasn’t fed very well at all. We had small pieces of cheese and butter an always rationed,” however, he called me into his private room and apologised for having browbeaten me about joining the navy but he didn’t want me to join, to think that I would probably be lost because there was such a fight going on

06:30 and the Germans were so determined. We had very little to do other than just get on and stay resolute and this we did because now at 80 years of age, I look back and I go through my life and I think young men, 16, 17, 18, legs blown off,

07:00 terrible injuries, hearing their voices still and of all things, poor ‘Boy’ Sampson, who I remember bleeding to death and I didn’t do enough. I should have gone back and made it more pronounced that he should be treated, “He can’t be left to die like a dog,” bleeding like he was. I still see him to this very day and it’s hard to come to terms with it and I don’t think I ever

07:30 will because, but for the grace of God go I. We were all vulnerable to it and the Japanese were ruthless and war is ruthless. Just let’s hope that sanity can come to the fore because our so-called aristocrats seem to miss the point. For instance, Churchill was blamed

08:00 over the fall of Singapore because he should have allowed a certain amount of tanks and aircraft to come to the Pacific but stay, as I stated before, that he was hopeful that the Americans would be brought into the war and indeed they were when they bombed Pearl Harbor. Then Churchill thought to himself, “Good, they can take that area over and they can

08:30 give the Japs what the Japs have been giving other people, and so they did eventually, but nevertheless because we were starved of aircraft mainly, no air support whatsoever, such as it was, and the guys that flew them were absolutely brilliant in so far that their speed was about 100 miles an hour and nothing compared to the Zero

09:00 and the Army 97s, the AV [AV Rose and Company aircraft manufacturers] bombers. It was pitiful and these men, 19, 20 years of age, just like the guys in the Battle of Britain, who saved the UK, saved it them boys, I will be forever grateful, and so many were cut short in their early days. I forfeited my early days, having joined at 15

09:30 and I don’t regret it, but when you hear today of 16 and 17 year olds doing stupid things like setting fire to buildings and forests, it’s a shame that we’ve lost the point of bringing some form of discipline to these boys. It’s obvious that the discipline

10:00 in the home is wrong and a good dose of the army or navy or air force would do them a world of good, would make men of them. They don’t know what to do next and they’re so easily covered by the government, by allowing pensions to be paid to women that have babies before they’re married. Everything is…They don’t have any drive to overcome anything.

10:30 It’s all there for them and even if it is, it makes them so soft in the underbelly that they do stupid things and then I think to myself, “At that age, I was fighting a war.” It’s indescribable really. We’re going to the pot. God help us if there is another war, although this has been said before that they would rally round. Probably they would but I do believe that there should be some

11:00 instrumentation to get these men trained and disciplined, cause you could see what happened in the fall of Singapore. The morale had gone. The purpose had gone and there were so many desertions to break the line. That is terrible when you think of what we lost and how many we lost

11:30 and the thousands that were just murdered, with boys that needed care and attention where their wounds was left. They had no choice but to leave them and they were bayoneted by the Japanese. How they can ever face up to what they did, I don’t know. Probably they, like us, was under orders, but I do think the Westerners have the

12:00 edge on the Japanese.

Did you finish your story earlier about the wash up of that mutineer thing on the Empire Star?

Well, we got to the stage where they were all brought off the Empire Star and, if I remember rightly, I told you that one in five was shot in Batavia and that the others were imprisoned and they managed to break out

12:30 and they were in the jungle for about three months. Then they had to give in to the Japanese and were sent back, as far as we know.

That's right?

To Singapore in Changi and whether they survived or not I don't know, but it wasn't just one contingent. It was general. In fact, the Indians started it, the Punjabis, and officers had to go and stop them running away and point a pistol at them and say, "Get

13:00 back into line," and it's a lack of discipline again. Discipline is so important to running a life, your own life. If you're not self-disciplined then you're wayward and things happen that shouldn't happen, whereas you could, if you're not in control and I can't emphasise again too much that the men sitting in their pearly seats should be out there with their men. They shouldn't leave their men, and thank God I joined the navy. I would

13:30 never handle the army, never, ever. The discipline was willy-nilly [haphazard].

In your time in Pacific fleet operations, what Australian ports did you visit other than Fremantle?

Didn't.

Just Fremantle?

Oh yes, Christmas Isles [Christmas Island, otherwise known as Kiritimati, part of the Line Islands in the Pacific Ocean; part of (modern-day) Republic of Kiribati]. Yeah, we visited the Christmas Isles on the [HMS] Frobisher when the atomic bombs were being released and our ship lay 14 miles off

14:00 Christmas Isles and we were told that we were going to experience something that you will never probably witness again, so terrible, and what we had to do, the ship was laid broadside on to where the atomic drop was going to be and we had to turn our backs, put our hands over our eyes and count to 10 or something

14:30 and then turn around and as the bomb went off, a mighty explosion, something most terrible. It had a grumbling noise, a deep, down to earth grumbling noise and the whole mushroom, mushroomed and bellowed at fantastic speed and the shockwaves hit the boat. Some men were knocked down. Others grabbed

15:00 the guard rails to hold on. The ship was literally pushed sideways by the strength of the bomb and this again was an experimentation. They wanted to see what the fallout would do. It's now disclosed that many men who were contaminated passed it on to their children

15:30 and deformities were so. This was another explanation where they said, you know, that this is what we want you to watch. A little later on, [British Field Marshal Bernard 'Monty'] Montgomery came to Manoel Island [Club] in Malta, to give us a lecture about how the war went and what will happen in the future and we then got a lecture on the atomic bomb, how the

16:00 fusion is exploded and the damage it can do and they declared that there would be no more wars as such, because this was so devastating that if they started slinging them around, there'd be no humanity left, so there'd be no need for a navy of any size or army and that this then would bring sense to the people.

16:30 But I often wonder to myself that if aggression and that isn't inherent in us, because like the weather, it can be beautiful and then it can turn angry and we can be very nice and very kind and suddenly we can be very angry and do awful things to each other and it's a lack again of discipline. Discipline is so important in my mind and having

17:00 experienced discipline to the ultimate, as far as I'm concerned, I feel a better man for having gone through that discipline.

Can you also talk about the actual, the flash of that atomic test?

Well, it was more cloud than flash. It was like a big cloud of mushrooming, ever expanding, seemingly bursting at the seams to get

17:30 away laterally and vertically. It was going up and spreading and this is the time you got underway, because the fallout presumably, but no doubt there was some fallout but we wasn't the only people doing it. The Australians were submitted. They were even given special suits and after the bomb, so many hours after, they had to go and see how much damage it had done to where

18:00 it exploded and these men were contaminated. The experiment again was placed upon the Aboriginals. They were not told to get out of it. They bombed while they were still in their homes and the land that they owned and they made such easy suggestions to say, "I want you to watch this," but in fact what had happened was that it

18:30 subjected you either to radium or whatever was falling out. They didn't know what it was doing to people, so they had to find out, so we were the guinea pigs again and it's only recently now, especially

in Australia, where they get more sympathy than the Brits, of why their children are deformed, why was it that they was made

19:00 to go and inspect? Now we know. It was experimental and we were the guinea pigs and now they're hitting, the Australians are, hitting [up the British] Ministry of Defence for compensation but they're still trying to deny it and this is the awful thing about these intellectual people. They're not honest even with themselves and they're so featherbedded, they're influenced money-wise

19:30 and status doesn't say much for our lovely country, Britain. It's absolutely indoctrinated with class distinction still. People with money can get their little bit of paper [degree] and they're made for the rest of their lives. People like myself have got to fight every inch of the way and can still be turned down by these

20:00 executive officers that can eliminate you, ruin your life. I was looking so forward to becoming officer rank, I mean work my way through the ranks and finishing up. I wanted to be recognised as we all do. We should all be advancing, not going back, and these awful things they do to people.

20:30 They can do a lot of harm by merely stopping you from advancement. You worry, "Why, why did they do that?" I've gone through the pretty hard thing over my examinations, having to take my ship to sea and be officer of the watch in cold conditions in Reykjavik in Iceland, where we operated from,

21:00 doing the big fish war that was [the 1958 so-called First 'Cod War' occurred when Iceland extended its exclusive fishing zone from four miles off-shore to 12 miles causing confrontations with British fishing vessels and causing the Royal Navy to be deployed to intervene; later 'Cod Wars' saw the zone extended to 200 miles]. Icelandic vessels were ramming our British naval vessels because we were taking some of their fish. We wasn't operating at the correct number of miles out from Reykjavik in Iceland and, naturally, they would fight, because that cold water fish is most beautiful fish

21:30 and this is what we were doing. However, in all that, and then they can just come up and say, "It is regretted, but we are taking this man off the roster for advancement to," it's wrong. They wouldn't do it to their own and there is a clique. The

22:00 commanding officers of vessels, I think, are wonderful. I'll give you an example of the torpedoing of [HMS] Fiji. We was astern of the Empire Star, loaded with sailors and our captain, Captain Bean, laid his ship diagonally across the stern of the Empire Star

22:30 and had we not have received that torpedo, the Empire Star would have and for sure because she was so top heavy that a torpedo just below the waterline, anywhere between the quarter and the foredeck, she could have rolled and I believe that was a most wonderful thing that the captain did, although it wasn't explained whether he did or didn't, but I come to the conclusion

23:00 that somehow he'd got his ship in a position, there's the stern of the Empire [Star], I mean we're like that, and then we took it bang, right in the middle, so had it continued the few more yards it had to go, it would have probably struck the Empire Star there. I'll give you another example. In Madagascar, the French fleet was hold up in Madagascar, no sorry, wasn't Madagascar, it

23:30 was…I'll come to it, it's just gone, I'll come back to the name of it, and the Fiji again was involved. We'd steamed like crazy for about 30 hours to get to this position. Now what had happened was that Vichy French [name of the French government that collaborated with Nazi Germany after the fall of France; so named because it was based in the spa town of Vichy in central France] was going to turn their ships, aircraft carriers, destroyers, cruisers, over to the

24:00 Germans and these ships were in this harbour, which I'll name in a minute, and our captain said, over the Tannoy, "Tomorrow morning, we are going into harbour, just poke our nose into the harbour and we're going to train our guns, A-turret on that aircraft carrier, B-turret on that

24:30 cruiser and we're just going to poke our nose and we're going to say to you, you come over on the Brits side. You're going to, will be forced to come onto the Brit's side." And that night, I was only 16 years of age and I thought, "The man's crazy. We're going to be slaughtered."

25:00 He said, "That we're going to go in Martinique [part of the Lesser Antilles island group, Caribbean Sea; the French protectorate had decided to join the Vichy French as opposed to the Free French fighting with the Allies], Martinique was the harbour, there was the aircraft carrier, there was the big cruisers and some destroyers and the guns were, he presented the smallest amount of the ship to them, bar one and his guns was ready and we all thought, we were fearing it to come. He put down the

25:30 guard rails for anything that was coming low [standard procedure to prepare a ship for battle stations], so that small magazines could have a go and he poked his nose in and said, "Surrender or I will blast you out the water." I thought, "No, we'll be murdered. He'll slaughter us. The man's a fool." And, yet, had they have fired on us and sunk them [us; HMS Fiji], we'd have still trapped them inside. They couldn't get out. What a wonderful,

26:00 if only he would have explained it, but he didn't. He just said, "We're going in and we're going to knock the hell out of them unless they capitulate," so we were then, just before we went in, as we were approaching the shore some six or seven miles off, we noticed a trader [small trading ship] coming out

and the captain said, “We’re going in there where that ship came out. We’ve got

26:30 the Vichy French in there and we’re going to take them and that ship that’s coming out now is the trader and what she’s going to do, she’s going to wireless back to the frogs [French] and say that there is so many naval vessels out here.” There was only us and I got the gist of it. I thought, “The man’s mad, he’s stupid” and then it [occurred to me], “If they sink the ship, they can’t get out,”

27:00 and they knew that, the position he was, cause he didn’t present broadside on, which they could have knocked us for six [cricket parlance; soundly beaten us]. He just poked his nose, so all he had facing them was A and B-turrets and the 4-inch [gun], nothing else, but he was going to use one turret for the big one [aircraft carrier], another turret for the cruiser and these were 6-inch guns and they could pack a wallop at that range, which was only less than a mile away,

27:30 and we all night thought, “Next morning, we’re not going to be here because the man’s mad,” and when it was all over, I twigged it. I thought, “That’s what he’s done. If they sink us, they can’t get out anyhow. They’re trapped,” so they’ll still have no part in the war, but we took them, and then miles away there was several ships, heavy ships, couple of battleships I think, coming in to make sure and we merrily

28:00 went on our way and they took over and we captured them. Now there’s an illustration of what our naval captains were like. They are magnificent men. There’s not many get to that position but, you see, one did. That was our captain, Casulet, made an admiral and so he was and he was so unassuming and I always kick myself because he lived just up the road from me in

28:30 England, 20 or 30 minutes away and he was usually opening this and closing that and still active even though he was retired, cause they never really retire, you see, admirals and captains, but often my wife said to me, “Why don’t you ring him up and go and see him?” I said, “No, it’s not the done thing,” see discipline again. I said, “You can’t approach an officer

29:00 on the strength of you was both on the same ship,” but I had such admiration for him that had I done so I’m sure he would have said, “Come in, sit down and how are you going, what have you been doing, what’s up with you?” type of thing, see. He would have enjoyed that. I’m sure he would have, but I couldn’t, because I felt I was overstepping the mark and this is where decorum comes in and where you know instinctively what is

29:30 right and what is wrong and this is the beauty of our navy. I’ve quoted, I could never have been an army boy, never, ever, but our discipline was different. Yeah, we were so close together on ship and we each knew each other so well and there was a lot of laughing and skylarking and this was true of the navy. We’re bright and breezy and we had some

30:00 comics onboard. I mean they’d mimic anybody and make you laugh and that was good, because had it been the other way, morose and frightened and, you see, and people did get frightened. I was frightened especially when the [ack-ack, anti-aircraft] guns couldn’t fire more than 70 degrees [through the vertical plain]. Wherever we were, as soon as 70 degrees was up, on the ship’s Tannoy, “Take cover, take cover, take cover.” No matter

30:30 where you were you’d have to drop down and take cover and one time I remember there was a hatch and it was above the deck about that much…and I remember putting my head down behind this thing thinking, “What a stupid thing. I should have run and got inside, not here. I’m vulnerable here, silly bugger, me” type of thing and I was then petrified. I was alone and several times like when I went to knock the bungs in [small holes in ships are often ‘filled’ with a bung of soft wood and hammered into place to block water entering], when these two men, or one man

31:00 at least, wouldn’t go down and knock the bungs in and it was frightening. It was so cold and dark and I thought, “God if we’re hit, we’re goners,” and this was always the case and especially with the Fiji with a gaping hole. When we got her in dry dock, couldn’t believe it. You could get two double-decker buses in there and if she hadn’t have been built like she was built, we wouldn’t have survived. They were broken down, very much on the German scale of these pocket battleships.

31:30 They had small compartments, so meaning to say, if there was any damage the ocean could only get in up to that stage and then the other side you would reinforce but the buckling of the bulkheads often happened with the movement. See a ship’s got to move when she’s in a big sea and this is why she groans and they almost talk to you. They cry out and it’s an awful painful [noise], I can’t describe it, and this would

32:00 happen and in this black hole, it takes a lot of determination, you know, to just run and leave everything and, as I say, discipline again. You do it, you do your, cause you have a feeling in your mind, “I didn’t do right there,” like Sampson the boy. I didn’t do right. I should have gone back, said, “Look, this man needs attention now. He’s bleeding to death. How can you let a young man bleed to death?” and he did.

Can you tell us about the relationship you had with

32:30 **the ships that you were on?**

The relationships?

In particular like the [HMS] Durban?

Nothing like the Durban. You see, when I was promoted on the Durban to petty officer, I had to leave that ship because the idea is that once you get promoted you become too familiar with the troops. Well, I shouldn't say troops, with the sailors, and they then draft you to another ship. I went to this ship called the [HMS] Stronghold. It was an old,

33:00 very old destroyer of the First World War. She was a coal burner and I was drafted to this ship and I was so out of place. I was captain of the fo'c'stle. You see, there wasn't only the captain of the ship in the navy. You get a captain of the fo'c'stle. You get a captain of the quarterdeck. You get a captain of the waist [middle part of the ship]. You get a captain of the heads, which is the toilets. We're all captains, you see, and this is beautifully done when you think about it

33:30 cause you have a responsibility, "Who's the captain of the so and so, who's the captain of the fo'c'stle? Send the captain of the fo'c'stle to me," you see, and everything is directed and whatever that captain of that part of the ship says, you do, because I'd learnt a lesson earlier on where, as a boy, I was given all the rotten jobs under the sun and it used to hurt your knuckles when you knocked against that and you had to scrub off with a scrubber and saltwater. I mean, it's ridiculous, it seemed to me.

34:00 Why no soap? "Oh you dropped the soap over the side. Just do it with," see, and you'd have to sit on this beam and work backwards and you'd be toppling like this when you got the bucket to, then you'd have to drop the bucket and get more water and so on and I thought, "I'm going to complain about this. It's not right" and the others were loafers. They'd go to the back. When scrubbing the decks you'd do it in rows and you'd each scrub over each other, you see,

34:30 and all the lazy buggers used to be at the back and they'd be not hardly scrubbing at all, you see, and I was always in the front and I used to think, "Well, bugger it, why should I?" and then I couldn't do it. I had to be active. I couldn't do it. This was long before the nuthouse.

But you were telling us off camera before, like how you loved the Durban like a woman?

I did.

Can you tell us about that?

Yeah, because you see a ship is known as 'she' and why she's

35:00 known as she is because she's manhandled. That's a good one, isn't it? And there was something about the shape and the speed and the momentum of the ship and her firepower. Everything about her, the number of people onboard was just, you knew everybody, about 150 of us and it was just beautiful.

35:30 Everything was organised and a challenge was always put out, like I used to go weak at the knees when I had to box and Walter, the big heavyweight, used to come up and say, "Doug, you're going to be boxing tonight. I'll get you a good one," and he used to get me this Tug Wilson, about my stamp, about my weight. He'd knock the hell out of me and I couldn't understand why. Another little feller,

36:00 boxer, he was a lighter weight and, I'll think of his name in a minute, and I said to him one day, I said, "I can't understand it," I said, "Tug Wilson's knocking me all over. I can't read him." He said, "You know why?" I said, "No." He said, "He's southpaw [boxer who leads with the right hand off the right foot; convention is that most boxers lead with the left]. He leads with his right hand and his big one [punch] is on the left." He said, "Now, you change to southpaw, can you do that?" so I tried it, danced round a bit and threw up, he said, "You can."

36:30 He said, "Now next time you box him," he said, "he won't have a clue what you're up to, go southpaw." And although it felt uneasy, it didn't feel right, I did and I plastered him and I was so pleased because he'd plastered me so often and I really, and he said, afterwards he said, "Why suddenly are you beating me?" I said, "I don't know. Why do you think?" And he hadn't clued, he hadn't a clue and it was only this, I forget his name now,

37:00 told me to do it and I went back to him and I said, "Want to go southpaw?" He said, "Not with you, I don't!" Cause, apparently, although I didn't realise it, and coming in from the only bloke been under civilian bombing, he said, "When I joined the Durban there was no war in the Far East and been torpedoed as well and this is always known when you join a ship.

37:30 Somebody knows something about you, you know, "Who the hell is this?" like you know, and being a lone fellow on the jetty, and all this beautiful cruise ship come in with a beautiful bow and I just fell in love with it and I must have been made for the sea. I'm sure of it, cause when I left the navy I thought, "That's the end of that. No more sea." First thing I did, I went and bought a yacht and there she is up there and I loved it. I just loved it. I had to be near the sea

38:00 and now if anybody walks on the beach with me and they try and get nearer to the sea, I will move in and I will go to the [sea side], I don't know what it is. It's something that is a tonic to me, there's no doubt about it, but the other ships never came up to it. I was pleased I didn't get on the [HMS] King George V. I didn't like big ships and it was coincidental that I missed her because of this head wound but it did me

38:30 a favour. I would never have got to be a petty officer so young on that ship. There was so much competition and I know that there was a sentiment towards me because having been torpedoed and

gone through a pretty hectic time and also the bombing as well, you know, in the barracks and it was hell on earth, the bombing. You can't believe it unless, you know, unless you can visualise

39:00 these planes coming in from high altitude and then coming down to [ground] zero and, you know, and making such a hell of a noise and the bombs and it's...

You said that you did an escort at one stage to Fremantle, did you ever get shot within Australia at all?

I must tell you about this one. This was absolutely great. We were in convoy and

39:30 we had to pick up the Queen Mary [used as a troop ship] and we were the only escort and the reason they gave it [to us] was obviously for the expertise of our Captain Casulet. I just think he had all that on his plate, that big ship and before we left the main convoy, in came the [Queen] Mary

40:00 and she swung out and she belted off at 26 knots about a quarter of a mile from the [other] troop ships. All the troop ships going, "Hey, hey" and they were shouting back as well and to see this majestic great big, 81,000 ton ship, doing 20-something knots, and just leaving the others for standing . She circled the whole convoy then joined in and then off Fremantle we broke away and we alone escorted her to Singapore

40:30 and that was absolutely wonderful and our captain, you know, he used to get well out in front and then he would reduce speed and let the Mary go passed and you'd have all the waving and shouting and I used to think, "God, let's get this one through. This is the prize," but the reason she was so good, she was so fast, you know. I mean see anything

41:00 less than say 12 knots you had to zigzag, even 15 [knots] would be better and you [still] had to zigzag. Not with the Mary. She could go for it because very few submarines could shoot her a torpedo and by chance hit her. There'd be very little chance. She could belt it and that's why she survived, went into Singapore and she was gone within three days and I went onboard, you know, and

41:30 they'd torn all the guts out of her and wonderful photographs and stairways and the lounges and, but you could more or less read it and it was an absolute wonderful ship, so big.

Tape 8

00:39 Yes, having experienced the mighty explosion of an atomic fission, I thought to myself, "The people at Nagasaki and Hiroshima, how terrible it was to have to do that." The excuse was, of course,

01:00 if it was an excuse, was the fact that this would shorten the war and save many, many American lives. The old saying, all is true [fair] in love and war, absolutely that was it. The Japanese, rather than give up, they

01:30 committed suicide, they were so entrenched to their emperor. He was a god. I mean how silly can you get, in so far that the Japanese believed he was a god and they made it so by making them not look at him whenever he was available to be

02:00 looked at, not very often, usually on a white charger, but they mustn't look at him, he is a god, and how crazy. Now if they believe that, well, I don't know. When I hear some of those Japanese on these war films that you get occasionally, when you hear what they say, how it all came about, that they were under orders and now

02:30 in retrospect that they look back on their things and had it all to come again, they couldn't have done it, but you see the real main reason of Japan starting to try and invade other countries, their country was too small. They were being more or less overpopulated for the area they had.

03:00 They were at loggerheads with Russia over a small island and they wanted to grab as much as they could and, of course, this country with so few people in it was an absolute, what a prize, so they more or less did an encirclement by going over to Papua New Guinea first and then entrenching themselves there, where they could then come across and play havoc,

03:30 by bombing Darwin at least, which was the nearest touch. This was the main reason. They were running out of space and they wanted to advance their population because they were alongside and betwixt Russia on the one hand and China on the other, and what they did to the Chinese at Manchuria is so terrible what

04:00 they did. They seemed to hate the Chinese and yet really they're cousins. I don't know where the Japanese derived from, but I think there were some Chinese crossing with some other race of people to make the Japanese. Japanese and the mind boggles of how they went about it, but they were determined to do it because long

04:30 before the war happened in the Pacific, they were then, and I can't understand why this wasn't known that they were building up and contravening what ships they should and shouldn't have and the strength of their armies. It was all being built up ready and had the Germans have taken England

05:00 then the Japanese would have come in. What am I saying?

Just said if the...?

Yes, they would have come in, because they could then grab, you see. Now, if they hadn't have been coming in, they weren't justified to take anything, but since they came on the side of the Germans, then it was their right to say, "Alright, well, we'll have this

05:30 stretch. We'll have, you know, so and so," and they were desperate to expand, so all these factors come together but, again, it is greed mostly, and it's still greed with, you know, with what people do and want and it is such a shame that we can't live amicably and that we don't have to go through these traumas because one madman can

06:00 sacrifice millions of people, which has been shown by [Adolf] Hitler, who was an absolute madman. And I can't understand there either how the Brits didn't understand they were building up these armies and making their roads and they were building their roads so that their transports could get through so quickly from one place to another and I can't believe that we had nothing, which we didn't, and people were staving off Germans that had dropped

06:30 out of planes, with hayforks. They had no rifles. I mean what, another thing I can't understand about England is the mere fact that in the '30s, even the '20s, we were the richest country in the world, owning a third of the world almost and yet we're the most poorly paid. The working man, before the war, he earned about an average of 30 to 35

07:00 shillings a week and for that he had to work on a Saturday morning. And this is why I took this into account as a young boy and thought, "Who wants to work for that? And where do I work on the land, who wants to work on the land?" And I used to do this working on the land for my poor old mother who was always desperate for extra money and we boys used to do all kinds of things to help her and we used to go on the golf course and

07:30 carry the golf bags for the intellectuals who would pay you a couple of bob [shillings] or two and sixpence and sometimes I was able to go around three times. That was three times five miles and then 10 miles of cycling to earn seven [shillings] and sixpence. Where did all that money go to, who took all that money and why is it that the Queen, the Queen herself, who earns over a million [pounds] a day in interest,

08:00 never gives anything away, never looks at the slums of London and people sleeping in garbage bins, absolutely running out of her ears with money. And as for Prince Charles, who has inherited millions as well, what a joke he is, what a joke. I mean it's pathetic. Our country is better off without them, in my view, although, at one time I used to stand up with my bottle of rum

08:30 or my glass of rum, "The Queen, God bless her," not any more as far as I'm concerned. I think it's disgraceful how the British people, and they seem to accept it, they don't seem to have the sense to fight for anything, they accept it. I mean the coalminers and, who's getting a pittance of money, and hard working people. I mean the people where I came from were very hard working, very tough people

09:00 and they gave you a hard time. Probably, that was good or bad, I don't know, but I didn't like it. And I can't understand how our big country now is still very wealthy but still not giving as it should to the people. The people make the country and it beats me that, in those days, I mean I got chilblains [inflammation caused by severe cold] for the want of a pair of boots,

09:30 because we were so active that we used to go jump in dykes and do all kind of activities and, of course, I used to kick the toes out of my boots playing footy and I had no more boots. Mother couldn't afford the boots and father used to go and drink the profits, what profits there were, and so I got chilblains. My mother couldn't look after them, my feet, and Mrs Hammonds, who lived

10:00 next door, used to come in every day and separate my toes and the flesh used to fall off one toe and then the other, and I used to howl with pain and she used to say, "Now this won't hurt you, I'll promise you," and she'd be as gentle as she could, but it used to terrorise me and my feet went black. I thought I was going to, I thought I was honestly going

10:30 into hysterics it was so bad. And it's, the only other time that it was as bad was when I was hit in the leg with shrapnel coming out of Singapore and it wouldn't heal and every morning I had to go down to the sickbay and Phil Sayers, excellent medico, he used to plug it with something and he'd have to pull this

11:00 wadding or gauze out and then push the other in and it wasn't making any headway and it got deeper into my thigh and my poor old leg here now, all the veins have gone and I, you know, I was traumatised by this. And after about four months of trying to be treated the doctor came in one day, he said, "We're going to have to take your leg off." I said, "What?" He said, "I'm going to have to take your leg off." I said, "I'm not having

11:30 my let off." He said, "Then you'll die, it's gangrenous." I said, "It's not." He said, "It's gangrenous and

we'll have to take your leg off." I said, "Well, I'm not going to allow it." He said, "Then you'll die." I said, "Then I'll die," and when I was treated I was given a bit of wood, little bit of wood, put it in my mouth and when the pain started, when it started brogling [?] at the back, I used to, bite on this and it was so painful and yet, I don't know whether I've repeated myself, but

12:00 it was years later when we found out that the Japanese were introducing something into the bombs, these anti-personnel bombs. The idea of the anti-personnel bomb was to fragmentate [fragment] and hit as many people running on the deck to their stations as is possible and, at the same time, whatever it was they put into these bombs, turned the flesh gangrenous and it was blamed on the climate, that

12:30 it was so hot.

So how did your leg start to heal eventually?

Well, eventually, when I got back home to England, I got working on it myself and I used to put Morhulin Ointment. It was like a white thick ointment which I stuffed into it with gauze, put gauze over the top after that and it did the trick. Mind you, I've got a big hole in there, but it did the trick and I thought, "Well, that's done it. That was the climate,"

13:00 but 50 years down the track, it wasn't that apparently, cause a lot were very, you know, the shrapnel used to fragmentate into little pieces, sometimes as big as your thumb and other times if it hit the ship's side and anybody running anywhere and they were caught, cause it used to fragmentate like that, so it'd catch you down below first of all and the idea was to demoralise the ship's crew and,

13:30 you know. Next question?

I was just thinking you've been through so many traumatic sort of episodes in your life, what do you think has kept you going throughout. I mean, you talked earlier about as a boy you went up to that man [Colby] and said, "You nearly broke my spirit," but he didn't, and then it seems to me that, despite everything, your spirit's always been

14:00 **very strong, do you know why that is?**

Think it's in the genes. My mother was a very strong personality and unlike my father that was led, a bit weak, in the pubs and stuff, didn't get his priorities right, but mother was [a] very determined woman and very sensible woman and kept us all together. She thought the world of her children and especially me because

14:30 I was not very attractive as a kid, very skinny, always hungry and all the time I had to fetch water from the pump, which was just a dyke. We drank the water from a dyke, had all the bits and pieces of weed in it, for years, and then it belonged to my grandmother, the houses we lived in, free, rent free, and this dyke,

15:00 she had to get a filter put in, by putting gravel and stones and things like that in, then it was a little bit better, but it never seemed to hurt us. We all survived pretty well on it and the water we have here today, I mean it's wonderful compared, but grandmother was so good in that respect and then any doubt I had, I was always with grandmother. I'd always call in and see her and she'd always give me an apple or something like that,

15:30 talk to me. And I remember going one Sunday, cause we had to go to Sunday school three times on a Sunday, morning service, bible classes in the afternoon and evening service, and the churches used to be absolutely packed out. All granny's side [of the family], the Bradleys, all had Vandyke beards [Goatee beard], gold watches, dark suits and very, very religious and they were all in, you know, this Corning coal merchant's

16:00 business. Father was, could have been brought back in, but he was a goner. It was such a shame, cause at the time you didn't realise what the war had done. I mean he'd go in the pubs and in no time at all, there'd be for some reason a fight. I remember once that I used to go weekends and work on a farm and this farmer was a very, very rough old boy but

16:30 good at heart and he seemed to like me, since what I used to do is to muck out the cows [clean the cow stalls/enclosure] and all this and I used to stay there the weekend, wouldn't go home. I'd stay there and he met my father in the pub one day and he had a habit of banging him on the chest like this and he said, "That young boy of yours, your Jean," he said, "I want to adopt him." Dad said, "Don't talk so bloody silly." So [the farmer] he said,

17:00 "I'm telling you and…" [Dad] said, "Harry, don't do that, don't do that." He said, "I'm telling you, I want to adopt that boy." He said, "I can give him a better life than you can." "Don't talk stupid," he said, "be off with you." He said, "I'm telling you," and he kept doing this and Dad said, "Don't do this. I'm warning you, do it again and I'll smash you." And he did and he knocked him down and he got up again and he knocked him down again and he split his nose wide open and Dad was great with his fisticuffs. He was

17:30 the army middleweight, not middleweight, welterweight champion [in the modern context a welterweight is between 63.5kg and 67kg]. So I don't know where I got it from but I put it down to [HMS] Ganges, but I know that when I used to lead the horses on the weigh[ing] machine where they

used to weigh all the stuff as it went through the coal yards, all the sugar beet and stuff like that, he was on the weighing machine, he used to be weighing it and all the other little fellers my size would lead the horses, they used to have a team of six horses

18:00 and the front team, we used to have to lead to get it direct onto the weighbridge and father used to be tapping on the window and pointing at this kid holding the horses and saying, “Go on, have a fight with him,” and I thought, “No, I don’t want to fight, why should I want to fight him?” and I used to think, “Dad, you’re a bit crazy you are, wanting me to,” you know, he was an innocent little kid and he wanted me to start fighting him and then he’d say, “That one then, have a…,” you know, and he was all out. And then sometimes he’d

18:30 spar with you, you know, and back off and pick off and sway and he was good, there’s no doubt about it, but then it got worse. We used to have the fairground come in and they would have the roundabouts and the swings and this was a great thing for our place, for little Wainfleet, cause there was only 2000 or 3000 [people] including the outliers [those who lived out of town but the surrounding district] and everybody knew everybody and everybody put everybody down and

19:00 I don’t know what it was about them, but when I got to Portsmouth I couldn’t believe the difference in people. They were lovely people, friendly in the pubs and everywhere. They were delightful, invite you home and give you a good meal, even though they were short on rations themselves, but wonderful people and I found that to be my home and I obviously got a lot of people’s backs up [annoyed], because this book that I’ve written

19:30 I’ve sold in my town and when they read about how I’m explaining to you, how I found them hard and always trying to put you down, it’s absolutely true, and they must have thought, “Oh dear, he’s a bit of a boy, running his own people down,” but that’s exactly how I felt about it, and in a way they helped me to get out of it, cause I looked around, I thought, “Don’t like this, labouring.

20:00 There’s no point in being a grocer boy. There’s no point in being a paper boy.” Now that was a thing. I took up cycling to increase my height. My father said, “You’ll never get in the navy because you’re not tall enough.” He said, “You see.” So I thought, “Right, I’ll get a job. Paper boy.” I went to Mr Cooks, the paper man, and I said, “Can I be a paper boy?” He said, “Yes, of course you can,” and he gave me the worst lot of the lot, all outside in

20:30 the country. And he was supposed to be religious, in fact, he went to college. My father was college educated and he went to college with my father and, yeah, and he got me to do this round and I used to have boxes on the side at the back stuffed with papers and I’d have a big pack here…stuffed with papers, then I’d have another leather bag with the money. And I had to take the money and one time he used to get me to put out all the money

21:00 on the desk, in a private room, then he’d count it. He’d say, “But you’re a penny over [the] due’. I said, “Well, somebody must have given it to me, then.” He said, “Who?” I said, “I don’t know.” And he kept doing this and he said, “You’re threepence, threepence here. What’s this threepence for?” And he checked it all up and I said, “I don’t know. Some people when they pay the papers, they give me a tip.”

21:30 He said, “Like what?” I said, “Well, sometimes a halfpenny and sometimes a penny,” I said, “and I put it all in the bag.” I said, “And then when you take it out, you take what you know to be the proper price and what’s left is mine.” He said, “No, I don’t like this. I don’t like this,” he said. And I said, “Well, what I’ll do, I’ll put everything in the bag again and we’ll put it out on the counter and you can count it,” and he was trying to make out

22:00 that I was nicking [stealing] some, you see. Now this was religion for you, which I had no time for either, you know, and it then transpires he wrote to all these people that I told him and they couldn’t remember whether they’d given me anything or not, so that didn’t prove a thing and he still wanted to get, he kept all my pennies and halfpennies and said, “When I’ve satisfied myself that

22:30 it’s right, then I’ll let you have this back again,” which was what, five pence at the most, and so what I found out was that he was charging a delivery fee. Now I was delivering and he was getting a fee from those people within the monies with our papers as well, so he was taking a fee from me which

23:00 was about twice as much as, in other words, that he was, how can I put it? He was taking the money that should be gone to me as the delivery boy, but it wasn’t, it was going to him, and I found this out and so I said to myself, “Well, I’m not going to do this any more because he’s making out I’m pinching things,” and I never was

23:30 and I never got my five pence back. And I thought to myself, “Now that’s the kind of people they were,” and he was a churchgoer and he was robbing me. He could have easily have given me a good income, you know, I think I got about what, five shillings for the complete week, you know. I’d have to deliver in the evenings when I left school and the weekends was right round and so I told him that I was going to leave.

24:00 Then I got a job as a grocery boy and I used to go around with his son [of the owner] in a smelly old paraffin kind of transport and it used to stink of paraffin and I used to sell all confectionary and paraffin and, to the outliers, you know, they weren’t very fussy about what they got, and that didn’t last very long. Then I got this job at the boating lake and that was more like it and I used to go in for rowing

competitions and win and I found I can

24:30 manhandle a boat. Anyhow, and I thought, “Mmmm.” Then there was a boat called the Elizabeth Allen [?] that used to take people out to see the seals on the seal islands and I said to my father, “Can you get me a billet on there to go and see the seals?” He said, “Yes,” and I went out on this cruiser and we used to see the seals on the banks and how they used to move and all the rest of it. It was quite something in those days and I thought, “This is great,”

25:00 and I liked the motion of the ship and so when I saw the notice ‘Join the navy and see the world’, I thought, “Well, that’s it, that’s it.” Then seeing the PTIs, that’s what I want to be, and so I got as far as I could possibly go in the PT branch, so I went from PTI second-class, PTI first-class, staff PTI and then passed for officer-ship [to be commissioned] and passed and rejected [by the Admiralty],

25:30 so I got as high as I could go, never dreaming when I first saw these guys that I would ever make it, because in those days you had to have seven references or…what are they called? Seven recommendations for either boxing, swimming, whatever, and the officer in charge of that division would rectify [certify] and say, “I consider this man, you know, so and so,” so he had to get these seven and they were hard to get, before you were

26:00 ever able to qualify and, furthermore, you had to be a leading seaman and so when I got made leading seaman at 18, then I thought, “I’m getting on that ladder. I’m going to get there, I’m going to get there.” And then, of course, as time went on I was put on the staff at the PT school, where I trained men to become physical training instructors, and that was the highlight and I remember the officer said to me, “You’re

26:30 going to the PT school on the staff.” I said, “It’s no good you sending me there, sir,” I said, “because I don’t get along very well with the chief staff instructor.” He said, “I don’t care about that.” He said, “The chief staff instructor doesn’t select who goes there. I select who goes there and you’re going there.” It’s a good thing he did, because then I thought to myself, “Well, if he can get promoted, I’m damn sure I can do it,” so I went to the commander and I said, “Sir, is

27:00 there any vacancies on the PT branch?” cause we were the smallest branch in the navy, apart from the divers, “Is there any vacancies coming up to become a PT officer?” He said, “I’ll make out, I’ll find out,” and he came back a week later and he came in the gym and he said, went over to him and he said, “Yes, there should be a couple of vacancies within the next couple of years.” I said, “Well, do you think I should go ahead and go for it?” He said, “Yeah, go for it,” so that meant

27:30 leaving the PT school, going to sea and going off [to] Iceland with this fisheries dispute [?] and then coming back and then going on a course for officers at the PT school and I was about six weeks too late. The course had started. They said, “Oh well, you have been a staff instructor, so six weeks you’re in, go on, you’re in,” and so went

28:00 through the course, did very, very well, indeed. I even surprised myself and that was it. I’d passed professionally and educationally for commissioned officer which, as you know now, was very sad, never achieved but I should have achieved, because it meant so much money as well, not only position, but money. You see

28:30 a lieutenant commander retiring would pick up 10 times more than I pick up with my pension and it was cruel to think that they could do that, what they did, and they knew about it. I mean you’re not telling me they didn’t know. They knew what was going on. I mean it comes down from above and I don’t know how they could do such things. It’s callous and

29:00 so it goes on and I must tell you now that there was a psychiatrist in Sydney who, what was his name? I’ll come to his name in a minute. Anyhow, what he did, he was very, very ambitious and he used to go to America and England to all these

29:30 psychiatrists above his rank and he would pick their brains and one of the doctors, one of the Brits, who had demonstrated that it was dangerous to put people to sleep for indefinite periods and he lost, he killed two people, so he cut it at that. He said, “That’s it, I’m not doing it any more.” Now

30:00 this man, [his surname] begins with a B and I’ll think of his name in a minute, this man started his own private hospital, having been to America and got a guise [semblance] of what was done to the brain there and to Britain and, I think, to several other countries, and he spent a long time away, sifting a bit of information here and there, and this doctor in England, who was the supremo of all the lot of them, said, “That you must never

30:30 sedate them over four hours. The body can kick out any foreign body or substance within four hours. The body’s so wonderful that it can kick out all this rubbish in four hours, so you must never go and sedate them for more than four hours cause it doesn’t give the body time to discharge what’s in there already.” And so he took this aboard

31:00 and he was convinced that this man wasn’t right and he decided he would sedate them for 24 hours, f48 hours, a week, even three months and he was losing them right, left and centre. Bailey [Dr Harry Bailey], psychiatrist Bailey, and he started up in this private hospital at, I forget where it was in Sydney [Chelmsford Private Hospital], and he would sedate them

31:30 for days on end and just get the nurses to inject them if they came out of it, give them another shot. The body of course, and what did they finish up like? Just like we did, trembling and out, couldn't come round, had to slap them around to bring them round. They were frothing at the mouth and he killed, believe this, or believe it not, it's all in my book, 40 people before anything was done about it,

32:00 and they described, some of them that managed to get out of it, they described what happened. They would be sedated and sedated and sedated and then they would be given the old discharge to bring them round, you know, and I mean how can anybody, even me, I know nothing about it now, to what they must have known, but even how could they do such a thing to people's

32:30 brains? I mean knock the brain out, what have you got? A zombie, and he killed 40 people. He finally committed suicide in his car because of what he'd done, because the organisation called the, there's an organisation that took him to task about this. Scientologists,

33:00 and they took him to task and they really went for him, said, "This is wrong, what you're doing. You're killing people." The health authorities allowed it to go on. They never intervened. He was known as the big thing in psychiatry this guy, but…what did I say his name was?

Bailey?

Bailey. He was the big man and what he used to do, he used to leave instructions with his nurses, "Oh, if he wakes,

33:30 give him another one, give him another jab, put him out again." And then this other doctor would come in to awaken them after so long, depends on what he said, whether it's four days or four months, not getting to four months, but three months he did, completely sedated and this other guy used to put the old electrodes on and unless their toes did

34:00 that, then it wasn't good enough. If their toes didn't contract, he gave them a higher dose till it did and I can believe this now, cause I remember something like this, that when they hit you with this voltage the whole body shoots off where you're lying. You can feel your body lift and because you're so sedated, you see what they did, you know, the sedation alone was bad enough, you know,

34:30 to sedate you as they did because sometimes it was overdone and they had to slap you around to make you take food and, as I've explained before, that if you couldn't take it through the mouth, they used to stick it up your bottom and that was absolutely degrading and I remember one of the…

Orderlies?

Yeah, used to come around and slap me around

35:00 and he saw me one morning in this huge great big room where we used to congregate to wait orders of what happened, sometimes left there all day doing nothing, he came in, he said, "I want to see you." And I said, "What do you want to see me for?" He said, "You hit me across the jaw," he said, "And it took two of us to hold you down." I said, "Well, I didn't know anything about it." He said, "Well, you do, have a look at this," and he had a big bruise on his jaw here and

35:30 he was more or less saying, "If you do it again, we're going to slap you around a bit more." And in the book it explains quite a lot about individuals having come through it and got compensated. One lady who they did it to for several times, many times, she didn't know how many times either but quite a lot of times. And whether you signed for it or not, it didn't make any difference

36:00 whether you signed, if you didn't sign, that was it, they still did it, agreeing to it, which you didn't agree but you got, and you didn't know what you was doing. I don't remember ever signing anything and this lot, I mean it was really good reading on my part and I read it and I thought, "Right, well this should be disclosed as well because he," as I say, "committed

36:30 suicide and these people weren't all compensated." Some were and they described their experiences and they were left in dirty conditions. The nurses were brutal to them and they were forever changing because some couldn't stick it and so they had new nurses come in and they used to be laid bare, you know, in the nude on the beds and they were spewing and doing all the other things. It was

37:00 just an absolute terrible place to be, as I'd experienced, and this probably was worse because the man [Bailey] couldn't get it through his thick head and he wouldn't take the advice of that doctor, of not sedating them longer than four hours and he did and he said, "The longer they're down, the better they'll become." And it's all down in black and white and that's one other way of

37:30 disclosing, but it still goes on. Even the Australians, they did this to the Australians. When I told you about, you know, how they indoctrinated you and did exactly you were told, they kept repeating it, you know. They'd have something going, repeat, repeat, repeat, and you would be repeating it. You was told, "Come on, repeat it, repeat it," and so they took your mind over. They had a special name for it.

38:00 **So do you remember the specific things that you were told to repeat?**

For what?

When they did that to you, do you remember what they were telling you to do?

No.

Or to repeat?

No, I don't remember it. All I remember about where they did it, this hospital has been going on now for yonks [a long time]. It's a mental hospital. It's huge and we, as I said, just took [up] part of it,

38:30 and having got in there, it…what am I talking about?

You were talking about how basically they brainwash you to remember things?

Yes, all I remember about it was we were in this cubicle. It was dark. The ceilings was very, very high, of wood, and all this was green on the sides and it was narrow and long and I remember I

39:00 used to be groaning and moaning and being slapped around to take food, but other than that, I don't remember. And then I s'pose when he'd done his course of treatments on me, then, of course, I was like the others, just roaming around, blotto [spaced out].

So how do you know you were asked to repeat things over and over again, is that a direct memory or you've just heard?

No, this is what we heard later on, why it was done, not because of war trauma. It was done

39:30 to, because what the Russians wanted was that when they did it to their men and they told them to do something, they would do it, no argument about it, it was done, see, and they indoctrinated that into it and it was called mind control. They took control of your mind and this then spread because each was, silly people we are, there was each

40:00 finding out what the Russians were doing, then they found the French were doing it. Then they found the Australians were doing it. The Australians did it a lot, and then the Canadians were doing it and it just went on from there. They wanted people to jump to it or do what they said. I don't know how they would accumulate so many people to do it but it was a form of mind control and that you could,

40:30 in other words, control people, huge numbers of people, you know, cause normally we're a bit, "Well, I don't know about, I don't know whether I'll do that, no way, why should I?" cause you analyse it, but with this you have no recourse to it, it's just done. And this, then we found out was done, and in the book here, it explains it fully of every part of it. In fact, I think I've got a photograph here of the man, the Australian man

41:00 that did it, Bailey, and it was awful the conditions that he did, but even the Australian troops were, deep-sleep therapy, one 24…

41:30 **Did it take you a long time to put your book together?**

Two years.

42:00 I don't think I have got…

Tape 9

00:03 I was in Brighton, near Brighton. I'd just come back from Burma and they had these combined operations all down the south coast of England with all these landing craft

00:30 and having come back from Burma, I then was put into a ship called HMS Lizard. They all had names similar to that. We were well covered on the south coast with these landing craft and it was just after the time I'd have arrived and met that man that you saw

01:00 in the photograph, Mick, that suddenly, peace in our time, in other words, the war was over and, of course, we dropped everything and started to celebrate and we got into the pubs, and the pubs in those days was the life and sole of everybody's party. I mean everybody made a beeline for the pubs and, of course, we got to the pubs and had a few drinks and then filtered out onto the road when they chucked out

01:30 at two o'clock and since the war was ended, the pubs were open day and night and, of course, we just made whoopee. We had these girls that were on the Lizard, in the capacity of stores and typewriters [typists] and things like that, and they joined in. They knew a little bit about us, not a lot, but they soon became very warmed to us and, of course, we

02:00 went up and down the main street, arm in arm, singing and shouting, "There'll always be an England" and everything like that and it was one glorious time. I remember having the white ensign [Royal Navy flag] on a stick and I was walking down the street doing this with it, see, and arm in arm with all this lot and more people were joining in as it came down and, of course, it was

02:30 absolutely wonderful. We went to the pictures with this flag. I woke up and there was no flag and I woke up with all these fellers and girls sitting alongside me and then we recuperated, had a quick wash off and back to the pub, piano was playing and it was great, yeah. That was a point that I must tell you about. From HMS Lizard, the pub would be about 800

03:00 yards from the Lizard and every time I went to the pub there would be two old boys, one with an accordion and one with a violin, and they had dirty old raincoats and their shoes were, and they looked real tramps, and they played such beautiful music and they were playing something [so] that I stopped and I let them play on, and I said, "What's the name of that?" And he said, "It's

03:30 Fascination Waltz." And it goes, "La, la, la, la, la, la, la-la," and it sounded beautiful the way they were, you know, and I got in the pub and got quite well in with the landlord and I said, "Do you know what?" He said, "What?" I said, "There's a couple of musos," call them musos here in Australia, but musicians, up the road, I said, "And they are wonderful. One's an accordion and one's on." He said, "My word,

04:00 I could do with them." I said, "You wouldn't regret it." I said, "I know the pub's full, but," I said, "music they play is out of this world." He said, "Really?" I said, "Well, I love music and," I said, "I'm telling you, they'll play anything." He said, "Well tell them to come and see me." So the next time ashore, we used to stop, quite, eight or nine of us and we'd say, "Play so and so," and they'd set off and a couple of bob [shillings] in the hat, everybody put in a couple of bob in the hat and

04:30 they wasn't standing in a very busy area but they seemed to take that same place. Anyhow, we passed them every time we went to the pub and I went up to them this time and when they stopped playing, I said, "I've got some good news for you guys," and they said, "Oh yeah?," men of about 55, 60, said, "The landlord at the pub," I said, "would be delighted if you was to come and play for them." I said, "I don't know how many times he wants you, day or,

05:00 you know, days or what, evenings or weekends," I said, "but, he would love you to go over and," I said, "You will get a few bob, too, more than you get standing here in the cold." He said, "No." I said, "No?" He said, "No." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, that's what ruined us. We were orchestral musicians," he said, "and we hit the grog and," he said, "we went to seed."

05:30 He said, "So we decided, my mate and I, we would never, ever set foot in a pub again." And I felt so sorry, but that was just one incident that I recall, yeah. And getting back to VE [Victory in Europe] Day, as I told you, we, for the first time decided, after what was it, nearly 18 years, 20 years, we decided we'd go back home.

06:00 Having arrived, my sister said to me, "The Daily Mirror's been on the phone to you and wants you to ring them." I said, "The Daily Mirror, what the hell for?" She said, "I don't know, they wouldn't disclose. They wanted to talk to you," so finally I got on the blower [telephone]. And they said, "And your name is?" I said, "Douglas Warth?" [They] said, "Now, where are you on the photograph?" I said, "In the middle, right in the middle, with a WRENS [Women's Royal Naval Service] hat on."

06:30 He said, "Oh, yeah, got you. Now do you know anybody else in that photo?" I said, "Oh yeah." He said, "Well." I said, "Yeah, a real pal of mine, at the end there, with his girlfriend, the WREN." And he said, "Now, anybody else?" I said, "Yes, one or two of the girls there." I said, "The one I'm hugging there." And he said, "Oh yeah, where's she?" And I said, "I haven't got a clue." He said, "Anyway of getting hold of her?" I said, "No, I don't know." So he said, "Well, anyhow, how would you like to come to the

07:00 victory, the 50th year of the end of the war, to London?." I said, "Well, we're about 300 and something odd miles away from you," I said, "and I'm not that flush with money [he doesn't have a lot]." I said, "I don't think I can make it." He said, "Oh, no way.," he said, "We want you to come." He said, "We're going to pay all expenses." He said, "We'll give you a carrier to meet you and take you across London," he said, "and then, you know, you'll meet your mate

07:30 cause we've got him lined up to meet you outside the hotel." They said, "And, incidentally, it's one of the best hotels on Hyde Park." He said, "You have a view over the park. You'll see everything going on." I said, "Well, thank you very much. That's very kind of you." He said, "Not at all," and we went to this and it was absolutely stupendous. They'd built a huge great stage. It was magnificent, the backdrop and everything and all the musicians and the people taking part.

08:00 There were people cracking jokes. There was Vera Lynn [popular British singer of 1930s and '40s] with her sentiments. It was one hell of a good party because everybody joined in singing. When the most popular songs started in the war then, and it's funny when people band together in adversity and this was an absolutely beautiful way of expression, general expression and, of course, with more people you get a greater kick because you seem to

08:30 be coming in with them and it's really something that comes in automatically. But we listened to all this and in the evening went back to the hotel and I wanted to pay the waiter. He said, "No, it's all paid for." We could drink as much as we liked. We had beautiful meals and, yeah, and then they wanted us to stay on, but we couldn't. We had to get back to where I was but three days had

09:00 passed and we had three days of, we were out and then, of course, Mick, I then, on the way back, when we were flying out, went to stay with Mick at his place and he was on about the past and how he meant

to write and didn't write and what happened. I wondered if he had made it and I felt the same about him and we just exchanged our views and he said, "Do you remember that time, Doug,

09:30 when I said to you, 'Come on home with me'." He was a Londoner, you see, and we were in Brighton, which was only an hour's run by train, and he said, "Come home and meet mother," so I went home with him and she was wonderful, wonderful cook, and just fell about us like nothing on Earth, you know. And then next morning we had to go back to the ship and what happened was there was an air raid going on and,

10:00 it wasn't a big one, we were laughing or stood laughing waiting for the bus and making quite a joke of this and there she was crying and saying, "Please don't go. I'll ring the navy and we'll tell them that you've been held up in an air raid." We said, "Oh this isn't an air raid, this is nothing at all, good God almighty. Now we've gotta go." And so we jumped on the bus and we saw her crying and waved her like this, goodbye, and

10:30 went back to our ships. Eventually went to see all my family in various parts of the country, big family of eight and all made very, very welcome and, yeah, that was a very nice finish to VE Day [50th Anniversary]. Just let's hope that I can go for the 100th [anniversary], I hope, yeah.

Can you remember where you were when you heard about the atomic bomb going off in

11:00 **Japan?**

Yeah, we were heading back home to England, to pay off. That was the [HMS] Frobisher, yeah, and so that's when we heard about it and having experienced some of it, didn't think much of it really, you know. It was a massive great thing, but I mean it just fell off our shoulders really, didn't think any more, didn't think about contamination, didn't think about anything and they even

11:30 fooled, presumably, probably the captain knew, but they fooled all the ship's company, you know. The really thing was to see if there was any detriment to anybody, you know. They had to kind of have people involved to see if there was any repercussions and God knows about the poor aboriginals because they were still here.

Can you tell me how it came about that you decided to live in Australia?

12:00 Yes, I can. My eldest boy, David, he was absolutely brilliant at college and at sports and I used to take him into the gym and teach him a lot of things and when he went to this college he furthered, you know, his expertise and he was a lovely kid and I was told about this when I used to go shooting pigeons on this farm,

12:30 this big farm. I used to see these clouds of pigeons going over and settling on the wheat and I thought, "God, if I could get to those, they're just destructing that field." And I went to see the farmer whose field it was and took the boys and he said, "Yeah, certainly you can shoot the pigeons," he said, "as long as you ring and tell me which field you're going to be on." And I did this and after some time Mrs Budden said to me, she said, "You know, you are such a good father."

13:00 I said, "Am I? Why am I a good father?" She said, "Your boys are always with you." I said, "Yeah, it's strange that." I said, "I never invite them but they always like to come shooting with me," you see, and David, he had a single bore .410 [shotgun] at the age of about 10 or 11 and he used to shoot with that, the pigeons, you know, come out in all weathers. Then we had a boat and we used to go fishing, you know, we'd be out in all weathers in the boat and she knew this and she said, "You know,

13:30 it's a shame that more fathers don't take on board their sons, and time passes so quick." And it's true, cause I know when Dave was 11, after that he shot up [grew] and 17 he was out here [Australia], and having got out here he did a couple of years walking around Australia, getting lifts and shooting horses, poor things, and breaking up batteries, to have a few dollars to see him through,

14:00 and he didn't know where he wanted to settle but finally he got on this farm and the farmer was really delighted that he could help out and do the tractor work and stuff and then after about a few months his father said to David, he said, "Do you like fishing, Dave?" And Dave said, "Yeah, my word. I used to go fishing with my Dad and we love it." He said, "Well, on Sunday," he said, "we're going to Eden [southern NSW]." Now they were at Wagga Wagga [south-western inland NSW]

14:30 and it wasn't that far to go to Eden, probably four or five hours. He went to Eden and he saw all these divers, these abalone divers, and so he got chatting to them and he said, "What's the score with this, how does one become an abalone diver?" [The diver said] "Oh, you just go and get a license." [David said] "Who from?" [The diver said] "Oh, the harbour master or the fisheries officer." [David] said, "Oh yeah, how much?" "A couple of dollars." "A couple of dollars?" However,

15:00 he said to his farmer mate, he said, "Dave," his name was Dave, he said, "Dave, I'm sorry, I'm going to leave you." [Dave the farmer said] "Oh, Dave, you're not going to leave?" He said, "Yeah, I'm going to leave." "Oh Dave, you're not going to leave?" He said, "Yeah, I'm going to leave." He said, "Where are you going to go?" He said, "I'm going fishing. I'm going to Eden." He said, "You're not, oh, stay with me." He said, "I'll put your money up." He said, "No, Dave, I'm off." "Oh you're not Dave?" "I am Dave." And this went on and so Dave went to Eden. He had no money and he slept on the beach

15:30 and next morning he went round, chatted up a few of the divers and he said, “What’s it all about?” and they said, “Well, these beautiful shellfish, they are absolutely delicious and you fry them in butter and cut them very clean and you can pulverise them a bit before if you like, but they are beautiful and most of them are sent to America and Japan and they can’t get enough of them and so we get quite a good screw [profit] out of it.” And he said, “Oh, yeah, how do you go

16:00 about getting your license?” “Go down see the fisheries officer and couple of dollars, you’ve got a license.” He did this and he started diving off the rocks and they all thought this pommy bloke was mad and he used to walk all the way round from the rocks, about two miles along the rocks to the fisheries to put in his catch and have them weighed and then all he’d have all day was an omelette and a pint of milk

16:30 and that was his lot and he used to sleep on the beach and I never knew anything like this, however, about six months later he wrote to me. He said, “Dad, if you can send me some money for a little tinny [small tin or aluminium boat],” he said, “I can double my income.” He said, “I’m having to dive off the rocks,” he said, “but if I go out in a boat,” he said, “I can double my income in no time.” So I wrote back and said, “How much do you want?” and he said, “About £100 will do.” So I sent him

17:00 £100 and then two weeks later said, “Dad, it’s marvellous. I can go now and I can even treble it,” and he did. Within a year he got the best boat in the harbour and the price of abalone was going up and up and up and then he’d been out here two years. Then my other son joined him and he became an abalone diver and then he rang up one night and he said, “Dad,” he said, “what the

17:30 hell are you working yourself silly for over there?” He said, “Why don’t you sell up and come out here?” he said, “and enjoy life.” He said, “I can get you out because I can sponsor you.” I said, “Can you?” He said, “Yeah, no worries,” so this is what he did and we put the house on the market. It’s a beautiful house and we didn’t think it would sell very quickly but it sold within two months, bang, bang, and so we then rang up

18:00 the [Australian] authorities in London, Australia House [the High Commission], and said, “When are we going to come out to Australia? When are we allowed to come out?” And they said, “You’re not in the right category to come out,” and so we thought, “Well, that’s it,” and we’ve sold the bloody house, so I thought, “Not only that, I’ll build another one, along the same area.” And so Dave said, “What’s the problem Dad?”

18:30 I said, “We’re not in that category.” He said, “What do you mean?” I said, “They’ve told me we’re not in the category for immigrating.” He said, “Who said that?” I said, “I don’t know. It was somebody in the…” He said, “Oh, some bloody clerk.” He said, “I’ll go and see them.” So both of them went to wherever it was they went and they said, “Why isn’t my mother and father allowed to come out? I can employ them. I’m doing very well and why can’t they come out?

19:00 They’re longing to come out and besides, we’re not going to go back to England any more and we need our family with us.” On that, straight away, some lady rang us up from Australia House and said, “Why aren’t you in Australia?” So I said, “I’d like to know that myself.” She said, “Well, you do your medical and you’re free to come,” so we paid our own fare out and we came out on the Rusty Shultavale [?], a Russian ship, smelling of

19:30 Russian soup all the way through and we came out and stopped at Naples [Italy], Algiers [Algeria], Colombo, then onto, on the west coast, what’s it called? Mentioned it a few times ago, not Adelaide,

20:00 what’s the other one on that…

Fremantle?

That’s it, yeah, Fremantle, pulled in there and we met up with a guy on the ship who was an ex-pommy pilot and great bloke and he was a yachty [he sailed yachts], like I was. We got talking yachts as we left England and got on famous and every morning, Rene and I used to do our exercises out on one of the decks and unbeknown to me, his cabin was flush with this deck and he used to watch us exercising

20:30 and he came out to me one morning, said, “Can we join in with your exercising? I said, “Yeah, by all means,” so he said, “That’s great,” so he and his wife joined. In no time at all we had 30 and the guy that should have been doing it on the ship was Tuppy, “Well done,” he said, “Good on you, mate.” He said, “You’ll have 40 or 50 shortly.” Anyhow, they used to line up and love it and then I said to him, “Can you play some music while we’re doing it?” He said, “Music?.” I said, “Yeah,” and I said, “It makes it flow very nice

21:00 with music,” cause I was music-mad. Anyhow, he did this and it did and it flourished. People started to buy me little pressies and it was great and we put in at these ports, went ashore and saw all those things like the acropolis and all those things and it was absolutely great. Then we, leaving Colombo, we had a really bad storm, right on the nose, all the way through. People were sick and down and I was eating all

21:30 that was going, still hungry, and it was really good. I enjoyed it. I was banned from going on the fo’c’stle [forecastle; forward-most deck of ship] but I used to go onto the breakwater, which was this side of the fo’c’stle, and watch the old ship plunge and then she’d, you see, and she was groaning like hell and they

do groan. Of course, they give, you know, and this was great and so we finally landed and Dave met us. Before that,

22:00 this guy that we teamed up with, this pommy guy, he said, “I want to take you home,” and we were allowed off the ship about, we had to sail at midnight. We had to be back on board an hour before and we didn’t get off until nine o’clock at night and Jack, who we met, this guy, he was insistent that we come home with him, so he rang his son and said, “Bring the car and we’ve got two more visitors to see to,” a magnificent house and he told me the story of his having to get where he got.

22:30 He was in a little old café, seeing to workmen most of the time, just about making it, just about making it financially and then he thought, “To hell with this. One of these days I’m going to take on something big,” and he found an advert saying this huge concern [business] was for sale. He had no money, so he went to the bank and he said, “I’ve got collateral and I want to buy this property.” And they said, “We’ll go and have a look at it,” so [they]

23:00 had a look at it and he then really bullshitted them into parting up with a good sizeable chunk of the money in advance and so he put this money down and he started this off and it just went and he finished up the biggest caterer in Fremantle. He was really making some money. Anyhow, having met me and listening to my, what I did, shooting and fishing and all that, he wanted to do the same and

23:30 he said to his wife, “I’m going to be like Doug. I want to retire. I’m 60, I want to retire.” He said, “Doug’s retired.” She said, “Well, I’m not retiring and you’re not.” She said, “We’ve had it in the hard days and I never want to be hungry again,” and so it didn’t happen and, unfortunately, when we got to Fremantle, no, fortunately, when we got to Fremantle, he took us home and you’ve never seen anything like it. It was a most magnificent place and he whispered to me, he said, “And Doug,

24:00 I paid for that, cash.” And he used to keep money under the floorboards and it was a magnificent place. He said, “Now, listen, we’ve got to get together and I’m going to come and see you.” And Dave by this time had bought us a little old 90-year-old cottage and this was somewhere and Dave said, “Don’t worry, just a stepping stone. Don’t worry about what you’ve left and what you come to,” but there was like the thunderbox outside and it was

24:30 really old, that place. Anyhow, we tarted it up and I painted it and made a new balcony and did all around the two lovely blocks which overlooked the harbour and people used to stand and watch us like this and saw the progress. And the guy over the road was a typical dinkum-di Aussie [genuine Australian] and he liked his beer and he used to watch me through the window and I could feel him watching me and one day, after six months, he shouted out, “Oi, come and have a bloody beer,

25:00 mate.” And I said, “Yeah, I’ll be with you,” so went over and had a beer and we clicked and he became a very good mate. And then, finally, after about a couple of years it was promulgated that all the Davidsons was going to meet at this place from all over Australia, and ‘Davo’ [neighbour], who was the, you know, the junior member said, “And you’re coming.”

25:30 I said, “I’m not family, Davo, I can’t come to that.” He said, “You’re bloody coming.” I said, “No, Davo,” I said, “I can’t. I’m not family. I’m an interloper.” I said, “We can see each other.” [Davo said] “You’re bloody coming, even if I’ve got to drag you,” he said, “you’re coming.” And so that was it and then they started to poke the rum and the stuff into me and I got a bit silly with it, like everybody else I suppose, and then there was a distinct tapping on the table

26:00 and this was great grandfather Davidson. He was the senior member of the Davidsons and he said, “Now then, you Davos,” he said, “do you know why you’re all here?” He said, “I’ll tell you why you’re all here.” He said, “My great, great, great grandfather was six miles off the shore here and what did he do? Over the side and swam the six miles to the lighthouse here and he landed

26:30 and then he made his home here in Eden.” And there was silence and I blurted out, “Bullshit!” And he said, “What did you say?” And I said, “Bullshit,” and silence and I said, “How the hell can your great, great grandfather leap over the side and swim six miles with a ball and chain round his ankle [reference to Australia’s convict past]?” And they burst into immediate laughter and Davo come and said,

27:00 “I thought you was going to get your throat cut,” but that’s exactly what I did and it was a silly thing to have done but I did cause I always like to, you know, to have a good old laugh about things and it could have gone the other way, of course, but, no, and they remarked about it and they kept patting me on the back, “Come and have another drink, you pommy so and so,” you know, and it was great and to this very day they come here and stay with us and we go down and stay with them and he’s a great mate,

27:30 really great mate and he’s a fighter, too. He used to take me in the pubs in Eden and it’s pretty rough there and he, one night, we all did in the drink and he saw somebody, went straight over and knocked him straight to the ground and he came back. I said, “What was all that about Davo? You don’t do things like that mate.” He said, “I bloody do.” He said, “I’ve been owing him, that bloke, for some time.” He said, “Now, I just managed to catch him,” and he never, ever told me what it was about, just went and knocked him out and

28:00 anybody said anything, he was a big fellow. And he used to sometimes spar [practise boxing] with me and I said, “Don’t come it Davo because,” I said, “you won’t get passed me mate, I’ve got too fast a left hand.” He said something about, “Yeah, you want to prove it, you want to prove it?” But, no, he turned out to be a real good mate and helped us along with several things, you know, and I finally got my

license to go fishing

28:30 and I bought one of the boys boat off him and he then put the money towards another loan, which bought them a beautiful big diesel boat, but of course by this time abalone had gone up. The licenses had gone up. We paid $850,000 for the license. That was later on, because what Dave did, he heard about Tasmania and how the abalone was twice as big, so he said to me, “I’m going over there to have a look

29:00 see,” went over, stayed about three weeks. He’d got his 12 tonne in. That’s what he was allowed to get and then the rest of the year was free and he went over to Tassie [Tasmania] and he found out that this was so, the abalone were quite big. They were green lip rather than black lip, huge great things and they were now going to buy them in the shell instead of having to shell them and he was raking money in right, left and centre, so I was his

29:30 decky [boat deckhand] and I used to take the boat out and keep it clean and do the engines and look after the divers and with those divers, you would have to back up. You can’t go forwards cause you run over the lines, so if they were over there, the lines would be streamed, you’d either temper the boat to stay where it was or as they moved, then you backed up and, of course, all the water used to come over the top and it was cold and there was a mad dash for the bathroom when we got in

30:00 and I invariably got there first, but it was really good. And then I decided I would go fishing alone, so I went off fishing with this boat and did quite well actually. I used to get down to Green… forgot it now, Green Cape [25km south of Eden], a big lighthouse there and you’d filter into

30:30 a big open area like that and the fish used to start about nine [o’clock] in the morning and they’d go crazy, no sorry, the fish at first light would go crazy until about nine o’clock and they would just go as they came. And after that, having got two or three boxes of kingfish, I’d go right out due east and look for the sharks and I had a tin barrel, about 25 litres, put a chain round it with a

31:00 swivel on and a huge great big hook and lacerated a kingfish and tossed it overboard and then backed off with the boat and then after about 20 minutes you’d see the old shark coming in, you know, and bang and then you’d see the drum go down and you’d still wait and up the drum would come and down it would go again and they seemed to wise up that it’s no good diving, so they started to, on the surface. Give him about an hour of this. Then I went in, hooked him on the chain, pulled him

31:30 into this stern post and cruised along with him as he came over on his back and took him 26 miles back to harbour, cut him up on the jetty where all the people were watching and they’d say, “Cruel old bugger. It’s still alive, that thing.” And it was, partly it was, but you see there’s no other way of dispatching it [killing it] and so you’d chop it up into sections that just fit into these abalone bins and I was doing okay, except that

32:00 the other guys were saying, “Has your old man got a new motor in that boat?” [My son] said, “No, not to my knowledge.” See what I used to do, I used to come half-way back to a place called Bittangabee Bay. I’d go into the bay, Dave would come in as he was going home with his catch. He’d take my catch and weigh it in at the fisheries and then I could get away early next morning, cause before, when I used to set off from Eden, I could see these navigation lights catching me up, catching me and then passing me and getting

32:30 to the fishing grounds before me and the position is then, that once they get the boat in a circle and they’ve hit the fish, the boat goes around in a large circle and these fish are being pulled in like this, you see, and they get very excited if you leave the outer ones on and they splash on the surface like this, and the middle ones you can pull them in and keep pulling them in, you see, and you mustn’t go into their circle. Anyhow, I thought to myself, “Well,

33:00 my boat’s so slow,” this boat I’d bought from the boys, so, you know, “What I’ll have to do is go into Bittangabee [Bay] about seven o’clock at night, have a good sleep, get up about three [am] and get down to Green Cape before sunrise,” which I did. So this is the question, “Has he got a new engine in the boat?” Never let on, you see, and I killed it. I got into the bay, got the fish and he was, just from him to me,

33:30 you know, that, “Clear off, clear off, you’re a pommy,” you know, “you’re an interloper, piss off,” type of thing, and I ignored him and carried on in a circle, pulling these fish in and got five, six and seven, you know, bins of fish and got Dave to take them to the fisheries and they couldn’t understand how I got there first, you see, but if I hadn’t have done it, I’ve have got no fish, so they had their quota and

34:00 they never discovered I stayed in Bittangabee. I used to make a nice fry up and it was quite settled, very sheltered, didn’t matter what the weather was doing and it was beautiful in there, and I reckon that’s about it.

34:15 **INTERVIEW ENDS**